

Zohl de Ishtar

Let's start at the beginning - shall we? Well, it wasn't the beginning. But it was my beginning. I suppose you want to hear a story and they go well, it depends what it's about. And I said, it's about women's absolute, being so powerful and changing the world just by loving women.

Well, let's start there, tell us your story Zohl.

I came - I start my road to Greenham started in Australia. When, in the end of 1982 - so, the end of 1982, I saw these women, New Year's Eve dancing on the silos at Greenham. And I was just at that moment taking off to ride a bicycle around the world for peace, disarmament in a nuclear free future. And we travelled for, we travelled through many countries in Europe. And eventually I met a woman from, two women from Greenham in Sweden. And they said, 'Why don't you come to Greenham with us?' So I left the world bike ride, and ended up going down to Geneva. Before that, I should say that on the world bike ride, because we were riding bicycles, for peace, we carried stories inside us. And the stories I carried inside me were the stories of the impact of nuclear testing by the United States and others in the Marshall Islands and other places in the Pacific, including, as you would know, Australia. So I was carrying that story. And every time we go into a village, we would stop and we would have an event at the local hall. And we would all stand up and tell stories. There was 15 of us on the world bike ride in Europe, and there was 50, in, when we were in Australia. So while we were travelling through Australia, we met with a lot of First Nations people and learnt from them. But we also picked up other information. We knew we were heading for Europe, we wanted Europe to take responsibility for their history, and specifically wanted England to take responsibility for its history in the Pacific. And so, when the world bike ride went overseas to become the world bike ride, the idea was Canberra to Canberra via the world. I got on a bicycle and pushed very fast over the water and got to Copenhagen and started from there. We went to conferences including - we were the first non government organisation allowed into Czechoslovakia. We went in under the wings of guys, on roofs with machine guns. And we rode through Czechoslovakia. And we rode through Hungary and not in the way that the powers that be in those places wanted us to - but in our way of a bunch of hippies on bicycles riding for peace through East and West Europe at the time. So when I met these women at Sweden, in Sweden, I said, 'Talk to me about Greenham.' I knew that it was these women dancing on the silos. So I was like, 'Yeah, I'm coming.' So I left the world bike ride, went down to Geneva. And in Geneva, there was the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty conversations taking place, and we decided that we would occupy the US and the United States, the US and the Soviet Union embassies in Geneva. So there was me quite blithely sitting on our side of the hill with a notepad sketching both embassies - I mean, you would never get away with it these days. And then I took my sketches back to where we were staying and gave a lecture about how to invade the embassies. I didn't actually go in I decided that I wanted to dance in the street in front of

the media instead of disappearing inside the base, the embassies. So yeah, so then I ended up at Greenham Common, followed those women to Greenham and went to Green Gate. Best place in the world Green Gate, beautiful.

What made it the best place in the world?

What made it the best place in the world was the trees. Like we weren't on the side of a busy street. We were in the - on the common itself, we were very engaged with the land there. We were very engaged, we were right next to the silos, so I slept with the silos for years. And, and, you know, like just, you know, what 500 yards away from the silos where they kept the nuclear weapons - and, and we were also the separatists camp. So we were the only camp that men weren't welcome in. Which was brilliant, because there always needs to be a space like that for women who want that sort of space. But Greenham had - its nine miles around it had, at one time it had 13 different camps. They were different colours of the rainbow. Like if you wanted to go to Blue Gate, if you want to be vegan, you get went to Blue Gate, and you dyed your hair blue. If you wanted to go in and have parties with the male squad-dies every Friday night, well, you lived at Violet Gate, and you just cut the fence on Friday nights and walked in and had parties with the guys. So you know if you wanted to be on the media all the time you lived at Yellow Gate which was the original and the main gate. So you'd go there. So it catered for all types and that was his strength. I mean, and yeah, if you didn't, if you had an argument with one person one day at one gate, you'd just move to the next one. Until it calmed down and go back again, which is a very ancient procedure for actually dealing with conflict.

Yeah.

So yeah, it really, really worked. And every woman was totally 100% empowered, autonomous, with 100% responsibility for their actions. And with 100% respect for each other. Might not like each other, but we had respect for each other. And yeah, in that, that's how I want to live that, my whole life. That's how I want to live the rest of my life and I really miss Greenham I really - I left earlier than I wanted to and I'm keen to come back and go to Greenham and live at Greenham again.

