



BeFriending Creation

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‘Eco-spirituality & Action’ course shows how Quaker Testimonies are in tune with ecology

By Angela Manno

FOR eight weeks, from January through March 2007, I helped lead a course called “Eco-spirituality & Action” that was designed through the Friends in Unity with Nature group of 15th Street and Morningside Friends Meetings in Manhattan.

Attended by adults from New York Quarterly Meeting at Friends Seminary, the course was based on the outline of *Planetary Perspectives*, a book in progress that is an outgrowth of my art series, “Conscious Evolution: The World at One.” The course also draws from my experience in applying the principles of the creative process observed in nature and art to daily life.

My particular interest in offering “Eco-spirituality & Action” to Friends has an ulterior motive: to identify key corporate actions Friends are willing to take in order to respond creatively to the plight of our Earth. I know that when Friends get behind an issue, they themselves become a force of nature. I feel it coming—a growing synergy within the corporate body of Friends, a groundswell among us who know deeply that the earth is our larger self, in whom we live and move and have our being. We know that we cannot glorify God while continuing to heap contempt upon His creation.

Being fairly new to Quakerism, I discovered over the eight weeks how uniquely primed Friends are for the materials I had put together for the course. The Quaker principle of “continuing revelation”



resonates with the premise of Eco-spirituality that we live in an evolving, creative Universe. The wisdom, order, beauty, and creativity displayed in the Cosmos are powers that each individual possesses. We are now called to use these powers to protect the earth (which includes humanity).

One evening we wrote on the blackboard the principal values of ecology that we’d identified through the readings (accessed at www.funquakers.org) and looked for their corresponding Quaker Testimonies. Every one of them

had a match. Here are a few (see if you can find their corresponding Testimony): *Holism, Interdependence, Non-Zero-Sum Games, Reciprocity, Unity in Diversity, Intergenerational Responsibility, Synergy, Biocentricity, and No Waste in Nature*. This led to a discussion on whether we could expand our love beyond the human community to embrace the whole of the Natural World.

Thomas Berry put this succinctly in his Schumacher lecture, “Every Being Has Rights”: “. . . *The real revelatory experience is in the air we breathe, in the birds that fly and the flowers that bloom.*” Not in words, he says, but in realities.

Aware that as Friends we fundamentally embrace most of these ecological values (I’d go so far as to call them virtues), we used them to guide us while we explored our inherent creativity and leadings towards healing the Earth Community. We employed exercises from Joanna Macy’s book *Coming Back to Life*, as well as a number of evocative visioning techniques.

ONE of the most powerful was an exercise to determine our highest vision for Quaker action in this time of crisis (see the next page for the exercise and a sample of one participant’s vision). The importance of the spiritual journey

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>> **Eco-Spirituality**, from page 1 and contemplative tradition was also stressed as the necessary preparation for leadings that can well up from the Ground of Being itself.

The final results were not only a deep sense of our belonging to this vast, beautiful Cosmos, but a set of priorities for proper nourishment, healthy habitat, and clean renewable energy. Each individual also identified his/ her own individual leadings.

AT the last session, we incorporated the traditional Quaker practice of worship sharing, with some startling results: It was truly a gathered meeting, in which the Spirit spoke to us of a true *metanoia*, a New Covenant forming between humanity and the earth. Peace vigils have begun in Manhattan that include witnesses for the earth. A Minute was generated calling us to work to nurture both peace on Earth and peace *with* Earth. Another leading called for a process of "Truth and Reconciliation with the Natural World."

It is my deep desire that Quakers will again become a force of nature, this time *on behalf of nature*. Quakers' creativity has always been deeply aligned with and attuned to the creativity of the Universe through its mystical connection with the Ground of Being and their faithfulness to that connection through committed action. This is essential to the Great Work of our time.

Ecospirituality & Action will be presented in a revised and condensed format at Powell House, Old Chatham, N.Y., April 11–13 2008, as part of a series of Earthcare Curriculum courses. One will be a weekend workshop March 14–16, 2008 with Friend Marshall Massey, entitled "Earth in the Headlines: How Are Friends Called to Respond?" Other pro-

jected Earthcare Curriculum course topics include "Permaculture" and "The Spiritual Foundation and Practical Applications of Caring for the Earth."

The Powell House Earthcare Curriculum is being developed with the assistance of the Earthcare Working Group of New York

Yearly Meeting and is designed to lift up the spiritual basis and practical applications of Earthcare. The Curriculum is envisioned as an ongoing series of courses offered each year to deepen our relationship with, understanding of, and care and witness for the earth within a Quaker context. ❖

Eco-spirituality & Action—Visioning Exercise

"What is our ideal role as Friends in a time of climate crisis and mass extinction? What is our ideal self-image as Quakers in the Great Work of our time to foster a mutually enhancing relationship between humans and the earth?"

