

# Befriending Creation

Newsletter of **Quaker Earthcare Witness**

Volume 19, Number 6 • November-December 2006

## *Can charisma\* alone buy Earth enough time?*

The QEW Annual Meeting showcased exciting ecological projects and visions. Now, how quickly can we learn to translate them onto a global scale?

by Louis Cox

ON our way home from the QEW Annual Meeting in October, we spent an afternoon at the zoo in Washington, D.C., because Ruah had always wanted to see its world-famous Giant Panda family. We also joined throngs of visitors to ooh and aah over the zoo's celebrated Indian Tigers, Lowland Gorillas, Indian Elephants, Mexican Wolves, Przewalski's Horses, and African Cheetahs.

It was interesting to observe how we were drawn to these large "charismatic" species, while passing up the chance to encounter lowly worms, ants, centipedes, fungi, bacteria, and plankton—"the little things that run the world," as E.O. Wilson describes them—at the zoo's Invertebrate House.

Were we being "species-ist"? —Yes. But being swayed by a little charisma isn't necessarily a bad thing. When pandas and other "extinction poster children" are able to leverage public support for ecosystem preservation, many

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\***charisma** (kə·riz'ma) *n.* <Gr. *favor, grace*. A special quality of leadership that captures the popular imagination and inspires allegiance and devotion.



**LISE AND DAVID ABAZS** revisit Ghost Ranch, N.M., where they studied sustainable agriculture before starting their own farm in northern Minnesota 19 years ago. At left are sons Tremain and Colby.

lesser known and less attractive species receive protection at the same time. They are earning their keep by buying time and preserving options while humans hopefully gain the wisdom and will to leave room on the planet to sustain the entire family of life.

**L**ATER, as I was thinking ahead to the article I would be writing on the recent QEW Annual Meeting, it suddenly came to me that this year's gathering had largely been about the many *charismatic people*—like our keynote speaker, David Abazs, and his family—whose ecological wisdom and witness has been an inspiration for the rest of us.

In an upbeat but serious talk about the world's agriculture crisis, David confronted us with a number of "inconvenient truths":

◆ Holding up an apple, he cut away successive slices representing bodies of water, deserts, icecaps, and what good land has already been paved over. The remaining sliver—only 1/64<sup>th</sup> of the original apple—represented all the land on Earth that is available for growing human food and fiber, averaging only a couple of acres per person.

◆ That living skin of topsoil, averaging only about three feet in depth, is rapidly breaking down from the abuses of industrialized farming.

◆ Less than 2 million people, or about 1 percent of the U.S. population, are now engaged in farming. About 90 percent of family farms are being subsidized by off-farm employment.

◆ Agribusiness giants are dominating the nation's food supply, increasing our dependence on nonrenewable resources and reducing farmers' traditional role in land stewardship, food quality, and food security.

**Charisma**, next page >>

>> **Charisma**, from page 1

◆ Farm mechanization is depopulating the countryside, resulting in the loss of rural culture along with farming and related skills.

◆ Monoculture and bioengineering are causing rapid loss of seed stock diversity. Of the thousands of apple varieties that were grown in this country a century ago, 85 percent have been lost.

◆ Out of thousands of heirloom vegetable and grain seeds only 3 percent are left. Remaining varieties are less adaptable to different climates and soils and more dependent on synthetic fertilizers and irrigation.

◆ Water tables are dropping at alarming rates, while weather is becoming less predictable worldwide.

Significantly, David summarized these ominous trends as a “devastating time bomb. *A rendezvous with extinction.*”

Small family farms like the one the Abazes own and run in northern Minnesota are increasingly rare and endangered. Millions of farmers have already been driven off the land. After 19 years, this family too is growing weary of the unrelenting hard work and economic stresses.

But as charismatic leaders of the North American sustainable agriculture movement, they have been successful in rallying farmers and consumers alike to stand up to the tyranny of agribusiness.

This is why they and other family farm activists need our moral, political, and economic support. Their little pocket of resistance is buying the rest of the country some time to get its act together and reform the way food is produced and distributed in this country. When another farm family gives up and sells out it isn't



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know and care  
where our food comes from.

(This echoes another reason often given for protecting endangered species: When any strand is snipped from the web of life, there is one less reason to care about our connection to all of Creation.)

**D**AVID went on to describe some positive trends in farming today:

✓ Community supported agriculture is helping thousands of consumers and farmers regain control over food. The Abazes' own CSA serves nearly 50 local families and provides nearly half of their family's income.

✓ While ineligible for government subsidies, small farms like theirs are up to 1,000-percent more productive per acre than most factory farms.

✓ Expanding markets for organically grown food and grass-fed beef are putting a lot of pressure on conventional producers to change the way they do business.

But these are hopeful signs *only to the extent that we are ready and willing to help translate alternative models into global movements.* We've honored our charismatic leaders and read their books. Let us now follow their examples!

David shared some the ways we can be part of this revolution—by getting organized to eat more foods in season and more foods that are grown locally, to form food-buying clubs, to start vegetable gardens on Meeting property, to join local CSAs, to patronize local farmers markets, to participate in seed-saving networks, and to use regional food banks.