What caused you to leave?

My Mother was, I was rung and they told me my Mum was dying and so I needed to get on the plane and Australia in those days was a very very long way much longer way away from England than it is now. Well Coronavirus has changed that but yeah. So yeah went home and continued my work in the Pacific.

When you were there, what forms of non-violent direct action did you take part in?

Oh, look, I think I got arrested like nine times or something but um, I only got arrested when I wasn't doing anything. So one of the one of the things that I really enjoyed doing was the day that I went invisible. I wasn't planning this I didn't know about being invisible. But they came in and they wiped - the day they totally decimated Yellow Gate. The Yellow Gate camp, they dropped it to the ground and all the women were pushed over to the other side of the road except for myself, and a group of other women. Oh, there is actually a photo that appeared in - I don't know who took photo but there's a photo of us sitting. We just started to build a fire and boil the kettle. And the police just walked around us like we weren't there. And anyways, those other women sort of disappeared off and I was by myself. So I thought, okay, I'll get on top of the mound, and I'll wave to the women on the other side of the road, let them know I'm here. And somebody on the other side of that road, had a camera and took a series of shots with the police as they slowly came to realise that there was a Greenham Common woman amongst them. And what happened - it took me a while to figure it out. But I assumed that the other women were police women under disguise. Because I had never seen them before. And I guess, you know, maybe they had other stories, but no one ever told that story. So I suspected they were police women who had infiltrated the camp. We were infiltrated several times by media by, you know, American spies by Russian spies, you know, like, it's easy to infiltrate. I mean, we don't even give a toss about who was infiltrating it's like, how much education could they pick up while they were there? That's what we wanted. More interested in would they learn where they were going wrong? So somehow, I think it was assumed that I was one of the undercover police women who had infiltrated first, but that's a story that I have no proof over. But I came to the conclusion that I was actually there by myself, didn't make sense why the police would not, you know, pounce in on me and drag me across the road. So yeah.

Tell us about some of the times that you got arrested.

Well, one of the one of the times I got arrested was when Heathrow was on. So there was, in Australia, a group of women following the Greenham inspiration, and there were other women's camps all growing up all around the world. There was one at Pine Gap. Now what year was Pine Gap - 1984? So anyway, in 1983, I rode into Greenham Common on my bicycle, it was my 30th birthday. I made sure I arrived on my 30th birthday. And went to Green Gate, which is where the women I'd met in Sweden were. And that was just before a big, you know, like bring your black cardigans and we're going to cut things. But the soldiers had built up the whole inside of the things with razor wire. So when we started cutting the fence with our BCs, with our black cardigans, our bolt cutters, they, they couldn't get at us there was just police on our side. And the soldiers were all locked inside this gate, this fence with razor wire that they couldn't climb through. I don't know why they had difficulty climbing through the razor wire because we were really good at it. So anyway, they couldn't get through the razor wire to us and one of the things I did that day knowing that - well we just been, had a visitor from one of the Australian women for survival had come to Greenham and and she had she'd come for this

action and she had had come to tell us about the camp that we're having at Pine Gap which is in the middle of Australia, right next to Alice Springs plonk in the middle of Australia. It's a massive communication control command and intelligence base. Has been there for a long time and definitely was there at that particular time. Um, so I rode around the day that we had that big Embrace of Base I think we were (inaudible) at that stage. I can't remember what which Embrace the Base it actually was but it was the end of 1983 and I rode my bicycle around the base. And I cut the fence, I cut some fence - I cut a circle out of the fence and this is it here.

Oh wow!

So I cut this fence, Greenham fence, and I rode around the base and women tied their magic stuff onto it. And a woman turned up and we sent it back to - I told you the woman turned up, we sent it back to Pine Gap.

Wow.

