

## The energy glut is a gas gas gas

by Julian Sereno

The Sunday after Thanksgiving I filled up my gas tank in southern Virginia and paid \$2.49.9 a gallon. Around here it's about a quarter more. But that is still a dollar less than it was not too long ago.

The gas bill for my house — I heat with gas and have a gas stove — is less than it was when I moved in 28 years ago, though credit too must be given to Mark Bashista for making it as energy efficient as possible, and also to modern heat pump/furnaces.

The reason for all of these wonderful savings is the energy glut. It has come about through the oil boom in Bakken oil fields of North Dakota and the natural gas boom, entirely the result of fracking, which now takes

place principally throughout the West and in Pennsylvania and New York. Augmenting the glut is the proliferation of solar panels, particularly solar farms, which began after the cost of their manufacture dropped.

Energy independence for the United States — a mantra I've been hearing since the first oil shortage of 1973 when the price of gas at the pump almost doubled from 30 cents a gallon to more than 50 — is a reality.

The glut has created whole new bunches of winners and losers.

The U.S. economy is a winner, because the cost of energy affects all the goods and services we buy and sell. Consumers are winners, but we shouldn't let the glut go to our heads and start guzzling again.

Among the big losers are petro-tyrants like

Russia's Vlady Putin and Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro, whose nations' economies are tanking while their problems multiply and their power bases weaken. Also facing leaner times are the oil rich sheiks, many of whom are citizens of our stalwart allies Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, who help fund ISIS, Al Qaeda and similar purveyors of religious hatred, not to mention mass murder and crimes against humanity. They won't be able to give quite so generously.

President Obama is a big winner, no doubt to the mortification of his detractors. History books will say that he was the president when the United States reached energy independence. If Ronald Reagan won the Cold War, as Republicans like to claim, then Barack Obama was the president who lead us to the promised land of energy independence after more than

40 years in the wilderness.

Paradoxically, the glut may yet save North Carolina from the environmental trauma and degradation of fracking, which could begin as early as next summer. That is because with the glut of natural gas and the resultant low price, the frackers won't make enough money to make it worth their while.

Of course the Solons in the NC Legislature bet big on fracking. They fast-tracked the legislation allowing it. And they spent our taxpayer money to dig a well with the hope that it would entice frackers. But if the price of natural gas continues to fall, there is reason for optimism.

Let's hope, as the old saw goes, that smarty has a party and nobody comes.

*Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line.*

## Veterans remember Christmas truce

by John Heuer

On Friday, November 7, members of the Eisenhower Chapter of Veterans For Peace erected the Swords to Plowshares Memorial Bell Tower at the NC Capitol in Raleigh. The Bell Tower was conceived by Cary artist Roger Ehrlich, and constructed by Roger and Joe McTaggart from recycled orchard stakes, and aluminum cans. The 24 foot tall tower was built in four 6' high sections, with the flattened drink cans hinged on wires so that the silver sides shimmer with the breeze and reflect the light. The 80 lb. bell is on loan from the Church of Reconciliation in Chapel Hill.

The tower was first displayed on the NC State University campus over Memorial Day weekend last May, and was inspired by the NC State Bell Tower, a memorial to those NCSU students and alumni who served and perished in "The War to End All Wars," now referred to as World War I. The inscription on the bronze door of the NCSU Bell Tower reads: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares" from the Old Testament Book of Isaiah.

Roger, an associate member of Veterans For Peace, had many levels of inspiration for the mobile Swords to Plowshares Bell Tower, on this, the centennial year of the start of "The Great War." His grandfathers fought on opposite sides during WWI, one for Britain, one for Austria. Roger intended that the observance of Memorial Day in 2014 include commemorating all the victims of wars, regardless of race, religion or nationality. His perspective is that if we only remember our own losses, then we fail to learn the true costs of war.

After the Memorial Day weekend staging in Raleigh, Roger and Joe took the tower for display in downtown Asheville, during the Veterans For Peace Nation Convention in July. Since then, the tower was on display again at the NCSU campus for the Packapalooza 'Welcome back' event in August, and the September Bull City Stand Down event at the National Guard Armory in Durham. Wherever the tower is on display, Roger invites veterans and others who have been effected by war to inscribe an

aluminum plaque to commemorate a friend, family member, or the veteran's own service. Roger also invites interviews that commemorate these lives, service, and sacrifice. Many of these interviews have become emotional, as veterans and their family members experience a measure of healing by remembering the sufferings of friends, family members and others.

