Man, It’s Hot

By William E. Marden

Movies show us a globe sweltering in tropic temperatures where the poles have melted due to unrestrained global warming and pitiful polar bears swim for their lives while the ice under their feet melts.

Scientists warn that we are on the brink of a global environmental change that can change the way we all live.

If these predictions turn out to be true, local health experts and doctors say we can look forward to the outbreak of previously unknown exotic diseases, increased allergens of unheard levels, breathing problems and other serious health concerns.

Who’s responsible for this meltdown mess?

For the most part, it’s us - human beings - the smartest of all animals and yet, the most irresponsible stewards of our planet.

The signs are all there: severe droughts, uncontrollable wildfires, floods, crop failures and photos of drowning polar bears. There’s an ever-increasing warming of our world and it’s very real.

Last year, Time magazine reported on the U.N.’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the state of planetary warming which stated, “Warming of the climate system is unequivocal and that there is very high confidence that human activities have played a significant role by overloading the atmosphere with carbon dioxide, hence retaining solar heat that would otherwise radiate away.”

So, what’s the cure? Experts in a wide variety of fields say that the way we live and build can in some and perhaps appreciable ways, reduce the human impact on the environment.

If this continues...

John McDonough, EdD, CRNA, ARNP, director of the Nurse Anesthetist program and professor of nursing at the University of North Florida, offers perhaps the bleakest health forecast for our future if the current global warming trend continues and intensifies.

McDonough said global warming will have a tremendous impact on society.

“Global warming will result in changes in historical weather patterns that will make storms a lot more violent,” said McDonough. “You can expect to see more people dying as the result of flooding, rainstorms, mudslides, and lightning strikes.”

Moreover, he added, water-born diseases like cholera will be impacted, so that as warmer water makes its way north, you can see the possibility of organisms being carried in contaminated water.

However, McDonough cautioned, heat in itself can be a killer.

“When you have hotter days that do not cool appreciably during the night in big, nasty heat waves, the very old will be primarily at risk,” McDonough said. “There will be more heart attacks related to heat. And, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts as much as a 145-percent increase in deaths by the year 2020 due to this kind of heat, similar to what Chicago and France experienced last year.”

Aaron Hilliard, PhD, director of Environmental Health and Disease Control for the Duval County Health Department, agreed that global warming will have a significant impact on health in our community.

“Experts expect the climate change to increase the number of upper respiratory infections and asthmatics,” said Hilliard. “We know that, in some ways, this correlates to [incidents of] increased heart disease.”

According to Hilliard, part of the health department’s role is to pay close attention to the statistics received as a result of chronic illnesses or infectious diseases. “We will monitor ongoing reportable diseases to be able to identify trends and whether they’re increasing or decreasing,” said Hilliard.
Something in the air

From what we know so far, global warming will have an impact on our health, however, those most affected will be people with certain allergies and breathing problems.

Sunil Joshi, M.D., a local allergist, said that in the last 20 years, the incidence of allergies and asthma have been increasing.

"Before temperatures started warming, after a freeze you'd feel comfortable and you wouldn't see any pollen for awhile," said Joshi. "Now you have a freeze and in a couple of weeks you see the pollen coming back. An increase in pollen can trigger asthma attacks among people prone to attacks because there are many triggers that can make the condition flare up."

Sanjay Swami, M.D., another local allergist, noted a Harvard study showed that the effect of increasing carbon dioxide levels associated with global warming is that plants tend to produce more pollen and function more efficiently.

"As a result, there may be higher levels of pollen in the air as time goes by," said Swami. "Today, the allergy season already starts in January and we only get a few weeks respite in December."

However, said Swami, "even that seasonal respite is short-lived because as the temperature remains warm, there aren't as many hard freezes to kill everything off, which in turn, can lead to more intense and longer allergy seasons."

What can be done?

Concerned people can help make a difference by taking action such as buying a hybrid, getting a tune up, and making sure your tires are properly inflated. Business and government, too, can do their part. However, it takes more than a village, it takes an awakened world of changers to address a problem well into a feverish state.

William E. Marden is an Orange Park-based freelance writer.

The entire story starts on page 16 of the March 2008 issue of Magazine

SENIOR SAGES

For the Love of Peace

By Susan D. Brandenburg

What do you get when seven senior sages, whom for years have been champions for our environment, peace and justice, come together in one room?

You get treated to a wealth of historical knowledge and a chance to experience a lifetime of advocacy, inspiration and resiliency for a passionate cause.

That's exactly what happened when these golden-aged gems spoke to University of North Florida students, teachers, and guests during Peace Week and the Elders Luncheon last October.

