

BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness

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The ultimate question of personal and planetary health: *What do we love?*

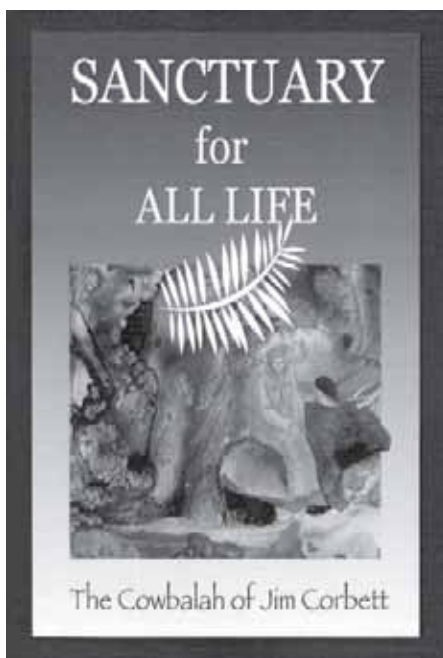
by Louis Cox

PREVIOUS *BeFriending Creation* articles have discussed fundamental disorientations that are driving modern industrial civilization to insane destruction of its own life-support system: *We don't know where we are, we don't know what time it is, and we have forgotten who we are.*

After reading the late Jim Corbett's last book, *Sanctuary for All Life* (Howling Dog Press, 2005), I recognized another even more important dimension of the current human-earth condition—what some call “compassion” (*agape*) and what Jim called by many names, including “communion.” As the ultimate question of personal and planetary health, it comes down to, “*What do we love?*”

The book's title mirrors that of the Sanctuary Movement that Jim and others in the faith community helped found in the 1980s to seek justice for people fleeing from fighting and persecution in Central America who were being denied legal status as refugees by the U.S. government.

It was the voice of a Higher Authority, a call to communion with people of all creeds, colors, and nationalities, that led the Sanctuary Movement's supporters to put human suffering above abstract laws and artificial political boundaries.



It's interesting to note that, in replacing the original statement of FCUN Goals with a new QEW Vision and Witness statement in 2003, we dropped the phrases, “...to live in deep *communion* with all Life Spirit,” and “...to affirm the *unity* of all Creation” (another way of saying “communion”). These words were felt to be semantic stumbling blocks for some Friends, along with the word, “Nature.” However, Jim preferred to use the word “Nature” in referring to a sense of communion with the Ultimate Reality, since it avoided the idolatry he believed is inherent in all theological propositions. It is our ignorance of and spiritual iso-

lation from this all-embracing Reality that contributes to our ecologically destabilizing behavior, he maintained.

What Jim had to say about Nature is very much to the point of the Quaker spiritual ecology movement. In his keynote address to the 1995 Annual Meeting in Cuba, N.M., he described the Quaker principles underlying the Saguaro-Juniper Corporation that he helped found in southern Arizona as a “human-land covenant,” but he was still wrestling with an even more profound vision of a redemptive realignment of humankind and the Earth community. He seemed to be approaching clarity as he worked on final drafts of *Sanctuary for All Life*, shortly before his death several years ago.

In his visioning, Jim went against the current within the modern unprogrammed tradition

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JIM CORBETT'S *Sanctuary for All Life* will be the subject of speaker Daniel Baker at the QEW Fall Meeting & Annual Gathering at Ghost Ranch, N.M. next October. Daniel wrote the introduction to Jim's book and is a member of the Saguaro-Juniper Corporation in southern Arizona that Jim helped to found.

>> **Sanctuary**, from page 1

that tends to soft-pedal Quakerism's Judeo-Christian roots. As a "Judeo-Quaker," he had long been interested in the pastoral strain of the ancient Israelite religion, traces of which can be distinguished from later traditions of Judaism that were more urban-centered and domesticated. (These studies were integrated into his 1991 book, *Goatwalking, a Guide to Wildland Living*, which described the earthy spirituality he found in the freedom and simplicity of subsistence herding in desert wildlands.)

He found that the core message of Moses and other Hebrew prophets was about justice and right relationship, a message most relevant to those who have been liberated from bondage and who practice an open, nature-oriented spirituality, maintained by sabbatical consciousness, as a way of keeping from being re-enslaved. When Jesus proclaimed the coming of a new Kingdom, he was speaking mainly to those who had become oppressed and marginalized in their own homeland, and he offered liberation by inviting them to become its co-creators. This new order resides in peaceful covenant communities that generate their own cohesion, in contrast to social structures and religious institutions that rely on coercion.

THE inspiration for *Sanctuary for All Life* may have come when Jim began to see a deep spiritual stream running through four themes of his life: his work with the Sanctuary Movement, his personal experiences as a goat-walker in the desert Southwest, his role in drafting the land stewardship principles of the Saguaro-Juniper Corporation, and his interest in the Earthcare movement emerging within the Religious Society of Friends.

By tracing its roots in the Hebrew scriptures, he could see that the Kingdom of God isn't just about people; it includes the whole life community, just as the original Covenant in the Book of Genesis did. He could see that the Higher Authority principle of the Sanctuary Movement applied just as compellingly to restoring the inalienable rights of the land, and that the global environmental crisis is fundamentally about our spiritual relationship to the earth.

Holy scriptures are no substitute for holy cows.

—Jim Corbett

The resulting integrative vision is not the kind of smooth-flowing work that a person can simply read and summarize. Like the many ancient scriptures that it draws on, *Sanctuary for All Life* is meant to be a doorway to a different way of being in the world. Its words help to clarify the nature of that journey, but they are not the journey itself. To understand how to care for the earth, we must also listen to the earth.

As a kind of prophet himself, Jim often said things that are difficult to grasp because they tap into an ancient well of Spirit that our civilization has largely abandoned. Even when his words are plainly heard as a call for humankind to be restored to communion with Nature, some readers may retreat into denial and rationalization to avoid acknowledging their weakness and hypocrisy.

Jim's vision of a covenantal relationship with the land is strikingly different from today's scientific-management approach to environmentalism. He suggests that we need to discover the harmonies

that integrate us into Nature more than we need to learn how to calculate our Ecological Footprints or practice the principles of Holistic Resource Management.

Jim also stresses the necessity of faithful membership in a covenant community as we seek to reconnect with Nature and to see that of God in every Other. It is community, not the recitation of sacred texts and rituals, that mediates communion. "When property rights are transformed into earth rights, a community's way of living is its religion," Jim wrote. Elsewhere he said, "A religious society grounded in communion knows that the Peaceable Kingdom is already here among us, spreading invasively and unmanageably—like yeast or a really vigorous weed."

FOR Jim, the Peaceable Kingdom had to do with care of the land, care of the animals on the land, care that food is wholesome and truly life-giving, and care that food is shared equitably as part of continuing cycle of life. It must embody "a community practice that can grow among neighbors and continue as a way of life for future generations."

How are we to fulfill our covenant, to become a holy people living on holy ground? There are literally hundreds of pithy and thought-provoking observations throughout the book, but here is one that stands out for me: *The Hallowing Way must be walked in humble obedience, not with urgent hopes and agendas.*

A covenant community can and should engage in prophetic witness for peace, justice, and health for all. But such witness is not to be combined with struggles for state powers. "All faith in human rule is idolatrous—possibly the fundamental form of idolatry." ♦

Communities need our help!

by **Barbara Williamson**
Richmond (Va.) Friends Mtg.

IN the last *BeFriending Creation*, I discussed the Testimony of Community and mentioned sprawl as a threat to the environment. Sprawl is more than just a threat to the environment. It threatens the health of children, contributes to the loss of farmland and natural resources, increases traffic congestion, worsens urban poverty and social segregation, and for many people reduces their sense of community.

There are deep moral dimensions to the expressways and subdivisions, the strip malls and sewers and utility lines that keep pushing suburbia ever outward as poorer people in the older cities and suburbs become isolated and disassociated from society.

Any number of research projects have examined the causes and consequences of sprawl and many books, including *American MetroPolitics: The New Suburban Reality*, by Myron Orfield and *Inside Game, Outside Game*, by David Rusk, have provided excellent overviews of the cause and effect of sprawl and even make suggestions for how the problems caused by sprawl can be corrected.

While the solutions to sprawl seem at first straightforward, most communities have not been able to implement the solutions. The stakeholders in cities and towns have not been able to effectively fight for major changes to control sprawl. The business community tends to be impatient for quick results and is instinctively wary of pushing for strong regulatory requirements. Politicians' time frames tend to be in two or four

year blocks and many are reluctant to lead, rather than follow, public opinion. Many organizations are constrained from lobbying for legislative reforms because of their status as tax-exempt organizations or public bodies. Some environmental groups have little concern for the social equity issues of sprawl.

As Friends concerned for the environment and called to live by the Testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, and Equality, we should be addressing the problems of sprawl. Quaker Earthcare Witness' focus is on a faith-based advocacy for responsible stewardship of God's Creation. Of



paramount importance is an advocacy for sustainable land use and communities that includes:

- ❖ Coordinated regional planning and development.
- ❖ Vibrant cities, mixed use developments and access to public transportation.
- ❖ Infrastructure that channels development rather than chases it
- ❖ Housing which is affordable for people of all incomes.
- ❖ Preservation of farms, woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife.

Faith communities have been some of the most active forces in organizing new regional coalitions. In places like Chicago, Columbus, Detroit, and St. Louis faith-based coalitions have been able to address regional polarization and advocate for proposed legislative remedies to sprawl.

Faith communities can have the time, the commitment, and the political clout to take on sprawl. Why faith communities? Faith communities can provide people

to attend public hearings and rallies; politicians respond when large numbers of their constituents support a position. Only faith-based coalitions have consistently brought together multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-jurisdictional groups. Only when faith based communities provide the moral leadership—e.g., the 19th century abolition movement, the civil rights movement of the 20th century—does America address racial issues. Why not sprawl and growing economic segregation in the 21st century?

FAITH communities often cross regional boundaries that provide them the opportunities to network across municipal and class lines. In political environments that are frequently paralyzed by cynicism and stalemate, communities of faith can play a transformative role by convening diverse political constituencies who might not otherwise come together and by creating a better, more idealistic vision of what metro regions can become. Faith communities can influence politicians, developers, and decision makers to focus development on established city and suburban centers and toward a shared regional future.

Communities, where we live and our children and grandchildren will grow up, need us to step forward to address the issue of sprawl and the unwillingness of many local government officials to work together regionally. Read the articles about growth issues in your local and regional papers. Attend city/county council and planning commission meetings. Participate in the democratic process. Contact your local officials to get a copy of the local comprehensive plan and read it. Join a Smart Growth organization in your area. Get involved! ❖

Wangari Matthai's Nobel Prize began with a frog egg 'necklace'

by Tom Goodridge
Morningside (N.Y.) Friends Mtg.

"HOW DID DIRECT CONTACT with nature as a child influence your development?" was the question I posed to Wangari Matthai, the most recent winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, for her work as founder of the Green Belt Movement that has planted over 10 million trees in an effort to restore Kenya's eco-system. Wangari was speaking at New York City's 92nd Street Y on September 14, 2005, her radiant smile surrounded by a deep blue head wrap.

The event began with an interview by *National Geographic's* Editor-in-Chief, Chris Johns. Following the interview, Wangari took questions from the audience. The question I was able to ask Wangari is the research question for my doctoral study: I asked her to share either from her cultural heritage or from more personal experience.

Wangari told us how as a small child she played by the stream near her rural Kenyan home. Peering into the stream she discovered gelatinous clusters of tiny bright balls that she took for beads. But when she tried to take these beads up to wear like a necklace, they would fall apart in her hands. Later that season she saw swarms of swimming creatures, composed mostly of round heads joined to sinewy tails. They moved so fast she could never catch them. Then these little swimmers, like the beads before, would disappear. Sometimes, when she was patient, she discovered sets of bulging, golden eyes staring back at her.

At the time Wangari wasn't



WANGARI MATTHAI receives the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in 2004

able to complete her necklace of knowledge by stringing these experiential beads together enough to understand the sequence of frog metamorphosis. Yet it filled her with the wonder of Creation and a curiosity that fueled a passionate lifelong search to better understand Nature's secret laws and how to work with those laws.

The search led her to a small Benedictine college in Kansas, which she attended as part of an international student development program. On breaks from classes she would sometimes walk by the Mississippi River. She wondered how the girl by the stream ever made it to this great American river—which she had learned about long ago in her Kenyan school. Wangari said she also experienced her first autumn in Kansas, where the wind blew across the plains. She then understood what had only been a literary phrase, "trees whispering in the wind." Wangari returned home

from Kansas to become the first woman to earn a Ph. D. (in biology) from the University of Nairobi. Her crowning achievement was her trip to Oslo, Norway on October 8, 2004 to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

Wangari believes that the Nobel Committee was not only honoring her individual achievements with the prize but also recognizing those women, especially the women of Africa, who toil to restore our Earth. She also felt that selecting an ecologist for the first time means that the Nobel Committee has linked environmental restoration with the attainment of world peace.

May Wangari be granted a frog egg beaded necklace to hold her medallion of peace! ❖

Quaker Stamp Project buys more DVDs for Video Lending Library

THE QUAKER MISSIONS Stamp Project in Mattapoisett, Mass., has just given Quaker Earthcare Witness \$300 toward the purchase of environment-related documentaries in DVD format for the QEW Video Library.

The following new titles were purchased: (Contact the QEW office to borrow them.)

- ❖ The four-part *Sacred Balance* series by David Suzuki.
- ❖ *Oil on Ice*, about threats to ANWR from proposed drilling.
- ❖ *Designing a Great Neighborhood*, about a cohousing project.
- ❖ *The Ecological Footprint: Accounting for a Small Planet*.

Friends are encouraged to support the stamp project by sending commemorative and foreign stamps to: Brad Hathaway, 87 Aucott Rd. Mattapoisett MA 02739. If you would like to help with the project, call Brad at 508/758-3579.

Rejoice with the Western Shoshone!

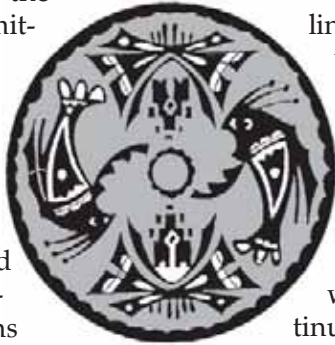
by Mary Gilbert
Friends Meeting at Cambridge

THE Western Shoshone have achieved a major victory in their ongoing struggle to protect the integrity of their land and their way of life. It is appropriate for us with Earthcare on our hearts to celebrate with them.

On March 10, 2006 the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), in Geneva, Switzerland, handed down a groundbreaking decision, urging the United States to “freeze,” “desist,” and “stop” actions against the Western Shoshone peoples and their land. This decision is the first “full decision” against the U.S. federal Indian law and policy. The decision declares that the theory of “gradual encroachment” through a “compensation process” is a process found by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to violate “international human rights, norms, principles, and standards that govern determination of indigenous property interests.” The Committee has given the U.S. a deadline of July 15, 2006 to inform it of remedial actions taken.

