

# Grandmothers for Peace International

9444 Medstead Way • Elk Grove, CA 95758 • USA

*Barbara Wiedner, Founder/Director*



*From left to right: Tess Koenig, Tarzana, CA - Lil Corrigan, Marietta, GA - JoAnne Lingle, Barnesville, GA - Peg McIntire, St. Augustine, FL - Barbara Wiedner, Elk Grove, CA - Bernice Kring, Sacramento, CA - Kathy Anderson, Duluth, MN - Lorraine Krofchok, Alpharetta, GA. Not present at time of photo: Louise Cox, Lafayette, AL - Maryanne Markewicz, Cleveland, TN - Bob Koenig & Andy Anderson. Taken November 16, 1996, at Fort Benning, Columbus, GA.*

## November 1996

Dear Friends,

Perhaps it comes with aging, but this past year seems to have “zoomed” by at high speed. It has been another full, productive and exciting year for our organization. It seems only yesterday I was writing to request that you remember to include GFP in your holiday list of charitable donations. Your past generosity has kept our work “alive” and I do not need to remind you again that in order to continue we desperately need your help — but I just did!

Certainly the signing of the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty** made 1996 a year we will never forget. It is not the Treaty we would have written, but it is a major step in the right direction and a great accomplishment for all who have worked for so many years to bring it about. Now we must work to bring about the ratification of that Treaty and toward elimination of the “fine print” that allows computerized laboratory testing which perpetuates the development of nuclear weapons. The important **Abolition 2000** campaign will continue to be a part of our efforts in 1997.

There is also the major problem of nuclear waste, and the diabolical plans to transport it through our communities, as explained in our last newsletter. We have several important issues to address, and again, we can only do that with your help!

Just this month (Nov. 13-16) several of our members journeyed to Ft. Benning in Columbus, Georgia, to participate in a wonderful gathering of 400 people from around the country at a demonstration sponsored by the **SOA Watch** calling for the closing of the **School of the Americas**. This year 60 brave people committed civil disobedience and now face from 2 to 6 months in Federal Prison for their non-violent action — walking onto the base to plant crosses

bearing names of those who have been murdered at the hands of the graduates of the SOA. I am enclosing a fact sheet which will refresh your memory on what the School is about and why it is so vital that we continue our work to bring about its closure.

Perhaps next year (if SOA is not closed by then) you will join us in Georgia for this action. Our great new banner and the presence of grandmothers (and the Men’s Auxiliary members) in our GFP shirts with our dramatic logo created a great deal of excitement, numerous cheers, and great photo opportunities for those assembled. We were simply overwhelmed by the warm reception and expressions of appreciation our presence generated. We signed up several new members, and one of them is the subject of the story that I have written especially for this holiday mailer. I hope that it warms your heart this holiday season — and inspires you to send your holiday donation in the enclosed envelope!

Do not forget our commitment to non-war toys when shopping for holiday gifts for children. If you have an opportunity to join a **Non-War Toys** campaign in your community, please do so. Don’t forget to wear your Grandmothers for Peace shirt or button — our logo is a powerful image that reminds everyone who sees it that we work from “the heart” and with love, not only at this season, but every day of the year.

Our deepest thanks for your past generosity and your continued work for peace and justice.

*Peace,*

*Barbara*



MAY THE HOLIDAY SEASON AND THE  
NEW YEAR AHEAD BE FILLED WITH LOVE,  
JOY AND PEACE FOR YOU AND ALL YOUR  
LOVED ONES.

\*\*\* from the Volunteer Staff  
at the International Office of Grandmothers for Peace

PHONE: (916) 684-8744 FAX: (916) 684-0394 E-MAIL: [wiednerb@aol.com](mailto:wiednerb@aol.com) WEB SITE: <http://www.wholarts.com/peace/>

(This Mailer's Editing and Graphics by Patricia Altenburg)

## **“People’s Peace Pledge”**

### FROM A NUCLEAR TEST BAN TO NUCLEAR ABOLITION

We, the people, pledge to work for the abolition of nuclear Weapons and the closure of all nuclear test sites as President Clinton and other heads of state sign a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty at the United Nations banning all nuclear bomb explosions.

We dedicate this pledge to the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the millions who have suffered from nuclear testing worldwide, and to future generations so that they may live in a nuclear-free world.

We believe that the conclusion of a zero-yield Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is a testament to the power of grassroots activism and constitutes an important step toward the unfinished task of abolishing nuclear weapons.

We call for the ratification and implementation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and an end to all nuclear weapons testing, including high-technology non-nuclear explosive testing which is not currently prohibited by the treaty.