Many other contemporary charismatic figures found their way into discussions as the QEW gathering continued through the weekend—such eco-visionaries as Bill McKibben, Amory Lovins, William McDonough, Paul Hawken, Vandana Shiva, Bill Mollison, Thom Hartmann, Matthew Fox, and Thomas Berry, to name a few.

We often invoked mentors and models of previous generations—Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, Gandhi, and Jesus. We even became conscious of Ghost Ranch itself as a kind of charismatic landscape—worthy of the time and expense it took for us to sojourn there because of how it extended our perceptual horizons, quickened our spirits, and hushed us into awed silence.

### Other Gathering talks

The late **Jim Corbett**, charismatic leader of the 1980s Sanctuary Movement, was the subject of a talk by guest speaker **Daniel Baker** of Cascabel, Ariz., who summarized the core message of Jim's last book, *A Sanctuary for All Life*:

—Jim saw the human community as imbedded in the larger Earth community, capable of existing in harmony with all life forms only through the practice of co-creation, which the ancient Hebrews called “Shaloam.”

—The power of the Sanctuary Movement came from Jim's deep conviction that peace and justice apply to every one and every thing. This is not just a philosophy; it is a Torah written on the heart. “Inwardly, it is most accessible in word-free stillness; outwardly it is most accessible in wildlands.” Shaloam teaches that nature is our mother and all creatures are our brothers and sisters.

—Referring to Central American refugees who were aided by

**Annual Gathering**, page 4 >>

# Our peace testimony must address the *causes* of war, including environmental destruction

by Barbara Williamson  
QEW Steering Committee Clerk

FOR as long as most of us reading this issue of *BeFriending Creation* have been alive, United States foreign policy has been based, in part, on our need for fossil fuels. Administrations have made decisions on whether or not to engage in armed conflict based on our need for a reliable flow of oil. Even during World War II, German decisions on taking the war to Russia were based on a need for oil.

Even though it is clear that the United States' dependence on fossil fuels is contributing to global climate change and that oil is not a renewable resource, we continue to act as if we have a sovereign right to the world's oil resources. We have yet to find the political will to develop a national policy for reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and creating alternative renewable sources of energy. As a nation, we continue to be willing to engage in armed conflict to maintain the status quo.

As we have seen under the current administration, Americans are still willing to support our government's decision to go to war if a "good enough" reason is put forward. As Quakers we should be working to help all Americans understand that our oil-based foreign policy is leading us down a dead-end one-way street. Americans need to demand a change in our national energy policy to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. Only then will we be able to change our foreign policy

so that we no longer need to protect our access to fossil fuels with whatever force is necessary.

In addition, we need to take seriously the possibility of worldwide upheaval, which could take place if climate change and population growth continue and we do not replace our dependence on fossil fuels with renewable energy sources. Providing the basics of human survival for the people of the world is a complex process that currently does not work for many people in the world. Without means to transport

food over long distances, we are looking at major social, economic and political upheavals that could lead to widespread armed conflict.

Thinking back to the news videos from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, I remember the faces of the people trapped at the Super Dome coliseum without food, water, and other basic human needs. The anger and fear of the people could be felt coming through the television screen. What will it be like when lack of food strikes large regions of the world, particularly in those countries where food has always been plentiful for those with financial resources?

As Quakers we have a responsibility to be a voice for peace. But can we truly be that voice if do not work to end the causes of war? Our work as Quakers in caring for Creation is an important part of the Quaker Peace Testimony. We need to speak up for renewable sources of energy, reducing the effects of climate change, and other environmental initiatives.



Over the last six issues of *BeFriending Creation* I have been writing about the Quaker Testimonies of Simplicity, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Peace and their relationship to a concern for the environment. These articles have been my personal reflections on these testimonies. While I see a relationship to a concern for the environment in all of these testimonies, I believe that Quakers need a Testimony for the Environment. ❖

## *QEW joins November 'Day of Climate Action'*

AT ITS 2006 ANNUAL MEETING, the QEW Steering Committee endorsed the "International Day of Climate Action" that the Climate Crisis Coalition set for November 4, 2006 to call world attention to the upcoming UN Climate Conference in Nairobi, Kenya. Climate action events will focus on the 2006 U.S. elections, reminding voters of the Bush administration's obstructionist climate policies.

❖ This civil society initiative calls for the U.S. to join the other 175 countries that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol and to dramatically strengthen energy conservation and fuel efficiency standards.

❖ It calls for end to all subsidies for oil and coal and for those funds to be redirected to clean and safe non-nuclear energy alternatives. It also calls for all subsidies for fossil-fuel based industrial agriculture and for those funds to be used to support local and regional food and farming systems.

❖ It supports a just transition for workers, indigenous peoples, and other communities affected by the necessary changes. See <[www.climatecrisiscoalition.org](http://www.climatecrisiscoalition.org)>.



## The 2006 QEW Annual Meeting & Gathering was...

>> **Annual Gathering**, from page 2

the Sanctuary Movement, Jim wrote, "It is as difficult to imagine a humanity in which no one is alien as it was to imagine a civilization in which no one was a slave."

