

# From archived website of Willie Nelson's Peace Research Institute. 2007

## A Peaceful Solution Dan Scanlan

Written by Jay on June 20th, 2007

We asked *Dan Scanlan* a few questions. After his answers I couldn't think of anything else to say.

*Why are you passionate about creating peace?*

It's the highest calling in the job of life.

*How long have you been working for peace?*

Was active in college in **1961**; got serious in the streets in **1967**; lost my job teaching high school English in **1966** because I brought my **anti-war, anti-racism, anti-Warren Commission** attitudes into my classroom.

*What motivates you to work for peace and the environment?*

Injustice and stupidity pisses me off.

*Why have you chosen the path of Art for Peace?*

In the beginning was the word. That's **Art**. Somebody has to give voice to peace, love, justice, and sanity. I use the ukulele because it's disarming. **Woody Guthrie's** guitar said, "**This guitar kills fascists.**" If my ukulele carried a slogan it would be, "**This uke tickles the mean to a better place.**"

*What are your ideas for peaceful solutions?*

Keep talking to one another and jamming and learning each other's riffs so we can overwhelm the talking furniture — corporate television.

*We want to focus on you in relation to why you work for peace and the environment and why art. Please keep it positive. We are not promoting artists but promoting peace through the artist's work. Please don't make it too much about you.*

Art has many functions. One is to stop folks in their tracks and make them take a second look at their assumptions.

I hope some of my songs do that. Another function is to nourish folks who are working for peace and let them know their work is appreciated and to bolster their thrust. I hope some of my songs do that. A third is to celebrate and commemorate people who have done great deeds in the service of the beings of the earth. Again, I hope that's done. And the fourth is to give R&R to the besieged and help strip away the venom of the day. That's why I support the **Let's Have a Party**.

*Our readers want to know your heart. Please tell us who you are and not just what you've done. We will include what you've done if it's in relation to peace and our mission goals.*

I was the American organizer of the Father and Son Reunion: The **Braguinha Meets the Ukulele**, a cross-cultural phenomenon in **1998** in which three American ukulele players went to **Madeira Island** to teach the ukulele to **Madeiran** folk musicians and they, in turn, taught us the braguinha, the ancestor of the ukulele. Most importantly, this was a melding of two melting-pot cultures: **Hawaii** and **Madeira**. It is the project I am most proud of. The Father and Son Reunion's grand finale was a performance at the **World's Fair in Lisbon**.

On her 377th day in **Luna**, a 200-foot tall redwood tree in **Humboldt County CA**, I climbed **Julia Butterfly's** tree and sang *Giant Silent Redwood* to her. The song celebrates the fact that many, many things and people have come and gone during the tree's 2,000-year life. **Julia**, like **Judi Bari** before her, recognized the commonality of the struggles to save the redwoods, keep people healthy, abolish racial discrimination and end war. The struggles are different faces of the same fight.

I was privileged to spend a week at **Camp Casey** with **Cindy Sheehan** last year and was serendipitously asked if I could play Willie's **On the Road Again**. "One of my favorites," I said, and later that night performed on the ukulele while others sang, "Off the grid again, thanks to Willie we're off the grid again..." at the dedication of a bio-diesel generator Willie donated to the camp.

At **Camp Casey**, a **Kansas City** schoolteacher wore a simple safety pin on her blouse with a four-digit number on it. I didn't ask about it, but over a few days I realized the number went up every day and that it was the US troop body count in **Iraq**. I was struck by how profound this simple statement was. When I returned to **California**, I was able to locate a source of number beads, etc. and began

making kits, 2000 of them so far. We live our lives in America as though there are not men, women and children being bombed and mutilated in our name at this very moment. Anything I can do to break through that media-made glaze is worth doing. **Art — music** — is the main tool. And it gives back what you put out.

*We are looking for something conversational addressing your feelings and reasons for working towards peace. Why have you chosen this path? Something our readers can relate to because they feel the same way or maybe they need you to give them permission to feel and create what they are feeling.*

I believe we always know what's right, but we often, especially today when it seems so hopeless, don't know what to do. Most people would do something if they knew what they could do and if they thought it would work. We accumulate reasons for things not to work. But they can, and will, if we talk to one another. And turn off the talking furniture.

And tell Willie I think this project is right on the mark. I know his daughter plays uke, but if he ever needs one with my style, lemme know!

Peace, love, universal bruhaha,

*Dan Scanlan*

\* \* \* \* \* **Artist's Statement** \* \* \* \* \*

I began dabbling in songwriting and playing **guitar** and **ukulele** in college in **1961**. The **Kennedy** assassination, the war in **Vietnam**, the draft, destruction of the **Los Angeles** transit system in order to fund freeways, the racial inequalities and police brutality churned and boiled in my belly. I wanted peace — and was an angry, angry young man.

Music got me through that. Writing songs, jamming with others. Since that time, every small circle of friends I have been part of has had its own songs, oftentimes written by me. My songs are my weapons, my diaries, my dissertations, my diatribes, my paeans, my love letters, and my salvation. And my gift to peace and health and bubbles and comfort. Sometimes laughter.

I think it was the **Camp Casey Alumni** email forum that made me aware of the **Willie Nelson Peace Research Institute** and the *"A Peaceful Solution" project*. I immediately recognized it for what it was — an **Art Attack** bringing to a conscious level what we strive to do with our music and art.

It's very important that we acknowledge to one another what it is we think or hope we are doing. In so doing, we strengthen what it is we are doing — we shore up one another.

I noticed some time ago that the conversation around the table at the coffee shop or in the pub or on the lawn in front of the church is far different from the conversation on television or corporate radio. It's as though there are two different planets. Whenever we acknowledge **OUR** world we set down a bit of gossamer and make a connection. Tiny, yes. But every jot counts and connects and a new strong healthy home emerges.

That's the process I want be part of, **a peaceful solution.**

*Dan Scanlan*

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June 20, 2007 at 11:00 pm

[...] Dan Scanlan [...]

*stillisstillmoving.com » Blog Archive » More Videos For Peace says:*

June 21, 2007 at 3:27 am

[...] <http://willienelsonpri.com/peace/216/a-peaceful-solution-dan-scanlan.html> [...]

*A Peaceful Solution Strum Bums | Willie Nelson says:*

June 29, 2007 at 10:55 am

[...] Rescue and Relief Band. Their musical director, Dan Scanlan also known as Cool Hand Uke, has previously submitted a video version of "A Peaceful [...]

*Dan Scanlan A Peaceful Solution | Willie Nelson says:*

July 14, 2007 at 3:02 pm

[...] Dan Scanlan embodies an excellent example for all of us to follow if we want to create A Peaceful Solution. Dan demonstrates a serious yet light demeanor. Yes, stopping a war and creating peace has ominous serious tones but Dan maintains a sense of humor all the way. [...]

*Strum Bums A Peaceful Solution* | Willie Nelson says:

July 22, 2007 at 2:15 pm

[...] and talent sharing with all of us at Willie Nelson Peace Research Institute. In June, Dan sent us his original video and audio of A Peaceful Solution giving us the first ukulele [...]