We pledge to work for the immediate initiation of negotiations on a Nuclear Weapons Convention in compliance with the decision of the International Court of Justice which states that there is an obligation to conclude negotiations on the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

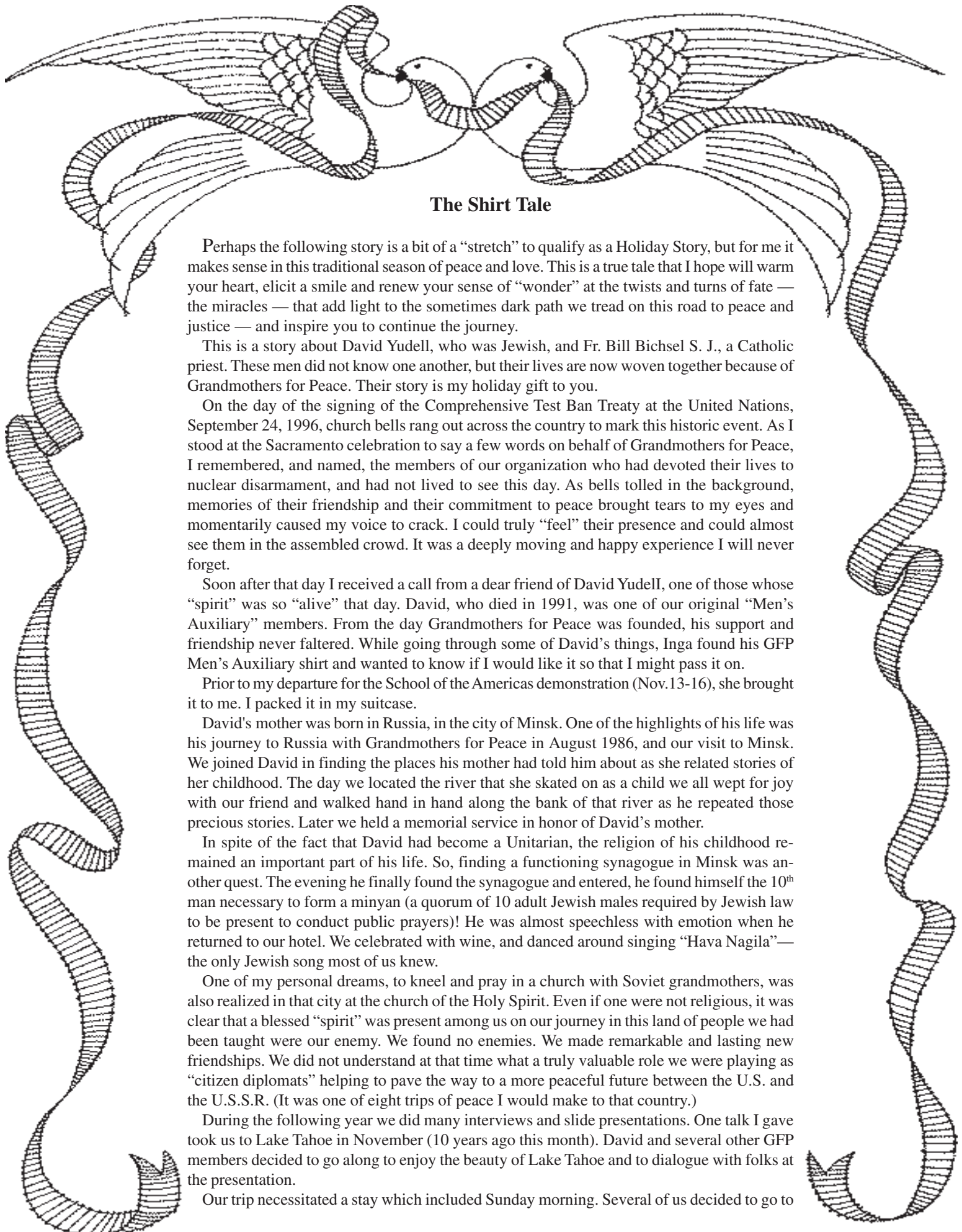
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Return Pledge (Or Copy of Pledge) to: GFP International - 9444 Medstead Way, Elk Grove, CA 95758



## The Shirt Tale

Perhaps the following story is a bit of a “stretch” to qualify as a Holiday Story, but for me it makes sense in this traditional season of peace and love. This is a true tale that I hope will warm your heart, elicit a smile and renew your sense of “wonder” at the twists and turns of fate — the miracles — that add light to the sometimes dark path we tread on this road to peace and justice — and inspire you to continue the journey.

This is a story about David Yudell, who was Jewish, and Fr. Bill Bichsel S. J., a Catholic priest. These men did not know one another, but their lives are now woven together because of Grandmothers for Peace. Their story is my holiday gift to you.

