

QEW 2005 Annual Meeting & Gathering

Exploring Indiana Dunes nurtures a *sense of place*

by Louis Cox

QUAKER Earthcare Witness makes a point of holding meetings and retreats at sites of great natural beauty and significant ecological interest, such as Zion National Park in southern Utah. But the reason for this is not simply a love of the outdoors. We have found these special places to be *spiritually grounding*.

That may sound sentimental to folks back home who devote their time and energy to various kinds of direct action, or elitist to those struggling just making ends meet. But the truth is, even brief encounters with places that represent the best of our “sacred, fragile, and threatened” planet can help make us more passionate and effective defenders of the earth, starting with the places where we live.

We found the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, on lower Lake Michigan near Chicago, to be especially powerful in this regard, under the guidance of our own Noel Pavlovic, a biologist who has lived and worked there for 22 years.

Noel said this place might not have been saved without the help of Henry Cowles, a naturalist who more than a century ago dedicated himself to solving the mystery of how the dunes ecosystem works. This was at a time when developers were beginning to exploit it as a source of cheap fill material.



NOEL PAVLOVIC, center in white hat, excites Friends with stories of the flora, fauna, and natural history of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.

Cowles’s studies laid the groundwork for impassioned activists and enlightened government officials, who literally drew a line in the sand to help protect these 16,000 acres of still-intact dune-lands from further abuse. The case for protection was based on scientific research, but the energy to do something came from people’s natural instinct to defend what they had come to know as home.

Noel began his Friday keynote address by reciting a fanciful legend about how the dunes were created, which has been preserved in the oral traditions of native peoples of the region. The story

involves cooperation between humans and animals, suggesting that the original inhabitants had a strong sense of place and that they saw themselves as part of Creation.

The fact that many people today don’t feel that connection to nature may have its roots in the objectifying methods of science. But professional naturalists like Noel are helping to reconnect us to nature, giving us not just a coherent account of how the dunes were actually formed *but bringing us back to awe and wonder*:

Massive glaciers, up to three miles high, carved out the Great Lakes 15 millennia ago. Cycles of rising and falling waters left rows of irregular ridges that grew in height as grasses took root and acted as nets to capture more and more wind-driven sand. These sprawling “succession” zones attracted a variety of plants, shrubs, and trees, which in turn provided habitats for an increasingly interdependent community of insects, birds, and mammals, Noel said.

An awe-inspiring case study is the stunningly beautiful Karner Blue butterfly, which is native to the dunelands. Its caterpillar feeds only on the wild lupine. Ants that feed on the caterpillars’ sweet secretions help to ward off predators. While wildfires occasionally destroy the butterflies’ eggs, they

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also enhance local biodiversity by etching a mosaic of clearings in the forest cover, which the lupines need to survive.

As such amazing intricacies of this ecosystem are brought to light, we may be led to a place of humility and deep respect for nature.

We have to use this earth in order to live on it, Noel

noted, but we must find a healthy balance between utility and sacredness. In practice, this translates well into the traditional Quaker values of simplicity, integrity, peace, and right sharing, he said.

ALTHOUGH there was a full schedule of committee meetings and workshops at the Indiana Dunes Environmental Learning Center, the 55 participants still had time for pre-dawn bird walks, early morning outdoor worship, and a choice of exciting field trips.

Several Friends who stayed an extra day visited a prairie restoration project on the nearby Little Calumet River floodplain. They also got to watch a busload of excited school kids descend on the center for two days' encounter with the natural world, through games, projects, and activities. This was a hopeful sign after hearing that many children today suffer from "nature-deficit disorder."

Annual Meeting & Gathering workshops included talks by Steven Walsh, Nancy Halliday, and Roy Treadway, all from Illinois Yearly Meeting, who shared what had led them to become witnesses for Earthcare.

Ed Dreby of the Quaker Earth-



LEFT: Steering Committee Clerk Barbara Williamson introduced Friday night keynote speaker Noel Pavlovic.



CENTER: An impromptu discussion crystalized around the topic of currency laws and environmental policies.



RIGHT: The Spiritual Nurturance Committee couldn't abide the thought of meeting indoors, so they braved the morning chill with the aid of blankets.

BELOW: An evening of lively contra dancing helped participants feel part of a community.



care Witness for National Legislation (QNL) interest group led an inquiry into how QEW can help Friends Committee on National Legislation strengthen its connections with Monthly Meetings.

eric joy of Argenta, B.C., Friends Meeting led a group reflection on "Spiritual Unification and Sense of Unity Decision Making."

Jennifer Vyhnek of South Starksboro, Vt., Friends Meeting shared ways she had learned to experience the sacred in nature.

An Environmental Learning Center staff member took a group on a "Walk through time" that pointed out physical signs of the natural history of the dunes area.

This year's Bible study took the form of worship sharing while Friends reflected on the 104th Psalm. On Sunday several members of nearby Duneland Friends Meeting shared worship with us.