Instructions

TRY THIS within your Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, through your Earthcare and Friends in Unity with Nature committees. Have the group write a description of their ideal image for Quakers and their role in the world with regard to Earthcare. Make sure they write this *in the present tense, as an accomplished reality*.

Instruct the group to *"Include in the description how you feel as part of this ideal Quaker image, what the ideal relationships are among Quakers, what the relationship of Quakers is to Nature. What is your ideal role for Quakers in this time of climate crisis and mass extinction? What is your ideal self-image for Quakers in the Great Work of fostering a mutually-enhancing relationship between humans and the earth?"*

"What is the ideal role of the Monthly Meeting to the neighborhood, the bioregion, the country and the world at large? If there's something you do not like about the current state of your Meeting with regards to its relationship to the earth or of Quakerism describe how you would like it to be in that area. If there are new qualities you would like Quakers to have or new ways you'd like to express yourself through Quakerism, include them. Also include in the description what you like about the Quakers and would like to see continued or expanded."

Give each person the opportunity if they wish to read out loud what they've written and give them full acknowledgement.

One participant's "ideal image for Quakers"

QUAKERS ARE ON FIRE about transforming the human-Earth relationship. Their acts of civil disobedience and their demonstrations at SUV manufacturing plants, coal-fired power plants, and nuclear facilities are making a stir and inspiring others to take action.

They are modeling a new way to live by moving into eco-communities, growing their own organic food, generating energy via wind turbines and solar PV arrays. They are living almost entirely without cars, having sited their eco-communities near bus or transit lines, and sharing one or two vehicles among their entire community.

By preserving habitat and re-building wetlands on their properties, they are encouraging others to take similar measures. They are living lives that demonstrate their commitment to peace, equality, integrity, and community, understanding that those testimonies apply to all species and all creation.

Summer: A good time to begin a low-CO₂ / H₂O diet

by Barbara Williamson
QEW Steering Committee Clerk

IT'S summertime, and as I am writing this the temperature is in the upper 90s and it's humid. Air conditioning can be a big comfort, but it can also account for 12 percent or more of your annual electric bill. Even more important is the cost to the environment: Americans emit 100 million tons of CO₂ every year just from running their air conditioners.

But there are ways to reduce air conditioning electric usage:

- ❖ Close doors and vents in rooms that aren't being used.
- ❖ Keep your air conditioner coils and filters clean. The coil on the inside is called the evaporator and the one of the outside is the condenser. They both are covered by small aluminum fins. When they get dirty they lose their ability to absorb or expel heat. Every spring check to see if they're dirty, and have a certified service person come to clean the coils, if necessary.
- ❖ While the service person is there, get the level of refrigerant checked. Also, have the compressor, fan, and electrical connections checked to make sure they are working properly. You can also vacuum or dust the fins and straighten them with a plastic spatula so they won't restrict airflow.
- ❖ Adjust your air conditioner settings. If your air conditioner has those options, select the recirculation setting, set the fan to its highest speed except on very humid days, and use the automatic setting instead of the continuous setting.

- ❖ In humid climates, use a dehumidifier to reduce the load on your air conditioner.
- ❖ Use ceiling fans. Rooms will feel cooler and you can reset your comfort zone higher. When you leave the room, turn off ceiling fans just like you do the lights.
- ❖ When you're using air conditioning keep doors, windows, blinds, and drapes closed. And try eating stylishly late—so you can cook later in the day when the house is cooler.

If you have a heated swimming pool, invest in a solar pool cover. This can reduce heat loss by almost 70 percent. If you keep it on when you're not using the pool you reduce water loss by up to 50 percent. The pool cover will also help keep your pool cleaner. If you turn down the pool heater thermostat by at least 1° F, that can reduce your energy cost by 10 percent.

If you have a hot tub, invest in a thermal blanket that goes underneath to retain heat. It also extends the life of your solid hot tub cover by reducing the moisture that builds up on the underside of the cover.

And if you won't be using your fireplace until fall, make sure the damper is closed. But don't forget to open it again when fall arrives.

FROM a Master Gardener workshop that I took this spring through an Agricultural Extension Service program I learned that most people in the U.S. over-water their lawns and gardens. Don't be one of them! Start by checking your sprinkler setting for uniform

coverage. You don't want to waste such a precious resource by watering your sidewalk or driveway.

Also, don't use your sprinkler until five to seven days after the last good rain, or until you see the first signs of wilt. *Most plants grow best when they are watered slowly, deeply, and infrequently.* Never use a sprinkler if there's a wind of more than 10 mph. You should water in the early morning or early evening.

In addition to a timer that can be used to control when and how often you water, you can also use a rainfall sensor that determines when there is enough moisture in the ground. An automated rainfall sensor is nice, but you can also use a rain gauge or moisture-sensing probe.

When it's time to upgrade your sprinkler system, consider installing a drip system. To be efficient and really save water, drip systems do have to be monitored as seasons change. The website www.watercasa.org/pubs/drip_top.html lists the top ten easy things you can do to make sure your drip irrigation system is performing efficiently.

