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Peace activist promotes memoir

Literature — S.
Brian Willson will 'hand-
cycle' into town this
month on book tour

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An anti-war activist with two prosthetic legs will cycle into Newberg this month to promote his new autobiography, "Blood on the Tracks: The Life and Times of S. Brian Willson."

Arriving in town on a three-wheeled, arm-powered "handcycle," the double-amputee will give a talk on the book and sign copies at 2 p.m. June 25 in the music room of Open Bible Christian School, 1605 N. College St.

Willson, 69, served as commander of a U.S. Air Force combat security unit in Vietnam before becoming a peace activist. He has made use of his background in law and criminology in advocating for prisoners, Vietnam war veterans and impoverished people around the world. He has been a conscientious tax refuser, has participated in water-only fasts, and has led delegations aiming to document U.S. aggressions in foreign countries.

In 1986, Willson and three

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Book: Lost legs at protest of weapons shipments

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others involved in a lengthy fast were labeled domestic terrorist suspects. The following year, while participating in a railroad blockade at a California naval depot, protesting alleged weapons shipments to El Salvador and Nicaragua, he was run over by a government munitions train. He lost both legs below the knee and suffered a skull fracture that required a permanent protective plate be inserted.

"Blood on the Tracks," his memoir, covers his life journey from high school jock to Vietnam commander to peace activist.

According to a press release, Willson came to believe that the American way of life has lost its humanity and the only way to regain it is by changing individual consciousness and refocusing on local issues. "Blood on the Tracks" is being billed as a guidebook for those who question obedience to current power structures and hope to return humanity to a state of cooperation, equity, mutual respect and empathy.

In 2006, Willson and other members of the group Veterans for Peace cycled through Newberg as they headed from Eugene to the national convention of Veterans for Peace, held in Seattle that year. The 2011 national convention will be Aug. 3-7 in Portland, where Willson lives, but he still plans to cycle there.

He will cycle from Portland to the San Francisco Bay area, stopping in New-

berg, this month. He then plans to take the Amtrak train back to Portland, rest for some time, take the train to the Seattle area, and handcycle back to Portland for the convention.

The purpose of the trek? "To demonstrate that all our lifestyle choices, including the way we move our bodies — even seniors and those with disabilities, such as myself — are directly connected to, and in effect drive, our national imperial policies," Willson, ever the activist, wrote in a press release.

The trip will also serve as a book tour, with Willson stopping along the way to talk about his memoir.

"Blood on the Tracks" is being distributed by Independent Publishers Group for \$20. Willson's 1992 book, "On Third World Legs," is out of print. For more information, visit www.brianwillson.com.