QEW committees, projects, and interest groups met briefly to hear reports and outline work to be continued by mail, e-mail and conference calls.

About 20 people posted their ecological footprint, after taking the Ecological Footprint Quiz. An encouraging percentage were close to the "sustainable" level. But a

surprising large cluster appeared at the other end of the scale. For such an environmentally savvy group we still seem to have some consumption issues to labor with—especially after we approved a Minute urging members of Congress not to approve oil drilling in the Alaska National Wildlife Reserve!

Friends also approved a proposal by General Secretary Ruah Swennerfelt and Publications Coordinator Louis Cox to take a six-month, 1,200-mile journey on foot, beginning in the fall of 2007 to carry QEW's vision and witness to Quaker Meetings. This will mark the 20th anniversary of QEW's founding. They will follow the approximate route of John Woolman's travels through the American Colonies 260 years ago.

This fund-raising and consciousness-raising venture will link today's ecological and social crises to Woolman's spirit-led witness for living in right relationship to people and God's creation. Ruah and Louis would receive reduced salaries during this period, but would continue to produce newsletters and conduct workshops on Earthcare while on the road. ❖

Let's get Meetings actively involved

by Barbara Williamson
QEW Steering Committee clerk

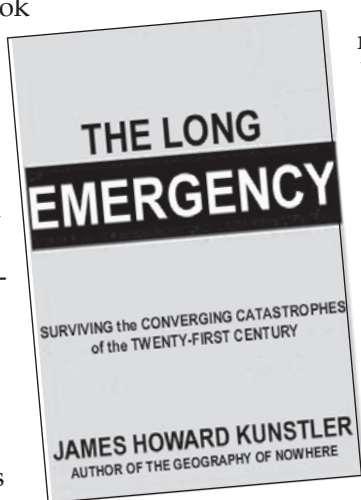
THIS summer, when I read James Howard Kunstler's *The Long Emergency*—a book about the coming peak of global petroleum production—my first reaction was an overwhelming feeling of dread. Then gasoline prices began to climb higher, Hurricane Katrina gathered strength as it passed over the unusually warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and there were predictions that prices for natural gas users would increase this winter by as much as 45 percent.

I even began to wonder if I should plan a family vacation to see polar bears before they too become extinct!

But as time passed, dread turned to reflection, and reflection began to change into a search for what must be done. I realized that if our call to care for God's creation is genuine and not just lip service, it will "cost" us something. We must change how we eat, where we live, what we drink, how we relax, and the work we do. We must turn from the King James Version of Mark 16:15, where Jesus's words to his disciples are translated as, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," to the New Revised Standard Version, where the same passage reads, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."

We need to create changes within the Religious Society of Friends that will lead Friends to sustain us in our tasks and join us in our work. We need their help to

be bold, hands-on, creative, and "evangelical" and to live faithfully in a culture that does not encourage us to live in harmony with all that God has created.



The Steering Committee of Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW) has returned home from our Annual Meeting & Gathering at the Indiana Dunes National Park's Environmental Learning Center. It was exciting to see the activity within the committees and the collaboration between committees. While

QEW has an Outreach Committee, all committees are working together for the purpose of outreach. Our aim is to reach out to Yearly

Meetings to assist them in strengthening or establishing an Earthcare committee that will work with Monthly Meetings to strengthen or establish their own Earthcare committees.

A recent study of the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Committee found that churches/Meetings often see environmental issues as "just one more issue" among many demanding time and energy. The study also found that conservation/environment committees involved in education, reflection and action make the churches/meetings more effective and hopeful. The QEW Steering Committee and staff look forward to the day when Yearly and Monthly Meetings will be actively involved in transforming Friends' relationship with the earth.

We have much to do. Thankfully, we have one another and the Light within all of us to sustain us in our work. ❖

New Steering Committee member follows her bliss as an herbalist

MARCI ANKROM, representative to QEW from Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting, says she is "trying to find a niche in doing my part in bringing about more environmentally friendly awareness."

She serves on the QEW Spiritual Nurturance Committee and Sustainability: Faith & Action Interest Group. She is also on the Earthcare committee of her Meeting in Bloomington, Ind., trying to do things to make the Meetinghouse environmentally friendly, such as planting native plants and trees.

X-ray technology is Marci's

vocation, but she is an herbalist by avocation. Learning that she is one-sixteenth Cherokee has made

her interested in Native American herbal medicines, and she has been making "Turtle Woman" tinctures and salves to sell at pow-wows.

"I am happiest when I am in nature," Marci says. "I see so much urban sprawl taking away all our green space.

Woods that are full of medicinal herbs are being cut down and replaced with houses. I'm sad that the city and county governments aren't interested in preserving those green spaces."



