

BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness

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Getting around in —‘sustainable Sweden’

by Ruah Swennerfelt and Louis Cox
Quaker Earthcare Witness staff

GEORGE FOX urged us to be “patterns and examples.” But to know how to do this, we sometimes need to seek out others who are already good examples.

When we apply this to ecologically sustainable living, who else in the world can we North Americans, with our huge ecological footprints, take some lessons from?

QEW supporter William Alexander has written passionately and persuasively about Kerala, India, which, in contrast to much of the “developing” world, enjoys a surprisingly high quality of life and low environmental impact, even while its per-capita income is low. But Keralans are different enough culturally that North Americans are not likely to see them as models for dealing with their own sustainability problems.

But what about *Sweden*?

We recently returned from a two-week visit to Sweden, where some of Ruah’s relatives live. We were “blown away” by how this technologically advanced Scandinavian country of nine million people about the size of the northeastern U.S. could be so far ahead of us on many measures.

*As “European-Americans” ourselves, we could easily identify with the Swedish example when it involves a people with whom we share many historic roots and cultural norms (not to mention much of the same DNA!).**

Confirming what we could see for ourselves is the 2005 report of the global Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI) <<http://www.yale.edu/esi/>>, which we learned about when we got home. It ranks 146 countries according to such things as pollution levels, air and water quality, energy use, biodiversity,



WORKHORSES of the Swedish national transportation system are electric-powered inter-city trains, like the ones pictured here leaving the city of Malmö every ten or 15 minutes. Note the crowded bicycle parking lot, serving thousands of commuters who prefer this mode of travel to the headaches and expense of private cars.

population control, and environmental regulations. The top six ESI countries currently are *Finland, Norway, Uruguay, Sweden, Iceland, and Canada*. Sadly, the United States ranks 46th (just ahead of Belarus).

According to the report, Sweden stands out in terms of strong governmental commitment to the environment, in contrast to the U.S., whose elected and unelected leaders are hard at work turning back the clock on the country’s hard-won environmental protection programs and social safety nets.

Right now Sweden gets about a fourth of its energy from renewable sources—primarily hydroelectric, biomass, and wind. The government is budgeting more than \$100 million a year for renewable energy research & development as it pursues a dead-serious goal of becoming “oil-free” and energy-self-sufficient by 2020. Since the disastrous meltdown at Russia’s Chernobyl facility in the 1980s, it has been phasing out its nuclear power plants. Contrast this to the U.S., which has no agenda for dealing with its addiction to oil or its disproportionate greenhouse gas emissions.

Interestingly, this ranking of countries seems to have flip-flopped over the last half-century. We can

* We aren’t ignoring other cultural and ethnic sectors of the U.S. who have less reason to identify with northern Europe. —That’s just a topic for another kind of article.

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>> **Sustainable Sweden**, from page 1

read in history books about the millions of aggrieved Scandinavian emigrants who found North America to be truly a land of hope and opportunity. But since the end of World War II, the U.S. has taken a very different path to human, economic, and urban development. We've promoted the accumulation of financial capital while draining our social capital and natural capital. We've traded once-thriving public transit systems for suburban sprawl. Our physical and community health have been undermined by an automobile-oriented, TV-drugged existence. Due to these short-sighted choices, we have not only lost our edge but we have seriously compromised our children's and grandchildren's future.

The contrast that struck us the most was Sweden's world-class transportation system. Cars have a place, but the majority of Swedes get around on clean, quiet, energy-efficient rapid public transit. The fact that most trains are electric-powered and that many city buses run on natural gas helps to explain the excellent air quality in most cities. And because Sweden isn't plagued with urban sprawl, the buses and trains can provide better service. This increases ridership and keeps fares affordable.

On one inter-city bus trip, we were pleased to find a clean, spacious restroom with hot and cold running water *and* a flush toilet, unlike the grimy Greyhound buses in the U.S. There weren't any signs or announcements telling us not to smoke or use alcoholic beverages, not to bother others with loud talking or music, and to please use the provided trash containers. —It was *assumed* that everyone knew how to behave appropriately on a bus. And everyone did!

In a region where pump prices have always been a better indication of the *true cost* of gasoline, most Swedes don't have to be sold on the idea of bicycles as serious transportation—in all kinds of weather. In most city centers, bicyclists and pedestrians *rule*, and car access is restricted in many commercial districts. Large areas in towns are set aside for bicycle parking. Bicycle commuters have their own *road systems*, not mere "lanes" squeezed in as afterthoughts.

Another thing that struck us about Sweden was the high priority that most people give to ecologically responsible choices. "In order to sell something

in Sweden you almost always have to mention something about its being good for the environment," one of Ruah's cousins told us.