On the day of the signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty at the United Nations, September 24, 1996, church bells rang out across the country to mark this historic event. As I stood at the Sacramento celebration to say a few words on behalf of Grandmothers for Peace, I remembered, and named, the members of our organization who had devoted their lives to nuclear disarmament, and had not lived to see this day. As bells tolled in the background, memories of their friendship and their commitment to peace brought tears to my eyes and momentarily caused my voice to crack. I could truly “feel” their presence and could almost see them in the assembled crowd. It was a deeply moving and happy experience I will never forget.

Soon after that day I received a call from a dear friend of David Yudell, one of those whose “spirit” was so “alive” that day. David, who died in 1991, was one of our original “Men’s Auxiliary” members. From the day Grandmothers for Peace was founded, his support and friendship never faltered. While going through some of David’s things, Inga found his GFP Men’s Auxiliary shirt and wanted to know if I would like it so that I might pass it on.

Prior to my departure for the School of the Americas demonstration (Nov. 13-16), she brought it to me. I packed it in my suitcase.

David’s mother was born in Russia, in the city of Minsk. One of the highlights of his life was his journey to Russia with Grandmothers for Peace in August 1986, and our visit to Minsk. We joined David in finding the places his mother had told him about as she related stories of her childhood. The day we located the river that she skated on as a child we all wept for joy with our friend and walked hand in hand along the bank of that river as he repeated those precious stories. Later we held a memorial service in honor of David’s mother.

In spite of the fact that David had become a Unitarian, the religion of his childhood remained an important part of his life. So, finding a functioning synagogue in Minsk was another quest. The evening he finally found the synagogue and entered, he found himself the 10<sup>th</sup> man necessary to form a minyan (a quorum of 10 adult Jewish males required by Jewish law to be present to conduct public prayers)! He was almost speechless with emotion when he returned to our hotel. We celebrated with wine, and danced around singing “Hava Nagila”—the only Jewish song most of us knew.

One of my personal dreams, to kneel and pray in a church with Soviet grandmothers, was also realized in that city at the church of the Holy Spirit. Even if one were not religious, it was clear that a blessed “spirit” was present among us on our journey in this land of people we had been taught were our enemy. We found no enemies. We made remarkable and lasting new friendships. We did not understand at that time what a truly valuable role we were playing as “citizen diplomats” helping to pave the way to a more peaceful future between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. (It was one of eight trips of peace I would make to that country.)

During the following year we did many interviews and slide presentations. One talk I gave took us to Lake Tahoe in November (10 years ago this month). David and several other GFP members decided to go along to enjoy the beauty of Lake Tahoe and to dialogue with folks at the presentation.

Our trip necessitated a stay which included Sunday morning. Several of us decided to go to

Mass. David had never attended a Catholic Mass, but came along with us in the “spirit of peace.” He chose to stand at the back of the church to simply witness the proceedings. What none of us knew at that time was that in that particular church they choose men to take up the collection from those standing at the back of the church. Needless to say, this proved to be a totally unexpected and startling turn of events that took David on another “adventure.” He made a quick decision to simply follow what the other men did and bluff his way through. He proceeded up the aisle with them and found himself in front of the altar — expected to genuflect with the rest. He fumbled his way through his first genuflection as the rest of us watched with sympathy for his plight while trying to contain our laughter.

When we finally gathered outside of the church we found our dear friend in shock. He survived, and we all decided there was much laughing going on in heaven where even David’s mother would approve of his “adventure” into ecumenism. We took David out for a hearty breakfast to celebrate.

Now, I do not know where Fr. Bill Bichsel was at that time. I just met him this month at the School of the Americas demonstration at Ft. Benning. It was the GFP shirt that caught his eye. As I recall he asked the usual question: “What about grandfathers?” I explained about the Men’s Auxiliary and immediately remembered David’s shirt in my luggage. When Fr. Bichsel expressed his interest in getting one of our Men’s Auxiliary shirts I knew why “the spirit” had led me to bring the shirt along. That afternoon I gave him the shirt which turned out to be a perfect fit. “Bix” wore it proudly from then on. As soon as he put it on and came to show me how he looked in it, I told him the story of David. He beamed, I wept and somewhere in heaven David was slapping his knee and laughing out loud. I



Fr. Bill Bichsel  
(Tacoma, WA)

could hear him — “Well, I’ll be darned Mom, look what has happened now — a Catholic priest is wearing my shirt!!” Ah, the twists and turns of fate that brighten the path we tread on the road to peace and justice.

Fr. Bix (as he is called by his friends) was recently released from a prison near Portland, Oregon, after serving a four-month federal sentence for trespassing during a November 1995 protest at Ft. Benning. He is a man who is greatly admired. David would have loved him. “I don’t do civil disobedience lightly,” Bix is quoted as saying. “When gross injustices are happening, such as murder and people condemned to subhuman lives — and other forms of protest have failed — we can’t stand aside and say we are not responsible.”

