

# And then they went home

**W**hen women arrived at the gates outside Britain's Greenham Common in 1981 to protest NATO's decision to place cruise missiles there, few could have predicted that 18 years later there would still be trailers and tents outside the base gates. When the missiles went home in 1989, the women stayed. When the base closed in 1992, the women stayed.

Then nobody thought the women would go home.

On September 5, 1999, the eighteenth anniversary of the first march, they finally did.

The story of Greenham Common is now a piece of Cold War folklore. Although the peace camp was often known best for its most sensational aspects—the children born and raised there, the alternative lifestyles, or the easily parodied leftist stereotypes—the camp boasted many victories. In December 1982, 30,000 women joined hands



An early 1980s protest at the main gate to the U.S. Air Force base at Greenham Common.

in a circle around the base, and in April of the following year, 70,000 supporters formed a 14-mile human chain linking Greenham with the British nuclear weapons labs at Burghfield and Aldermaston. Another 50,000 women brought down part of the fence that December, bringing

international attention to the cause of nuclear disarmament.

One of the camp's more interesting victories came in 1992, when a suit filed by protesters claiming that the production of nuclear weapons breaks international law continued through two jury trials.

The case resulted in hung juries.

Camp members plan to commemorate their activities by turning their former home at Greenham into a historical site with sculptures, gardens, standing stones, and information kiosks.

—B.L.