According to UNF professor John Frank, the luncheon afforded UNF students a rare opportunity to interact with and be inspired by some of the First Coast's most respected and long-time peace activists.

To the delight of the audience, elders Peg McIntire, Stetson Kennedy, Henri Landwirth, Willye Dennis, Bob Ragland, Lloyd Pearson and John X. Linnehan were more intent on discussing current projects underway than they were about basking in admiration for their past accomplishments.

Still actively stumping for peace and battling injustice at every turn, these vital elders are the new demographic - they are living proof that 80 is the new 60 in the 21st Century.

Roughly one in 35 Americans today is 80 or older, and the ratio is projected by the U.S. Census Bureau to be one in 12 by 2050.

Furthermore, researchers from the National Institute on Aging, in a 2004 U.S. Census Bureau Report, estimated that the population of U.S. residents over age 85 will double to 9.6 million by 2030. And, the new longevity is accompanied by new trends in the health and vigor of many of these same Americans.

Researchers found that the percentage of people over age 65 who had a disability that caused "a substantial limitation in major life activity" decreased from 26.2 percent in 1982 to 19.7 percent in 1999, and there "were signs the trend would continue."

Stetson Kennedy

One of those locals who is still hale and hearty at 91, Stetson Kennedy, recently celebrated his one-year wedding anniversary to St. Augustine historian, 67-year-old Sandra Parks. Well-known for his lifelong devotion to human rights, Kennedy infiltrated and informed on the Ku Klux Klan in the 1940s, authored several books including Palmetto Country, The Jim Crow Guide, The Klan Unmasked, and once ran for Congress on a ticket of "Total Equality."

Kennedy's State Road 13 home, named Beluthahatchee - Place of Peace, by famed anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston, has

http://hforhealth.com/features/
been purchased by St. Johns County and is part of Florida Heritage Park. The landmark property is where Kennedy's friend and fellow peace activist, folk singer Woody Guthrie, wrote his autobiography Seeds of Man. In 2003, Beluthahatchee was designated as a Literary Landmark by Friends of the Library U.S.A.

Despite a heart attack in December 2007, Kennedy is actively involved in completing two manuscripts - his memoir, Dissident at Large, and his book about Key West in the 1930s Grits & Grunts. In great demand as a public speaker, Kennedy is also working with a Hollywood studio on a documentary about his Klan-busting days.

As to his advanced age and suggestions that he slow down, Kennedy retorts, "Mellowing is for wine. My last words will be my most militant."

**Henri Landwirth**

Another peace-loving senior is 80-year-old local resident Henri Landwirth, who spent five years as a teen in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. He survived to become a wealthy hotelier and one of America's most beloved philanthropists.

In 1987, Landwirth founded Give Kids the World, a whimsical village near Orlando where, in the past two decades, more than 80,000 terminally ill children and their families have spent a free week's vacation. Landwirth also founded local charitable organizations Dignity U Wear and Memories of Love.

As one of the youngest Holocaust survivors, Landwirth has decided to actively devote the remainder of his life to perpetuating the memory of the Holocaust and spreading his personal message of forgiveness to the youth of America.

"My message is about replacing hate with forgiveness," said Landwirth. "Hate murdered my parents, stole my education and even took away my name. I will take the tattoo 'B4343' with me to my grave, but I had to release the hate. It was only when I learned to forgive the Nazis that I truly was able to begin living the wonderful life I've lived."

Last year, Melissa Bright, a recent graduate of the UNF, was so inspired by Landwirth's forgiveness message that she approached the university's student government about taking it a step further, and formed the university's own "Hate Hurts Peace Project."

Bright and her compatriots created a dramatic set of Forgiveness Posters depicting victims such as Landwirth, Nelson Mandela, Pope John Paul II, and others who forgave perpetrators of hate crimes committed against them. The posters pose questions such as: "Is your pain so much greater?" "Have you been hurt so much worse?" Landwirth's new Gift of Life in America Foundation is funding the distribution of the posters to school campuses.

"We hope they will begin their own 'Hate Hurts Peace Projects'," he said. "We must keep trying to bring about positive change in this world."

**John X. Linnehan**

Back in 1983, 79-year-old John X. Linnehan spent five months in jail as a result of initiating the first civil disobedience action against nuclear weapons in Florida when he protested against the General Electric Neutron Devices Plant in Largo. In 1986, he founded the Metanoia Peace Community at St. Mary's, Ga. where the Kings Bay Trident Submarine Base is located, and has since staged many protests there.

"Each Trident sub has the potential to vaporize 192 cities of over 100,000 population," said Linnehan. "We humans are not just warring amongst ourselves, we are, as a species, warring against our natural world."