As Fr. Bix raised the bread over the assembled crowd at the “Sharing of the Loaves” ceremony for Christians, Jews, Muslims, Native Americans and agnostics while wearing his Grandmothers for Peace Men’s Auxiliary shirt, I knew that my life and our work had again been blessed. I could feel David’s presence in the crowd, and knew he was beaming with joy at the sight of his shirt worn by this remarkable man.

He would have been overjoyed to pass the collection basket among this crowd! In fact, several grandmothers (a beautiful sight in their shirts) actually did that, and only later did I realize how truly symbolic it was.

David, Bix, and all those whose names were on the crosses planted in the ground by 60 brave protesters at Ft. Benning on November 16 should inspire and motivate us to continue our efforts to close the School of the Americas. It is a training ground for murder and oppression of innocent people — our brothers and sisters of the Americas. I believe there is a holiday message in all of this, and an abundance of light to lead us on the path to peace and justice in the New Year.

May the heart we wear on our shirts envelop us all and those whose lives we touch with the message of Love, Joy, Hope and Peace — this season and always.

— Barbara Wiedner

**\*\*\*\*\* ACTION ALERT \*\*\*\*\***



Columbus, GA, students carry their poster  
"Schools for Kids Not Killers!"  
at the SOA demonstration.

**MAKE THIS YOUR FIRST  
NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION!!**

*Please join us:*  
**Call /Fax President Clinton EVERY MONDAY**  
*beginning immediately.*

**DEMAND THAT**  
**THE SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS BE CLOSED!**  
**(because your tax \$\$\$\$\$\$ keep it open)**

Call the While House Comment Line at (202) 456-1414  
Fax the White House: (202) 456-2461  
If you call/fax before 8 A.M. your time, the cost is minimal.



**ORDER FORM: GFP SWEATSHIRTS & T-SHIRTS**

	<u>Prices:</u>	<u>SIZES:</u>						<u>TOTAL</u>
		Sml	Med	Lge	X-Lge	XX-Lge	XXX-Lge	
1. WOMEN'S SWEATSHIRTS (Blue) XXL Add \$6.00 - XXXL Add \$10.00	\$18.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
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3. WOMEN'S CREWNECK T-SHIRTS (White) XXL Add \$4.00 - XXXL Add \$9.00	\$10.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
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SHIPPING & HANDLING: ADD \$2.50 - 1st Shirt and \$1.50 each per additional Shirt: \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to Grandmothers for Peace International for the TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Return this Order Form to:  
**Grandmothers For Peace International**  
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*CARRY OUR MESSAGE* —

*WHEREVER YOU GO!*

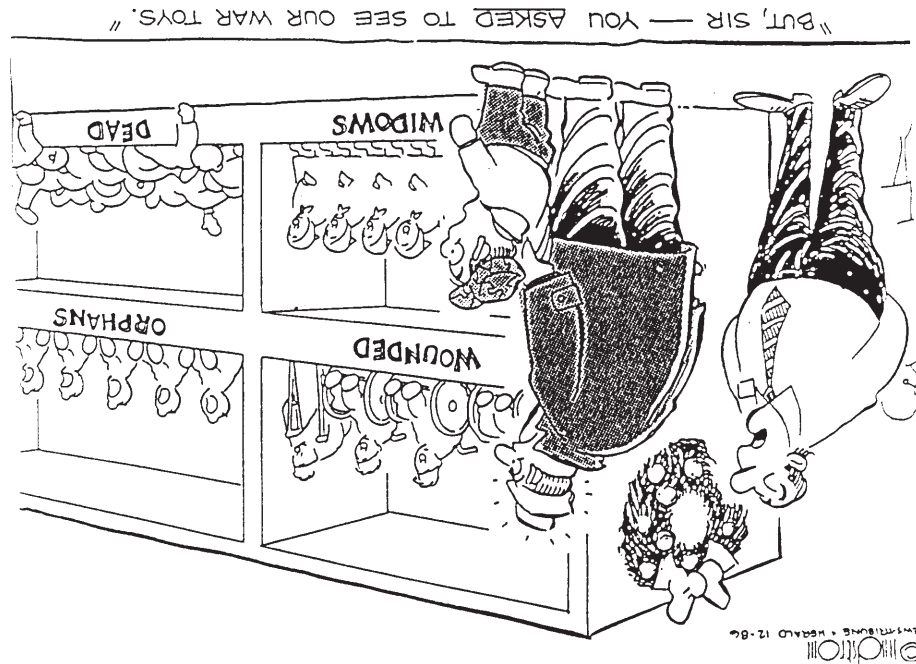
**Navy Tote with colorful GFP logo**

12 oz. Cotton Canvas

14" x 10 1/2" x 5"



**To order:** Send \$10.50 per bag to:  
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## ***Grandmothers for Peace International***

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