It's a message wheel from Greenham. And it arrived at Pine Gap Women's Peace Camp the same day that it arrived the same day that they were having their 111 Karen Silkwood's. You know the Karen Silkwood woman? The woman who made a lot of knowledge and was murdered because she was making a lot of noise in the United States around nuclear, nuclear weapons and nuclear power? Anyway, 111 Karen Silkwood's got arrested that day. And they, so they went off and hacked - but one of the things they did before they did that is they took the gate off Pine Gap and they then, they cut some wire out of it. And they sent, they, they tied their precious things onto it and found its way back to Greenham and and that's it. It's still at, it's in Newbury. One of the commoners, one of the local women who had common rights to the common that was taken away and turned into a military base - so there's a whole heap of commoners doing a lot of protests in, supporting Greenham Women as well, as we were supporting them. And they, she's got it in her house and I met up with her on Zoom recently and she's still got it. And the Pine Gap one is in, is in Newbury. So it's so lovely to see her on Zoom and going really strong because she was just like, a total rock to Greenham Women. You know, there was a whole group of locals that just supported us so much. When women first arrived at Greenham in September in 1981 these two women were amongst the first to be there. And they stayed with us all the way through. Absolutely stunning, so that's the Pine Gap fence. And so, you were asking me about a time when I was arrested - what was I doing? One of the things I really liked about the police is when we would do blockades - now, I never sat down in a blockade. I was too busy clowning with the, with the police officers. You know, they'd stand up, they're all really you know, like rough and tough, you know, like, and I would just sit there and just mimic them. Not sit there, I'd stand right next to them and mimic them. And it would drive them nuts. And I really loved doing that. So that was pretty awesome. Now so I'll tell you about Pine Gap Women's Peace Camp, that happened. And we exchanged the, exchanged fence which is still in existence today. And

then a year later, in 19, 19 let's check, that's 1983. So now we're in 1984 and - but the women in Australia decided to have Coburn Sound Women's Peace Camp which is a, it's a port down south of Perth on the bottom of Australia's west coast. And we couldn't get there. So we decided that we would go as close to it as we could. And the closest to it we could was Heathrow Airport. So we sat down in Heathrow airport and we, we sat in a circle in the main lounge in the lounge and sang Greenham songs - what else would you do? And we had postcards with us and the postcards, we gave them to people who are getting on the planes to go to Australia and say 'Will you post this for us?' In the hope that at least one would get through to the camp. I don't, to this day I don't know if any got through camp, but we were there. And of course as the ringleader I'm the one that got arrested. But so did my partner, Bridget, at the time. So actually, I think there was two or three other women as well so we spent the whole, we spent four days in Bow Street lockup. So the day that we were let out of Bow Street lockup, um, well hold on, one of the things that I did at Bow Street is I smuggled a pencil in, right. So I managed to you know, you get strip searched and all that sort of stuff and by strip search I mean like you know, bend over and cough sort of things - which they later declared was illegal but, on their behalf, but they are, they - so many of us went by different names like not our own name I used to get arrested as Mara Linga so Mara Linga. Maralinga is a place in one of the places in south Australia that the English did all the nuclear testing. One day here in Australia I even got arrested here just down the road and 'What's your name?' 'Mara.' 'What's your last name?' 'Linga.' And Maralinga's just up the road a bit. The cop didn't pick it up. Obviously from another place altogether. But um, you know, like, in England I was Mara Linga we had Frieda People, Frieda People you know, we had all kinds of stuff going on. So those of us that, that worked through pseudonyms couldn't take them to court to get compensation for having been stripped searched, but yeah. So, so I managed to get a pencil in and then I wrote this, I spent the whole four days writing this very long letter to go to Coburn. I don't know what's happened to it. If I ever find it, I'll send it. But I don't know what's happened to it because, um I just don't know what happened to it. But but it was a, it was a beautiful letter. It just went on and on and for days kept me occupied. It was great. I think that's what I mean by it was a beautiful letter, it kept me occupied and kept me focused. Oh and the Pine Gap time when the Pine Gap cap was happening near Alice Springs. We used to, we had some busy times at that stage at Newbury courts, you know, like being hauled up in front of the magistrate. Well, I used to take advantage of that because in the middle of Newbury courts in those days, I don't know what it looks like today, they had a telephone box. So I just get in the telephone box and ring up, no expenses, um all these women in Pine Gap, the women that were in the Pine Gap office in Alice Springs. So one day I went, I went there and they'd obviously cottoned on to this so I arrived and there was a policeman and he was stationed inside the phone box so I couldn't ring Pine Gap anymore! So that was really good. Anyway with Coburn Sound when we got released me and my partner at the time Bridget we, Bridget Roberts for those who know her, um, we um - was exactly the same moment that women had arrived in a giant truck, Green some Greenham Women had

arrived in a giant truck and had deposited right in the corner of Whitehall and Downing Street, half of the fence of, that was supposed to be surrounding Greenham Common.

