



The Arboretum

Wilton Monthly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends Newsletter, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth Month 2007

Meetings

Meetings for Worship are held the First Day of each week (Sunday) at 10:00 a.m. at 317 New Canaan Road, Wilton, CT 06897, (203) 762-5669. Adult Religious Education precedes Meeting for Worship at 9 a.m. Children attend the Meeting for the first 15 minutes and then attend First Day School.

Clerk's Corner

Worship is the search for and sometimes the attainment of a completely satisfying goal. This goal is a life which is in harmony with itself. Such a new life emerges out of the old in much the same way that a higher level emerges out of a lower in the course of evolution. There may have been a group of discordant and mechanically related elements in the soul, each seeking its own interests irrespective of the others. Then the miracle of creation occurs. God says, "Let there be light." The diverse glimmering sparks are fused into a common radiance. Our darkness comprehendeth His light. A new type of behavior emerges. This is the rebirth of the soul through worship.

Creative Worship, Howard H. Brinton 1931

Sometimes just a few words can dominate ones thoughts for weeks. So it has been for me after reading the words above in Howard Brinton's essay, *Creative Worship*. The first word of the paragraph intrigues me, coming from an Old English word mean-

ing "to ascribe worth to something", and, originally without any connection to divine or religious concepts.

Of greater interest to me however involves reading the last few sentences in the paragraph like this:

Then the miracle of creation occurs. *Something inside of us* says, "Let there be light." The diverse glimmering sparks are fused into a common radiance. Our darkness comprehendeth *this* light. A new type of behavior emerges. This is the rebirth of the soul through *a feeling of profound love, admiration, adoration, devotion and respect*.

It is so easy for us to have difficulties thinking of god as a bearded old man sitting on a brightly illuminated throne. None of us have ever carried on an intelligent conversation with any being in any other than a human form. We tend to get stuck with the metaphors, unable to move beyond *ide of us* is the recognition of the authentic *experience* of living.

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11th/12th Month, 2007

1st Day Sun	2nd Day Mon	3rd Day Tue	4th Day Wed	5th Day Thu	6th Day Fri	7th Day Sat
11 Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business	12 [MFWWCFB meets every 2nd First Day]	13	14	15	146	17
18 R—Clerks R—Peace & Service Quaker In- quiry	19 Ministry & Counsel	20 11:30 am Nursery School Com- mittee	21 [Peace & Ser- vice meets the third First Day]	22 [M&C meets First Second Day after MFWWCFB]	23 [Nursery School meets 3rd 3rd Day]	24
25 P-House & Grounds	26 [House & Grounds meets the fourth First Day]	27	28	29	30	1
2 R—First Day School, Gillespie House	3 CFS Board of Directors Meeting	4 [CFS B of D meets First Second Day]	5 [Gillespie House Meet- ing provides dinner, every 1st 1st Day]	6 Finance, 7:30 pm	7 [Finance meets Thurs- day before MFWWCFB]	8

Committee meetings are held at the Meeting House unless otherwise noted.

P—Committee meeting held **Prior** to Meeting, 9 a.m.; **R**—Committee meeting held after **Rise** of Meeting
Please call the committee clerk if you plan to attend a committee meeting to verify time and location.

Please note: new clerks may have been established for the year commencing 7/1/05

Connecticut Friends School—Deedie Dominicali (914) 273-4807

Finance—James Hamilton (203) 854-5256

First Day School—Judy Mickle (203) 325-2334

Helen Gander Friends Nursery School—Martha Gurvich (203) 843-3433

Hospitality—Doris Munger (203) 966-1710

House & Grounds—Jim Holdsworth, (203) 831-0070

Nominating—Jeff Menoher- (203) 866-5610

Norwalk Clergy Association—Missy Conrad (203) 847-9790

Peace & Service—Diane Keefe & Regina McIlvain (203) 846-4403), (203) 682-6432

Ministry & Counsel—Jeff Menoher (203) 866-5610

Overseers—Sean Higgins, Tom Martin (203) 849-0012, (203) 222-0442

Minutes of Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

Eighth Month—No Meeting Held

Ninth Month 9, 2007

The most important duty of Friends attending meeting for business is to seek Divine guidance while exercising self-discipline and self-control. Friends are urged to be mutually forbearing and concerned for the good of the meeting as a whole, rather than to press a personal preference. Time is allowed for deliberate and prayerful consideration of the matter at hand. Everyone must want to reach a decision and be open to new understanding.

