Slide 1: The Golden Rule in 2015

This is what the Golden Rule looks like today, with bright red sails - a giant peace symbol on one sail and a Veterans For Peace logo on the other. This is the story of the Golden Rule peace boat, “Sailing for a Nuclear-Free world”

Note the song link at the bottom of this slide in case you want to play the theme song.

Slide 2: Thank you all for coming to today’s presentation. I’m Gerry Condon, President of both Veterans For Peace and the VFP Golden Rule Project. It is my pleasure to be here, my first time in Hawaii. Thanks to Ann Wright for organizing this tour and (anyone else who is helping with this event)

Slide 3: The Golden Rule is a Project of Veterans For Peace, which is an organization of military veterans and their supporters who intend to abolish war as an instrument of national policy. Part of their mission is to work for the reduction and ultimately the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Veterans For Peace was started in 1985 and now has chapters in over 100? US Cities and 10? countries around the world!

Slide 4: This is what the Golden Rule looked like in 1958 when a group of Quakers tried to sail her to the Marshall Islands to interfere with nuclear bomb testing. What would cause people to do such a dangerous thing as to sail a small boat to the middle of the Pacific Ocean? To put their boat and their lives in danger?

Slide 5: First was the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Despite hugh propaganda campaigns and lies about why the bombs were dropped, some people were horrified by what our government had done. The first captain of the Golden Rule, Albert (Bert) Bigelow, was a naval captain during World War II. His destroyer was headed for Hawaii when he heard the news about Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He was horrified and said, “Intuitively it was then that I realized for the first time that morally war is impossible.” He was proud that he resigned his commission a month before eligibility for a full pension.

Slide 6: 24 women who had survived the Hiroshima bomb came to New York in 1955 for reconstructive surgery so that they could lead less painful, more normal lives. Bert Bigelow’s family hosted two of these women. For several months, the women told the stories of what these bombs did to them and their families. Shigeko Sasamori was one of those women and she broke the champagne bottle on the Golden Rule when it was re-launched into Humboldt Bay in 2015.

Slide 7: The reason for the tactic of taking a boat into the Pacific Ocean was the atomic testing program going on Eniwetok and Bikini atolls in the Marshall Islands. These tests brought incredible suffering to the Marshallese people and radioactive contamination that forever changed the background radiation levels of the entire planet. This picture shows the Castle Bravo test, the biggest explosion the US ever detonated. Scientists were shocked when Castle Bravo produced an astounding 15 megaton yield, making it 1,000 times as powerful as the U.S. nuclear weapons used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Some people played with the ash that fell. People died of radiation sickness, cancers and other radiation-related diseases. Between 1946 and 1958, the United States conducted 67 nuclear weapons tests in the Pacific Ocean. As a result, the Marshallese people are still experiencing severe birth defects, cancers and other health problems.

Slide 8: As a result of the atmospheric nuclear bomb tests by the U.S., U.K, and Russia, Strontium 90 was found in milk, and the “Baby Tooth Survey” levels of Strontium 90 were found to be 50 times higher between 1950 and 1963. Initial findings published in 1961 helped convince Kennedy in 1963 to sign the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

Strontium 90 is not naturally occurring, but occurs only as a product of nuclear fission – from spent nuclear fuel and fallout from nuclear tests.

Strontium 90 acts like calcium in the body - it gets into the bones or breast milk, causing bone cancer and leukemia.

Slide 9: Now we know the motivation, but what to do about it? You don’t start out by deciding to sail a boat across the Pacific Ocean and put your lives at risk. You try other tactics first - contact politicians that have the power to act. Engage the public through media. Protest and demonstrate. Raise awareness of the issue. But their efforts were getting nowhere while the planet was being poisoned by more and more radiation being blown into the atmosphere.

Slide 10: The decision was made to sail a boat into the nuclear testing zone. At the urging of his Quaker Meeting, Bert Bigelow bought the Golden Rule, a 38 ft ketch, in Los Angeles, California. And off went these four Quakers with the intention of sailing to the Marshall Islands to get in the way of the nuclear bomb tests.

Slide 11: Here is their intended route, stopping in Hawaii for supplies before heading the rest of the way to the Pacific Testing Zone. This was a very public voyage - the government, the press and the people were very aware of the intent of these four men. That is perhaps why the government decided to stop them. While the Golden Rule was en route from Los Angeles to Honolulu, the Atomic Energy Commission wrote a new rule, called the Golden Rule rule, which forbade US citizens from entering the testing zone.

Slide 12: The crew stopped in Ala Wai Small Boat Harbor in Honolulu for supplies. After re-supplying, they left for the Marshall Islands. But the U.S. Coast Guard caught up with them and forced them back to Ala Wai harbor.

Slide 13: While one crew member was detained, another man, Jim Peck, was recruited to crew and off they went again, headed toward the Marshall Islands. They made it to international waters, but again, the Coast guard caught up with them and forced them to return.

Slide 14: The crew was arrested and spent 60 days in jail while being tried for breaking this rule. They were ultimately acquitted. Jim Peck caught tuberculosis while in the Honolulu City Jail.

Slide 15: The arrest of the Golden Rule crew drew huge crowds into the streets with messages to “Let the Golden Rule Sail”, “Stop the Bombs” and “Free the Crew of the Golden Rule”. Protests were organized all over the United States and some around the world. This brought a lot of attention to the problem of nuclear bomb testing, which was one of the objectives of the voyage.