Wow.

Yeah. So yeah, that was a that was a good thing there.

What happened? So they just they just unloaded it there?

I wasn't there. I was still in the nick at the time. But yeah, they just dumped, I don't know, it was a massive load. They dumped it on the on the traffic island, they didn't interrupt the traffic. I never got to see it, but I would have loved to have.

Yeah.

And so some women came from there to welcome us out of the Bow Street nick. But, you know, we were harassed and treated really badly while we were there. One thing I really loved doing was asking for a banana, you know, when you're locked up, asking for banana, and then I would make stick people out of strips of banana peel. And I'd sit there and play with them. Because I've got a theatre background, right, and so, like - I have a circus theatre background, so I would have great fun making up stories for these banana skin people. And the police thought I was nuts. I really enjoyed doing that, kept me occupied. Again in Paddington, and they just went totally bonkers. So yeah, so it was in 1983, soon after I arrived, that I started talking about the Pacific.

Yeah.

And you know and women were getting involved with the Pine Gap thing and learning about Australia and all that sort of stuff. But in 1984 Bikini Day, the 1st of March, Bikini Atoll that the largest hydrogen bomb was detonated in, by the United States. We had a celebration for Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific day. So it happens every year 1st of March. And so it was at Green Gate. Women came from all the different gates. Women came who were not even living at camp, came from wherever they came from, scattered across the country. And we, we said that was the day that Women for Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific network was born. On the 1st of March 1984. And so we started, we made a another message wheel from the fence, and we took the message wheel and we, we had the message wheel there and women came and tied their beautiful pieces to it. And we also made a really long beautiful banner. And we had masks and we all painted the mask to represent our understanding of, of connectedness with women in the Pacific. And we sent those off to Hawaii. Now Hawaii he had a um, Hawaii had, was the office of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement which is, was an indigenous led, indigenous run Pan Pacific, global in fact, network of people in-

digenous and non-indigenous who were working together to look after the Pacific and to get responsibility taken for the damage that was done and to stop more damage from being, happening. So one of the things we learned that day was women in the Marshall Islands, who carry their babies for nine months, giving birth to babies that look like jellyfish. They breathe. They look like jellyfish, some of them are a bit hairy. They're different colours. And they just look like a jellyfish. And that's after a woman carrying a baby for nine months. There's a lot of that going on out in the Pacific today.

Still now?

And people - yeah. And people do not know these stories. This is one of the stories I carried with me on the world bike ride. It was the story that resonated deepest in my heart. And so on this day, Bikini Day, that was one of the stories I told. It really hit into the core of women. Was one woman in particular who I remember, an American woman. And she really got so involved in the stories I was telling that she then went off and engaged with women in the Pacific by herself, and ended up with a beautiful book called Speaking Truth to Power. So she's - which is an awesome book. And I'm proud of the fact that came out of that particular incident.

Yeah.

So what we did on that day was we decided what we wanted was to have Pacific women with us at Greenham. And there's so many Pacific well, Indigenous Pacific women who came to Greenham. Aboriginal Australian, included who came to - we even had an Aboriginal flag raised, in raised at Green Gate by a beautiful, strong poet and storyteller, First Nations Australian, who, who just claimed the whole common on behalf of indigenous peoples of the world. You know, in a room, sort of like a re - the word that comes to mind is retaliation. But it wasn't a retaliation. But it definitely referenced England coming to First Nations continent of Australia, and raising the union jack and claiming everything that happened then and since. So, yeah, very proud of that point. Um, there was also, we also ran in 1985, a tour for one Maori woman and another Marianas woman, Chamorro woman from the Northern Marianas, across England, Scotland and Wales. So they started at Greenham and finished at Greenham. And when they were at Greenham they really, they told stories, they talked about what was happening. They had you know, every woman there was really paining like really feeling deep for what's going on in the Pacific, what has gone on in the Pacific. We travelled with a little cortina for six weeks all over England, Scotland, Wales, and we talked to every peace group we came to. And so we had set up the Women's International - oh sorry, wrong, not the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, although they did come into the story later. We set up the Women for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific - originally called Women Working for but somebody said, 'Why did, why are we working for it?' It's like, okay! Um, so and we sent the message wheel and the banner and the masks off to Hawaii. So, the next thing we find out is that Hawaii - that Britain is about to go and