OTHER tips for conserving water this summer include:

- ❖ Don't sweep your walk or driveway with a waterhose. Use a broom. And when you're washing your car, turn off the water while soaping and scrubbing.
- ❖ Collect rainwater and/or install a graywater system that recycles your shower, dishwasher, and washing machine wastewater for reuse on your lawn. There are websites that can give you information on sprinklers and graywater systems.

Enjoy the rest of your summer! ❖



UN sustainable development talks end without full agreement—but on a hopeful note, perhaps

By Mary Gilbert

QEW Steering Committee

A TWO-WEEK session of United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) that I attended recently as representative from QEW was the second in a two-year cycle focused on air pollution, energy, industrial development, and climate change.

The CSD failed at the end to reach agreement, but that very failure may indicate a change for the better.

Over the course of the session many strong voices, including that of the European Union (EU), spoke to the need for clear goals and time-bound targets for mitigation and adaptation strategies.

However within the CSD there are factions that don't share common interests, and promote very different approaches to sustainability. The members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), for example, claim that continued reliance on fossil fuels, using new, "clean" technologies, is sustainable. The Small Island Developing States (SIDS), whose very existence is threatened by the out-of-control weather patterns and rising sea levels connected with global warming, see a need to end the use of fossil fuels now.

In the negotiating room, delegates from all CSD countries went through the draft document word by word, making their countries' inputs. Whatever section of the document that was being considered at the time was shown on a large screen, and everyone could see every suggested addition or

deletion as it was typed in, enclosed in brackets and tagged with the names of the countries that sponsored it.

Once all cards were on the table, negotiations went into high gear. The goal was to come up with a "clean" document, with all language unanimously agreed on, by the end of the two-week session. Such negotiations can be brutal. The U.S. was intransigent and generally obstructed meaningful progress, and there was enormous

pressure to dilute statements that come out of the CSD so that they are almost meaningless.

For instance, the phrase "nuclear energy" appeared nowhere in the docu-

ment because it was felt there would be no chance of agreement about recommending it as safe or condemning it as disaster waiting to happen. "Advanced energy technologies" was substituted, and nobody challenged the phrase. Also, at the urging of the U.S., in every place where words like "monitor," or "accountability" appeared, the phrase, "where appropriate," was added. The U.S. also inserted the word "voluntary" throughout the document, to make sure there would be no requirements that would have to be met for the general good.

The JUSCANZ nations (Japan, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) vote individually but operate in concert, while in the CSD process most nations vote in blocs. The European Union (E.U.) is such a bloc. The largest bloc is the "G77," consisting of 138 poor and developing na-

tions. It includes both the OPEC and the SIDS countries with their diametrically opposed interests.

Time after lengthy time, negotiations were suspended as the G77 went into closed session to thrash out language they could agree on. On the next to the last night work went on until 4 a.m. Disappointment lay heavy over the delegates as it became clear that agreement would not be reached.

ON the final day the chair made the unprecedented announcement that he had taken over preparing the outcome document himself, changing the language as he saw fit to eliminate all remaining brackets. Copies were issued and read. The U.S. and the rest of the JUSCANZ nations praised the chair's version. The speaker for the G77, acknowledging the difficulty of compromise, said that the G77 accepted the text.

But the EU voted "no!" Their speaker said that to accept the document put before them would be to tell the world that the CSD is a useless institution, unable to help the world in this time of shared crisis. His words were greeted with thunderous applause.

The chair did issue a final report a week or so later, but because the E.U. stood on its principles, the document does not represent an international agreement.

Perhaps we're at a turning point. Perhaps this precedent will be followed in other international forums. Perhaps the picture is getting clear enough so that understanding and responsibility can prevail. I pray this will be so, that the world will remain habitable for the many species that together comprise Life on Earth, and that we may live in the house of the Lord forever. ❖



'Late bloomer' Mary Gilbert

From designing creative jewelry to defending the jewel of Creation

By Grace Carpenter

WHEN Mary Gilbert returned from a meeting at the United Nations in 2006, she retreated into her backyard. She sat in despair among the native plants she'd carefully tended, and spoke to no one.

She had been at the UN as a representative of Quaker Earthcare Witness, where her role, she says, is to be a "fly on the wall" at meetings on sustainable development. When it was time for a U.S. representative to speak, a high-ranking executive from a pharmaceutical giant gave a self-serving talk that failed to address any U.S. responsibility for the global crisis.

"It was such a slap in the face to serious discussion. It was hard to watch, hard to see the power of corporations actually running the world for their benefit," she says.

Mary emerged from her garden more focused than ever on her role as a witness: She needed to write about the destruction of the environment, and about the UN discussions of it. "There's a war on and people don't necessarily know it," she remembers thinking, "so you can get to be a war correspondent."

Now that Mary, 65, is retired, she has more time to devote to her new role. At an age when many of her peers are moving to Florida and devoting themselves to golf, Mary is re-inventing herself as a communicator on the war over the environment.