Faith & Practice, Intermountain Yearly Meeting

When Friends make a decision . . . they are seeking the will of God in a particular matter. They have found the most reliable guide to that will to be the sense of the meeting. The sense of the meeting . . . can only arise out of a membership which has given itself over to seeking the will of God and has prepared itself spiritually for the search. It may be that some present have not yet come to that condition of seeking. It may be that some have come seeking that their own will be done—sometimes for excellent reasons. It may be that they come with a leading from God which is quite true for themselves but not a leading for the meeting as a whole.

Patricia Loring, Spiritual Responsibility in the Meeting for Business

Attending: Maribeth Becker, John Lee, Judy Meikle, Rich Francis, Marilyn Atkin, Missy Conrad, Ed Shaw, Allie Meikle, Munro Johnson, Woody Schempp, Clerk, Jeffrey Menoher, Recording Clerk

MINISTRY & OVERSIGHT

Jolene Festa has requested Transfer of Membership to Brooklyn Meeting, NYC

2007-09-01 Meeting approved of the transfer of Jolene Festa's membership to Brooklyn Friends Meeting.

The Clerk will draft the letter of transfer.

NOMINATING

The Meeting has a real need for a Recorder.

The following have not as yet been reported to NYYM and there may be other information that needs to be passed on as well:

- Report of deaths: Marjorie Walton, Peggy Smith
- Report of new members: Anthony Dallessio, Lisa Kuller, their children, Chris Henson

Transfer of membership: Jolene Festa

There are also several openings for Purchase which have not been filled?

2007-09-02 Meeting approved the nomination of Woody Schempp to Purchase Quarter Ministry and Counsel.

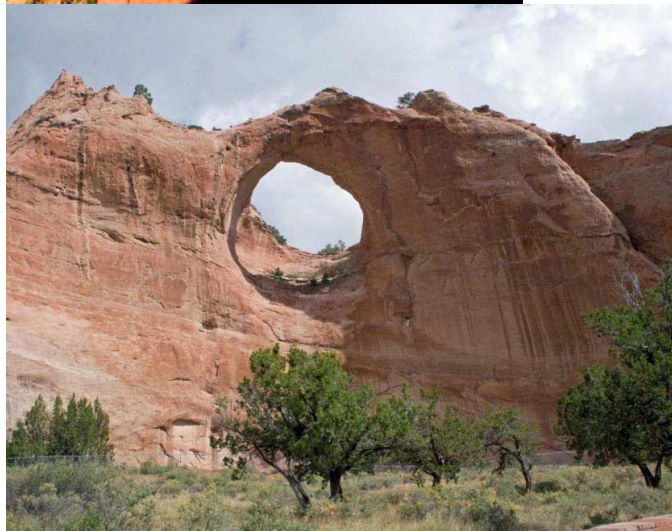
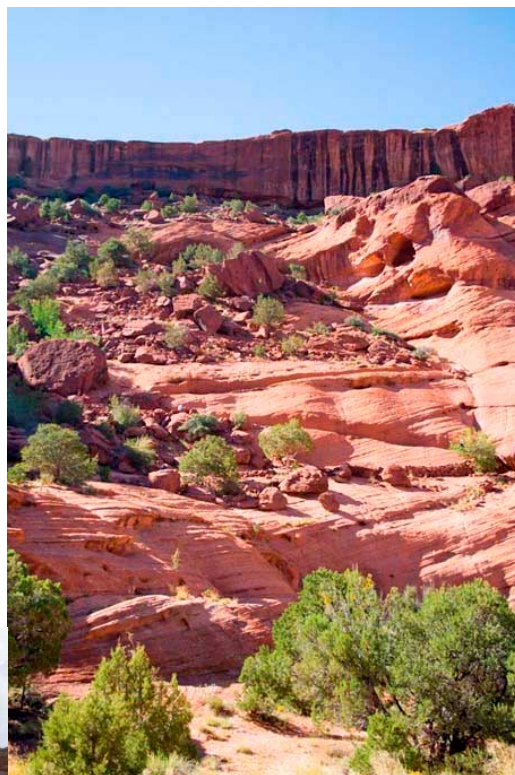
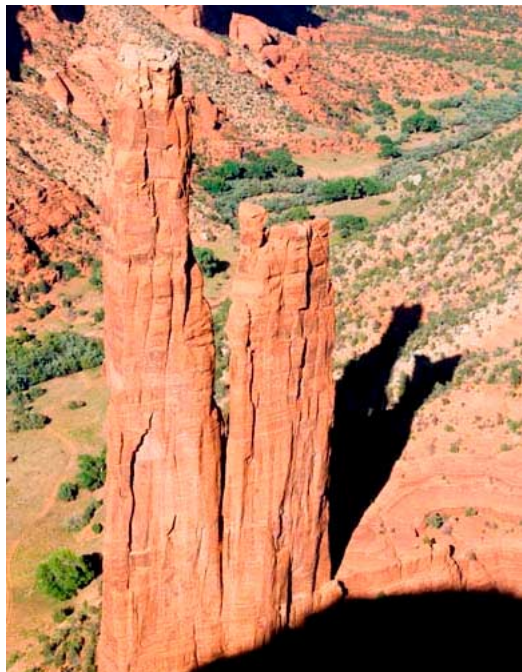
FIRSTDAY SCHOOL

