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Column: Friends & Neighbors

Caption: Photo 1, **Alameda Public Affairs Forum** Founders Arthur Lipow, Gretchen Mackler Lipow, and Julie Rufo plan for their next forum.

Photo 2, Professor of Political Science at Stanford University David Holloway speaks during the **Alameda Public Affairs Forum**.

Photo 3, Desiree Flowers, 6, of Lum Elementary School, hands a flier to Gretchen Mackler Lipow for **Alameda Public Affairs Forum** talk called "Sixty Years After Hiroshima: What does the nuclear future hold for us?" held the Home of Truth Center. (Kara Andrade/ Staff)

IT'S DIFFICULT TO erase the image of Slim Pickens as the B-52 Bomber pilot riding the bomb in Stanley Kubrick's 1964 movie, "Dr. Strangelove" as a satire of the Cold War. As an urban cowboy, Pickens hee-hawed and clung with one hand on the bomb as it cut across a black and white sky, relentlessly headed toward its target.

The film remains strangely relevant during the 60-year remembrance of the atomic bombs detonated at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and the current Bush administration's policy that has taken steps into what some consider the mire of Cold War.

Some of these steps have included increasing the roles for nuclear weapons in United States policy, supporting the development of more usable nuclear weapons, the preemptive use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states and reducing the time required for the United States to resume nuclear weapons testing.

But one doesn't need to keep up with current nuclear arms debates or the role of the U.S. to consider Kubrick's question of whether we have learned to stop worrying and love the bomb. The question remains whether we can live with 30,000 nuclear weapons -- 10,000 owned by the U.S.

It was a question posed by David Holloway, professor of political science at Stanford University, when he spoke on "Sixty Years After Hiroshima: What does the nuclear future hold for us?" during the **Alameda Public Affairs Forum** program held Aug. 13 at the Home of Truth Center.

"We have survived more than anyone has expected with so many nuclear weapons," said Holloway, author of "The Soviet Union and the Arms Race" (1983) and "Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956."

"Can we go on avoiding a nuclear war or is this an accident?" He addressed the somber crowd which contained three 18-year-olds quietly pondering the question in the back of the room.

"I'm interested in the talk about nuclear weapons because I grew up with my dad telling me about how in the '50s they were always afraid of it," said 18-year-old Julian Shirley of Island High School. "I also think we need to get rid of all of them (nuclear arms) because people are scared and the U.S. has to set the example so that other countries will follow."

Holloway, who is completing a book on nuclear proliferation with an emphasis on India and Pakistan, spoke for an hour about the history of nuclear weapons including the arms race between the United States and Russia, interminable arms control negotiations, nuclear proliferation, the Cold War legacy, and the dangers of nuclear terrorism. He ended the talk with a gradual shift toward nuclear responsibility by the leadership of states with nuclear weapons and what he hopes will be "a strong effort that people will share the same ideas about the use of nuclear weapons and their consequences."

For Arthur Lipow, forum chairperson, these are the kind of topics that Alamedans need to learn about and discuss publicly in a forum. The forum were started which was formed in June 2004 by a group of friends

"People have a lot to contribute and don't have a place to meet fact to face to have discussions and ask questions of leading experts," Lipow said, seated among his collection of 10,000 books in the basement of his home in on San Antonio Avenue.

He welcomes people borrowing from his extensive collection as long as they return the book and summarize it (in case he hasn't read it) or just sit and chat for with him.

Lipow, who was once a professor of politics and sociology at the University of London, recruited Holloway to speak through a mutual friend who also taught in London.

Lipow's collaboration with friends Julie Rufo and Pat Flores has led to previous forums which have included topics such as "American Policy Toward the Arab World," "The CIA, Repression and Terror in Guatemala," "Crisis in Haiti," "The Conquest of Bread: California Agribusiness and the Future of California" and many more. Some of these forums have gained attention from KPFA and word is spreading like a small wildfire who on this particular day before the forum takes the shape of Desiree Flowers, 6, of Lum Elementary, who unknowingly knocks on Lipow's library door with a flyer for Holloway's lecture the next evening.

"We've been trying to recruit young people to come to the forum," said Gretchen Mackler Lipow as she gratefully takes the flier from Flowers. "Here's our answer."

For a schedule of upcoming forums see www.alamedaforum.org.

Send items for Friends and neighbors to kandrade@cctimes.com or mail to 1516 Oak Street, Alameda 94501.