We also learned that Sweden doesn't have as many grassroots organizations working for eco-justice, economic and social justice, and nature preservation as we do—simply because there is already a consensus among Swedes about the way things ought to be that is readily carried out in most governmental operations and corporate practices. This is why their



SWEDEN has multi-lane highways, but its transportation system is more heavily weighted toward public transit, like this natural gas-powered tandem city bus.

government inspects farms to ensure humane treatment of animals, and items like free-range eggs with tasty dark-yellow yolks are plentiful in the stores. This is why all workers are guaranteed five weeks of vacation, and working parents are offered paid maternity and paternity leave. This is why Sweden has a high quality national health care system—like all industrialized nations *except* the U.S.

BUT despite all of the things we observed that have made Sweden vastly more people-friendly and Earth-friendly, *we never had that gut feeling of being in a "foreign" country*. Daily life there is about all the same things—people going to jobs, shopping, repairing streets, attending school, playing sports, enjoying the outdoors, etc. It felt more like we had entered a kind of "Twilight Zone" and were given a glimpse of the "kinder, gentler" society that ours might have become if our forebears had made different choices.

What's involved if *we* now choose to live sustainably? Members of QEW and others in the spirituality & ecology movement believe this requires a "*spiritual transformation*"—freeing ourselves from the spell of materialism and the illusion of separation from the natural world.

But Sweden seems to have made such a shift in consciousness while remaining a mostly *secular* society (only 10 percent of Swedes regularly attend church). So what we are calling "spiritual" must not be restricted to the teachings of organized religion today.

Yet we believe that faith communities still have a vital role to play in leading humankind back to right relationship with all of Creation. *We believe that more people would reconnect with their faith traditions if they heard the Gospel articulated in a way that affirms the inseparability of personal salvation from the health of the whole Earth community.* ❖

Eco-Justice and Our Testimony of Equality

by **Barbara Williamson**
QEW Steering Committee Clerk

SINCE the beginning of the Religious Society of Friends, we have incorporated into our lives the testimony that there is that of God in everyone. This year is the 350th anniversary of the first Quaker to come to the New World. *She* landed near what is now Annapolis, Maryland, to spread the Quaker message. In the middle of the 1800s, Quakers were the core of a movement to support the abolition of slavery. Conscientious objectors during World War II brought to light the need for changes in the care of the mentally ill. These are just a few of the many times when the Quaker Testimony of Equality has led us to change the culture of our times.

Once again it is time for Quakers to embrace the Testimony of Equality, not only as an individual leading but also as a mandate to change the world. From the sacred mountains of the Navajo in the West to the southern Appalachian Mountains in the East, mountain-top removal for mining coal and other resources is destroying the way of life and the traditions of the people that hold these mountains in their hearts. All over America, companies are extracting, using, storing, and disposing of chemicals that threaten the surrounding neighborhoods. Often those living in these areas are poor and/or people of color.

I recently returned from the National Council of Churches'

Eco-Justice Conference, where the opening speaker was author Bill McKibben. Bill shared with the conference attendees information on recent scientific research that indicates that the United States needs an immediate 50-percent



reduction in its use of fossil fuels to offset the effects of climate change and that we probably have only about 10 years to reverse global climate change.

We can no longer be observers to the changes that are taking place. The communities, homes and lives of thousands of people, just in the United States, are being threatened. (With 72 percent of the United States population living within 100 miles

Standing by and watching lives and communities being destroyed contradicts the very heart of the Testimony of Equality.

of a coastline, Americans are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.)

If you are reading this then you know what's going on in the United States and around the world. The mad rush to provide the resources to support the American way of life is destroying the cultures, lifestyles, and, in some cases, the very lives of those people who do not have the political might to protect themselves and their families. Standing by and watching lives and communities being destroyed contradicts the very heart of the Testimony of Equality. Do some people really deserve so much more than others? Do the lives of some people

have no meaning for a privileged few? Can Quakers sit back and watch without acting? What exactly can we do?

NOT all of us will join the ranks of people like John Woolman and Wangari Matthai, but there are things that you can do. You can start by following the tradition of: "Each one teach one." Share your concern for the environment with one other person. Then another. Soon you will have influenced a "village." Begin with the people in your Monthly Meeting. Find a few other like-minded people and form a group to do a green evaluation of your Meetinghouse. Share what you found with the rest of the Meeting and why it is important to make your Meetinghouse Earth-friendly. Work with your Meeting to have the changes implemented. Continue to talk with the people in your Meeting about the importance of caring for the environment and how abuses to the envi-

ronment are affecting the lives of people all over the world. Become involved with your Yearly Meeting. Join the committee working on caring for Creation. If there isn't one, then become involved in starting one. Work with other Monthly Meetings.