Before retirement she had successive careers as a librarian, a social worker, and a public health researcher. But she was more focused on having a secure job, she says. The environmental activism—Earthcare, as she calls it—is differ-

ent: it's a "leading." And now is her chance to finally pursue it. "The thing about being retired is that it's exactly the same challenge you think it might be," she says. "It's like: Okay, girl, you've got no more excuses, let's see who you are."

Mary says she always has been a late bloomer. For instance, she has an artistic side that she didn't express much until well into midlife. In her forties she took up jewelry making, and found a sense of fun in it that had been lacking in her childhood. She worked on jewelry for ten years until she felt she had gotten something out of her system: "I finished some childhood business. At 55 I finally hit adulthood."

Although her focus on environmental activism is fairly recent, Mary traces her involvement back to spiritual experiences that happened many years ago—like the time she was at a Quaker retreat, and after speaking she found herself leaving the meeting and running through the woods and the rain, and finally stopping to drink from a stream. She heard a voice and felt a moment of intense connection to the natural world. She remembers thinking, "I'm part of a living Earth. Some living parts of Earth stand still, like trees; I happen to be a moving living part."

In addition to two weeks of attending NGO sessions at the UN, her role as QEW representative involves "tons and tons" of e-mail and generally keeping up with things. Also, the time she spends on writing and speaking has

gradually grown into a bigger commitment. She now produces about three or four articles a year on the subject of Earthcare, and she has also been getting speaking engagements.

At first Mary struggled to convey information from the UN meetings in a way that made sense to those unfamiliar with the doz-

ens of committees and subcommittees. "For the first couple of years it was so hard to learn my way around the language and all the acronyms," she says. She felt she was finally getting closer to what she had come for when she began at-

tending—and writing about—the meetings of the Indigenous People's Caucus. "They speak frequently about the sacredness of Earth," she says. "They are the only voice that's really articulate about it."

MARY hopes that her writing will encourage other Quakers to see caring for the natural world as something that goes beyond the political. "Many Quakers who care about the environment are not thinking of it as a spiritual concern," she says. She also hopes to raise awareness among Quakers of what's happening on an international level.

When Mary feels discouraged she often finds solace in her garden, which she has tried to make a haven for native plants. "I wanted to have plants that would flourish because they evolved to be in this kind of environment." She likes to talk about the amazing qualities of fungi, pointing out that trees couldn't have evolved without them. Sometimes she likes to just lie on her tummy in her yard, she says, watching bees and ants. ❖





Spring program shows QEW Steering Committee is being faithful to its job

By Louis Cox

HAVE you ever wondered why it's called a *Steering Committee*? That's because its main duty is to steer the *Good Ship QEW* as it sails toward the harbor of "an Earth restored." It has to adjust the sails of policy, sound the depths of concern, mind the compass of ecological principles, and keep the lines of Quaker process unfouled.

At the 2006 spring meeting in Chicago, the Steering Committee's program showed it is being faithful to its commission, tending to ongoing projects while adapting to emerging issues.

One of the latest initiatives is that of nurturing QEW's vital relationships with Yearly Meetings. QEW now has fairly broad name-recognition, but there is much to be done to develop working relationships with other Friends groups and to deepen understanding of the spiritual foundation of Earthcare.

There are quite a few Friends who are active in their Yearly Meetings on peace, justice, and Earthcare matters, but not many who are directly involved in QEW work. To narrow this gap, a special grant from QEW supporter Bob Barns was used to cover travel costs and fees to bring 10 Yearly Meeting activists to this spring's Steering Committee meeting.

These guest eco-activists were engaged in two ways: 1) In one long afternoon session, Friends shared in groups of four what they had been doing in their Yearly Meetings to raise up Earthcare as a spiritual concern; what efforts had been successful; what obstacles they had encountered; and what future opportunities they might

use to further this concern. 2) Friends formed larger groups based on membership in Yearly Meetings in the same region, to brainstorm about their common needs, interests, and concerns; to identify strategies and programs they might work on together; and to suggest how QEW might support those efforts..



QUARTETS of Steering Committee meeting participants share their perceptions of past successes, current challenges, and future opportunities for nurturing Earthcare within Yearly Meetings.

The Outreach Committee distributed a flyer for use by Friends planning to witness for Earthcare at Yearly Meetings and other Quaker gatherings. It provides preparation tips and basic talking points, such as, "If you carry a concern for the health of the earth and its inhabitants, you're already an Earthcare witness; we have resources and networking tools that can help you be more effective."

This was followed by a special presentation on "Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream," a consciousness-raising symposium that seemed to resonate with QEW's goals and principles. It is based on the view that modern society is ecologically dysfunctional, largely because of outmoded beliefs and assumptions. Its aim is "bringing forth an environ-

mentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, and socially just human presence on this planet." Directed by the Pachamama Alliance, this touring multimedia program integrates traditional native wisdom, green spirituality, and the new creation story of the evolving universe. For more information, go to <www.awakenthedreamer.com>.