Allie Miekle read from minutes of last FDS meeting. There has been an affirmation of the commitment to build FDS based on an exploration of Quaker spirit as rendered in practice.

FDS created a list of answers to the question: What is a Friend?

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Trek trough the Navaho Nation; Photos by Ed Shaw



New curriculum for upcoming months will include:

- Creation of Monthly family Service Day, each related to aspect of Quaker testimony
- FDS to engage in Gillespie House dinner: full meal in October, dessert-only after that.
- September focus on Quaker value of community
- Use of a Bible story to reinforce lesson

Creation of flyer to created interest in FDS by the greater community

There followed discernment on payment for FDS teachers who would be there on a regular basis with a prepared lesson.

Some concern expressed about determination of dollar amount for compensation. With the suggestion that payment be made from funds marked for advancement activities, some concern about process not in place for handling these advancement funds.

2007-09-03 It was the sense of those gathered that proposals for advancement activities be considered by Ministry and Oversight before final approval.

2007-09-04 Those gathered were in unity that FDS teachers could be paid at rate of 60 \$/session with a commitment to 14 weeks with a maximum of two teachers receiving pay. Funds are to come from that portion of the Smith legacy ear marked for Advancement.

A suggestion was raised for occasional Creation of a meeting program by young people, in order to engage young Friends in the broader affairs of the Meeting for Worship.

TREASURER

Rich Frances presented cash flow report to Meeting for Business, with highlights as follows:

- Individual contributions by members are down, as compared with last year. Some significant contributors have left Meeting. Checking Acct contains approximately \$10,800.00.
- Peggy Smith estate contribution has been a significant factor in year-to-date contributions.
- We had some additional expense for workman's compensation on insurance policy for which we are to be reimbursed by HGFS.
- Our contribution to NYYM has been delayed due to low contributions numbers at this time. We expect a greater level of contributions in the near future.

A meeting of Finance Committee will be required soon (next couple of weeks).

OTHER Business:

Conveners for various committees need to assure that committees start functioning! Woody will ask people to ask as conveners.

But none can worship him, till all these unruly passions, all these disturbances and troubles, that natu-

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Minutes Ninth Month (Continued from page 5)

rally attend men and women in their natural state, are all brought down into entire subjection to the divine will, and until there is a complete sense of his greatness, and of our nothingness. Here it is, that we are brought into a condition to learn of him. For what will it avail any of us, to come and sit down thus together, to be led, and guided, and instructed in the way of salvation, if we do not gather into a state, whereby and wherein we can be instructed--into a situation in which we can hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches? And it is my earnest desire, that we may individually labour after this stillness; for this is the travail that ought always to attend our minds when thus assembled together. This leads to an experience and evidence in ourselves, of the mighty power of God, and of our own complete insufficiency to do any good thing. For we must come to this evidence before we can serve him aright; and before we can walk in the way which he has cast up for the ransomed and redeemed to walk in--a blessed way. We must come into this condition, in order to learn our duty, not only to God our creator, but to man our fellow creature. This will open to us all that we are to do, and instruct us in the way in which we can answer the great end of our creation, and we shall always be ready to glorify God and enjoy him.