As I write this, my family will soon be celebrating the birth of my first great-niece. What will the world be like for her? Don't all children deserve a world that shows them the beauty of God's creation and not a world reflecting the waste of our consumer-orientation? Every child deserves to live in a world restored. Living our Testimony of Equality can make that happen. ❖

Awaken to a sense of place in the desert Southwest

by Ruah Swennerfelt

MAKE your plans now for the QEW Annual Meeting & Gathering, October 5–8 at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico, in an awe-inspiring landscape north of Santa Fe. We have a full agenda of interesting people, exciting activities, and fun!

This year, instead of workshops we've invited four people who are well-known leaders in various facets of Earthcare to share their visions and work. Our keynote speaker will be featured Friday evening, and the other three will speak during the day on Saturday. We'll also have outdoor worship, hikes, bird walks, and a "Sharing Our Gifts" show on Saturday night.

Annual Meeting Registration forms will be available on the QEW website by mid-July.

"Where have all the flowers gone—Seeds of Hope in Troubled Soils" will be the keynote talk by **DAVID ABAZS**, whose journey began at Ghost Ranch's highland desert farm in the summer of 1987.

He will survey food and farming trends around the world and highlight the seeds of hope for building a truly sustainable food system. "We will reveal our personal journey, successes and failures, in trying to create a family along with a sustainable community-based food system," David says. Bringing insights to Friends' roles in this and other local and global concerns, David will use music, slides, and stories for this exploration.



David Abazs

David, his wife Lise, and their boys, Colby and Tremayne, operate Round River Farm, an ongoing experiment in sustainable farming and living which includes a dairy and a CSA. The farm utilizes alternative power systems, water and nutrient recycling, and is close to becoming fossil-fuel free. After receiving degrees in Environmental and Intercultural Studies and traveling the world extensively, David and Lise were led to northern Minnesota 19 years ago to work on discovering humanity's niche in nature's economy.

David works as the northeast Minnesota organizer for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, teaches a farming curriculum, and leads hands-on workshops. He is actively involved in local politics, regional agriculture and sustainability efforts. The Abazs family are members of the Duluth-Superior Monthly Meeting and are active in Northern Yearly Meeting.

LYNDA TAYLOR has been Co-Director for Sustainable Communities/ZERI-NM for the last five years. SCZ <www.scizerinm.org> is a Santa Fe-based nonprofit that works to halt poverty and environmental degradation and to simultaneously provide local economic opportunities that strengthen culture and address social needs. They work with communities to help uncover hidden assets for use towards local sustainability

and regeneration and to achieve environmental, economical, social, and cultural goals simultaneously. They work to change the way people think about "wastes" and promote using all "waste" to create economic opportunities while simultaneously preserving and enhancing the environment. The philosophy of SCZ is that "you cannot force nature to produce more; you must do more with what nature provides."

The specific project that Lynda will highlight concerns a local forest initiative. Small-diameter trees (less than 9 inches) thinned from Picuris, N.M., forests (pinon, juniper, ponderosa) are not used to their greatest economic potential. There is an abundance of these trees thinned with little value added beyond firewood, and with 60 percent unemployment, there is a great need for economic development at Picuris. SCZ is working on a pilot project to use the "waste" small-diameter trees lying in their landfill and the slash left in the forests after thinning for value-



Linda Taylor

added products. The five value-added product areas proposed include the production of: (1) a natural wood charcoal; (2) preserved wood capturing and using the charcoal fumes; (3) raising edible native mushrooms on wood chips; (4) using spent mushroom substrate after mushroom harvest as an animal feed supplement; and (5) producing a mushroom compost amendment for forest soil restoration.

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>> **Annual meeting**, from page 4

Lynda has been a leader in the non profit environmental community in New Mexico for 30 years, having headed up numerous projects at the Southwest Research and Information Center, the NM Conservation Voters Alliance, and the Coalition for Clean, Affordable Energy.

DANIEL BAKER will talk on *Beyond the Sanctuary Movement: The Prophetic Vision of Jim Corbett*. Daniel was instrumental in the posthumous publication of the late Jim Corbett's book, *Sanctuary for All Life*, including writing the essential introduction.

Jim was a co-founder of the Sanctuary Movement in the 1980s. He recognized no being as alien, regardless of species. He lived and worked within a wider vision of "that of God in all being," and as such he saw human relationship to Nature as central to faith rather than as one ancillary concern among others.



Daniel Baker

Daniel will discuss Jim's work of "land redemption," particularly as articulated in Jim's *Sanctuary for All Life*.