For years the Western Shoshone (they refer to themselves as “*Newe*,” so from here on I will too) have struggled against U.S. government incursions onto the lands specified by treaty in 1863. This land covers approximately 60 million acres, stretching across Nevada, Idaho, Utah, and California. It has been and is being used by the U.S. for military testing, open-pit cyanide-heap leach gold mining and nuclear waste

disposal planning. There have been military-style seizures of *Newe* livestock, trespass fines in the millions of dollars, and ongoing, armed surveillance of those who continue to assert their original treaty rights. The U.S. government is now asserting federal ownership of nearly 90 percent of this land.



The *Newe* are spiritually linked to the land and want to live in balance with it. Their representatives in Geneva said, “Our people have suffered more nuclear testing than anywhere else in the world, and they’re continuing underground testing despite our protests. Yucca Mountain is being hollowed out to store nuclear waste. We cannot stand for it.—This earth, the air, the water are sacred.” (Joe Kennedy) “The *Newe* use this ancestral land for sacred ceremonies.... Our ancestors’ burials are being dug up and placed into local museums’ basement storage areas...” (Judy Rojo) “We are speaking for a Nation threatened by extinction. The mines are polluting our waters, destroying hot springs, and exploding sacred mountains—our burials along with them—attempting to erase our signature on the land.” (Bernice Lalo)

A recent, dramatic escalation of new actions threatens irreparable harm to the land and the people of the Western Shoshone Nations. Last year, with support from the University of Arizona Indigenous Law and Policy Program, the *Newe* filed a renewed legal action at the UN CERD. They brought 13,000 supportive signatures from U.S. citizens to Geneva, thanks to a petition cam-

paign organized by Oxfam America. (Signatures are still being collected.) To find out more or to add your name go to:

<www.wsdp.org>, or contact the Western Shoshone Defense Project at: <wsdp@igc.org>.

The struggle of the *Newe*, right here in our back yard, is of a piece with the struggles of indigenous peoples around the world. Over the five years I have attended Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) meetings at the UN in New York, I have come to know members of the Indigenous Caucus personally. There is a growing feeling of solidarity as Lakota and Filipino and Aztec and Bantu meet and discover that they share the same story.

THE good news from the Western Shoshone is flashing around the world right now, heartening indigenous groups everywhere as they defend the land they love and ensure a future for their peoples and their ways of life. I am eager for the next CSD meeting, to hear this victory discussed in the halls and meeting rooms at the UN. ❖

Howdy, Western Friends!

COPIES OF THIS ISSUE of *BeFriending Creation*, plus the May-June 2006 *Quaker Eco-Bulletin*, are being included in the May issue of *Friends Bulletin*, the journal of Western Friends, Anthony Manousos, editor.

The arrangement kicks off an ongoing collaboration between Quaker Earthcare Witness and *Friends Bulletin* to publish materials on ecology and spirituality of interest to Western Friends and to broaden support for QEW's ministry in North America.

Water as commodity: *pricing the priceless*

by Mary Gilbert

Friends Meeting at Cambridge

WATER makes life on Earth possible. There is never any new water; what there is just goes round and round, in a cycle that rises 9 miles above the earth and descends 3 miles below its surface.—Trillions of droplets, circling and circling, making up 70 percent of our bodies (more for babies) as they flow through us and all other life forms. Without taking in new water, human life ends in a matter of days.

The water in the tears we cry may once have flowed as blood in the veins of dinosaurs. The cycling of moisture makes us a juicy planet with juicy life forms, all interdependent motes in the limitlessness of Divine Creation.

How can you put a price on something as sacred as water? Well, that's what's being done:

Huge multinational corporations, called "water giants," are waging a two-pronged effort to gain control over people's access to water. One prong is the bottling of water for sale, either as plain water or with various additives (think Coke). The other is the ownership or control of municipal water systems.

Bottled water

Compared to oil, water is easier to find and easier to pump. It doesn't need refining; technology can never make it obsolete; and it has a huge potential market: all the people on Earth.

Supermarkets here sell water from France and Italy, while in New Hampshire three towns are fighting an international water

corporation that wants to mine their water and sell it in Europe! Think of all that expensive, CO₂-generating transport, shipping water across the ocean in both directions!

Tap water in the U.S. gets tested, but there are no costly safety regulations on bottled water. Personally, I use tap water, and I've bought a seltzer-maker because I don't want to give up the bubbles.

When you mine an underground aquifer, the first thing that happens is that the water table goes down. Wells run dry, plant life is affected, farms dry up. In some places increasing desertification leads to famine and desperate migration.

Where water is mined from porous rock near the ocean, the freshwater being removed is replaced by salt water seeping in. Water from local wells can't be drunk, given to animals, or used in fields. When a huge Coca Cola plant caused this to happen in India, local people were forced to start buying bottled water—or Coke!

Municipal water systems

There is a real, two-sided problem with engaging international corporations to provide water to towns and cities. First, they are doing it for profit. The idea of providing water to the poorest people in thirsty areas, to create profit for people with money enough to invest, shows a real moral disconnect. Second, international investors are like absentee landlords, with no reason to care about the vitality of the community where they invest. They don't live there.