Marci Ankrom

Day of Discernment guides Friends Center's green renovation project

FRIENDS CENTER'S proposal to significantly "green up" their facilities in downtown Philadelphia was reported in the September-October issue of *BeFriending Creation*. But integrating such innovations as solar electricity, geothermal heating, vegetated roof, closed-loop water system, and natural lighting into the plan considerably boosts the amount of money to be raised.

Many who like the *idea* of evolving from "Quaker gray to Quaker green" might have reservations about paying for extra features that sound experimental and don't have a clear payback, in terms of lowered utility bills, etc. Wouldn't those funds be more appropriately directed for disaster relief, peace and justice work, and other traditional Quaker programs?

That's why Friends Center invited me and more than 100 others representing the spectrum of Quaker organizations in the Northeast to participate in a "Day of Discernment" in early October.

The options were laid out on a long chart: At one end it read, "*Maintain the status quo*," leaving environmental work to other organizations. The middle ground option was, "*Stretch our limited resources*" to be faithful to the call to be good stewards of Creation. At the other end it read, "*Become a beacon of hope*" as a distinct ecological witness to the Religious Society of Friends and beyond.

Returning from initial small-group discussions, each participant was asked to stick a blue dot at the spot along the continuum where they initially felt most comfortable. It was interesting to see that almost everyone placed their dot in the zone between "*Stretch our resources*" and "*Become a beacon*."



JOE VOLK reviews the process that FCNL went through in renovating its headquarters in Washington D.C. as a LEED-certified "green building."

Sandy Wiggins, a "green architect" who helped develop the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards, linked today's environmental crisis to the lack of attention to energy efficiency, natural lighting, and natural ventilation in most modern buildings.

Twentieth-century planning tended to put cost per square foot over human health and comfort and seldom considered how much longer society would have access to cheap fossil fuels. It favored generic designs that ignored local landscape, climate, and cultural factors, said Wiggins, who had decided in mid-career to abandon this dysfunctional model.

Attention is now swinging back to conservation, and interest is growing in technologies that use renewables. But this alone won't avert us from the "doomed trajectory" we're on, Wiggins warned. We must quickly ascend a "ladder of awareness" to a new mind-set that uses "whole systems" approaches. We must learn that we

are part of a human family, that we are part of nature, and that the human economy is a subset of the Earth economy. What does this have to do with Friends Center? "Everything," Wiggins said.

A COMPARABLE experience was shared by Joe Volk, Executive Secretary of Friends Committee on National Legislation, which just finished a similar "green" renovation of its headquarters in Washington, D.C. Meeting LEED standards was a daunting prospect, but FCNL can't separate its physical presence from the values it represents or the messages it sends to lawmakers. So the way FCNL manages energy and other resources becomes a potent witness to this country's dangerous dependence on fossil fuels.

Volk said we need to be taking steps now to prevent the next war, as focus shifts to the Caspian Sea region, where China will be our biggest oil competitor.

Raising \$5 million to renovate the FCNL headquarters as a LEED-certified building was viewed at first as a huge problem, in light of FCNL's \$1 million annual budget. But at some point people began talking about this as an *opportunity* not a problem. Money began to flow in as potential donors realized how important it was for Friends to witness and practice their values, Volk said.

Reaction from Congressional staff who have toured the renovated building has been very encouraging. One highly impressed legislator has already introduced a bill increasing the number of federal buildings that have to meet LEED standards. The project has clearly reinforced Quakers' reputation of always being "ahead of the curve." We were not just making a good investment," Volk said. "We were making history."

—Louis Cox

Western Friends explore paths to sustainable living

by Ruah Swennerfelt

IN late September I tore myself away from my home, garden, and cats to spend a week in Colorado and Wyoming, speaking, listening, and sharing with Friends and other people of faith about paths to sustainable living. My visit culminated with a presentation at the Wyoming Association of Churches (WAC) annual meeting and community-wide symposium, on the theme of "Earth, Wind, and Spirit: A Healing of the Earth from a Spiritual Perspective."

QEW Steering Committee member Donn Kesselheim of Wyoming Monthly Meeting did a superb job arranging venues that kept me very busy speaking to Meetings, community groups, and even a sixth grade class! I began with a gathering at the Boulder, Colo., Friends Meeting, where we explored what it means to live sustainably. Friends there were very aware of the issues, but given the enormous ecological problems facing our planet, the main question on everyone's mind was, "What can we do?" I facilitated similar gatherings for Friends in Denver and Fort Collins.

My emphasis on sowing the seeds of ecological healing in our personal lives echoed the peace witness Quakers have been involved in for so long: We look for the seeds of violence in our lives, in our communities, and in our government and work together in the Spirit for change.

I suggested that we start by taking time to develop a relationship with the place where we live, which makes us want to protect and preserve that place. It also helps to broaden our definition of "Who is my neighbor?" to include the non-human community of life.