Daniel has an academic background in philosophy and religion and most recently has worked with the Nature Conservancy and local conservation groups. He and Jim were friends during the last decade of Jim's life, and they worked together in the Saguaro Juniper Corporation and the Cascabel Hermitage Association in Cascabel, Arizona.

HOLLISTER KNOWLTON was one of seven North Americans who had the extraordinary opportunity to travel to the legendary sustainable community of Gaviotas in Colombia in June 2005. Their trip included a visit to Marandua, where ZERI (Zero Emissions Research Institute) is helping create the 100,000-acre



Hollister Knowlton

Gaviotas II, and to Manezales, home of the ZERI Pavillion. One of the Manezales projects is growing oyster mushrooms from the waste of coffee companies.

Hollister will share photos of her trip to Gaviotas, linking it with the revolutionary work of ZERI and with QEW's 2005 workcamp at La Bella Farm in Costa Rica, while weaving a story of inspirational work by visionary, world-changing men and women. She asks us and herself, "How does our faith call us to live in this unsustainable world? How are we a part of the Great Turning?"

After 24 years in science and environmental education and advocacy and 12 years in communications, Hollister took early retirement in January 2004 to devote her life to service in the area of ecological sustainability and healing the human-Earth relationship.

Hollister is Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's representative to QEW and clerk of QEW's Outreach Committee. She also serves as facilitator for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Earthcare

QEW e-mail & web problems solved— Please try us again!

AROUND the middle of May, we noticed a sharp drop-off in e-mail traffic for the QEW office. Then we discovered that the QEW website was down.

No, our site hadn't been "hacked," but it turned out that the server for our e-mail and website was having technical problems that apparently couldn't be resolved.

We promptly "fired" that outfit and switched to another. Since then we have been getting good service.

But in the switching process, we may have permanently lost a number of e-mails sent to QEW that had been blocked or bounced.

If, from the middle of May to early June 2006 any of your e-mails to QEW bounced or you didn't get a response from us, please resend them! —ed.

Working Group and as clerk of the Eco-Subcommittee of her Meeting's Peace & Social Concerns Committee. Since 2003, she has been an at-large representative to Friends Committee on National Legislation and is a member of its Policy Committee. She is also on the board of Philadelphia's Energy Coordinating Agency.

In 2002, Hollister was one of four delegates from QEW to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, where she and QEW Steering Committee member Mary Gilbert worked with the Energy & Climate Change Caucus. ❖

Author explains why monetary reform is needed to solve today's social and ecological crises

by Louis Cox

IN an impromptu afternoon talk at the April QEW Steering Committee meeting in Chicago, Stephen Zarlenga, author of the book *The Lost History of Money*, outlined his case for monetary reform, which he believes is essential if the world is to deal effectively with mounting social and ecological problems.

But getting average citizens to wake up to the problem is difficult because the banking system shrouds itself in a kind of religious mystique, he said.

Imagine the Federal Reserve System as a priesthood presiding over a solemn ritual that turns ordinary paper into something called debt, then magically transforms it into its opposite, credit.

But if this is a religion it has a curious twist, Zarlenga noted. It abhors morality, putting its faith in an all-knowing, invisible "moving hand" that conveniently bestows most of its blessings on those who already have the most.

Contrary to popular belief, the Federal Reserve System is not a government agency but an *independent* network of *private* banks. It, not the government, creates the currency used by its member institutions. Also contrary to popular belief, the paper notes held by banks and borrowers represents only a fraction of that abstraction called "dollars" said to be circulating within that abstraction called "the economy."

To grasp the implications of what Zarlenga is saying, try to imagine what the board game Monopoly™ might look like if it was played by the Fed's rules: The "Bank" wouldn't begin with any currency to give out to players; it



STEPHEN ZARLENGA reviews the history of money systems, showing how they hold the key to who has ultimate control in any society.

would have to borrow currency from an outside "Super Bank." The rate of interest the Bank is charged on what it has just borrowed would affect the amount and terms of the currency that can provide to the players. The game would speed up or slow down accordingly.

In this more "realistic" version of Monopoly, the players would need some place to keep the currency they get from the Bank, so they would open up accounts with the Bank. Curiously, the Bank would then be allowed to count those debt-based deposits as *assets*, enabling it to lend more money to other borrowers. Under these topsy-turvy rules, the Bank could end up lending out *many times* the amount of currency it borrows from the Super Bank.

That's basically how some \$700 billion is created within the Federal Reserve System each year. But Zarlenga asks a question that ordinary people aren't supposed to ask: "Where does that \$700 billion go?" It hasn't been going into the nation's roads and bridges. It isn't going into the public schools. It didn't go to building proper levees for New Orleans. It *has* lined the pockets of a wealthy elite. This scandalous situation stands as an

indictment of the current monetary system, which exists only to promote the growth of financial capital, he said.

Before we can chart a course for getting out of this mess, Zarlenga said we need to study the history of money. We need to realize that money can't be based on a hoard of precious metals. Whatever token is chosen as an exchange medium, the quantity of money to be created and how

it is to be allocated is the result of a collective human decision. In a sound monetary system, virtually everyone would be a stakeholder, and currency would be linked as much as possible to things of real value, thus ensuring adequate financial support for things that the society considers important.

This would have the natural effect of taking away the occasion of war and lessening society's pressures on the natural environment, he suggested.

ZARLENGA summarized why he thinks the U.S. Treasury Department might do a better job of managing the monetary system: The amount of money to be made available to private banks could be linked to the amount needed to carry out public works approved by Congress. Instead of sapping the economy, as supporters of the *status quo* might argue, such infrastructure improvements would revitalize local economies, stimulate research and development, and boost tax bases and employment. If such programs were chosen carefully, the inflationary effect would be minimal, compared to current spending on defense contracts, which tends to be highly inflationary, Zarlenga said. ❖

Steering Committee has intense, productive session in Chicago

THE various committees and interest groups of the QEW Steering Committee worked intensely and productively during their spring business meeting at the Cenacle Conference & Retreat Center in Chicago.

During the first night's introductions, Friends were asked to share one thing they resolved to do in the coming year in service to a sustainable future. One person called attention to the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment Report, which states that the earth's ecosystems are already 60 percent degraded.

In plenary sessions, Friends worked on a written response to FCNL's request for input on its proposed legislative priorities for the 108th Congress. They also learned from AFSC-Philadelphia office representative Angie Berryman how the AFSC has been working to instill democratic principles and eco-justice into global trade and investment activities.

The Sustainability: Faith & Action Interest Group met with



ABOVE: The Sustainability: Faith & Action Interest Group labors with details of its "Men for Men" fund, which will encourage vasectomies.

ABOVE RIGHT: Cenacle director Bob Raccuglia, center, accepts QEW's gift of compact fluorescent lights to help save energy and fight global warming.

RIGHT: David Abazs, center, demonstrates the vegetable-oil-powered diesel car that he drove from Minnesota.



Angie later to explore ways that QEW could collaborate with AFSC in the future, similar to the way it has been working with FCNL.

In the Ann Kriebel/San Luis Committee, clerk Susannah McCandless gave a progress report on the development of a legal agreement that would secure the *parceleros'* interests in their parcels while preventing any future sale of the land except to another land

trust with similar aims.

In the Publications Committee, Publications Coordinator Louis Cox demonstrated the new QEW website and received input from the Committee on the draft of a future QEW flyer, *Slow Down to the Speed of Life*. He also reported strong sales of QEW's latest book, *Earthcare Friends, a Study Guide for Individuals and Faith Communities*.

The Outreach Committee reported good progress in scheduling Yearly Meeting visitations, developing Monthly Meeting Contacts, and planning programs for the upcoming FGC Gathering.

The mid-year financial report showed that contributions to QEW are in line with earlier budget projections, and the personnel report indicated that QEW is pleased with the work of the QEW staff.

During free time, Friends took advantage of opportunities to visit the nearby zoos, natural history museums, and conservatories and to watch local and migratory birds in Lincoln Park.

Several Friends also stayed up late for impromptu discussions and to watch a video about Native American spirituality. ❖

New rep from Western YM brings varied talents and interests to Steering Committee

MARSHALL GIBSON of the Indianapolis, Ind., First Friends Church, Western Yearly Mtg.'s new representative to QEW, acquired many talents and interests from a variety of career and life experiences.



Marshall Gibson

After graduating from the Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Ind., he served as a pastor in a number of Friends Churches.

He later worked for a public housing agency, teaching new tenants such basic skills as han-

dling contracts, getting along with neighbors, and fire prevention. These days he picks up extra income as a storyteller and, yes, as a seasonal Santa Claus!

Marshall developed an affinity with nature while living on an island in Maine as a boy. He also became concerned about the pollution in Maine's Kennebec River.

He say he still has a hard time understanding why more people aren't interested in taking care of the earth.

Marshall Massey called to complete interrupted pilgrimage to Baltimore Yearly Meeting sessions

by Louis Cox

IN EARLY JUNE 2006, Marshall Massey, a Friend from Omaha, Neb., had to take a break from his planned 80-day pilgrimage from Omaha to Harrisonburg, Va., due to physical ailments that worsened over the first 2½ weeks of his scheduled 1,150-mile journey.

Despite great suffering, he got as far as central Illinois! *Way to go!*

After a period of recuperation at home for badly swollen ankles and elevated blood pressure, Marshall hopes to continue on a modified itinerary that may include some use of motorized transportation as the need arises, he wrote recently in his on-line computer journal at <http://journal.earthwitness.org/>.

Known for writings and talks that aroused Quakers' interest in ecological issues in the 1980s, Marshall felt the call to undertake this walk after being invited to be the keynote speaker at Baltimore Yearly Meeting on the topic of living in harmony with all God's creation. He interpreted BYM's invitation as a request to help them discern what they are called to do as Friends about deteriorating ecological conditions globally.

Marshall decided that this challenge called for deep discernment on his own part, which he believed could be done best under the conditions encountered on a very long walk—with ample time for prayer and reflection and in a state of vulnerability that would keep him attuned to divine love and power. He also saw the trip as an opportunity to engage Friends and others along the way in meaningful conversations about environmental issues. He expected that this would involve more listening



MARSHALL Massey at a QEW meeting near Canton, N.Y., in the early 1990s.

than talking on his part.

Marshall raised several thousand dollars, including \$1,000 from QEW, to help with travel expenses and to cover some of the household income he would lose while on leave from his job. He also contacted Friends, Friends Meetings, and other kindred spirits to arrange hospitality and speaking opportunities along the route.

Sometimes he was a guest in people's homes. Other times he had to hustle as night fell to find a spot where he would be allowed to pitch his tent.

To regularly update his on-line journal he apparently carried along a small notebook computer that was set up for wireless Internet connection.

His almost-daily entries include reflections on various environmental issues that he observed along the way—from the pitiful sight of countless road-killed animals to seriously eroded farmland in the Midwest.

He summarized discussions with local residents about the things that are undermining the health of the land, from tax-subsidized ethanol fuel programs that aren't as renewable as portrayed to absentee owners who invest in farmland only for short-term profit. Generally absent from most people's consciousness was the kind of "land ethic" that Aldo Leopold was writing about more than 50 years ago, Marshall noted.

Marshall was able to schedule meetings with a majority of the Friends Meetings/churches along his route that he had contacted. As a member of a "conservative" Yearly Meeting, he felt he was well-positioned to engage Friends who were oriented to different parts of the theological spectrum.

HE WAS ALWAYS welcomed warmly in the characteristic way that Midwesterners extend themselves to strangers. But he met many conservative Friends who were quite cool toward a number of environmental views and positions they associated with "liberal" Friends groups.

He heard general support for such practical measures as land and water conservation and recycling programs, but few of his contacts viewed global warming, species extinction, genetic engineering and other issues as serious problems. Marshall sometimes detected as well a degree of disdain for "environmentalists" in general, who were portrayed as indifferent to the problems of average working people and the poor.

When Marshall resumes his walk, we look forward to more journal reflections on how Quakers might be able to come to unity on this vital concern. ❖

'Last Hours' calls us to a new vision for human life on Earth

The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight

The Fate of the World and What We Can Do Before It's Too Late

by Thom Hartmann

Three Rivers Press, 2004. ISBN 1-4000-5157-6 Pbk.

Reviewed by Mary Jo Klingel

IN THE Afterword to *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight*, by Thom Hartmann, Neale Donald Walsh, author of *Conversations with God*, says, "You have just read one of the most important books you will ever read in your life." I agree.

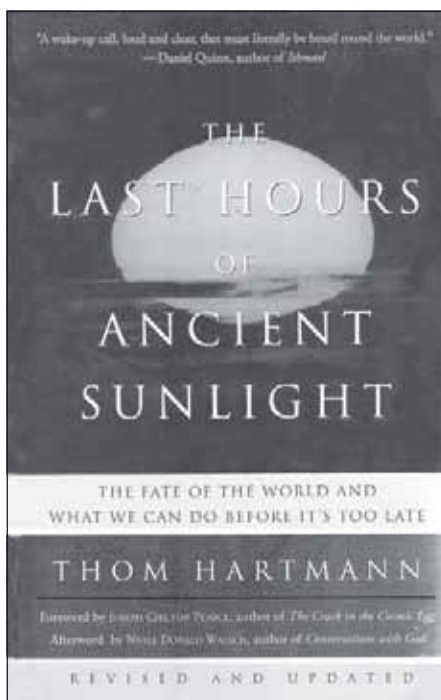
I finished reading this book and systematically called every bookstore in town until I had purchased five copies. I gave two to members of my QEW committee and mailed three to friends. One of my friends who received the book called me and said that, by page 25, she had had a panic attack and when she finished it, she bought five copies and mailed them to her friends.

The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight spoke powerfully to me, to the part of me that longs for a deeper vision about our environment. I recycle, compost, drive a fuel-efficient car, eat low on the fuel chain. I do what I know to do now. On darker days I think that what I do gets wiped out every day by our processes of consumption. I longed for a deeper analysis until I read *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight* and realized I had found it.