There is a growing movement in the South (the Southern Hemisphere) and other "undeveloped" areas to declare access to water to be a human right.

In Cochabamba, Bolivia, a Bechtel subsidiary contracted to provide all water to the people. Water bills doubled and tripled immediately, and water quality deteriorated. The people of Cochabamba forced the corporation to withdraw, and the corporation sued Bolivia for the full amount they would have earned during the contract period, a guaranteed 17-percent profit per year. This year Bolivia won when Bechtel withdrew its case. The Bolivian success is inspiring people's movements everywhere to hold onto their water delivery systems.

AT the World Water Forum in Japan in 2003, two water giants let it be known that they were pulling out of water contracts in the South. Instead, they plan to be providing 80 percent of the water delivered in the cities of North America within ten years. However, they are finding that the North can put up resistance too.

"Food and Water Watch," a new project of Public Citizen, has published an extremely readable report called "Waves of Regret," which can be found at www.foodandwaterwatch.org. The report details 19 struggles for local control all over the U.S., some of which are ongoing. (In tracking developments, note that water giants operate through subsidiaries with different names.) It's well worth the 20 minutes it takes to read. A city near you may be part of this struggle.

At risk is something that connects us intimately—physically and spiritually—to the whole of life on earth. ❖

Staff boost QEW relationships from D.C. to S.C.

LAST MARCH, General Secretary Ruah Swennerfelt and Publications Coordinator Louis Cox strengthened QEW's connections with Friends Committee on National Legislation during a visit to FCNL's newly remodeled "green" headquarters in Washington, D.C.

On the same trip they witnessed to about 60 Southern Friends as resource persons for the Palmetto Friends Gathering in Charleston, S.C., speaking on the theme "Friends' Testimonies and the Environment."

The tour of FCNL's offices—led by Senior Legislative Secretary Ned Stowe—highlighted the advanced resource-conserving features, such as sustainably harvested bamboo flooring, extensive use of recycled building materials, vegetated roof, natural lighting, and geothermal heating and cooling, that are part of being a "LEED*-certified" building.

Even more important was the chance to see and feel how the \$5 million rehabilitation project has enhanced the Quaker lobbying group's image within the legislative community on Capitol Hill.

Ned told of an influential legislator who, as a result of visiting the FCNL building, now wants all new federal buildings to meet LEED standards. The renovated offices thus have become an integral part of Quakers' witness to the world, serving as patterns and examples of ways of taking away the occasion of war.

During this visit QEW and FCNL staff also made plans for future postings of FCNL legislative action alerts on the new QEW website [see box]. It is hoped this relationship will continue to grow.

**"LEED" is short for "Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design."*



Ned Stowe shows Ruah the controls that provide heating and cooling with water circulated through a deep well.

THE PALMETTO FRIENDS' annual retreat started with Young Friends exploring the social and environmental problems created by Hurricane Katrina.

After a sober worship-sharing session about current environmental issues, Ruah and Louis decided that this group already knew most of what they had prepared to say on that subject. They shifted focus to the spiritual journeys that led them to transform their lifestyles and to nurture an ecological witness among Quakers.

Ruah shared her revelation that Quakers' historic peace testimony rests on a deeper principle of "peace with Earth." She also portrayed Earthcare as an extension of the testimonies of peace, simplicity, equality and integrity.

Louis told how his freedom to explore nature as a boy helped to develop his spiritual relationship with the land—something that is difficult for many young people to experience today. He also told how for many years he remained in denial about the seriousness of the global environmental crisis. ❖



Louis shares stories of growing up in rural South Carolina, which shaped his spiritual relationship with the land.

New QEW website is networking tool and information center

As of April 15, QEW's website, <www.quakerearthcare.org> was replaced with a completely revamped site that not only more accurately reflects the QEW's structure and activities but serves as a powerful networking tool and information center for Earthcare activists.

Friends are invited to explore the new site regularly, since it contains a wealth of information about ecological issues, as well as links to many kindred groups in the international spiritual ecology movement.

The new website enables users to more easily find related materials. There are web versions of QEW pamphlets and many articles adapted from QEW's new book *Earthcare for Friends*. There are even "QEW-Tips" for eco-friendly living.



BILL BLISS and his wife, the late Isabel Bliss, during a fund-raiser for QEW (then FCUN) at the 1992 FGC Gathering in Canton, N.Y.

Mich. Gray Panthers tap QEW co-founders for 'activist' award

"I'VE NOW BEEN DECLARED an activist," said Bill Bliss of Ann Arbor (Mich.) Friends Meeting with a bit of tongue-in-cheek humor after learning recently that the Huron Valley Gray Panthers would be giving him and his late wife, Isabel Bliss, one of three "Bonar Awards for Gray Activism."

The Blisses were nominated by Al Connor of Ann Arbor Friends Meeting's Environmental Concerns Committee (and member of the QEW Steering Committee).

The award recognizes the Blisses' many years of work for peace, justice, and Earthcare at

local, state, and national levels, including their key role in the founding of Quaker Earthcare Witness (then Friends Committee on Unity with Nature) more than 18 years ago.