Slide 16: While the crew of the Golden Rule was on trial, another ketch, the Phoenix of Hiroshima, sailed to the same dock, two slips down. The Phoenix captain, Dr. Earle Reynolds, had just spent 3 years studying the effects of radiation on children in Hiroshima. He and his family then sailed around the world and were on their way back to Hiroshima when they heard about the Golden Rule and crew. They went to the trial. They were so inspired by the courage and integrity of these men that they decided they would do what the Golden Rule crew could not - sail into the Marshall Islands and put their lives at risk to stop the nuclear bomb tests. When they entered the testing zone, Dr. Reynolds was arrested and brought back for trial in Honolulu. After two years and a temporary guilty verdict, the U.S. government admitted its mistakes and Dr. Reynolds was acquitted.

This incident changed the family members forever - they were inspired to sail to Russia to try to stop their nuclear bomb tests. They later made two trips to Vietnam during the war to bring humanitarian aid and a message of peace!

Slide 17: Bert Bigelow sold the Golden Rule to Walter Pettengill in Honolulu. Peace and anti-nuclear groups didn’t hear of her for decades. Then the Golden Rule showed up in Humboldt Bay in Northern California - a sad, derelict boat. She was tied to a dock when a gale came along and bashed her repeatedly against the dock. Planks broke and she sank in place.

Slide 18: Leroy Zerlang dragged the Golden Rule into his boat yard, two big holes in her side.

Slide 19: Leroy called his best friend, Chuck DeWitt, and said, “Hey Chuck, let’s share a bottle of Maker’s Mark and use the Golden Rule for a bon fire!” He came over to the boat yard, wondering what in the heck was the Golden Rule? The previous owner told Leroy that the Golden Rule had played an important role in the cold war, so Leroy looked it up on the internet. He decided to sell her. The Smithsonian and the Center for Wooden Boats in Seattle were both interested.

She had faced a watery grave and a firey grave, but Chuck DeWitt is a member of Veterans For Peace and talked with other VFP members - they decided that they wanted to restore the boat and her mission! They said to Leroy, “Hey, Leroy, give us a year in your boat yard so we can rebuild the Golden Rule.” Well, it took five years and they did it. Chuck DeWitt was the restoration coordinator and showed up every day for five years, as did many other people. “Goldie”, as I call her, is very lucky. Only 5% of boat restoration projects are ever completed.

Slides 20 - 23 pictures of the restoration

Slide 24: On June 20, 2015 the Golden Rule was re-launched into the waters of Humboldt Bay to great fanfare and a huge party! Hundreds of people came to celebrate the rebirth of the Golden Rule and her mission! Shigeko Sasamori, the Hiroshima Maiden, broke the bottle of champagne on the bow as she slid into the water.

Slide 25: A month later, four crew members sailed the Golden Rule down the California Coast to San Diego in time for the Veterans For Peace National Convention and to commemorate Hiroshima and Nagasaki days. The boat put the sparkle in that year’s convention. One of the original 1958 crew members, Orion Sherwood, came and crewed the Golden Rule again after all those years.

This was the start of the Golden Rule’s new mission to educate people about the dangers of radiation. We stopped in ten ports on the way back to northern California to talk about the history of the golden Rule and nuclear issues today.

Slide 26: Our 2016 voyage took us north to Oregon, Washington and British Columbia, Canada. We participated in four water protests, gave 26 educational presentations, were in four wooden boat shows, and supported the Indigenous Canoe Journey. Veterans For Peace chapters, Quaker meetings and many other peace and anti-nuclear groups were a big help in planning successful events.

Slide 27: By far the most significant water protest was against the Bangor Nuclear Submarine Base - home to 8 of the nation’s 12 nuclear-weapons equipped submarines and the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the U.S. Sharing a fence with this base is the Ground Zero Center for Non-Violent Action. They had not held a water protest since 1982. But there we were, 14 people on board the Golden Rule, 14 kayaks in the water, 6 aboard another sailboat, and many others on shore as we sailed back & forth in front of the submarine base.

Slide 28: We did many activities to reach a broad audience including presentations to local governments, giving boat tours, taking people sailing, and participating in local events and wooden boat shows.

Slide 29: For the 2017 voyage we sailed again the entire California Coast to San Diego, but also went up the Sacramento River to Sacramento and to the location where the Phoenix of Hiroshima lies under 25 feet of water. We had a very moving ceremony for the reunion of these historic sister sailboats with the Reynolds family and other supporters.

Slide 30: The Peace Action and Sailing Camp brought together two youth and three VFP members from Tucson, Arizona and another VFP member from New Jersey. We had a wonderful week of sailing, learning and educating!

Slide 31: This is in the Sacramento River Delta, where the Phoenix of Hiroshima has been since 2010 - the same year the Golden Rule sank.

Slide 32: The Golden Rule participated in 5 Fleet Week protests over the past 3 years, the last one being in San Diego. Here we see the military saluting the Golden Rule as we give our message of peace in contrast to the promotion of war and war machines when the Navy invades our coastal cities.

Slide 33: What’s Next? It’s time to sail again into the Pacific! In 2018 we will sail to Hawaii and probably sail all over the Hawaiian Islands for the remainder of 2018. Then we’ll visit the Marshall Islands, Guam, Okinawa, and finally Japan. Our goal is to be in Japan in July and August of 2020 for the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Slide 34: Here’s how you can get involved with the Golden Rule Project - it will take a lot of people to bring about nuclear disarmament and end the whole nuclear era! We invite you to contact us and help save the planet from the possibility of a nuclear war.

Slide 35: There are many nuclear issues today - (read the slide)

Slide 36: Here are some of the places that nuclear-armed nations are in conflict. The scenario that was used in discussing the humanitarian impacts of nuclear war was based on the 200 nuclear weapons that Indian and Pakistan have. If all of those weapons were used, there would be so much ash and dust blown into the upper atmosphere that it would cause a nuclear autumn and block out the sun for 5 to 10 years. Crops wouldn’t grow and billions of people would starve.

Slide 37: