

HOW THE SNAKE RIVER ALLIANCE CAME TO ME

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By [Snake River Alliance](#)

Rinda Just, Snake River Alliance Board President



Rick and Rinda Just go Solar!

Three and a half years ago, my husband and I did the mid-life, post-retirement downsize. We explored rooftop solar, as I had long believed that using the sun to generate electricity to power a home or business was just common sense.

We heard about *Solarize The Valley*—the clean energy initiative of the Snake River Alliance. Alt-Energy conducted a rooftop suitability analysis to calculate our needs and potential for generation. We signed on, and by late summer, we were on-line. (This spring, we added a few more panels to accommodate a plug-in hybrid car, a shift to an electric heat pump water heater, and a future conversion of our gas furnace to a heat pump.)

We got to know the Alliance staff and the folks at Alt-Energy, as Liz Paul quickly enlisted us as part of the volunteer promotional team. We talked to TV reporters, posed for Alliance promotional materials, hosted open houses, and attended clean energy events to promote the solar initiative.

My first introduction to the Snake River Alliance, however, occurred far earlier in my life. I knew of the Alliance's work as Idaho's nuclear watchdog because I was raised in southeastern Idaho, and my father was employed by the federal nuclear program. When my dad came back from WWII, he went to work at "the site" (then the National Reactor Testing Station) as a guard. When he retired in 1976, he was Chief of Personnel Security for the Idaho Operations Office of the Department of Energy. He was a first responder when the SL-1 reactor accident killed three military workers. He was a part of the Karen Silkwood investigation, and he personally escorted Soviet Bloc leaders on tours of the Idaho facilities.

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~ Rinda Just

In 1979, when the Alliance was founded, I was in law school at the University of Washington and my dad and I already had diverging views about nuclear energy. He was a veteran who believed in the federal government. I was a child of the Vietnam conflict and Watergate. He believed the government would not harm its citizens; I thought injecting nuclear waste into the Snake River Aquifer was beyond the pale. He believed that nuclear energy would be the panacea that would get civilization off carbon-based fuels, and I witnessed Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. He thought that nuclear waste could be safely handled; I saw nothing but failed attempts to store what couldn't be made safe. He viewed the Alliance as a bunch of hippy rabble-rousers who didn't know what they were talking about, throwing up obstacles to the good work being done on nuclear energy. Until his death in 2009, the nuclear industry remained a touchy subject for my dad and me.

Thus, when I was asked to serve on the board of the Snake River Alliance, I had to stop and think. I agreed to serve—motivated in part by my dedication to clean energy. But more importantly, I considered it my obligation to try and contain, in some small way, the nuclear genie whose promise of abundant, carbon-free energy and national security has proven to be this century's fairytale nightmare.

When I told my 93-year-old mother about my election to the Alliance board, she said that my father would be spinning in his grave. I told her that he was a thoughtful man of integrity and always told me he didn't care what I worked at, so long as I did the best I could and was happy. I reminded my mom of his words, and opined that in light of what we had learned over the past 70 years, he would be proud of my service.

The Alliance came to me, and now it is time for me to come to the Alliance.
(Rinda Just was elected the President of the Board of Directors in June 2019).