The recipients will be honored at a Gray Panthers meeting in mid-May. Accompanying the award will be a \$200 check, to be used as a donation to Bill's favorite organization—"which is QEW, of course," he said.

Bill recalled that at the 1987 FGC Gathering Isabel clerked the first impromptu meeting of workshop attendees who had been inspired by plenary speaker Marshall Massey's call for a Quaker response to the global environmental crisis.

The group continued to meet regularly at the Bliss home at Friends Lake community in Chelsea, Mich. The following year, an organization was formed and incorporated. For the next six years Bill and Isabel served as volunteer staff, with offices occupying most of their living room.

Bill is a retired chemical engineer whose career gave him a lot of information and insights about how misuse of technology has threatened the earth's ecological integrity. He and Isabel worked for many years to build support for Friends Committee on National Legislation, to help it pursue its goal of seeking "an earth restored."

Bill and Isabel helped to organize the Michigan Ecumenical Christian Coalition on the Environment. Bill served on the Steering Committee of Michigan Global Climate Change Coalition. He is currently active in the Chelsea Area peace network. ❖

Ohio Valley Yearly Mtg. 2006 sessions to seek 'Spiritual Path of Stewardship'

"SEEKING an Earth Restored: the **Spiritual Path of Stewardship**" is the theme of this year's Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting sessions, July 26–30, 2006 at Earlham College in Richmond, Ind.

The decision of the Yearly Meeting planning committee to focus on Earthcare this year is partly the fruit of patient but persistent efforts by Bill Cahalan of Community Friends Meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, (a past QEW Steering Committee member) and other members of the Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting Peace & Social Concerns Earthcare Subcommittee.

Plenary speakers at Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting sessions will be Doris Ferm of Bellingham (Wash.) Friends Meeting and Carl Magruder of Sierra Friends Center in Nevada City, Calif., both past QEW Steering Committee members.

Workshops

- ❖ "Embracing Earthcare as a Religious Calling," with Bill Cahalan.
- ❖ FCNL's recently remodeled "green" headquarters in Washington, D.C.
- ❖ "The Biblical Basis for Earthcare," with Paul Buckley.
- ❖ "Music and Nature," with Jamie Fota.
- ❖ "Gardening as a Spiritual Practice," with Kate Anthony.
- ❖ "Developing an Earth-Friendly Community," with Faith Morgan, Pat Murphy, and Megan Quinn.
- ❖ "How Monthly Meetings Can Develop Earthcare Programs," with Debra Jordan and Marcie Ankrom.
- ❖ "Alternatives to Dependence on Fossil Fuels in a Period of Decline of Oil Availability, and its Spiritual Implications," with David Pilbrow.

More information: Bill Cahalan, 513/251-2558; earthawaken@yahoo.com

Couple's adventure in Canadian wilds reminds us to connect with nature and live fully in the present

by Ruah Swennerfelt
QEW General Secretary

IN November of 2001, Louis and I began a three-month journey by public bus from Vermont to Costa Rica. An additional month was spent in Cuba traveling mostly by train and bus. Our "closets" were limited to what we could carry on our backs. We left behind the comforting shelves of books, the ever-present public radio, and all the other accoutrements of a relatively comfortable lifestyle (by Majority World standards, anyway).

In Central America our lodgings were mostly in local folks' homes, sometimes without running or hot water, refrigerators, or many of the things we take for granted in the United States. Interestingly, after a while we found we didn't miss all those comforts and conveniences back home (though we missed our families, friends, and cats). We were growing content with the "simple life" we had chosen for ourselves during our sabbatical.

We spent everyday outdoors in exquisite surroundings, enjoying the exotic birds, animals, and flora. We had lots of time to share ideas, to engage in long conversations with new friends, without feeling rushed. I felt closer to God. I felt there was more time to reflect on my relationship with the Spirit and my desire to live more fully in the present.

THAT'S the kind of journey that Alan Kesselheim and his partner (now wife) Marypat Zitzer embarked on in June of 1985, except that most of the time they had only each other for conversation and companionship: They



Alan and Marypat during their two-year, 2,000-mile wilderness adventure

spent 14 months canoeing 2,000 miles from the town of Jasper in Alberta to Baker Lake in Northwest Territories, just south of the Arctic Circle. They spent two summers canoeing and one long winter caretaking a summer camp in almost total isolation.

Alan tells the story of this journey in his exciting and insightful book, *Water and Sky, Reflections of a Northern Year* (Fulcrum, Inc., Golden, Colo., 1989), which I learned about from Alan's father, Donn Kesselheim, a member of Wyoming Monthly Meeting and QEW's Steering Committee.

Alan shares honestly in the book about his initial trepidation when first launching away from what was known, anticipating the stresses that two people would experience being alone in the wilderness for such a long time. He also beautifully describes their encounters with the natural world, which were sometimes dangerous, and with the indigenous people of the region. I felt like I was journeying with them.

I read this book during a time when I was so busy with paid and volunteer work that I wasn't getting outside to re-connect and ground myself from the earth's

bounty. It reminded me that my work is fuller and richer when I take that time to feel the wind and sun and allow time in my life to really listen to the Spirit.