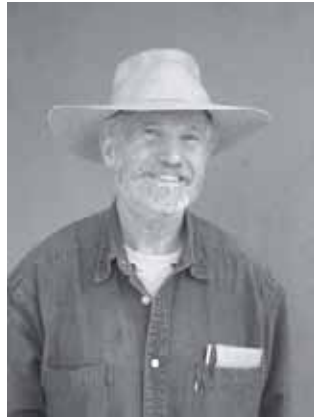
—In spite of humanity's continuing addiction to various kinds of enslavement, Jim saw hope for the future because the deep joy that comes from being a co-creator is much more powerful than such addictions.

—The Sanctuary Movement had to act through a covenant community, Jim said. "While individuals can *resist* injustice, only a community can *do* justice."

—As a "practical mystic," Jim believed that our fundamental relationship to the divine springs from our connection to the earth, and it is the loss of that connection that has allowed the human community to contract into a system of ethics that seeks only individual human redemption instead of a more universal land redemption. When we come to see how everything in the world is interconnected, *religion and ecology become one and the same thing*.

**A**NOTHER charismatic ecologist, **Gunter Pauli**, inspired the presentation of guest speaker **Linda Taylor** of ZERI-New Mexico. After a long and exhausting career of waging legal battles against corporate polluters, Linda was ready for something more positive when she learned about Pauli's "**Zero Emissions Research Initiative**" (ZERI). She eventually adapted it to an economic development program for a native American community in New Mexico <<http://www.scizerinm.org>>.

The core concept of ZERI is that there is no waste in nature; this is because the outputs of the



Daniel Baker



General Secretary's report at plenary session



Sustainability: Faith & Action meeting



Hollister Knowlton



Linda Taylor



Talent Night Laugh-in

animal, plant, bacteria, fungi and algae kingdoms, while toxic to their own members, are typically food for one of the other kingdoms. Thus when human activities are fully integrated with all five kingdoms of nature, pollution problems are virtually eliminated.

ZERI-New Mexico has applied this concept to create a local in-

dustry based on conversion of forest-thinning wastes into charcoal and charcoal products. Smoke from the process is captured to make wood products rot-resistant. Other wood waste is inoculated with fungus spores to cultivate edible mushrooms, and the substrate from that process is used as compost.

Next page >>

## ...challenging, informative, energizing, fun, awesome!

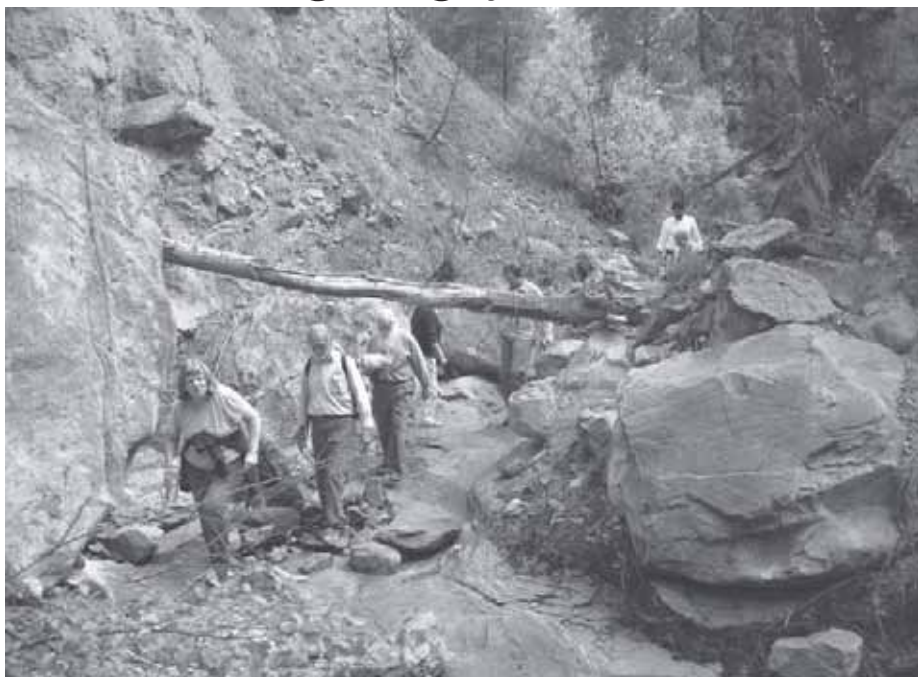
>> Linda said ZERI is about more than finding profitable ways to use waste products. "It is a helping people toward a different way of looking at the world they live in."

**A** SIMILAR epiphany came to **Hollister Knowlton** (QEW's assistant Steering Committee clerk) when she was introduced to the work of **Paulo Lugari**, founder and designer of a visionary community on the plains of eastern Colombia called **Gaviotas**. For the past 30 years, Lugari and some inventive associates have slowly transformed what had been a virtual wasteland into an ecologically productive and prosperous community, based on reforestation, locally made windmills and pumps, and socially conscious community development.