It was a delight to meet with a group called "Women Who Care for the Earth" of Laramie, Wyoming. We had much to share and explore, and I was also treated to a walk in a lovely preserved place as the aspens were in full autumn color. We took a "cosmic walk" on a spiral representing the unfolding of our 14-billion-year-old universe, which one of the women had set up permanently in her back yard. (Interestingly, the WAC meeting also began with a cosmic walk.)



QEW GENERAL SECRETARY Ruah Swennerfelt fields questions about the surprising benefits of simple living from sixth-graders in Lander, Wyoming.

My task at the community events was to share ideas about building sustainable communities. I based much of my presentation on a fine book, *The Natural Step for Communities: How Cities and Towns Can Change to Sustainable Practices* by Sarah James and Torbjorn Lahti. I also talked about Burlington, Vermont's *Legacy Project*, an innovative blueprint for a sustainable future. The people present at the meeting in Lander left with plans to meet again and explore what they might do in their town.

I was asked to talk about simplicity with the sixth graders. They were very knowledgeable, attentive, and curious. We explored ideas from composting, watching less TV, eating less meat (or verify-

ing that the animals are humanely-raised), and getting around without a car.

I had the good fortune to be chauffeured from Laramie to Lander by Friend Bill Young, who has worked on wind power in Wyoming since the early 1980s. I heard about different wind projects, visited some, and learned of their efficacy. One project sends electricity to Colorado!

Bill believes that wind power is a viable alternative to fossil fuel-based electrical generation. He also mentioned that the problem with birds and bats being hit by the blades is diminished when turbines are sited away from migration routes. It was truly a memorable day both in learning and viewing the grand landscapes and big sky.

At the Wyoming Association of Churches meeting, two others were asked to be presenters as well. Peter Sawtell of Eco-Justice Ministries gave an excellent presentation on the causes of our ecological crisis. He publishes a weekly e-mail newsletter, *Eco-Justice Notes*, at <www.eco-justice.org>. Tim Stevens, from a group called Restoring Eden gave an impassioned discussion of the evangelical Christian approach to caring for the earth.

In my talk, I focused primarily on personal spiritual transformation as the necessary first step towards healing the planet.

WOULD you like a visitor to your Meeting? What is the burning ecological issue where you live? What kind of prompting into action are you looking for? Call or e-mail the QEW office and we'll find just the right person to explore Earthcare issues with your Friends community. ❖

QEW supporter proposes Quaker vasectomy fund

Dick Grossman, a Durango, Colo., gynecologist and QEW Steering Committee member, brought this proposal to the QEW Sustainability: Faith & Action interest group at the recent QEW Annual Meeting. While generally favoring the idea, group members agreed the issue is complex, and implementation would require careful planning.

A CHILD who is planned and desired is wonderful, but an unplanned and unwanted child can be a sad liability for some.

Studies show that such children are less likely to thrive and are more likely to become delinquent. In the United States, unfortunately, only about half of all pregnancies are planned. Many of these end in abortion.

Further, among the richer nations, the United States has one of the fastest economic growth rates. Because of our extensive consumption, a child born here will have a very significant effect on the environment—more than over a dozen people in India!

When they have the number of children they want, many couples—as many as one out of four worldwide—choose permanent sterilization for family planning.

Sterilization for a woman by tubal ligation involves one or two abdominal incisions and is usually performed under general anesthesia. (Using a new device, it is possible to block a woman's tubes without an incision, but this technique is expensive and has other shortcomings.) Having surgery often means taking several days away from usual responsibilities.

For men, sterilization by vasectomy is much simpler, safer, and less expensive. It is done with local anesthesia and tiny incisions. The

man can usually resume normal activities rapidly, although he will not be sterile immediately.

Unfortunately, for every man who is sterilized in this country, two women have their tubes tied. A similar trend is seen in most parts of the world. In some cases this is due to the structure of our health care system. Medicaid, for example, pays for prenatal care, labor and delivery, and about two months of care after the birth of a



DICK GROSSMAN, right, sparked some lively discussion when he brought his plan for a "Men for Men" vasectomy fund to the QEW Sustainability: Faith & Action Interest Group.

child. It also will pay for family planning services, including tubal ligation. But it *excludes* vasectomy.

Some men are reluctant to have a vasectomy. Common myths associate vasectomy with erectile dysfunction and prostate cancer. And our society generally expects women to be responsible for childcare and family planning.

Men who are willing to have vasectomies, may be deterred by the cost. They may be uninsured, or their insurance doesn't pay for this procedure. A fund to pay for vasectomies would help.

Here is a draft of my plan to set up a "Men for Men" (MFM) fund. It would initially be for men who belong to or attend Quaker meetings, but hopefully it would be extended in size and scope.

Men for Men Proposal

FOR years there have been ads in the *Friends Journal* informing readers of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund, which reimburses cremation costs for members of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Interest on the endowment pays for a few cremations each year.

