

Interview, New Fricktal Newspaper, 8/26/2007
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Were environmental issues already important to you in your youth?

Yes. In my youth I often sought out nature; the woods, the mountains, streams. I always felt at ease there. I suffered increasingly as our countryside became more and more built-up and nature was being forced to retreat.

When and how did your active involvement begin? What are the cornerstones in your life up to now?

I became actively involved in 1975. I protested against the road through the southern Bruderholz area near Basel, against Kaiseraugst (nuclear power plant) and against the COOP supermarket "Märthof" on the Basel market square. The protest actions against Kaiseraugst and Märthof were successful, which encouraged me to continue.

Whilst working as a doctor in Boston from 1980 to 1982, I came into contact with the "*International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War*". Afterwards, I built up a Swiss group, which led later to my involvement with energy-change, the move away from fossil and nuclear fuels towards renewable sources of energy and to the foundation of the energy forum "*sun21*".

Many people recognise what's going wrong, but few take action, because they feel they are powerless to achieve anything. Where does the drive and energy for your protest come from?

I get a lot of energy from my enthusiasm about the various miracles of Creation: land and sea, animals, plants, people. Our planet with the life that exists on it is a unique wonder in the cosmos: the perfect globe has exactly the correct distance from the sun, for water and land to remain separated, and so that we neither burn nor freeze; a delicate skin which breathes has developed. In conjunction with light it makes life possible. It simply cannot be that at such an early stage in the development of our ecosystem, we are ready to sit back and accept the climatic changes for which we are undoubtedly responsible, and to endanger the inhabitability of the planet, purely through comfort, fantasy and lack of courage. All this motivates me.

In the article "pacemaker on the way to the sun" (9/18/2000) Peter Knechtli writes: "without being driven by missionary fanaticism, Vosseler has decided on a gentler approach." (<http://www.onlinereports.ch/2000/vosselerPortraet.htm>) What distinguishes this gentler approach? Which means do you deploy and where do you draw the line?

The means and ways of taking action are exactly as important to me as the purpose of the action. For me, our engagement for the cohabitants of this world should be without violence. We should have respect for people with other ways of thinking and acting, we should renounce violence in thoughts, words and deeds, and we should remain open and show an interest in the opinions and ideas of others. That doesn't rule out fasting actions or the protection of trees with body and soul.

How would you describe the relationship between mankind and nature?

People often deviate from the cycles of nature. They take more from the earth than they give back, or than can grow back. They pollute the planet with non-biodegradable toxins. Through this, mankind has become a disturbance, a cause of sickness in our ecosystem. The solutions for a peaceful, healthy co-existence for mankind and nature are all available. We must simply apply them, with all haste.

What has been your most beautiful experience of nature in recent times?

Recently, we were filming a solar boat on the lake of Geneva with Swiss television, in light of our forthcoming Atlantic crossing. In an extensive area of low pressure, a large cloud had opened up over the lake. The interplay of sun, clouds and water formed a breathtaking natural spectacle – a corona over the Jura heights, a multi-coloured sky, flowing gold, silver and copper on the evening lake.

What have you been able to achieve with young people on the point of environmental awareness?

I come into increasing contact with young people, who for their age, have already developed an amazing awareness and who dare to take active steps, as indeed you do at the moment with this interview. This gives me courage for the future.

Could you describe your new solar boat project? What are you aiming to achieve?

You have to experience it for yourself, how such a large boat can move so powerfully through the water, with only two small electric motors driven by solar energy. We want to show this to as many people as possible. Our Atlantic crossing symbolises aspects of energy-change: departure - leaving everything behind, allowing energy-change to have absolute priority; and then, it is a communal project, with enthusiasm and fantasy. It is based on ingenious technology: motors with a staggering efficiency of 80-90% (in comparison to petrol driven motors, which hardly achieve 20% efficiency), photovoltaics , a masterpiece: you take a substance which is as readily available at the seaside, namely sand, and out of this you fabricate a flat panel and lay it down. It creates energy without exhaust gases, and without suffering from wear and tear. We also demonstrate that renewable energy has a huge economic potential. Whoever sticks with oil and nuclear power simply leaves the highly lucrative business in the area of renewable energy and energy efficiency to others. I hope that Switzerland will recognise this soon and will act accordingly.