Hollister's talk was accompanied by slides she took during a visit to Gaviotas in 2005 to see for herself whether this novel experiment could be a model for others working toward a sustainable future. She was pleased to witness a successful "win-win" pattern of community relationships that seemed to help people be more cooperative, creative, and optimistic about their future.

Although the success of Gaviotas owes much to the work of very dedicated people with technical backgrounds, other communities might be able to tap similar resources because there are many scientists out there with unrewarding industry or government jobs who would be glad to switch to something more personally meaningful, Hollister said.

She said she still isn't clear what she is being called to do with what she has learned so far about Gaviotas, except to share this amazing story with others.



Returning from a hike to Box Canyon on Ghost Ranch

**OTHER HIGHLIGHTS** of the QEW Annual Meeting & Gathering came out of business sessions and committee meetings:

**Sustainability: Faith & Action** finalized contracts to be used in a program called "Men for Men" to help fund vasectomies for Quaker men. They issued a news release about the U.S. population recently passing 300 million (*see page 11*).

**Publications** offered suggestions for the final draft of a new QEW pamphlet called *Slowing Down to the Speed of Life* and approved new editions of two out-of-print QEW publications.

The **Ann Kriebel-San Luis Committee** reviewed progress in revamping the covenants governing the QEW-supported La Bella Farm in Costa Rica, eventually leading to the establishment of a self-sustaining land trust.

**Quaker Earthcare Witness for National Legislation (QNL)** heard a report on FCNL's expanded involvement in energy and environmental issues. It also asked to be laid down as a committee, having

spawned several projects, including the Quaker Eco-Bulletin and the Friends Testimony on Economics project, that are now carrying out most of its original goals.

Prayerful consideration was given a letter from a Steering Committee member who has been troubled by the high environmental costs of transporting dozens of Steering Committee members and visitors from all over the continent for two meetings a year. (Similar concerns have been raised within Canadian Yearly Meeting.)

One suggestion, that we use e-mail and conference calls in lieu of the spring meeting, did not satisfy those who believe the Spirit works best through gathered face-to-face meetings. As one Friend explained, "I always get more energy out of these meetings than the energy it took to get me here." (*See page 12.*)

Also, it would be difficult to carry on QEW business without the bird walks, outdoor worship, nature hikes, and challenging speakers that have made our gatherings spiritually nourishing. ❖

## Group asks our help in stopping U.S. Army 'land grab' in SE Colorado

DISPLACEMENT of traditional communities and trashing of fragile ecological systems are among the fears that have led thousands of Southwesterners to resist the U.S. Army's proposal to nearly triple the size of its 240,000-acre Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site in southeast Colorado.

After hearing from Doug Holdred, a member of a citizens' coalition, the QEW Steering Committee agreed at its October meet-

ing to write a letter of support (see box below). *We all should inform our legislators as well!*

Opponents question the Army's need for a larger site for



military maneuvers when there are many other very large military reservations in the Southwest.

Some QEW members observed

that the land in question is very similar to the terrain in parts of the Middle East where the U.S. may have plans to expand its military presence.

On their website <[www.pinoncanyon.com](http://www.pinoncanyon.com)> the coalition says, "As ranchers, farmers, school teachers, and business and community leaders in Southeast Colorado, we have strong core beliefs about environmental protection, humane animal-care practices and private property rights. We also hold firm to the belief that our national security relies as much on our efforts to produce food as it does on a good national defense."

### QEW letter on the U.S. Army's planned expansion in Piñon Canyon, Colorado

October 7, 2006

To: Donald Rumsfeld  
U.S. Secretary of Defense

We, members of Quaker Earthcare Witness, are deeply concerned about the negative environmental, human and spiritual implications of the proposed expansion of the Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site in southeastern Colorado. In the manner of Friends, those present, representing many Friends Meetings and organizations of North America found unity to support this letter.

We believe that both this expansion and the process that has led up to it violate principles to which all of us should be committed. True sustainability, which we should all strive for, meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The proposed expansion would remove families, perhaps forcibly as was done in the past, from the land that has sustained them for generations; this would impact their descendents far into the future. The area affected is unique and fragile. It would likely never be

able to recover from the effects of live-fire military maneuvers, unexploded ordnance, and large-vehicle traffic. Delicate wildlife and plant ecologies would be disrupted and displaced.

The targeted area includes thousands of documented historical and archaeological sites which constitute the heritage of the culturally diverse local population as well as our national cultural heritage. These treasures belong to the people and the nation, and the United States government has no right to destroy them. The actions that would be undertaken would lead to more destruction of the fragile web of life on Earth.

True sustainability is never achieved at the expense of less politically and economically empowered members of our human family. The fact that the per-capita income of the people in Las Animas County is half that of the per-capita income in the state of Colorado as a whole suggests that these people are vulnerable and are being exploited by those who are wealthier and more politically empowered.

Additionally, the process that has led to this proposed expansion

has been undertaken in violation of a well-established basic procedure for sustainable development: the full recognition and inclusion of stakeholders. The Fort Carson Sustainability Plan has been in process since 2002, but has not recognized or included in the planning process the human population living within the PCMS expansion area.

The current trend of United States military expansion, of which the PCMS is part, threatens the sustainability of our planet, not only by direct human and environmentally destructive activities, but also by increasing the threat to smaller nations, engendering insecurity and leading them to expand their own military resources.

We seek ways to cooperate to save life, to strengthen the bonds of community among all people, to build peace, and to live in unity with nature. We urge you to put a halt to your plans to expand the Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site.

Sincerely yours,  
Barbara Williamson, clerk  
Quaker Earthcare Witness  
2006 Annual Meeting



## Collateral damage hits homes and health of the poor and powerless

**C**ONCERN over widespread and long-term environmental contamination from past lead and zinc mining was minuted recently by the Oklahoma/Arkansas Quarterly Meeting of South Central Yearly Meeting.

Over the last 20 years, more than \$100 million has been spent to clean up the Tar Creek Superfund Site (originally the Picher Mine Field) in northeast Oklahoma, southwest Missouri, and southeast Kansas—but not enough to stop dangerous levels of toxins from leaching into the region's creeks, rivers, and lakes from old mines and waste dumps.

Bruce Crauder, clerk of the Quarter, noted that fish-consumption advisories have been issued for two rivers in the region. Health alerts have been issued for communities, including Native American lands, that have used abandoned piles of mining waste as fill, road surfacing, and construction materials. In the past decade, studies have shown that up to 38 percent of local children had high levels of lead in their blood—which can lead to permanent neurological damage and learning disabilities. Consequently, an area Head Start Program has been cancelled, and children are no longer being placed in foster homes in the Picher area. Health concerns have caused real estate values to fall, exacerbating economic hardships for the region's largely rural population. A home buy-out plan has enabled 100 families to move out of the area, but thousands of others remain at risk.

The Quarterly Meeting agreed that "Picher Mine Field workers toiled for their families and communities under harsh conditions to



**WASTE PILES** from abandoned mines in the Picher area are still contaminating homes and water supplies.

produce the lead and zinc used in two world wars and that fueled

the economy of the area for decades. This is one of the great environmental casualties of World Wars I and II on this continent; we have the responsibility to heal the wounds of these wars."

While acknowledging positive steps that have been taken by state, federal, and tribal authorities, the Quaker body called for a more comprehensive, collaborative, and multi-faceted program to achieve greater eco-justice and health for the region's human and non-human inhabitants, including more intensive monitoring of health and quality-of-life issues in the region.

To learn how you can help, see <[www.leadagency.org](http://www.leadagency.org)>. ♦

### New QEW Steering Committee member uses therapy to heal people and the earth

**MARY JO KLINGEL**, a member of Ft. Lauderdale (Fla.) Friends Meeting, last year became Southeast Yearly Meeting's representative to the QEW Steering Committee. In addition to serving as her Meeting's treasurer, she is active on its Earthcare Committee, which she helped form in 2004.

She decided to become involved in the Steering Committee after reading several QEW pamphlets and the book *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight* by Thom Hartmann.

As a social worker and psychotherapist in private practice, she has been involved in a body work collective that she has found to be an authentic way of achieving personal and planetary wholeness.

"At first I thought I had nothing to give to environmental work as a social worker, but re-

cently I realized that the practice of sitting with people who are in pain, in order to hold space for their healing, can be applied to people who are working for the earth." She said she has been working on a new and exciting approach that could be of benefit to members of QEW. "People who learn to live in their bodies can both protect themselves and the earth."

Her approach to therapy is helping people to feel with their hearts, sometimes drawing on Yoga and similar practices. When the impulse to move comes from within, a person can feel the same kind of centeredness that is found in silent worship, she says. "This means embracing the whole of experience with all of its ups and downs, on contrast to some schools that try to keep everything upbeat all the time."



**Mary Jo Klingel**

# Quakers play supporting role in Labor Day climate action walk

by Ruah Swennerfelt

LOUIS AND I were among hundreds of Vermonters who gave up their Labor Day weekend to walk nearly 50 miles to call public attention to the looming crisis of harmful climate change and to demand that our legislators and candidates for state and federal offices take immediate action to reduce this nation's disproportionate contribution to greenhouse gases.

The 100,000-plus steps that the core group of about 35 walkers took over the five-day journey from Ripton to Burlington produced a lot of blisters and muscle aches. But in the process we developed into a high-spirited community of climate activists who started out with a profound concern and ended in hope.

The event was the inspiration of Bill McKibben, a scholar in residence of environmental studies at Middlebury College, who has written extensively over the past 17 years on the subject of global climate change. (He will be the keynote speaker at next year's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary QEW annual meeting to be held in Burlington.)

As McKibben noted in the walkers' advance documents, *"If we do our job well—with good cheer and good humor and deep affection for each other and for our state and our planet—then others will hear us in other places and this movement will spread. We may be taking the road less traveled, but we're taking it together."*

There were several Quakers in the core group. Friends from Middlebury Meeting provided food and fields for tenting on our first night. The second night we camped at a farm owned by Quak-



WE DISPLAYED a familiar QEW theme on the opening leg of the Climate Action walk.

ers who practice sustainable agriculture. Many Friends from Burlington Meeting joined us for the last leg and the concluding rally.