Metanoia is a Greek word meaning "to change one's life and go in a new direction." Linnehan is actively involved in the Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice (FCPJ), Pax Christi Florida - the the Diocese of St. Augustine Justice and Peace Commission, and Wage Peace Jacksonville.

In addition to writing his memoirs, Linnehan's resolutions for this year include establishing an "Eco Village" - an education and demonstration model of sustainable, low-impact, high-quality living in nine earth-friendly dwellings on 10 acres contiguous to the FCPJ's "Teaching Farm" in Hampton.

In his spare time, Linnehan continues to "plug in" to other peace and justice efforts - anti-death penalty, anti-nuclear weapon and anti-war efforts - wherever and whenever possible.

**Bob Ragland**

If you think two walking canes can stop retired pediatrician and child psychiatrist Bob Ragland, M.D., from grabbing every opportunity to wander his wooded property he labeled "Grandma's Farm," in West Jacksonville, you're wrong.

Since inheriting the approximately 50 acres in the late 1950s, Ragland has passionately fought for its preservation. Despite losing some battles, including the one that located Ed White High School on and adjacent to the property, Ragland remains undaunted.

He continues to rage energetically at the encroachment on unspoiled property caused by, as he puts it, society's addiction to growth, competition and oil.

"Soon, we'll be facing a water shortage like Orlando," said Ragland. Outspoken and angry, Ragland spends a good deal of his time writing letters to legislators and courting the North Florida Land Trust, the Jacksonville Community Foundation, and others who might listen to his harangues about our endangered environment.

"We belong to the earth. It doesn't belong to us," Ragland said. "We need to keep telling people that!"

**Lloyd N. Pearson**

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A member of the Council of Elder Affairs for the City of Jacksonville, Lloyd N. Pearson chaired Jacksonville's NAACP voter registration drive in the mid-1960s and registered approximately 65,000 African American voters. A champion who worked hard to rid Jacksonville of discriminatory employment practices, Pearson was also a key player in the integration of Jacksonville's public schools in the wake of the 1954 Supreme Court decision. After all, he had a personal as well as societal stake in the city's future.

A retired postal worker, Pearson is a father of six, grandfather of 17 and great-grandfather of 27. Today, he continues his key role as a community leader for several organizations, groups and boards. Plus, Pearson regularly conducts a prison ministry.

"I challenge the contemporary African American community to understand the true value of the ballot as the best means to social empowerment and advancement of our collective interests," Pearson said. "We need to educate one another regarding our constitutional right to practice our civil liberties and we need to engage in the political process wherever and whenever there is a need to speak out against social injustice."

Willye Dennis

Willye Dennis is practically a household name in Jacksonville. As a retired librarian and president of the Jacksonville NAACP Chapter from 1994-2004, Dennis served as a two-term Democratic member of the Florida House of Representatives, District 15. At 81, she is actively involved in her church and is in demand throughout the First Coast as an inspirational speaker. However, she said her heart is devoted to helping the younger generation.

"I wrote, Joy Cometh in the Morning to uplift and give solace and inspiration to the young people," said Dennis.

Peg McIntire

As the grand dame of the of the guest elders during the Peace Week Luncheon, 97-year-old Peg McIntire is still a vigorous role model. In addition to her two monthly peace rallies, she participates in St. Augustine as founder and leader of the activist group Grandparents for Peace, and she participates in the annual November protest to close down the School of the Americas near Fort Benning, Ga.

"Until military institutions that teach torture are closed down, the wars will never end," said McIntire, describing how she and a large group from the National Grandmothers for Peace donned white kerchiefs on their heads a few years ago at the protest. "The grandmothers in Argentina wear the white kerchiefs to remind them of their babies' diapers. We wear them because we know where our grandbabies are. They're at war!"

When she's not picketing or protesting, McIntire stays busy volunteering two days a week at the St. Johns Council for Elder Affairs, spearheading an oral history project she initiated. She also works one day a week at a shop on St. George Street and writes a regular newsletter for her Grandparents for Peace group.

"We are primarily anti-nuke and anti-war, but we network with a wide assortment of organizations who are concerned with various issues such as racism, the environment and the homeless," she said. In recent years, McIntire notes, she has also become "Granny Guru" to the peace camps sponsored by the Florida Coalition for Peace & Justice. "I believe every person should think, care and act toward the betterment of others," declared McIntire. "I treasure each day."

Susan D. Brandenburg is a Ponte Vedra-based freelance writer.

The entire story starts on page 20 of the March 2008 issue of H Magazine