Here is a summary of the first section of the book:

"We're all made out of sunlight and everything we depend on is fueled by sunlight.

"For hundreds of thousands of years we lived off of current local sunlight. Then we discovered ancient sunlight, buried in the ground, and began consuming it both for its heat and as a raw material to replace man-made fabrics.



"Capturing the ancient sunlight increased our productivity, but it also increased our appetite for more. . . . Now the last hours of ancient sunlight are in view, perhaps less than a lifetime away." (Page 83)

In his analysis, Thom Hartmann does not settle for a list of "what we all can do now." He does not deny that there is plenty to do. He moves past the "doing" into a vision of a *paradigm shift or spiritual and cultural transformation*. Again, I quote:

"Missing the point of a book like this is quite easy to do, because this book makes a radical departure from the normal fare of self-help and environmentalism. It presents the problems, delves into the cause of them, and then presents as a solution something that many may think couldn't possibly be a solution because it seems un-

fathomable difficult: change our culture, beginning with yourself." (page 346)

The paradox, of course, is that telling us *how* to change ourselves would only lead back into a list of what we can do now. Instead, he returns to the values of the Older Culture as a guideline:

"Return to the ancient and honest ways in which humans participated in the web of life on the Earth, seeing yourself and all things as sacred and interpenetrated. Listen to the voice of all life and feel the heartbeat of Mother Earth." (Page 351)

It is hard to resist the search for the how-to's, but the path is becoming clearer to many of us. We just need to keep talking to one another, and to more people and more.

Then buy this book. Read it. Buy five copies for your friends. We are all waking up together. ❖

Mother of all clotheslines calls attention to the mother of all crises

ENVIRONMENTALISTS in London, England, observed UN World Environment Day on June 6th by stringing up a 113,000-foot clothesline, complete with drying laundry, to call attention to lifestyle and attitude changes that can soften the coming Peak Oil crisis.

In connection with the event, Britain's Environment Agency announced that if each family in Britain hung up just *one* load of washing each week instead of using a gas or electric-powered dryer, that would save \$166 million a year in fossil fuel costs while keeping 500,000 tons of climate-changing carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.

Remembering Paul Weber, 1921–2006

—He helped keep QEW's light flickering

PAUL WEBER, one of the founders of QEW who kept its light flickering during its formative years, passed away at his home at Foxdale Village in State College, Pa., on June 2, 2006 at the age of 85. He will be remembered for his lifelong love of nature and his talent for keeping QEW's work grounded in the Spirit.

After receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in botany from Cornell University in 1943 and a Ph.D. degree in plant pathology from the University of Wisconsin in 1948, Paul began a long career in agricultural research that included more than 20 years' service as chief of the Bureau of Plant Pathology in the New Jersey Department of Agriculture.

When they moved from Madison, Wis., to Haddonfield, N.J., Paul and his wife Amy had hoped to continue their involvement with Unitarians. But since there wasn't a Unitarian fellowship in their new community they started attending Quaker Meetings. Soon there were convinced that they had found their spiritual home.

After retirement in 1985 they became regulars at Friends General Conference Gatherings and even persuaded their friends, Bill and Isabel Bliss, to start coming.

Paul's interest in nature and environmental issues led him to join an FGC workshop on Quakers and the Environment at the 1987 Gathering, which was led by

Bill and Alice Howenstine. Paul and a number of other Friends from this workshop (including the



PAUL WEBER at the entrance to the Unity with Nature Center at the 1991 FGC Gathering in Boone, N.C.

Blisses) were impressed by the FGC plenary talk on the spiritual dimension of environmental concerns. They convened the first of a series of meetings at the Bliss home that led to the formation of Friends Committee on Unity with Nature (later renamed Quaker Earth-

care Witness). Paul and Amy were very active in FCUN events during the next ten years. They also planned and carried out a creative and exciting "Peaceable Rainforest" theme for the Unity with Nature center at the FGC Gathering in Boone, N.C. in 1991.

Paul and Amy also were clerks of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Environmental Working Group. They traveled all over the country, meeting Quaker environmentalists, attending elder hostels, and visiting children and great grandchildren. They retired to Foxdale Village in 1995.

BILL AND ALICE HOWENSTINE of McHenry, Illinois, recently sent these words of condolence to Amy:

"We look back fondly to Paul's participation in the environmental workshop we led at Oberlin in 1987. That workshop and all the active people participating in it, combined

Letters

Cenacle Retreat & Conference Center
513 Fullerton Parkway
Chicago IL 60614

Dear Ruah,

This is a much overdue note of thanks to you and the Quaker Earthcare Witness group for the gift of the compact fluorescent lights, as well as the fact sheet, during the recent QEW Steering Committee meeting at our Center.