On Sunday morning, we met at a church in Charlotte, which was filled with climate action walkers and others who had come to hear McKibben give the sermon. The whole service was particularly meaningful as it highlighted the spiritual basis for our concern for the health of Creation and the key role that community plays in getting people to work together on this challenge.

We spent that night at scenic Shelburne Farms, where we were treated to more dynamic speakers. The next day we found our group had swelled to 450 walkers. All along the way we received overwhelmingly positive responses from passing motorists.

By the time we arrived at Battery Park in Burlington about 1,200 people were gathered for a historic climate-action rally. We cheered as all attending candidates for federal office and candidates for governor of Vermont, signed a pledge to act on global warming by supporting proposed legislation.

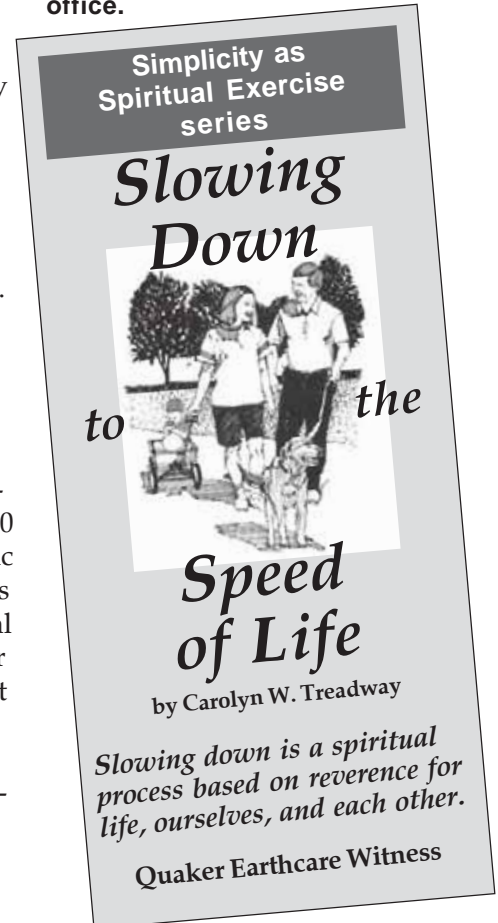
We returned home feeling empowered to work more energetically, at all levels, for a healthy future for all life on the planet.

WE ALSO WERE ABLE to practice walking with packs and equipment in preparation for a much longer walk that we are planning for November 2007 through April 2008 from Vancouver, British Columbia, to San Diego, California. We are calling this 1,400-mile pilgrimage "The Great Turning Walk: Rediscovering the relevance of John Woolman's message for us today."

Read more about our plans and how you might participate, in upcoming issues of *BeFriending Creation*. ❖

## New QEW pamphlet!

JUST IN TIME for the coming frantic holiday season, this new pamphlet is being included in the QEW annual appeal letter going out in November. It includes practical, professional guidance for those wanting more time and space for Earthcare and soul care. Extra copies may be ordered from the QEW office.







## An inspiring Earthcare retreat at Sierra Friends Center

**F**IFTY Friends from 14 Meetings within Pacific Yearly Meeting gathered this fall at Sierra Friends Center, Nevada City, Calif., to ponder the questions, “*What does it mean to hold Earth in the light?*” and “*What does it mean for us to be held in the light of Earth?*”

Keith Helmuth, a member of New Brunswick Monthly Meeting and a sojourning member of Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, gave an inspiring and challenging keynote address entitled, “*First Light or Last Things?*”

Keith explored two possible understandings of current trends: Are we are on the eve of an ecological enlightenment, with a re-discovered spiritual and physical connection to the earth guiding our actions? Or are we headed for chaos and destruction, because of our disregard for the health and viability of Earth’s ecosystems?

Keith described participating in a Native American First Light Ceremony, which welcomed the dawn as the sun’s first light flowed over the hills and valleys in New Brunswick, Canada. He had an immediate and visceral experience of Light—a central motif in Quakerism—reminding him that Spirit connects to humans directly through the natural world.

On the darker side, Keith shared a cautionary tale about Ishi,

the last surviving member of a California Indian tribe that had been systematically hunted down and killed by the land-hungry settlers in the new state of California. For the most part, Ishi was remarkably centered and showed no malice towards the culture that had destroyed his people. The key to Ishi’s ability to cope with the major traumas in his life, Keith said, was a creation-centered worldview that looked to the natural world for guidance on how to behave in it.

**F**RIENDS shared other stories of how they and their Meetings are witnessing for the earth, taking steps to make changes toward a more sustainable way of life. There were reports about individuals traveling less, using more efficient vehicles or modes of travel, conserving energy at home, growing their own food, and eating more locally produced food. Most Friends reported that their Meetings have initiated energy conservation and other “green” practices. It was recognized that these are only first steps toward larger, systemic changes that are required.