IT really does come down to the need for balance in our lives. We need the reflective, inward moments, the "wandering in wild places to help feed our spirit" as so aptly said by Bill Cahalan in his QEW booklet, *Awakening to Earth: Natural Awareness as a Spiritual Practice*. But we also need to be engaged in the world. As Friends we are called to be agents for change. So, I particularly appreciate those who share with us their experiences in the natural world, to remind us of the need for that balance and to urge us to shed ourselves of our "jackets of busyness", and expose ourselves to the places that are crying out for our visits.

Alan's evocation of early mornings on the river, of pelting rain, of the threat of a bear, of the sub-zero outdoor showers, of the changing indigenous cultures, and of the inner workings of his mind and heart will forever urge me to take risks and live fully. ❖

I have since read two more of Alan's books. *Going Inside, A Couple's Journey of Renewal into the North*, is the account of their return trip to Canada's tundra, with new adventures, challenges and insights. In the other, *Silhouette on a Wide Land*, Alan describes an early experience working on a ranch in the high plains of Colorado. He reflects on the people that settled the land and shares his growing, intimate relationship with rural life and work. I look forward to reading more of his works!—RS

March 22, 2006
Oxford University Press
Tim Burton, President
198 Madison Ave.
New York NY 10016



Dear Tim Burton,

I am contacting you regarding the paper that the Bible and other religious-oriented books are being printed on. As you know, the scriptures of all religions talk about stewardship and care for creation as a foundation for life. We are encouraging you to do what you can to improve the environmental impacts associated with paper. We have learned about some of the impacts and the solutions from the Green Press Initiative and encourage you to take a leadership role in ensuring that the paper that you use to publish the Bible and other faith-based books is socially responsible.

Our organization, Quaker Earthcare Witness, has adopted the practice of using 100-percent post-consumer recycled paper, bleached without chlorine, for our publications (books, newsletter, and pamphlets) as well as in the office. We encourage you to consider the following paper goals:

- ❖ Paper be produced by a mill with a written commitment to protecting endangered forests and that is willing to track and provide verifiable data to confirm this claim;
- ❖ Paper contains a minimum of 30-percent post-consumer recycled content fiber or as much as can be included, depending on the grade.
- ❖ Any virgin fiber in the paper originates from forests certified by the Forest Stewardship Council [currently FSC-certified

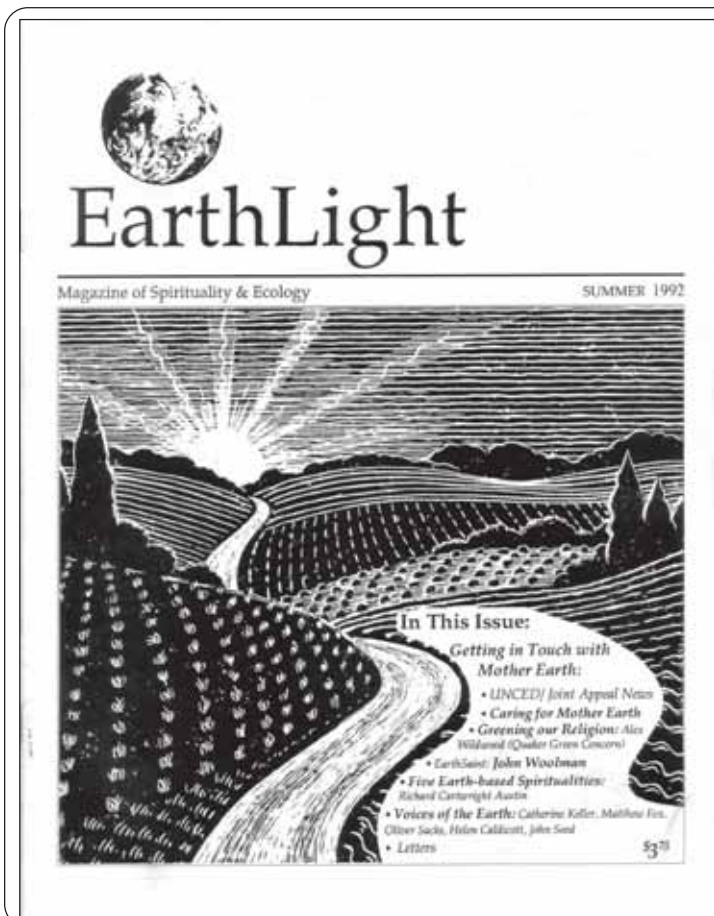
is widely accepted as the best practice in sustainable forestry and is preferred due to its protections for endangered forests, indigenous rights, and biodiversity].

I encourage you further to undertake the following steps:

- ❖ Explore the issue in greater depth within your company.
- ❖ Develop a corporate paper policy to phase in the use of recycled and FSC certified fiber going forward.
- ❖ Communicate policy goals to vendors.

Thank you for considering our request. Please keep me informed of your progress in this area.