bomb Hawaii. That can't happen! Britain is about to target practice on the most sacred island of Kahoolawe in Hawaii. They're impact exercises, they are happening at the moment. Britain's out there, Australia's out there. Then they come into Australia and play silly buggers on the, on the Queensland coast. But there was about seven of us and we went to London and we stood, just seven of us with this sign that says, 'Stop England from Bombing Hawaii.' And everybody come up and say, 'What are you talking about? England is not going to bomb Hawaii!' And I'd say, 'Yeah, it is.' And so we had an opportunity to tell those stories. And we also in that year, so the next year we had, 1986, we had two women from the Northern Marianas. They came and attended the London Dumping convention, on the banks of the Thames. Now we couldn't get inside. But we tried to get the, our two guests in. Friend's of the Earth jumped at it. Friend's of the Earth had built a, under the elders, these two women's agreement, they made a, turned a whole barge into a Pacific island with a woman and baby at the top and towed it up and down the Thames River outside and everybody in the London Dumping convention could not mistake that. But neither could they miss the fact that on the other side of the road, there was a whole vigil that went on for the entire time the London Dumping convention was on day and night. And it wasn't people that were on the other side we had octopus and sharks and whales and kelp. One woman turned up dressed as a kelp with a sign that said, 'Peaceful Kelp Front', um, you know, so we had a ball. I mean, basically everything we did was having a ball. Yeah, we spent a year travelling and we ended up at the Women's Camp against Pine Gap, which I mentioned before, in Canberra. And I did a lot of workshops there on what was going on in the Pacific. And then the next year 1987 - and we had a woman from Belau. and another woman from the Marshall Islands come and join us. And I mean, Greenham Women had already heard about the jellyfish babies. Um, but they both came and the thing about Belau - or otherwise known as Palau, just south east of the Philippines - created the world's first nuclear free constitution. Now we were all, great, you know, a lot of noise was made about New Zealand having a nuclear free port, which is indeed a great thing and something that Australia has never done. But here we had a whole nation of women elders who had stood up to their men and had said, 'We want to not have the same history as the Marshall Islands. We don't want nuclear here. We don't want nuclear accidents.' Unfortunately, the United States forced them in a strange concept of democracy for 111, I'm sorry, I'm exaggerating, 111, 11 votes over 15 years to uphold the small clause inside that they had the women elders had put inside the Constitution, just a one small couple of sentences. It took 11 votes. And it involved bombing places, killing people. You know, people were being murdered. Men were being paid to go and bomb houses. There was so much violence that had never been seen in Belau. All of the nations to the north of the equator are matrilineal nations but Belau has always maintained a really strong, matrilineal nation as they still do today. But the government of the United States forced much devastation on top of the Belauan people. And I've already told you about the Marshall Islands and nuclear testing in the Marshalls so.

So you then spent a lot of time petitioning did you to stop that?

A lot of people have, for a long time. So these erm, we went around again, we went around England, Scotland and Wales to to talk about what was going on in the Pacific. I later went over to Ireland - I'm Irish Australian so it was a good opportunity to go over to Ireland and talk about what was going on when I was over there. And then in 1988, we had the Australian Bicentenary. And the Australian Bicentenary, there was an Aboriginal support group in London, set up by a woman called Robin. And she and I were in cahoots. And she was part of the Women for a Nuclear free and Independent Pacific network as well. So the Bicentenary was the celebration of 200 years of English rule in this continent of many countries, of many First Nation countries. And so I decided that I should stay in England, and assist with actually making a lot of noise around that. So um, at the end of 1988 I received a phone call from my family telling me to get on the next plane because my Mum was dying. And I left Greenham. What came out of that whole experience for me was my book, Daughters of the Pacific.

Yeah.