Ideas for taking that next step included working with interfaith groups to promote sustainability; developing local Friends lobbying groups modeled on FCNL to work

on municipal and regional sustainability; introducing other Meetings to the principles and practice of permaculture and the possibility of developing an eco-village at Sierra Friends Center.

A draft Minute on climate change was discussed, and will be considered by several Meetings and by Southern California and College Park Quarterly Meetings.

**T**HE weekend retreat strengthened Friends’ perception that peace, Earthcare and social justice work are intertwined. Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting, a co-sponsor of the retreat along with the Pacific Yearly Meeting-Unity with Nature Committee, recently made this interdependence visible by forming a Peace, Earthcare & Social Witness Committee. The committee oversees a “Dime a Gallon” project that the Meeting started two years ago in response to the war in Iraq and global environmental concerns. Friends are encouraged to contribute 10 cents for every gallon of gasoline or energy equivalent for their personal consumption of fossil fuels. Information about the Dime-a-Gallon project and the draft Climate Change Minute can be seen at [www.dimeagallon.com](http://www.dimeagallon.com).

“*This retreat highlighted the tension we feel between what Friends are doing now to live in more sustainable ways and the profound changes in worldview and societal functioning that are required if we are to survive and thrive within either future scenario,*” said Shelly Tanenbaum of Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting.

“*Will we as spiritual seekers, Quakers, and human beings take to heart the vital lessons from nature, tap the wisdom of our ancestors, call on Spirit for guidance, and do the work required to resolve this tension and move forward toward a new way of being and living?*” ❖

## Animated children's book project supports peace and nature preservation

**PAUL WEHR**, a QEW supporter from Boulder, Colorado, is promoting Earthcare by publishing animated children's books that incorporate ecological lessons.

During the 35 years he worked in peace, conflict-resolution, and environmental education, Paul tried to apply ecological principles to his personal life. He and his wife Chris made their home more energy efficient, restored their property to a more natural state, and generally tried to lower their ecological footprints. After retirement from the University of Colorado in 2002, he was led to carry his environmental witness to a wider audience.

His first inspiration was to republish a popular animated children's book, *The Animated Bunny's Tail*, that his father, Julian Wehr, had written and illustrated when Paul was a boy. (Animated books got a boost when wartime rationing affected just about every material but paper. They flourished in the 1950s, when more families were able to afford them.)

The only thing that Paul had to change about his father's book was the story line (loosely based on the classic Peter Rabbit stories of Beatrix Potter) so that it included subtle Earth-friendly messages: For example, the mother bunny doesn't just serve muffins to her children—she gives them *whole grain* muffins. And when Barty Bunny returns home after narrowly escaping from an angry gardener, he is sent to bed without

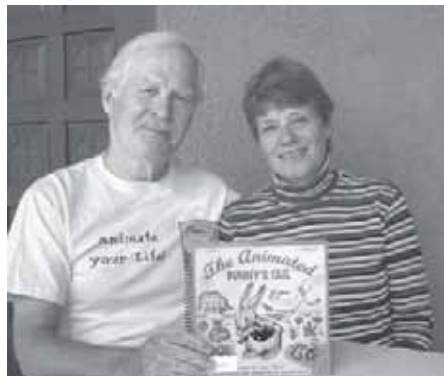
supper because he was sickened by the *nasty chemicals* in the watering can he had hidden in. (In the Potter stories Peter Rabbit was just too exhausted to eat.)

The 20-page hardback book features several amusing illustrations in which the story figures' bodies move when a tab is slid back and forth. The \$18.95 price reflects the complexity of the hidden mechanisms, as well as the high price of domestic printing these days. (A less expensive kit version allows the animated sections to be assembled by curious children who might be tempted to rip apart a standard version to see how it works.)

The book's initial success has allowed Wehr Animations to expand into a real family business. Since her recent retirement, Chris has been helping run the office, and Paul's sister and husband are in the process of producing a DVD about the book. All profits from book sales go to support peace and nature preservation projects (including QEW).

Paul is currently working on a new animated book about life in a forest. He wants to teach children about forest ecology because most humans don't live in forests and thus aren't aware of the stresses that human activities are placing on them. The book will portray all of the forest dwellers as members of a community, who must learn to cooperate to solve problems.

For more information see <[www.wehranimations.com](http://www.wehranimations.com)>.



Paul and Chris Wehr

I DO NOT BELONG to a Quaker community but learned of your publication a few years ago and sent a contribution. I am increasing my contribution with the enclosed check, and you can count on a contribution yearly as long as I am able.

QEW gives me hope in a world where things look dismal at the moment.

—Marjorie Snigel  
Rockville, Md.

ON BEHALF of the general population of our facility, we would like to thank you for your wonderful contribution to the educational, spiritual, and religious path of all of us here. This has been an excellent addition to the expansion of our library.

—Chaplain Richard Torres  
Warner Creek Correctional Facility  
Lakeview, Ore.

[The above letter was sent to QEW after we responded to a request for library materials about Earthcare from the Oregon Department of Corrections. We welcome tips from *BeFriending Creation* readers on other institutions that may be interested in using QEW publications.]