For the Earth,
Ruah Swennerfelt
General Secretary
Quaker Earthcare Witness



Ecology and Spirituality... a new Friends Bulletin book project

FRIENDS BULLETIN, the official publication of Western unprogrammed Friends, has decided to collaborate with **EarthLight** to produce a book about the role of Spirit in the environmental movement and our ecological awareness. Inspired by Marshall Massey, Bob Schutz, and Pacific Yearly Meeting's Unity with Nature Committee, **EarthLight** became a pioneer in the spiritual ecology movement and has published articles by some of the outstanding writers in this field—Mathew Fox, Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, Rex Ambler, Keith Helmuth, and Jim Corbett, to mention only a few.

WE ARE LOOKING FOR suggestions about noteworthy Quaker material to include in this anthology. Please contact us no later than **May 15** with your ideas. To find out more about **EarthLight**, please consult its online library at: <www.earthlight.org>.

Quaker Earthcare Witness Order Form

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Quaker Earthcare Witness, 173-B N. Prospect St., Burlington, VT. 05401-1607.

TOTAL \$

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.

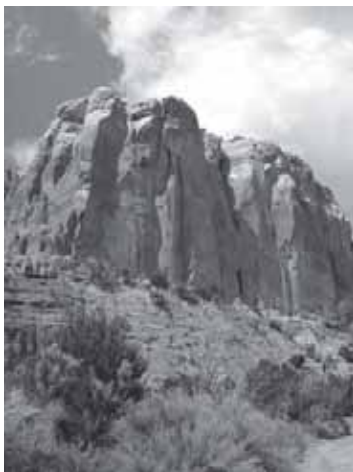
Scenic Ghost Ranch, N.M., picked for QEW 2006 Fall Meeting & Annual Gathering

THE 2006 QEW FALL MEETING & Annual Gathering will be held October 5-8, 2006 at the Ghost Ranch camp and conference center near Abiquiu, New Mexico.

The rugged high desert landscape, between Taos and Santa Fe, will be a special treat for Friends who feel an

affinity for the majestic scenery of the Southwest made famous by the paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe. Those who take advantage of the center's many nature trails will encounter an abundance of birds, mule deer, and other wildlife, as well as unparalleled opportunities for photography and artwork.

The plenary speaker for the QEW Fall Meeting & Annual Gathering will be **David Abazs** of Finland, Minn., a QEW Steering Committee member who spent



several months at Ghost Ranch while preparing for a life of homesteading based on sustainable farming and Quaker values.

Another speaker, **Daniel Baker** of the Saguaro-Juniper Association will talk about the land ethic that the late Jim Corbett de-

scribed in his posthumously published book, *A Sactuary for All Life*.

Other plans for the meeting, including workshops and outings, are being worked out by the QEW Outreach Committee. Workshops will focus on the ecological issues and inspiring beauty of the desert bioregion. Guided nature walks will be part of the program.

Look for more information in the next issue of *BeFriending Creation*, as well as on the QEW website. ❖

BeFriending Creation

BeFriending Creation, Vol. 19, No. 3, May-June 2006. Newsletter of **Quaker Earthcare Witness**. ISSN 1050-0332. Published bi-monthly.

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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Membership in Quaker Earthcare is open to all who demonstrate commitment to support the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness and who support its work at the Monthly or Yearly Meeting levels, or through other Friends organizations. Quaker Earthcare Witness is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation; contributions are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

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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Website:

www.QuakerEarthcare.org

May-June 2006

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QEW events to complement Gathering's 'Living Waters' theme

EVENTS in the QEW Earthcare Center at the 2006 FGC Gathering July 1-7 in western Washington state will complement the Gathering's theme of "Swimming in Living Waters," by giving participants an opportunity to understand the ecology of the bio-region from a spiritual perspective.

Sunday, July 2: "Re-membering Our Lives, Renewing Our Planet." Roy and Carolyn Treadway will discuss choices that can simplify our lives, especially regarding time, speed, and "stuff," while helping to renew the earth.

Monday, July 3: "Climate Change—Hope and Action." Karen Street will explore the science of climate change. Carl Magruder will talk about the Good News, the cosmic moment, the Gospel of the Earth, and not despairing. Dee Rossman will lead a discussion on how we can keep in communication and organize action around the topic of climate change. Also scheduled are video showings from the QEW Video Lending Library, such as *Oil on Ice* (oil drilling in Alaska) and *Coming Home*, part of David Suzuki's *Sacred Balance* series.



Tuesday, July 4: On the Gathering's scheduled "day of rest," the QEW Earthcare Center will be open for reading, discussion, and reflection.

Wednesday, July 5: "Sabbath Economics and Earthcare." Also, "Local Food: Building a Community Food System," with Kristina Perry and Kitty Ufford-Chase, followed by one of QEW's videos on the subject of food or sustainable agriculture.

Thursday, July 6: "Building and Creating Sustainable Communities." Ruah Swennerfelt will share from her own experience and from other sources exciting processes that have helped many communities become more sustainable. There may also be a video and discussion on neighborhood design, possibly followed by *Journey into New Worlds*, part of David Suzuki's *Sacred Balance* video series.

Late evening programs on Tuesday and Thursday (often arranged in response to emerging interests at the Gathering) will be posted in the Earthcare Center.

Much of the planning for this year's events is being done by the Friends in Unity with Nature Committee of Pacific Yearly Meeting (PYM-CUN).