The Ann Kriebel/San Luis Committee reported on progress in getting final agreement on a revised easement and covenant for La Bella Farm, a QEW-supported sustainable agriculture and social justice project in Costa Rica. The revisions address needs and concerns expressed by the *parceleros* for long-term security of the land title, as well as more autonomy for the community to make their own land management decisions.

QEW has considered La Bella Farm to be a valuable laboratory for ecological and social practices that are needed on a global scale, in contrast to prevailing development models that are working against sustainability. QEW-supported work camps and "agri-cultural" exchanges have been well-received and may be repeated.

Under consideration is a proposal for QEW and farm members to undertake joint sustainability projects, such as providing assistance to other agricultural communities in Central America, using innovative "zero-emissions" and permaculture principles.

THE Sustainability: Faith & Action Interest Group finalized documents it will use in a unique project called "Men for Men" (M-4-M) to fund vasectomies for

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QEW aims for fragrance-free meetings

THIS year QEW is asking those attending its fall Annual Meeting to come as “fragrance-free” as possible. It is hoped this practice will make attendance easier for those with severe chemical sensitivities.

Being fragrance-free begins with avoiding scented personal products like perfumes, soaps, shampoos, lotions, or deodorants. But it also means not wearing clothes that have been washed with scented fabric softeners or detergents. This could be quite an undertaking, as it is sometimes hard to find unscented versions of many products. They can be found in natural food stores and in supermarkets such as Whole Earth and Wild Oats. You can also buy them on the Web. Do a search on “fragrance-free products,” or go to www.peggymunson.com.mcs/products.html.

It's neither possible nor desirable to monitor what everyone does at QEW events, so we'll be relying mainly on feedback:

What was it like to receive this request? How easy or hard was it to find fragrance-free replacements for the products you normally use? And most important: Did having the meeting try to go fragrance-free make it possible, or easier, for you to attend because of your chemical sensitivities?

Chemicals are all around us these days, and they accumulate in our bodies in measurable amounts. In some cases the effects on our health are known, but many substances, including thousands of synthetics on the market, remain untested. Little research is done on the combined effects of these chemicals once they are inside us. We do know that an increasing

number of us get sick from them, and that reactions can be life-threatening.

A particular offender is “musk ambrette,” a synthetic musk shown in 1984 to cause central and peripheral nervous system damage, leading the Fragrance Materials Association of the U.S. to recommend limiting its use. In

spite of this, use of musk ambrette increased six-fold between 1979 and 1988.

Most often a chemical sensitivity will be initiated by strong exposure to something in particular, and the body responds by getting ill. Once the body's systems have been activated, next time the response can be quicker, stronger, and triggered by even less of an exposure. It can also be triggered by anything chemically similar to the first. Soon chemicals that the body has been handling successfully for years may bring on illness, as the sensitivity spreads in a “cascade effect.” That is what happened to Alicia Adams, a QEW supporter living in New Mexico



who was initially poisoned by massive pesticide exposure while working in community development in Venezuela. Her husband died 4 years later from that poisoning. [See the November-December 2004 issue of *BeFriending Creation*.]

There would be much less suffering from chemical sensitivity if policies about putting new products on the shelves were based on the Precautionary Principle: A new product would have to be judged harmless before it could be sold to the public. Under current policy, a product must be proved to be associated with a certain amount of damage to health, usually through lengthy and expensive court trials, in order to have it removed from circulation.

By encouraging us to go fragrance-free, QEW is giving us the opportunity to consider how much we want to participate in practices that poison the environment and threaten everyone's health. It is giving us a preview of what it would take to untangle ourselves from this web we didn't choose to spin.

—Mary Gilbert
QEW Sustainability:
Faith & Action Interest Group

Chemical pollution may affect fetus development

ACCORDING TO an article in the April 1, 2007 *Seattle Times*, fisheries biologists have been finding male fish that have become “feminized,” possibly as the result of exposure to human hormones and hormone-mimicking chemicals flushed into rivers and oceans from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, factories, and non-point sources. Such chemicals are found in a variety of consumer products, including birth control pills, plastic bottles, detergent, and makeup. They are now more dispersed in the environment than previously known.

Scientists also have been studying a recent trend for female fish in areas subject to chemical contamination to reach sexual maturity at earlier ages and to spawn later than normal.

Levels of hormones and hormone-like substances in most bodies of water are not thought to be high enough to affect swimmers. But there is concern that low levels of endocrine disruptors in the environment could affect developing human fetuses during phases of development that are coordinated by natural sex hormones, the article reported.

Reinventing the world at 'rightly ordered' Gaviotas

By Hollister Knowlton
QEW Assistant Clerk

IT was as if I had been led—through an amazing series of coincidences, or perhaps nudges of the Spirit—to a place that everyone who reads about it wants to visit, but is always told, “You can’t go there.”