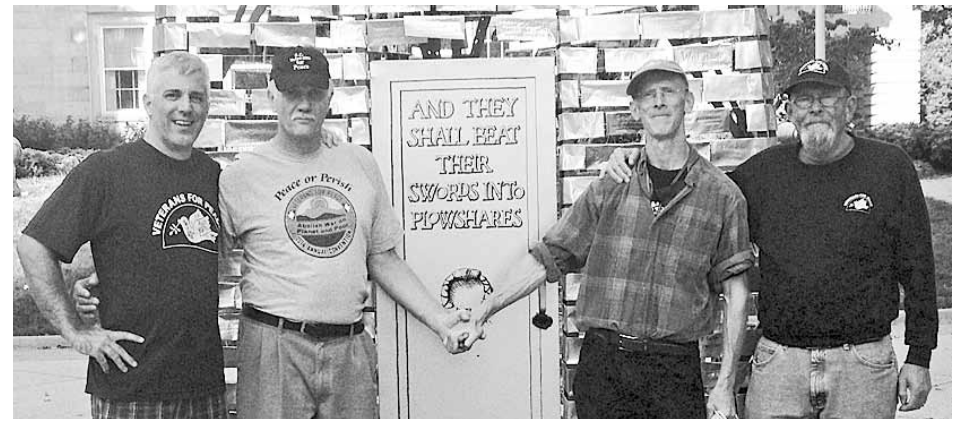
The mobile Swords to Plowshares Memorial Bell Tower project was created to remember the centennial of WWI, which was started in 1914, and travel to different sites until the centennial of the WWI Armistice, which occurred November 11, 1918.

### ARMISTICE DAY, VETERANS DAY AND THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE

Armistice Day was declared by President Wilson in 1919, and ratified by the US Congress in 1924 to celebrate peace and goodwill among all peoples and nations. In 1954, the US Congress changed Armistice Day to Veterans Day, to honor those who have served in the military. While it is appropriate and necessary to honor the sacrifice of service men and women, Veterans For Peace strive to rekindle the original meaning of Armistice Day, a celebration of peace and goodwill.

One way VFP is doing this is by promoting the centennial observance of the Christmas Truce. During that first Christmas of the war, in 1914, German, French and British enlisted soldiers and junior officers laid down their weapons, climbed out of their trenches, and met each other in No Man's Land. They sang Christmas Carols, shared brandy and cigars, played soccer under the lights of artillery flares, and retrieved their fallen comrades for burial. All up and down the Western Front, common soldiers ignored the orders of their generals, politicians, and clergy that they focus on killing the evil enemies, and recognized, instead, their common humanity. Of course the generals were outraged, and during the next Christmas, they ordered continuous bombardment to insure that such fraternization with the enemy would not be repeated.

Reconciliation with the enemy is one of the



surest ways to heal the emotional, spiritual and moral injuries of war experience. It took WW II Marine Corps veteran and VFP member Sam Winstead nearly 70 years to overcome his hatred of the Japanese, having fought them so bitterly in the Pacific. In 2013, Sam traveled to Japan to address the Rotary International Peace Forum in Hiroshima. This past Memorial Day, Sam embraced Yuri Yamamoto, a Japanese American whose father and father-in-law both served in the Japanese military during WW II. Together, Sam and Yuri rang the Swords to Plowshares bell to celebrate reconciliation, peace, and goodwill.

In May 2015, 90-year-old Sam will launch his fourth *Ride for Peace* from Raleigh to

Washington DC, with "The People's Call for a Peace Economy." While our leaders justify our recent wars with half-truths and outright lies, the truth is that we will never make friends by bombing people. On the other hand, providing food, shelter and medicine is the path to friendship and goodwill. This is what Sam means with his call for a peace economy.

To join Sam's effort, see <http://igg.me/at/samsrideforpeace>, or contact [www.ncveteransforpeace.org](http://www.ncveteransforpeace.org). To participate in the Swords to Plowshares Memorial Bell Tower Project, visit [www.facebook.com/STPBelltower](http://www.facebook.com/STPBelltower).