The Men for Men Fund would be similar in some ways. It would be administered as a project of QEW's Sustainability: Faith & Action interest group. Contributions through QEW would be tax-deductible. Recipients would be asked to repay MFM over the next year, allowing it to function as a revolving fund.

The candidate who applied for a MFM grant would have to sign a statement that he realizes that a vasectomy is permanent, that there are temporary means of contraception available, that he realizes that the procedure is minor surgery with risks including failure, and that he is accepting the money—and the procedure—totally voluntarily. This statement would be in addition to the usual surgical consent.

Selection of the surgeon would be the man's responsibility. In order to leverage services to as many men as possible, physicians would be asked to do the procedure at a reduced cost. Payment would be made directly to the surgeon.

In terms of the thousands of men in the U.S. who are candidates for vasectomy, Men for Men would be a very small fund. Perhaps it would be the start of something bigger, but at least it is something constructive that we can do to help make our society more sustainable. ❖

Sustainable practices meet Quaker values at CSA in N. Minnesota

by Louis Cox

DAVID ABAZS probably knows and practices more about sustainable living than any other member of the QEW Steering Committee. His family's well-tended diversified community-supported farm (CSA) in Finland, Minn., near the shore of Lake Superior, is proof that they understand how to live in right relationship to the land—through hard work but without hardship.

David is Northern Yearly Meeting's representative to the QEW Steering Committee, where he serves on the Outreach Committee. He and his family attend a worship group in their community.

David's dedication to a lifelong dream of living close to the earth with simplicity and integrity often keeps him close to home. But deep concern for his two children's future in an increasingly troubled world prompts him to work for sustainability at community, state, and national levels as well.

David and his wife Lise met in the late 1980s, when he was enrolled in sustainable farming program at Warren Wilson College in North Carolina. His understanding of sustainability was further informed by his Quaker faith, which called for him to seek a livelihood that puts his basic values into daily practice.

After graduation, David and Lise worked for six months on an agricultural research farm in northern New Mexico while looking for promising places to start their own farm. They finally settled on a 40-acre tract in northern Minnesota, where the climate, soil, and local



ABOVE: Goats contribute to the family's near self-sufficiency in food production. **RIGHT:** Energy for the Abazs home comes almost entirely from renewable wind and solar systems. The farm operation also involves efficient use

farm market turned out to be well suited to diversified vegetable production.

For the first eight years they concentrated on improvements to buildings and land (in the process unearthing an abundance of rocks with which to build walls and foundations). They installed a wind turbine and photovoltaic panels to enable them to live comfortably off the electric grid. They built an earthbermed passive-solar home, an energy-efficient greenhouse, and a composting toilet to recycle wastes back into the soil.

Financing these projects necessitated off-the-farm employment for a number of years. Gradually they found the right combination of fruits, vegetables, small livestock, and home crafts to allow them to bring it all into focus as a profitable CSA, helping to build a sustainable local food system. They now sell shares in their farms' output to 18 local families.

They also engage in other direct-marketing enterprises, such as selling holiday wreaths, wild rice, and honey. Part-time teaching in an environmental program provides other income.

THE key to their success, David believes, is the family's commitment to their original vision of living in harmony with the land, seeing their work as embedded in a "never-ending cycle of life." They have also tried to continually assess and learn from their experiences. This philosophy is reflected in the way they work together as a family and in the social and environmental witness they carry to the rest of the world.

Their approach enabled the Abazs family to gain a local reputation for working hard and having a strong commitment to the community. David works with school groups and is part of a program that makes children more aware of where their food comes from. He is also active in a seed-savers program, the Shalom Seed Sanctuary, trying to stem the loss of biodiversity in the world's seed stocks in recent years.

"We have an obligation to make the world a better place," David once said in a newspaper interview. "But you can't try to save the world unless you are content and happy with where you are at."

More about the farm and seed-saver program can be found at www.round-river.com. ❖



David Abazs

!Cochabamba!—declaring water part of the commons

by Mary Gilbert

Friends Meeting at Cambridge

AROUND THE WORLD water is understood as a sacred gift, part of the commons, rightly belonging to all and to none.

What happened in 2001 in Cochabamba, the third largest urban area in Bolivia, is an inspiring example of defense of the commons and resistance to exploitation. It is a story that we should know about and celebrate. And it is a story that we can learn from.