Gaviotas, a remarkable community in the inhospitable savannas (or *llanas*) of eastern Colombia, embodies the Quaker concept of “rightly ordered.” It has grown out of the vision of Paolo Lugari, who in the early 1970s was looking for a place to test his ideas about sustainable development, as one answer to the desperate poverty of millions in his home city of Bogota.

In the 35-plus years since then, he and others whom he has inspired have regenerated 20,000 acres of forest, which now provides jobs and clean water for an entire community. It is a place where formerly jobless people are paid a living wage, ride bikes to work, and share three meals a day in community. Powered entirely with renewable energy sources, the community utilizes farming practices that follow a key principle of the natural world, that the waste of one process is food for the next.

In June, 2005 I had the privilege to travel with six other North Americans to this famed village.

When the military plane that had carried us to Gaviotas (for all of 6 hours) and to Marandua/Gaviotas II (for an overnight) took off to return us to Bogota, it left behind Dr. George Chan, a consultant for Zero Emissions Re-

search Initiative (ZERI), and Scott Huffman, a recent graduate of the ZERI training program. The two spent the next two weeks building and installing two biodigesters that would use anaerobic decomposition to turn pig manure into methane for use as fuel for the community.

Using Chan’s integrated biological farming systems approach, the residue of the digested manure turns out to be nutritious food for

plankton that will become food for fish to be raised in 4,000-square-foot lagoons. In other projects that Chan has imple-

mented, this method produces 10 times the standard yield of fish! And the system doesn’t stop there. The fish waste provides a rich substrate for growing shitake mushrooms, another cash crop. The

mushrooms, in turn, break down the substrate into a material that is now healthy feed for—guess what—pigs and chickens!

Chan envisions 4,000 such family farms, each taking up just 10 percent of a 12-hectare (30-acre) plot and growing pigs, fish, and mushrooms. The remaining 90 percent of the land is to be reforested with a mixed crop of African palm (a source of biodiesel fuel), cashew, rubber, and pine trees. Thus, each family who will live in Gaviotas II will be producing revenue and food to support themselves and many others. And the forest will provide cash crops that will employ, feed, and supply energy for many more.

Upon seeing a community like this, one that seems to really have its act together, we might be tempted to call it a “utopia.” But the word “utopia” happens to come from Greek roots that mean,

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Research center at Gaviotas



MY TRIP WAS INITIATED because of another extraordinary effort: The commander of the Colombian Air Force had been inspired by Gaviotas, partly because he was interested in redirecting his country from war-making to peace-building. The commander recently arranged to donate 43,000 hectares (100,000 acres) of military land to Gaviotas in order to create a five-fold expansion of this model community. The donated land—also on the *llanos*, but in Marandua, north and east of Gaviotas—will eventually provide jobs and homes for 10,000 people. The Colombian Air Force then hired Gunter Pauli and the organization he had founded, Zero Emissions Research and Initiatives (ZERI), to apply its systems approach in creating the community, which is called “The Project for Life.” (See the November-December 2006 *BeFriending Creation* for more on ZERI).

Because military planes were making a number of trips to Gaviotas to carry ZERI staff, Gunter seized on the opportunity to fill 15 empty seats, on a first-come, first-serve basis, with “Friends of Gaviotas,” those of us who had attended one of the conferences that brought Lugari to the U.S. in 2002 and 2003. The e-mail invitation, sent less than six weeks before the trip, seemed an opening I had to follow. My choice to take early retirement at the end of 2003 in order to devote my life full time to the work of ecological sustainability and economic justice gave me the time to go, and Quaker funds, as well as the recent sale of an old fixer-upper house I had renovated, made it financially possible. —HK

>> **Gaviotas**, from page 8

literally, "nowhere." So Lugari calls Gaviotas a "topia," because it really exists!

THE power of this community and the example it provides is that *these same principles, adjusted for other localities and climates can be applied all over the world.* Perhaps you can see why author Alan Weismann titled his 1996 book about this amazing community, *Gaviotas: A Village to Reinvent the World* (Chelsea Green Publ., 1998).

Postscript: Last fall, Pauli led a group of 30 scientists, government officials, philanthropists, and others to Gaviotas and Gaviotas II. The visitors included Ricardo Sanchez, Director General of the United Nations Environment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean. They followed the same itinerary we had followed the year before. Their report is available at <http://www.zeri.org/resources_gaviotas.htm>.

A MEMBER of Chestnut Hill (Pa.) Friends Meeting, Hollister Knowlton is available to travel to Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly meetings to give presentations on Gaviotas and other topics. She offers workshops, such as "Our Ecological



Hollister Knowlton

Footprint" and "How Are We Called to Respond to Climate Change?" She is one of a half dozen Quakers trained as facilitators for "Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream," a symposium, developed by the Pachamama Alliance in response to a request by the Achuar, an indigenous tribe of Ecuador, to "change the dream of our brothers and sisters of the north." Her e-mail is <h.knowlton@comcast.net> or 215/247-0718 . ♦

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>> **Steering**, from page 6

Quaker men who want to limit their family size. The group then worked on a new QEW pamphlet, as well as on articles to be submitted to Quaker publications, to promote the M-4-M project.