Which has got all those stories. Not all the stories, but the nations I've been to. Then I've written Holding Yawulyu: White Culture and Black Women's Law. So what I've been studying ever since I got on a bicycle was white culture and its impact on indigenous peoples. So that's my Greenham story. And where I've gone from there, in 1997 I joined the New Zealand peace Flotilla, and went to Moruroa as the only Australian to actually leave Australia and get into the New Zealand Peace Flotilla. There was some, there was some Australians on the Rainbow Warrior, Greenpeace's Rainbow Warrior. But other than that, obviously, I'm the only Australian to actually get out there. I had to jump on a boat out of Auckland, out of New Zealand. And then I came back and one day, a friend of mine made a phone call to me and said, I've got 16 women elders here from the desert, come out and come and have a cup of tea. So I grabbed my bag, went for a cup of tea, met these amazing women from the desert. Haven't - didn't see my home for another three months because the women asked me to take them home to the desert, I accompanied them home to the desert. I was invited to stay there for a month. And at the end of the month, they said you can go now but you've got to come back. So they wanted me back. And I've just spent the past 20 years from 1999 to 2019 living in the desert with the women elders, living their way in the desert. So it's been awesome and it all came out of Greenham, none of that would have been possible without Greenham.

You talked a lot about, you know, it's the best place on earth and the fun that you had and like you were always having a ball. How did that, why was it important, I suppose? Or how did it balance out with the grief I suppose that you were trying to get across to people that, in the campaign? You know if people if people looked at it and thought oh you're just having fun that's obviously not the case. Why was it important to have that?

Have fun. There is a, um, you know, one of the things I love most about Greenham, you didn't have to be any way, you could be any way you were and it was okay. Yeah, kinda like as long as you didn't give somebody else a hard time, it was okay. And yeah there were times um - one of the things I loved about Greenham was the fact that I like to live in places where I know that just by breathing, I'm changing the world. That's been Greenham for me. I just had to be there and breathe like, didn't have to do anything else. I mean, other things were done, but just being there - that's what it's been like for me out in the desert for the last 20 years. Just being there and just breathing. Yeah, there was a lot of work to go with it, I was looking after some seniors. In one year I looked after three women who were said by the local clinic to be aged over 100. Now these are all women who, who had first contact when they were already women. One of the women elders, one of the only, the only remaining of the first original 16 women, had first contact when she had just given birth to her first child in 1967. That was yesterday. And, amazing women. I've been so blessed in my life and getting on the bicycle and riding to Greenham was definitely one of the best things I've ever done in my entire life. Because I found myself, I found myself as a person, I found myself as a lesbian. I found myself as a woman with other women. And yeah, I mean I had a good life before that, I - when I was 21, I built a horse drawn gypsy waggon filled it full of puppets and travelled around in a circus, my ancestors, Ishtar Peddlers Touring Children Circus, which is where my last name comes from. So you know, like, but yeah, there were times, there were times that drove people nuts. Sometimes, it drove me nuts. There were hard times.

Was it important that the camp was women only?

It would not have survived if it had been men, had men there. And there really needs to be places for women to get together as women, as women, like women. I'm talking about women here. It's an entirely, women are an entirely different group of people. And when we get together as women, there's just so much learning and giving and strengthening and, and sharing and crying and having hard times you know, but being together. We don't always agree with each other. This is the brilliance of having 13 you know, or sometimes, you know, four camps around the base, you could just pick up your bender and go for a walk. Well, you didn't pick up your bender, you left it there. I was very lucky to inherit a whole beautiful bender that had already been built in the original style, you know, the bent saplings, and then, then the blankets thrown on top and then the plastic on top of that. I mean, it doesn't take much to build a home. But I'd learned that on the bike ride because every bush became your home if you stayed at it long enough.

Yeah. So you said like, you know, you didn't always necessarily agree but you respected each other. How did it work with the collective decision making of the camp? You know, there was apparently no hierarchy - how did that work?

Um, some people did think there was a hierarchy and they thought they were on top of it. Um, so, you know, like, we used to have some entanglements. I mean, let's face it, Greenham got so many donations, there was money coming into Greenham from all over the world. And some of it was well spent, unfortunately, some of it wasn't. We had processes by which the money, camp bit could happen. But it was always the same people. And we also had at that stage, we also had an office in London and you know, they'd turn up on a regular basis to claim some money because they were busy living in London. It's like well, come back to the camp. Anyway, the money meeting used to happen at every, used to happen always at one particular gate. And and I thought about that and then I thought, hold on. Let's shift it around to different gates every time to find out how that, if we can actually bust this, this give me sort of attitude and yeah. I took it to Green Gate. We had the camp, the money meeting at Green Gate. And then we moved it on to Turquoise. And then on to well, round the circle. I think there was a Jade Gate in there at some stage. And we moved in around to Blue and then went on to all the other colours and ended up back at Green where the circle started.

