

Little Boat, Big Idea: “Rid the World of Nuclear Weapons”

By [Craig Wood](#)

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The sailboat Golden Rule will embark on a 15-month, 11,000 mile voyage near Stillwater, Minnesota this September to raise awareness about the growing danger of nuclear war and build support for abolishing nuclear weapons.

Referred to as the **Great Loop**, the crew will make 100 ports of-call along the Mississippi River, coastal cities and around the Great Lakes before heading back to San Francisco through the Panama Canal. Planned community events that link environmental, and peace and justice concerns to anti-war issues will include school visits, seminars and venues for speakers.

While in Stillwater, anyone interested can meet the crew and learn more about the project:

- September 17, 3-5 p.m. at Stillwater Library, 224 3rd St N. Stillwater, MN 55082, Margaret Rivers Room and Terrace
- September 18, 2-4 p.m. at Lowell Park South, Sam Bloomer, Stillwater, MN 55082

The *Golden Rule* will be docked at St. Croix Dock & Packet in Stillwater September 16-19.

“We are sailing for a nuclear-free world and a peaceful sustainable future” says *Golden Rule* Project Manager Helen Jaccard. “Our mission is all the more urgent now that two nuclear powers are confronting one another in Ukraine which greatly increases the chances of nuclear war.”

While the *Golden Rule*’s primary message about nuclear war and what can be done to prevent it is crucial, there was controversy about how that message would be delivered. The idea of having a 36 foot Ketch hauled 2,000 miles overland from San Francisco to Minnesota had critics questioning the expense of such an endeavor and wondering if the money might be better spent elsewhere. In spite of the seriousness of this campaign, visions of peaceniks

floating down river sipping wine or eating THC gummies danced in the heads of skeptics.

Those more familiar with the project scoffed and pointed to the dedication of national organizers and the vast amounts of work and money already invested in the legendary boat that made a trip like this possible. In 2010 the *Golden Rule* (affectionately called Goldie) was a submerged wreck in California's Humboldt Bay until it was pulled ashore. As the story goes, the harbor master, along with a bottle of whiskey and some friends, planned to make a bonfire out of her until they were told about the sailboat's historical significance.

The vessel made headlines in 1958 when four Quaker activists tried sailing her from Los Angeles to the Marshall Islands to interfere with nuclear testing after traditional methods of protesting failed. The crew never made it and were jailed after stopping in Honolulu. The upside, however, is their arrests created global buzz and not long after, records of nuclear pollution along with reports of radiation in mother's milk began to surface. In 1963, President Kennedy, along with leaders of the UK and the USSR, signed the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty which banned nuclear testing in air, water and space.

After five years of restoration, the *Golden Rule* set sail again in 2015 and has since plied the West Coast waters from Mexico to British Columbia and visited all of the Hawaiian Islands. Now owned, maintained and sometimes sailed by members of Veterans For Peace (VFP), she's rigged and ready for a new adventure. But the challenges of keeping and operating a sailboat remain.

The old mariner adage "a boat is a hole in the water you throw money into" is only one of the headaches. Long-distance sailing can be nerve wracking and sometimes surprising. Jaccard talked about how water from a fuel tank rusted out the boat's engine while at sea and how bad judgment calls about weather can make landings dangerous. There's no escaping inconvenience and discomfort.

With waves sometimes almost as high as the 35 foot mast and feeling like she was in a washing machine, Jaccard recounted sailing 17 hours from Honolulu to the port of Nawiliwili on Kauai with four of the seven crew so seasick they stayed below deck. "I eventually took the helm and wouldn't let go. The two other healthy crew kept a lookout on each side because the spray made my glasses unusable. As we approached the harbor, they would shout "Turn Left" or "Turn Right" after catching a brief peek at a buoy before it disappeared behind the next wave. Then the sun went down, visibility even worse. It was impossible to figure out the distance from us to the buoy and the entrance to Nawiliwili is very curvy. We finally got in after 10 pm, exhausted and greatly relieved! The high waves lasted right into the harbor entrance and the wind continued to hammer us long after we docked."



Golden Rule protesting at Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) — the world’s largest international maritime war exercise in 2020. The event is held biannually near Diamond Head. (Photo: Kate Thompson of Honolulu)

She spoke solemnly about the wet chill and sleep deprivation sailors live with between ports. It takes about three to four weeks each way to sail between California and Hawaii. The journey to New Orleans won’t be brunch and white deck shoes either. There are 29 locks and dams between the Twin Cities and St. Louis and beyond that, opportunities to refuel, buy provisions, take a shower or empty waste are scarce. It can take days or a week or more to reach a Marina. Then there’s debris and ocean freighters to dodge and scenery that’s sometimes less than charming.

Still, the crew along with its supporters, believe enough in the importance of the project to endure the hardships, setbacks and economic uncertainty. Jaccard is determined to follow the *Golden Rule* throughout North America noting that “it’s not always easy connecting with community organizers and media by sailboat.”

Church, school and civic groups are welcome to schedule educational presentations by contacting *Golden Rule* Project Manager Helen Jaccard at vfpgoldenruleproject@gmail.com or 206-992-6364

In addition to educational outreach programs, there will be fundraisers. The cost of boat insurance alone can be staggering. “It’s a lot of money” said Jaccard “but look at how much money we put into a nuclear weapon we can never use.” According to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), the nine nuclear-armed countries of the world spent 82.4 billion on nuclear weapons in 2021. The U.S. plans to spend an additional 494 billion on nuclear programs over the next decade.

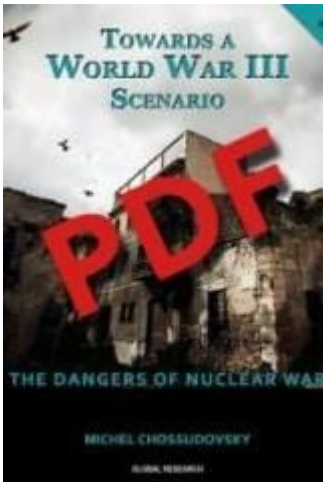
Undaunted by detractors, this little sailboat, which once lost its mast, was twice sunk and nearly burned for firewood, remains steadfast with her original mission to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

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A shorter version of this article appeared in [The Stillwater Gazette](#).

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by Michel Chossudovsky

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Reviews

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Michel Chossudovsky exposes the insanity of our privatized war machine. Iran is being targeted with nuclear weapons as part of a war agenda built on distortions and lies for the purpose of private profit. The real aims are oil, financial hegemony and global control. The price could be nuclear holocaust. When weapons become the hottest export of the world's only superpower, and diplomats work as salesmen for the defense industry, the whole world is recklessly endangered. If we must have a military, it belongs entirely in the public sector. No one should profit from mass death and destruction.

-Ellen Brown, author of 'Web of Debt' and president of the Public Banking Institute

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