S: F & A also discussed how it can help strengthen international programs that integrate humanitarian work and peacemaking with environmental stewardship.

The Publications Committee reviewed QEW's new edition of Elizabeth G. Watson's booklet, *Healing Ourselves and the Earth*, and discussed plans to publish a third edition of Jack Phillips's *Walking Gently on the Earth, an Earthcare Checklist*, along with a second edition of *Earthcare for Children, a First Day School Curriculum*. The group agreed the time had come to create a pamphlet or other publication on the subject of global climate change from a spiritual perspective, with due attention to credibility on scientific grounds.

The Finance Committee reported that QEW is good shape fiscally, but urged greater efforts to get supporters to set up automatic monthly deposits and to consider other forms of giving, such as donating appreciated stock and naming QEW in their wills.

The Spiritual Nurturance Committee led discussion of whether QEW is focusing enough on its original goal of deepening our spiritual relationship to the earth. While over time the number of political concerns and academic interests has grown, most agreed that QEW continues to work from a spiritual perspective. However, despite time set aside for breaks, outings, and worship, some reported feeling exhausted by the tight schedule and heavy agenda of this meeting. —*It's a rough sea we've been called to sail!* ♦

Voice of the Lake

With the insanities of the world increasing daily, even the weather going to extremes, the sound of a frog croaking each night from our lake is reassuring and comforting.

*Hr rumph
Hr rumph
Hr rumph*

Deep, calm, measured, usually in threes or fives. Then, quite a wait before he speaks again. Even on a celebratory night as the Fourth of July,



fireworks booming and dazzling in the dark sky, explosive sounds bouncing off the nearby shore, the frog speaks midst it all, not missing a beat.

*Hr rumph
Hr rumph
Hr rumph*

All is well
All is well
All is well

—Sandra Kocher
Worcester (Mass.) Friends Mtg.

Two books that fill us with hope!

By Ruah Swennerfelt

I HAVE to read a lot of books about the current issues of ecology, environmental challenges, climate change, conservation, etc. Usually when I finish one of these books I am in a funk for awhile. I have to breathe deep, take a walk, pray, reflect, and talk with my partner, Louis, for some reassurance that there is hope. There is so much depressing news of what is happening to our planet due to overpopulation, overconsumption, and denial. I begin to wonder why everyone hasn't taken notice and taken steps to soften their impacts on our fragile environment.

So when in the last month I read *two* books which left me with hope, I knew I had to share about them with you. Although both books outline the problems and how we got there, they either give information about what we can realistically do or what is being constructively done to help heal our Mother Earth. I think they are both "must reads."

Bill McKibben (see back page about our Annual Meeting, where Bill is the keynote speaker) writes in *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future* that, "for the first time in human history "more" is no longer synonymous with "better," and that for most of us they have become almost opposites. In fact, the May/June issue of *AARP Magazine* puts it this way: *Attention shopaholics and supersizers. Go nowhere near an important new book... You may never indulge the same way again.*

McKibben shows how impor-

tant it is for us to move beyond "growth" and to instead help support strong, local economies where most of our food could be grown and where we can develop relationships with growers and producers. He shows how many communities around the world are successfully doing this. He encour-

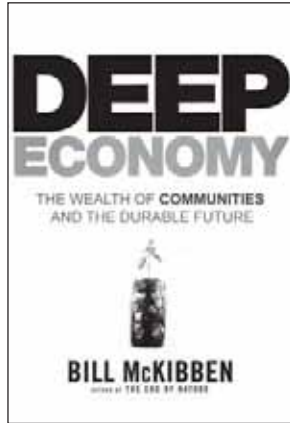
ages us to re-imagine ourselves to be members of a community instead of as only individuals protecting our own small "turfs."

McKibben is, at his foundation, a spiritual person, and his portrayal of a young, Chinese factory worker is heart-opening because of his deep faith in the

potential of all people. He doesn't hold back on giving us the real news of the suffering. But keep reading and you will be left with an understanding of what *can* be done and what *is* being done.

In *Blessed Unrest—How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being (and Why No One Saw It Coming)*,

Paul Hawken begins by telling about all the business cards he had accumulated from participants over his many years of giving environmental talks. One day he realized he had thousands of those business cards, most representing organizations working on social and environmental issues. He now believes that the total of these organizations in the world is over one million! He goes on to talk about what is going right in this world. As in *Deep Economy*, Hawken doesn't mince his words when writing



about the ills of the world, the history of how we got to this situation, and the continuing destruction that we are causing. For example he writes:

"...nature recycles everything, nothing is wasted, nothing is thrown away because there is no "away." All natural processes are cyclical, and every scrap of matter, atom, and molecule is reused and repurposed into new flows of life. Industrial society behaves like a spoiled child, casting away its unwanted toys in every direction, the only creature that leaves a wake that cannot be recycled by nature or industry."