Do you know anything about Woad Gate?

That's the one I'm after, Woad.

So Woad and Turquoise weren't the same gates?

No. Some of them weren't gates. Some of them were, um, what do you call it, fence.

Okay, and then there was Emerald Watch?

Yeah, Emerald was on the Gate.

Yeah.

But it was where you could see what all the squaddies were doing on that on the airstrip.

Right.

Yeah, I went back for the 10th birthday in '91.

What was it like then going back?

Oh, my body knew exactly where it is. There's very few places on this planet that I feel totally at home. The common is one of them. My body knows every foot every, every inch of that ground, around Green Gate. And right around, you know, to a lesser degree, the whole base. It got to the stage, as I was seeing memories as I just walking anywhere, they'd be memories jumping at me from all over the place. And it was like, hey, hold on a minute, you lot just

slow down. I'm here to make new memories. So that was good. That's really good.

What do you, why do you think it is so important that these memories are preserved? Like, for future generations?

I think women need to know - like, those of us who lived there couldn't imagine wanting to live any other way. And praying, you know, it could keep going forever. It doesn't make sense that it's not happening. Doesn't make sense that opportunity isn't available for the young women these days. So they can find themselves. It was such a priceless thing and all it took was a bunch of women to walk from Cardiff and sit down and say we're not leaving. So all it takes is one woman to go and do it. So why haven't I done it? I'm not sure yet. And I'm not sure that I won't do it.

Yeah.

Because it's some it's an understanding of self there's a grounded-ness comes with grounded - it's really important that we were on a common. I was asked recently if I would like to participate in a women's camp at Parliament House in Canberra. Ah, you know like where all the Polly's hanging out. It's like no. It's a different place altogether. Yeah, there are camps happening. There, okay we've got a massive protests going on with trying to stop coal mines here in Australia.

Oh right.

Cos you know like Australia is one of the world's largest exporters of coal.

Yeah.

Hello! Ah, you know, like we've got a climate catastrophe that's descending on us even as we speak. But yeah. It's, there's a power that comes into you, what I felt was a power that came into me that was more than me, but was but at the same time total to me it was, me, the size of me and yet it was as expansive as the universe. And there was a power to just weave the future. And we all could feel that. We all wanted it. And yeah, it wasn't always easy. But as I said, you just roll up your swag and move on to the next camp. Yeah, I lived at Orange. I lived at Red. I lived at Blue. Yeah, the zap. Yeah. Because that zap, that was scary business. But the person who knows most about it, and is still alive to tell the story - because the person who knew most about it isn't alive anymore. But she worked really closely with the woman who was from the Navy, who is an electronic expert in the Navy. Greenham Common woman. Yeah, you know, like she had, she had her life threatened so many times. And I remember going to the car once and there was a gunshot, in her, what do you call it, driving, front window, screen - yeah, that can only have been made by a gun. And I was busy with the Pacific - I was feeling the zap.

But I was busy with the Pacific. But even just yesterday, I saw a comment on television and about invisible weapons.

Right?

Well, that's what we're talking about.

Yeah. Listeners, would you just explain what the zap was?