PEACE, BE STILL, A Sermon Delivered by Elias Hicks, 1827

Minutes of Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business Tenth Month 14, 2007

The presuppositions of the corporate meeting for worship have, from the very beginning, profoundly affected the method of decision-making in the meeting for business. In both, there is faith in the Guide. There is faith in a continuous revelation that is always open to produce fresh disclosures. And there is respect and affection for each other that cuts through all diversity and that helps to kindle a faith that, with patience and openness, the group can expect to come to clearness and to resolve the problems that come before it. — Source unknown

Attending: Diane Keefe, Maribeth Becker, Frances Salant, John Steere, John Black Lee, Judy Meikle, Rich Frances, Michel Loth, Sean Higgins, Marilyn Atkin, Virginia Auster, Missy Conrad, Woody Shempp (Clerk), Laura Higgins (Recording Clerk)

Meeting opened with silent worship at 11:50 AM.

DIRECTORY – Meeting decided to format the Directory to print on the least number of pages.

PEACE & SERVICE – Diane Keefe reported that the Committee wants to focus on reducing gang violence in Norwalk. The Committee is supporting Judy Meikle's leading to take a personal role in promoting nonviolence. Judy plans to use the HIPP (Help Increase the Peace Program) by going to community organizations and asking for co-sponsorship of the series of three workshops – basic, advanced, trainer for trainers. Each workshop costs \$1,200. Publicity will be constructed around all the activities associated with the workshops and funding and Wilton Meeting's role.

Judy spoke movingly of how strongly she feels God is leading her do this work. As her initial investment in the peace work, she has reduced her full-time position at CT Friends School to part-time. One of the skills she said she needs to develop is fundraising. She will also be writing about the transformation of non-violence in the lives of youth.

Pieces are coming together from various sources, so the Committee is asking for authorization to spend up to \$3,000 of the Peggy Smith Advancement bequest. (Minute of 2007-07-07 established half of

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Minutes Tenth Month (Continued from page 6)

Peggy's legacy for Advancement activities.) A complete description of the grant request is attached.

After extensive, spiritually-led ministry from almost each person attending, the Clerk summarized the sense of the Meeting as being in agreement that the project is a valid Quaker witness. Most felt that the workshops will serve as a form of advancement.

2007-10-01 Meeting supports Judy's leading to go forward with the HIPP workshops in Norwalk with the requested funding of \$3,000.

2007-10-02 Ministry and Oversight is asked form a Committee of Care for Judy in support of her lead- ing to promote non-violence among youth.

FIRST DAY SCHOOL – Diane Keefe reported that Integrity will be the focus of the four next weeks, then simplicity and the meaning of the holidays. January classes will teach about equality and Martin Luther King. February's theme is peace.

Allie Meikle is serving as a paid teacher. The program needs more volunteers. However, the Committee feels the year is coming together well and the curriculum is sound.

CFS – Marybeth Becker reported that today from 3 PM until 5 PM, there will be a tour and reception at the White Barn property. One of the parents did a mammoth job of clearing and tidying the property gratis. The Norwalk Common Council gave CFS all the available open space money. This action was necessary in order to receive \$450,000 in CT Department of Environmental Protection funds.

CFS settled with a neighbor who planned to appeal the Zoning Board's permission. Now that fund rais- ing must be done in earnest, the school is working with fund raising organization called Changing the World. Everyone is invited and welcomed to participate in the broader fund raising efforts.

Three new Trustees received funding to attend Friends Council on Education conference at Pendle Hill.

TREASURER (9 MOS REPORT) – Rich Francis reported that the rent from the Nursery School will be \$600 above budget, because of full enrollment and a successful summer program. Insurance reimburse- ment to the Meeting will be approximately \$14,000.

In the report, the Operating Account balance of over \$24,000 includes \$16,000 of Peggy Smith bequest funds. We have had a positive cash flow because of bequests. However, receipts are actually \$45,000 behind budget. The shortfall in contributions is approximately \$33,000. Treasurer said a solicitation let- ter is ready to be sent. Meeting received the Treasurer's Report with gratitude

November 3 will be both a meeting of the physical and fiscal stewardship committee and a work day.

OTHER – Outreach wording needs to be consistent. All flyers and public relations must say the same thing. Our road signs say Wilton Friends Meeting. Wilton Monthly Meeting is too vague and confusing. We also need to make sure "Quakers" appears in the publicity and on our road signs. New road signs will be designed and brought to Meeting for approval.