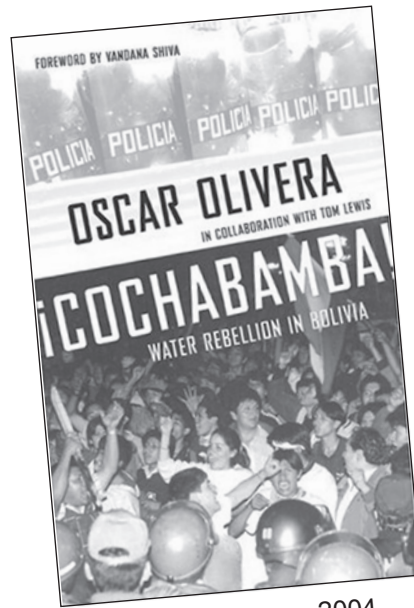
When *cochabambinos* put forward a plan to improve local water delivery in their city, the World Bank denied funding, insisting that only a contract with a private international company met their criteria for a loan. In 1999, acting behind closed doors, the Bolivian government contracted with *Aguas del Tunari*, a conglomerate dominated by the U.S. company Bechtel, to provide all the water for Cochabamba. The contract guaranteed an annual profit of 16 percent for 40 years. All other water provision networks and sources were confiscated.

Water costs doubled and tripled, and the people of Cochabamba united to take back control over their city's water. The police, and later the army, were called in, but the people were successful. For one week in April 2001, they took over the local government, and *Aguas del Tunari* was driven out.

It was in this popular movement that Oscar Olivera, principal author of the book *!Cochabamba!*, rose to prominence as a leader and strategist. I met Oscar in India in March of 2003, when I was taking a two-week course on water issues, and Oscar, on his way to an international meeting about water in

Kyoto, was one of the teachers.

Before the Water War, as it is called, Oscar had worked in a shoe factory, where he had become a leader in the union. His role in the Water War has earned him a prominence he doesn't enjoy; he



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would much prefer to stay home with his wife and family and "just be an ordinary working man" than travel and speak. (He also has information that he is Number 3 on a government hit list.) However, he is a leader whom people trust and will follow, and he is dedicated to continuing to build the coalition that prevailed over Bechtel, so he continues to lead.

I wondered why Oscar was willing to work for the community at the cost of his own satisfaction, so I told him about a study of contemporary persons known as dedicated workers for the benefit of others. The study revealed that each of them had undergone a period in childhood when s/he experienced her/himself as different and separate from others, perhaps due to a long illness, or time living

in a foreign country. I asked Oscar if he had had this kind of experience. He thought only briefly, then told me that he had spent his whole childhood feeling different, partly the result of knowing that he had a congenital heart condition.

!Cochabamba! begins with Oscar's narration of the history behind, and the events of, the Water War. It discusses the new social structures that are emerging in the aftermath of the Water War. As Oscar tells it, the real protagonist of the story is the *Coordinadora*, the committee that represented the astounding coalition of all sectors of Cochabamban society that ousted Bechtel.

The book goes on to look at the related struggle that Bolivians are now engaged in to regain public control over the nation's natural gas wealth. The Gas War has involved many thousands of people and many deaths, as government troops have attacked civilian marches, and it caused the flight of then-President Gonzalo Sanchez de Losada. This struggle is far from over, and has implications for all of South America.

BEFORE 1985 the national government owned and ran most of the industries in Bolivia. Work was centralized, and unions had a very strong voice in discussions. With privatization, the nation's workforce has become "atomized." The multinational corporations now in charge run small operations in many locations. This new organization of production has vastly reduced the unions' power. Law requires that after three months a temporary worker must be given permanent employment with some benefits and security, so

Cochabamba, next page >>

>> **Cochabamba**, from page 8

the standard practice now is to fire workers shortly before their three months are up, often, but not always, rehiring them for another three months. Wages have plummeted. There is no job security, and people must compete for the work available. There is increasing general desperation. Referring to the corporate powers, Oscar writes, "They want the total elimination of any possibility of our resistance. They want to convert all workers to disposable parts for their production machine, leaving us no kind of security whatever."

The Water War succeeded in part because many important structures were already in place. Cochabamba has "a thick social fabric" of neighborhood associations, water associations for areas without piped water, professional groups, sports clubs, and so on. When the contract with *Aguas del Tunari* was revealed and the results began to be experienced, the entire population of the city and the surrounding region rose up in protest. The need to take back control of the water they all needed to survive drew them into united action. Leaders from the pre-existing groups, already well known to and trusted by their memberships, found each other and formed the *Coordinadora*.

This kind of committee structure was something new. Operating outside of normal party politics and lobbying activities, it created a non-party space for discussion of what should be the "common good," addressing both wages and basic rights. Today Oscar and others are working hard to ensure that this space endures and takes permanent form. He would like to see new union organizations, by territory and region, that include

the whole work force, not just the employed, and the establishment of a Constituent Assembly, a form of communal self-government.

By the way, it is *absolutely not true* that management under local control are inefficient. Cochabamba's water delivery system today, publicly owned and run by a group descended from the *Coordinadora*, is steadily expanding water service in the city and improving quality.

In the United States we don't have a level of despair that could lift the veils from what is happening...

Why read this book

ABOUT five years ago, when I started representing Quaker Earthcare Witness at meetings of the Commission for Sustainable Development at the United Nations, I was shocked to discover how little information gets through to us here in the U.S. about what is going on in the rest of the world. Important changes are afoot that challenge the status quo, and many, maybe most of us, are unaware that anything is going on at all.