PERMACULTURE is a relatively new concept. It concerns attempts to mimic the natural world when constructing gardens, building a home, or designing a community. Many small farmers are using permaculture principles on

their land. The new ideas that we can live "carbon neutral" lives or that we can have "zero waste" are based on the understanding that "waste equals food" and that what "remainders" we have from production and growing should be able to be used by something else in the system. Imagine not

having any trash and that all you leave out for pick-up are things that can be recycled or reused!

The second half of the book is an appendix that provides information about all the different types of nonprofit organizations in the world and gives key words to do a computer search.

At times I was so moved by Hawken's poetic style, so filled with hope, I wanted to run outside and yell to the universe that we can do it, we can create miracles, and we can turn things around. ❖

Quaker Earthcare Witness Order Form

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Please check the appropriate boxes

- 1-year support for Quaker Earthcare Witness
(includes receiving **BeFriending Creation**)
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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

BeFriending Creation, Vol. 20, No. 4, July–August 2007. 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 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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Letters

WE ARE ON the receiving end of much gratitude expressed by our guests who value what the Cenacle Retreat & Conference Center offers.

Sometimes the gifts are tangible, like when 40 participants of the spring 2006 QEW Steering Committee Meeting each gave us an energy-efficient compact fluorescent light bulb for the Center at the end of their stay, raising the consciousness and lowering the wattage of the Cenacle at the same time.

Their generosity has been the inspiration for us to begin replacing all of the lights in our buildings with compact fluorescents and to investigate other ways of greening our operations.

—Bob Raccuglia, director
Cenacle Retreat & Conference Ctr.
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Amanda and Justin Mog,

I read with great interest your "Odd couple learns cultural sensitivity..." article in the Jan.-Feb. 2007 *BeFriending Creation*. Although it

seemed to set you apart from the normal, I think you are very wise and admirable.

As a member of QEW who is concerned about the impact of humans on the natural world, I find your "Recipe for poverty reduction and improved environmental health" to be right on. I hope you will become active in QEW when you return to the U.S.—or before.

My particular interest in your "recipe" is the first point—having fewer children. There are many Catholic countries that have lower fertility rates than Paraguay—Italy and Mexico, for example. Are there other factors than religion that might be contributing? Worldwide, one of the big factors that keeps fertility high is lack of modern contraception. Is that the case in Paraguay? Does that country have family planning clinics?

Thanks for the work you are doing in the Peace Corps.

—Richard Grossman, M.D.

QEW Sustainability:
Faith & Action Interest Group

BeFriending Creation

July–August 2007

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Designing Sustainable Futures Quaker Earthcare Witness Annual Meeting & Gathering October 11–15, 2007, Burlington, Vermont

This Annual Meeting & Gathering will take place at the Bishop Booth Conference Center in Burlington, Vermont, on beautiful Lake Champlain.

Thursday evening & Friday daytime QEW committee meetings and business decision-making. All are welcome to participate and learn more about QEW's work and vision.

Friday evening

Bill McKibben, well-known Vermont author and environmental activist, will give the keynote address. He has written a lot about global warming, alternative energy, and the risks of genetic engineering. In the summer of 2006, he led the largest demonstration against global warming in American history. His writing sometimes has a spiritual perspective.



Bill McKibben

Saturday daytime

Our Bible reflection will be from **Maggie Edmondson**, pastor of Winthrop Center Friends Church in Maine, who has had a long-time concern for Creation.

QEW's **Roy Taylor** of ChoosingGreen.com will talk about sustainable building design.

William Coperthwaite is a teacher, builder, designer, and writer who is exploring true simplicity on a homestead on the north coast of Maine. He is the author of *A Hand-Made Life*.

Jim Merkel is the author of the book *Radical Simplicity: Small Footprints on a Finite Planet*. He quit his

job as a military engineer following the Exxon Valdez oil spill disaster and has since worked to develop tools for personal and societal sustainability.

Saturday afternoon

Vermont musicians **Pete & Karen Sutherland** are known for their wide knowledge of traditional music and music-making styles, their songwriting talents, and their joy of performing.

Saturday evening

We'll celebrate **QEW's 20th anniversary!** Old timers and new will tell how QEW has been an important part of their lives, and will share visions for its future.

Sunday

After worship, we will complete **QEW business**, then have an afternoon of **biking, walking, exploring, and relaxing**.

Earth Mama (A.K.A., QEW's Joyce Rouse) will offer a concert in downtown Burlington as a benefit for Local Motion, a nonprofit that improves bike and pedestrian ways in Chittenden County.

Monday

After an early breakfast, we'll head out to **canoe** the nearby Winooski River. Come and enjoy a relaxing and nature-filled weekend!

Registration is limited to 70. So register early! *Forms and information may be ordered from the QEW office or downloaded from the QEW website (see page 11).*