"Witness" is a good name for your group; I feel that your presence at the Cenacle these past two years has been a strong witness to us, helping to propel us in a direction that we want to go—to operate in a more ecologically responsible way. We had already begun replacing incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent lights. Your gift has caused us to accelerate the process.

I hope that everyone was pleased with the April meeting. We look forward to hosting you again next year.

Bob Raccuglia
Director

with Marshall Massey's plenary lecture, gave birth to FCUN (QEW). You and Paul both played such strong roles in the early formation of this group.

A special example for us is your initiation of the early morning outdoor worship at the Gathering. We remember so well Paul's gentle but commanding presence at the break of that worship, greeting Friends and inviting them to FCUN activities. The outdoor worship manifests the spiritual basis of QEW, making it visible for all to see." ❖

Quaker Earthcare Witness Order Form

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Interests

Please check the appropriate boxes

- 1-year support for Quaker Earthcare Witness
(includes subscription to **BeFriending Creation**)
- \$500/US \$100/US \$50/US (avg) \$35/US Other \$ ___/US

Make checks payable to **Quaker Earthcare Witness**. Send with this form to
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.

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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Magnificent Healing music from Earth Mama

WE OFTEN CHOOSE a piece of music to suit a particular "mood" we're in. But we don't often think about the *therapeutic* uses of music.

Quaker composer and singer Earth Mama (Joyce Rouse) has produced a number of CDs that celebrate the natural world. Not only are they toe-tapping entertainment for all ages, but they teach us how to care about and care for Mother Earth.

Earth Mama's latest CD album, *Magnificent Healing*, is aimed at those of us who are particularly in need of *healing*, as we feel the suffering of the earth and its creatures and are troubled by continuing indifference by so many of our fellow humans.

So Earth Mama doesn't intend for us to casually stick this disc into the CD carousel as background entertainment as we go about our busyness. Hers is the rich and lovely voice of a long-suffering parent welcoming her

now-repentant prodigal children back into right relationship.

But first we have to make the task of healing our top priority. To get her point, we have to

sit down, focus, and really listen with our minds and hearts.

One very moving piece on her 8-track, 65-minute CD asks us:

"How would we live if we knew the earth was sacred? How would we live if we believed there was holiness in all? How would we live? How would we live?—And why don't we live that way now?"

This amazing album can be ordered through Earth Mama's website <www.earthmama.org> or

Earth Mama Supplies
P.O. Box 450
Independence VA 24348

The cost of the CD is \$15 plus \$4 shipping & handling. (For \$75 plus \$8 S & H, you can get all six of Earth Mama's albums.)



July-August 2006

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IYM Environmental Concerns Committee unveils plan to involve more members of Illinois Yearly Meeting in Earthcare

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE of Illinois Yearly Meeting seeks to involve members of the Yearly Meeting with the joys and preciousness of our environment and with ways to protect and care for the earth...

In the coming years the Environmental Concerns Committee will undertake the following activities:

At the Yearly Meeting site, we will explore:

1. Improving the natural setting with trees, prairie flowers, and other plants, enhancing the nature sanctuary of the site.
2. Developing a nature trail...for meditation, education, enjoyment, and exercise.
3. Creating a natural labyrinth as a sacred place among small hills, rocks, plants, bushes, trees, and walking paths for meditation.

In the surrounding countryside...we will:

1. Undertake bicycle rides at Yearly Meeting sessions, inviting adults, youth, and children to enjoy the surrounding natural areas and the thrill of traveling without engines, thus conserving fossil fuel...
2. Lead other nature experiences, such as early-morning bird and nature walks and trips to nearby prairies, wetlands, woodlands, and farms...

For the buildings, new and old, at the Yearly Meeting site, we will work with others to consider:

1. Making them as energy efficient ... or "green" as possible.
2. Adding wind turbines and solar panels to generate electricity and capture heat.
3. Conserving and reusing water.
4. Continuing to develop and support recycling and composting.

FOR WIDER OUTREACH at Yearly Meeting, regional gatherings, and Monthly Meetings, we will conduct spiritually-centered workshops focusing on our care of the earth:

1. In a time of destructive consumption, global warming, habitat loss, declining availability of fossil fuel, dangers of nuclear energy, and environmental stresses due to global population, and
2. In a time with great opportunity to foster development of renewable energy, thoughtful population choices, helpful agricultural practices, and simple sustainable living that will enhance our personal spiritual growth and societal peace and justice in our world. (*Approved February 12, 2006.*)

—Roy C. Treadway, clerk