Especially in South America, there is growing resistance to the coercive policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, whose policies undermine local and national economies by enforcing acquiescence to domination by transnational corporations. Some South American governments are discussing continental (not hemispheric) trade agreements modeled somewhat after the EU. A municipal level "Participatory Democracy" is spreading from Brazil to cities across Latin America. The slogan of the World Social Forums, "*Another world is possible*," has been joined by the question, "*Why not here?*"

The story of Cochabamba has two interwoven themes. One is political: It is flat-out wrong to coerce people into acceptance of an economic system that harms them. The other has to do with our relationship with our living planet: The *cochabambinos* know that water is for all. In fact, the full name of the *Coordinadora* means "the Coordinating Committee for the Defense of Water and of Life." The

Declaration they authored is a beautiful statement of this principle. [On the World Wide Web it's at: <http://www.ratical.org/co-globalize/CochabambaD.html>]

These two themes came together this year in Uruguay, where a national referendum declared water privatization constitutionally illegal. A movement against water privatization is rising everywhere, including the United States. Grassroots organizations in many of our cities are working to prevent or cancel water delivery contracts with the multinational "water giants." Citizens are waging legal battles to protect aquifers from "water mining" that will have tragic effects on local ecosystems. But new contracts are being agreed on, our supermarkets are piled high with bottled water, and the media are ignoring it all. In the United States we don't have a level of despair that could lift the veils from what is happening and unite us in the kind of understanding and action that happened in Cochabamba.

But let us begin by spreading our understanding of the concept of the *commons*, of water, air, and other essentials for life as sacred gifts.

Let us support the rights of people to defend their watersheds and their access to the water of life.

Let us pray about finding and carrying out our own right action in these struggles. ❖

IN YOUR RECENT newsletter, August-September, Alice Wald nicely introduced the important subject of "cultivating a sense of place." However, instead of placing it at the back of the issue, I suggest featuring this "cultivating a sense of place" as the topic for an entire issue.

I feel this concept is so important I have devoted a whole book, *I Belong*, to finding community and a sense of home, a sense of place.

My husband and I are members of the Ward's Creek Marsh Community in eastern North Carolina. We live here along with the green anole lizards, emerald green snakes, green tree frogs, orb weaver and green garden spiders, and jumping fish—mulletts and menhaden.

There are also blue and fiddler crabs, river otters, marsh rabbits, red-winged black birds, clapper rails, marsh wrens, field crows and fish crows, northern harriers, whistling swans, periwinkle snails, marsh mosquitoes, deer flies, praying mantises, dragonflies, and monarch and swallowtail butterflies.

Such plants as marsh pinks, marsh mallows, morning glories, green marsh grass, black needle rush, long leaf pines and swamp magnolias keep company with us as well.

Members that exist throughout the community are the creek that flows in two directions, the marsh muck, and the wind and cloud tapestries. Celestial members include the sun, stars, our moon, the planets, and the sky above.

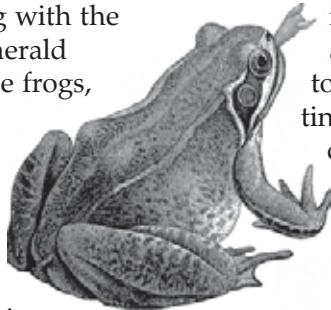
In cultivating a sense of place we also allow beauty, tranquility, as well as the raw, powerful energy and sometimes fierceness to touch us, to open ourselves, to fill and nurture us.

If we cultivate a sense of place the recycling and greening of our lives will follow as we find ourselves wanting to tread lightly, yet fully engaged with an openness and readiness for all that surrounds us and is within us.

I hope you will consider this topic. I would be happy to write an article if you should want one for submission.

My husband and I enjoy reading your newsletter and the feel of tapping into a human resource of like-hearted folks from the Quaker way of life. It is cheering and heartening to hear the success stories and awakening and thought-provoking to read articles that continue to challenge our choices in our manner of living. Keep up the good work.

—Nan Bowles
Beaufort, N.C.



I CONTINUE to have much appreciation for the Quaker Earthcare Witness organization and its representatives who have reached out to tiny Great Plains Yearly Meeting—Ruah Swennerfelt and Kim Carlyle. *BeFriending Creation* is a publication I look forward to reading because it is rich with inspiration, practical ideas, and careful scientific analysis.

Facing the need to find a new place to live in Wichita, QEW's winsome advocacy for our planet has encouraged me to build a passive solar house and keep reading about how to add some active solar features in the years ahead. It will be a high-thermal-mass house, and I'm learning a lot about trade-offs here, fifty miles north of the Kansas-Oklahoma border, where heating, cooling, and humidity must all be addressed.

—Dorlan Bales
Wichita, Kansas

New from QEW!