Okay, the zap, um, I can't remember what year it happened. Um, but it was a beam. And the beam went from just below your knees to just above your head. And the first thing, it's electronic weapons. And the first thing that it creates, creates is panic, absolute panic. But if you can pull yourself together enough to drop to the ground, get underneath the beam, lay there long enough to recover, and then crawl your way out far enough so that you think you might be out of the beam. Um, so yeah, they used to talk about, you know, we just cut the fence. You know, the whole thing was to prove to the military that that didn't matter what they did. You know, we could get in, we're just normal human beings, you know, not specially trained. What did they think the opposition was going to do? You know, like, that was the same with, with Cruise Watch. If we knew where the cruise missiles were, what made them think the Russians didn't? This is right in the Cold War - right. It's like, hello! Um, so that was the whole point of getting in and out of the base. But the the thing about the zap is because the fence didn't keep us out, they decided to use the zap - the electronic weapons which they have been developing since the 1950s. And they used the zap that when they first started at Greenham, they didn't know how to aim it. And you had squaddies inside the base, soldiers inside the base screaming their heads off and going absolutely nuts and yelling, 'Get me out of here! Get me out of here!' You know, all soldiers running up and down the watchtower. There was a massively high watchtower on um, inside the base, and you know, they'd run up and down with machine guns and squaddies that were pointing machine guns at each other and you know. They went berserk for about a week before they actually started to rein that in. But, you know, it impacted, it works with the brainwaves. So if it fits inside your brainwave in a way that doesn't do damage then it doesn't - you don't notice it. You don't feel it. You're not affected by it perhaps. Like my partner at the time Bridget she wasn't affected by it. But I was. It would totally space me out. One time I remember shutting my eyes and thinking the end of the world had arrived because it was just inside my head there was there was just doom and gloom and explosions going on all over the place. I shut my eyes again, and that wasn't there. So, you know, like these weapons - that was in the '80s. These weapons have got another, what, 30 years on top of that, you know, like, you know, those things they stick into, into your power point, so you can kill mosquitoes or keep flies out of your house - that's the same stuff. So they want to - when we had the women's peace camp in Parliament House in Canberra against Pine Gap, um, we went over to protest at the defence building, um, you know, I could feel it there immediately. But they used to call it the super fence, we're going to bring the

super fence in. And we presume, that's what they meant by the super fence was this, these electronic weapons and to hear just yesterday, somebody still mentioning invisible weapons. They're obviously not, you know, it, see, it could stop a raging bull. This is a study they did in the '60s, late '60s, early 70s. They would stop a raging bull in full charge, just by switching a button. They can actually narrow it up the beam onto one person, or like and actually spread across a whole area. And we had the world, one of the world's foremost experts in radiation, who was a, a scientific nun, as it turned out. Um, and she came to Greenham and proved to us that we were being cooked, as she used the word - mainly around Green Gate because Green Gate was closest to the silos. Yeah, it really damaged - there was two women who froze in two different sides of Green Gate at exactly the same time and could not move. So she was one of them, and there was another woman, and afterwards they got up and they exchanged notes and discovered that it happened at exactly the same time.

Yeah.

It impacted the rest of us and all. But while I'm busy talking about the silos let you, let me tell you that when I went back for the 10th birthday, I organised that we were all going to go on top of the silos again to repeat what had happened on the first birthday. When the women got on top the silos, the ones that had inspired me so much to actually get, get on a bike - I was already getting on a bicycle but definitely to go to Greenham. That's where I was heading. So I didn't know that until the day before I left Australia to set out around the world. I knew that I was heading for Greenham. And so I went back to the 10th birthday and I'm hoping that next year Coronavirus allowing we'll actually have the 40th birthday. I think what people need to know about the zap, um, you know, in today's world, I don't know how to get it out there. I'm not the person to tell the story. Yeah, I actually went dyslexic for - not dyslexic, um, - for a whole year, I couldn't speak for a year.

Really?

Um, yeah. I, I would come out with words, but it was my partner Bridget who had to actually translate everything I wanted to say.

So it was all like symbols?

Yeah, I couldn't string words together to make a sentence. So yeah, lasted for a year.

And did it gradually get better? Or was it a sudden

Gradually got better. I'm still get dyslexic with numbers sometimes. But I was actually, I was able to, well, I wasn't writing in those days. But I was able to write things but I wasn't able to speak things. I could speak words, they just

didn't make any sense. There was a lot of Australian and New Zealanders over there.

Yeah.

Back to you know - So yeah, the old joke - why does Green Gate have deep shit pits?

I don't know.

There's a lot of Aussies there and they're trying to get home. You know, if you're in England and you dig a hole you end up in Australia.

Yes.

But if you're in Australia and you dig a hole through the earth you end up in China.

Yes.

It must be a take on the gold fields when the Chinese were working the gold fields. Must have dug really deep holes. One of the things I want to make really clear is Greenham was never about nuclear weapons only. It was about nuclear weapons. But it was about everything else. And there were so many of us Greenham Women making connections all around the world on all kinds of different levels, including race. So when people say Greenham was a bunch of white middle class racist women, that's not what happened. I'm not middle class to start off I'm actually Irish working class with a long history of colonisation behind me which has informed all of my work. I know what racism is when I see it. And yeah. My story gives - the story of the Pacific at Greenham was massive, and gives a lot of example that Greenham was never one sided.

Very important addition. Thank you.