*John Heuer is NC Peace Action and VFP chapter president emeritus. He continues to serve as VFP National Board Secretary.*

## Remembering yesterdays

By Don Lein

When the Chamber of Commerce awarded my wife, Marian, and me the Citizenship Award for 2014, it came as a bit of a shock because we do not do it for, nor expect, recognition and for the two decades we have done this, we have tried not to let "ambition mock our useful toil". The local newspaper did an article enumerating good works that had already slipped from our minds.

It all began innocently enough when we attended a neighbor's birthday party shortly after my retirement in 1993. He was fairly well known in the community and we thought it would be a good opportunity to meet some of our neighbors and community leaders. We ended up talking to a couple of African American ladies who we found out were running for office — Uva Holland and Margaret Pollard. Margaret, after having heard what I had done prior to retirement, asked me to work on her campaign which I agreed to do. Her run was successful, since Margaret was elected and went on to serve her county very well. What followed was becoming involved with the Jordan Lake Advisory Board and informing Margaret about the possibility of leasing their property for County Park usage

and taking her and Betty Wilson on briefings and tours of its facilities.

Another passion was Road Running and one of the opportunities for Road Running was at the Senior Games, but alas, Chatham County did not have any Senior Games. Jim Schoonard, a fellow runner, and I met with another local dynamo by the name of Cassie Wasko, of the Council on Aging and we initiated the first Senior Games in Chatham County. Cassie also recruited Marian and me for the Taste of Chatham, which then went to the Governors Club, where it was called by the local press the "social event of the year in Chatham County". It also was a financial success paying off the mortgage on the Pittsboro facility and beginning to do the same for the Siler City facility.

It was at one of these events when Margaret informed me that she had named me to be on the committee to work on the development of a Long Range Plan for Chatham Parks and Recreation. The plan was accepted by the Board of Commissioners in September 1999. In order to raise awareness and provide support for this plan the Chatham Parks Foundation was established in 2000 as a 501c3 organization and continues in that role of supporting parks and recreation today. Over the course of years,

I have been accused of being joined at the hip with Tracy Burnett. Both Marian and I have worked extensively with Tracy and Chatham County should consider itself lucky to have such a dedicated and competent public servant.

While attending one of the post mortem meetings on one of our Taste of Chatham events, the then director of the event, Mona Hanner, mentioned to me that she had a vision for a Boys and Girls Club in Siler City, her home town. She had two teenage boys, with lots of children having no after school programs. We pursued her dream, first with Sanford and then with Orange County. Early support was forthcoming from Chief Tyson and the Spences, Millhollands, Emersons, de St Aubins, HARRISES, et. al. I recall early on how Tommy Emerson had told us that the \$200,000 goal was impossible in Siler City, citing the number of free and reduced lunches at the schools, etc., but in 18 months they were cutting the ribbons for the new Boys and Girls Club.

On November 16, 2009, the Chatham County Board of Commissioners passed a Resolution requesting a piece of steel beam from the World Trade Center as a centerpiece for a 9/11 Memorial for which "Chatham County will prepare a special location for the 9/11 Memorial." It

was signed by George Lucier and enclosed in a 12/28/2009 letter to The Port Authority of NY and NJ from Chatham County Fire Marshall, Thomas Bender, requesting a piece of steel beam. A number of months later Mr. Bender was notified of the approval of this request and the agreement for transfer of title to Chatham County was memorialized in a 12/17/2010 letter from Mr. Bender on behalf of Chatham County. Upon its arrival several months later the piece was taken on a trip around the county and a special memorial service was held at Joy Baptist Church on the 10th Anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy. Subsequent to that a 501c3 was founded to develop, fund and maintain the memorial. Both Marian and I are officers and are honored to be associated with fellow hard working and selfless volunteers.

It has been quite a run, without mentioning Active Chatham, North Carolina Senior Citizens, Triangle J Board of Directors, numerous local road races, the Y and, we hope the county has derived as much as we have, from these last 22 years we have been residents. Thanks again to the Chamber of Commerce who have caused us to pause and reflect upon our Chatham yesterdays.

*Don Lein is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line.*