

Munitions protesters are a varied group

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CONCORD — When the men in the black sedan passed the protesters at the Concord Naval Weapons Station they yelled, as a dozen people do every day: "Get a job!"

"I did!" yelled back Shannah Kurland.

Kurland, 20, had just returned to the protest site after taking a break to earn some money as a waitress.

Of the 20 people at the railroad tracks outside the weapons station last Thursday, more than half said they are retired or have jobs. Three others were visitors from Witness for Peace, a church-sponsored group.

Asked about rumors that protesters earn \$40 a day, some laugh. Some get angry.

"I don't need \$40," growls Hal Carlstad, 62, of Kensington, a protest regular since last June. "And if they offered it to me, I wouldn't take it."

Carlstad said he taught 7th grade science for 28 years. He raises bees and rents out some farm land to supplement his teacher's retirement pension.

Dominic Von Zabern, 19, and Chris Bankert, 18, are among eight or nine people for whom the protest is virtually a full-time, though unpaid, job.

"I really don't need money out here, because there's no expenses," says Von Zabern. Both take occasional temporary jobs, mostly to earn money to visit Nicaragua.

They pay no rent, because they sleep at the tracks as part of an ongoing vigil. They get food from supporters or from the Nuremberg Actions Committee, which has a \$75 monthly food budget.

They shower at a West Pittsburg home they call "The Peace House." Scott Rutherford, a retired federal employee, said he and two other Nuremberg supporters pooled their savings for the down payment on the \$90,000 house.

Kurland said she can understand that people are skeptical that protesters are willing to live on virtually no money.

"It's a very alternative way of existing, so it's hard for people to accept," she said.

"People just find it hard to understand that people can be committed to something," agreed Ellen Earth, 51.

Earth moved from Santa Cruz to Concord and took a part-time job at a Walnut Creek convalescent hospital so that she could protest U.S. military aid to Central America.

Annette Fuller, 59, of Benicia said she is a retired UC-Berkeley instructor who does part-time counseling. She volunteers Mondays and Thursdays at the protest site.

Louis Korn, 59, of Willits, said he is staying with a friend in Martinez while he spends days at the weapons station.

He wears long hair and a benign smile. Korn says he enlisted in the U.S. Army at age 17, in 1947, and now lives on benefits as a disabled veteran.

He puts down a protest sign and fishes a disabled military ID card from his pocket.

He smiles: "You might say I'm biting the hand that feeds me."



Staff photo/Jon McNally

SHANNAH KURLAND, 20, of the "full-time" protesters, gets a hug before being arrested at the Concord Naval Weapons Station tracks Thursday.

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