### Gifts to QEW honor supporter's birthday

QEW recently received a number of generous donations from friends of QEW supporter Carole Hoage of Silver Spring, Md., who had suggested charitable donations in lieu of personal gifts in honor of her 60th birthday. *Thanks and happy birthday, Carole!*

This is a good example of the many creative ways that Friends have found to support QEW—from Monteverde coffee sales to donation of appreciated stock. For more ideas on how to support QEW financially, go to <[www.quakerearthcare.org](http://www.quakerearthcare.org)>.

## Quaker Earthcare Witness Order Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home Mtg \_\_\_\_\_

Yearly Mtg \_\_\_\_\_

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.

*Dear Friends, this news release was prepared by the Sustainability: Faith & Action committee at the QEW annual meeting at Ghost Ranch. You can either submit it to your local newspaper as is or use it as a guideline for your letter to the editor to your local newspaper. —Noel Pavlovic, clerk*

**NEWS RELEASE, Quaker Earthcare Witness, October 16, 2006**

### A Major Milestone

**THIS MONTH** the population of the United States is passing 300-million. To put this statistic in perspective, we passed 200 million in 1967, and we are projected to pass 400 million around mid-century. Each year we add approximately three million persons to the country, of whom about half are immigrants and about half are an excess of about 1.5 million more births than deaths.

Most problems we humans are currently facing would be more manageable if we were fewer in number. Moreover, we Americans consume natural resources and generate waste at a rate greatly exceeding that of many other countries.

For example, an average American needs 24 acres for his/her support, while an average Ethiopian requires one acre <[www.ecofoot.net](http://www.ecofoot.net)>. Those of us who hold the care of the earth as a spiritual concern find this milestone a call to reflection and prayer, as well as a call to find ways to respond. In awareness of this reality, couples who are considering having a baby would do well to think about alternatives such as adoption as an Earth-friendly choice.

Lowering the number of births in this way and via contraception would slow the rate of U.S. and world population growth, thereby relieving pressure on fragile ecosystems. For those thinking to enlarge their families, choosing adoption rather than bringing another person onto the planet would be a truly creative way to observe this demographic crossing.

For more information about adopting a child and/or population concerns visit the QEW website at <[www.QuakerEarthcare.org](http://www.QuakerEarthcare.org)> and click on publications and then pamphlets. ♦

## BeFriending Creation

**BeFriending Creation**, Vol. 19, No. 6, November-December 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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**Gen. Secretary:** Ruah Swennerfelt, 173-B N. Prospect St., Burlington, VT 05401. 802/ 658-0308; [Ruah@QuakerEarthcare.org](mailto:Ruah@QuakerEarthcare.org).

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**Website:** [www.QuakerEarthcare.org](http://www.QuakerEarthcare.org)



November-December 2006

- ✓ Will charisma and ingenuity buy Earth enough time? 1
- ✓ Our peace testimony must address environmental *causes* of war. 3
- ✓ The QEW Annual Meeting & Gathering was awesome! 4
- ✓ Citizens are trying to stop Army "land grab" in SE Colorado. 6
- ✓ Quakers play prominent in Labor Day climate action walk. 8
- ✓ Sierra Friends Center hosts an inspiring Earthcare retreat. 9

## QEW gatherings go 'carbon-neutral' with NativeEnergy

FOR AS LONG as QEW has existed, we have agonized over the seeming irony that our travel to each gathering carries a significant environmental pricetag. While most of us have faith that the long-term benefits of nurturing our spiritual relationship to the earth will justify that cost, we have always looked for ways to reduce our corporate ecological footprint. (The QEW office is already off-grid solar powered.)

At the spring 2005 QEW Steering Committee meeting in Chicago, we agreed to make individual donations to an outfit that plants a certain number of CO<sub>2</sub>-absorbing trees to match the greenhouse gas emissions attributable to that gathering. But many participants found the travel-mileage calculations cumbersome and said it didn't feel much like a corporate witness.

So at this year's spring meeting, we agreed to start purchasing *direct carbon offsets*, in the form of Green-e certified Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) from a Charlotte, Vermont-based organization called NativeEnergy as a better way to mitigate the contri-

butions of our gatherings to harmful climate change. The \$300 worth of offsets that we purchased to cover our calculated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from this year's Annual Meeting & Gathering at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico, averaged out to only about \$6 *per person*.

The money will be used as start-up funding for wind farms or farmer-owned methane digesters that deliver renewable energy to regional power grids. For example, a 30-megawatt complex on Redbud Sioux land in South Dakota is helping a Native American tribe develop a sustainable economy based on its core cultural values. Carbon offset-supported methane projects also help family farms

compete with agribusiness giants.

NativeEnergy offers "greentags" for a variety of situations: Some organizations are focusing on emissions from special events, while others are covering their year-around CO<sub>2</sub> footprints. Many traveling musicians and film/television productions are using this system to become "carbon-neutral."

To learn more, go to <[www.nativeenergy.com](http://www.nativeenergy.com)>. ❖