Traveling Gently on the Earth, the sixth in QEW's "Simplicity as Spiritual Exercise" pamphlet series, will be included as a gift in the coming year-end appeal letter to QEW supporters. Please consider an extra contribution this year to help continue QEW's mission and outreach.

Simplicity as Spiritual Exercise series

Traveling Gently on the Earth



What Would John Woolman Drive?

What would happen if some of the resources currently devoted to maintaining roads and vehicles could be spent on making our communities better places to live?

—Faith & the Common Good
<www.faith-commongood.net>

Our new pamphlet reflects on the wisdom and living example of John Woolman, in light of the way our society and environment have been negatively transformed to accommodate the private automobile. It explores various personal and public policy alternatives and cites a number of resources for study and action.

To get the complete pamphlet series for your Meeting or study group, contact the QEW office.

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Canadians may contribute through Canadian Yearly Meeting for a tax receipt, starting at \$45/Can. Please send check to Canadian Yearly Meeting, 91-A Fourth Ave., Ottawa, ON K1S 2L1. CYM needs to know that the money is for QEW support. Forward this form to QEW to let us know that you have chosen to contribute through CYM.

We're not telling you where to buy your gasoline, but...

WE JUST THOUGHT that, while you're doing your best to conserve fossil fuel and support renewable energy, you just might like to know how much Persian Gulf oil the different major companies are importing.

According to the Energy Information Administration*, leading importers of Persian Gulf crude oil, *January through June of 2005*, included:

Exxon /Mobil	64,751,000	barrels
Chevron/Texaco	50,885,000	barrels
BP/Phillips	41,510,000	barrels
Marathon/Speedway	40,151,000	barrels
Total Corp.	11,262,000	barrels
Conoco	3,237,000	barrels

At \$60 to \$65 a barrel, this adds up to nearly **\$14 billion in revenues in just six months!**

Here are some other companies and their Persian Gulf oil imports for the same period:

Citgo	528,000	barrels
Sunoco	0	barrels
Shell (See other issues re: Shell)**	0	barrels
Sinclair	0	barrels
Frontier	0	barrels
ARCO	0	barrels



*www.eia.doc.gov/pub/oil_gas/petroleum/data_publications/
 **www.shellfacts.com/media.html

IF EACH OF US sent this list to at least ten other people... and each of them sent it to ten more, etc., millions of citizens might start thinking twice about where they buy their gasoline. Could this get the folks currently in power who are waging a ruthless war against both people and planet to start thinking twice about their policies? —ed

BeFriending Creation

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We publish **BeFriending Creation** to promote the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness, stimulate discussion and action, share insights, practical ideas, and news of our actions, and encourage among Friends a sense of community and spiritual connection with all Creation. Opinions expressed are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect those of Quaker Earthcare Witness, or of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The editor is responsible for unsigned items. Submission deadlines are February 7, April 7, June 7, August 7, October 7, and December 7.

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VISION AND WITNESS

WE ARE CALLED to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God. WE WORK to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God's Creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right, and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth's ecological integrity. WE PROMOTE these truths by being patterns and examples, by communicating our message, and by providing spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship to the earth.

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Getting to know our incredible, edible landscape

A GUIDED “EDIBLE WILD PLANTS” WALK during the October QEW Annual Meeting & Gathering was full of surprises. On the practical level, our eyes were opened to scores of “weeds” that were edible — from inky cap mushrooms to serviceberries—that early settlers learned about from Native Americans.

On the spiritual level, we learned that *our relationship to the land is deepened when we partake of some of the foods that also sustain the other creatures who live there*. While few of us could survive as hunters and gatherers (much less as just *gatherers*) our connection to the invisible web of life becomes palpable as we savor delicate hickory nuts cracked open with a rock. (One experienced Friend informed us that a pair of Vice Grip pliers works a lot better on these tiny nuts.)

Early summer meadows offer tasty greens like poke and lamb’s quarters. For nuts and berries, the best pickings are in late summer and fall. That’s also

when the squirrels and birds are out stocking up on many of the same victuals, so we have to be an early birds ourselves!

Naturalist Noel Pavlovic, our tireless host for the gathering, shared an amazing store of scientific knowledge about the flora of the northern Indiana

region. Lessons included how to tell when a berry is ripe, what parts of certain plants are good for different things (including medicinal uses), and how to tell the genuine article from a deceptively similar, and possibly poisonous, species.

Alice Howenstine, who lives on a farm in Illinois, preached the myriad delights of the common milkweed: When the flowering head has just formed, she likes to steam it as a vegetable.

She said it tastes something like asparagus. When the milkweed pods are still young and tender, they make delicious fritters and additions to vegetable soups, she said. ❖



ALICE HOWENSTINE, left, shows the parts of a milkweed plant that would have been perfectly delicious earlier in

asparagus. When the milkweed pods are still young and tender, they make delicious fritters and additions to vegetable soups, she said. ❖