Meeting closed with the Clerk reading the excerpt below, followed by a short period of silence:

Membership carries with it spiritual obligations. Each member is called to participate in the Meeting's

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spiritual life and to attend worship regularly. Members need to nurture each other's God-given gifts and talents. They seek guidance from one another and the Meeting in discerning God's will for themselves. They pray for one another.

The basic spiritual commitment creates practical obligations. The vitality of each Monthly Meeting depends on its members' investments of time, energy and financial support. Friends put practical meaning into their spiritual commitment through regular participation in Meetings for Business, service on committees or as officers, regular financial giving, taking part in service projects under the care of the Meeting, assisting in maintenance of Meeting property, and representing the Meeting in community and wider Friends' organizations.

-- *Handbook*, Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting

Respectfully submitted,
Laura Higgins

Info on Meeting Directory

At long last an updated directory of members and attenders is available. You can pick one up in the entry hallway of the meetinghouse. There are bound to be some errors in it but, after you pick one up, if you find an error or would like it mailed to you, please email Woody.

Special thanks are in order to Sean Higgins for all the work he did on this! Thanks also to Frances Salant for her suggestion that a little space be left on pages for notes.

An Update from First Day School:

During the first few months of fall, the teachers and students of Wilton Meeting's First Day School have been focusing on the Quaker values of "community" and "integrity." We have done this in a variety of ways including lively discussion, appropriate examples from the Bible and from Quaker history, hands-on activities and service work.

Allie Mickle has enthusiastically taken on the responsibility of working with the youngest children in our Meeting, ages 1-6. Diane Keefe and myself are working with the children who are in third grade and older. And, in the true spirit of community, our excellent young teenage Friends occasionally help Allie with the younger group or provide a more mature perspective with the group of "Middles," as we call them.

Today's lesson used the metaphor of "structural integrity" to provide a new way to think about the value of personal integrity. Our discussion centered around this statement: If we strive to use words and actions that match the things we feel strongly about on the inside, we are likely acting with integrity.

We talked about the ways architects and engineers have to think about a building's foundation and "core" when they design a safe and well-functioning building. The internal structure of a building determines what it will look like as well as how it will work. We then took turns trying to build a structure out of playing cards to see what strategy worked the best. "Structural integ-

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“simplicity” became a way for us to think about our own spiritual foundations and core values. The value of “simplicity” will be our focus for much of November and December. If you have a testimony on the subject of simplicity that you feel would benefit the children, don’t hesitate to contact one of us. We’d love to include you in our First Day School curriculum.

Warmly,
Pamela Hovland

Eco-Spirituality & Action Minute of New York Yearly Meeting 312th Session, Summer 2007

2007-07-58. The Clerk introduced Melanie-Claire Mallison, clerk of Nurture Coordinating Committee, who brought additional business from the Nurture Section. Melanie-Claire introduced Janet Soderberg (15th Street) to present a minute from the Earthcare Working Group. This minute began with Friends in 15th Street Meeting and then was seasoned further in 15th Street Monthly Meeting, New York Quarter, the NYYM Earthcare Working Group, and Nurture Coordinating Committee. Friends approved the following minute.

Eco-Spirituality & Action Minute

In our 1660 peace declaration, Friends declared, “We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatever: this is our testimony to the whole world.” That statement is still true, but its meaning has deepened beyond what those early Quakers would have understood. Can we now commit ourselves to ending humanity’s war with the Earth?

The Religious Society of Friends has witnessed for peace for almost 350 years. Over that time, our witness has grown and widened; we have worked for the end of war, for the end of the African slave trade, for equality of women, civil rights for African-Americans and for human rights around the world.

Now we are led to widen our witness again to work for peace between humans and our sacred earth community. Our culture has considered the Earth our property to be exploited, and we have all, knowingly and unknowingly, been complicit in this violent appropriation of world resources. We must now search for the seeds of this war in our possessions and our lives and work to nurture a new, mutual relationship with the Earth in all of our actions. The spirit is calling us to hold in reverence this miracle that God has given us. If we are connected to our source, our lives are richer and deeper.

We are asking that this minute be forwarded to all monthly meetings and worship groups in New York Yearly Meeting with a “call to action.” We suggest that each monthly meeting worshipfully address the following queries:

What are God and the Earth asking of our meeting at this point in time?

How do we respond in ways appropriate to our Meeting, our community, and the wider

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world?

How does this response build on previous or ongoing Earthcare work our meeting has already done?

What further specific changes are we willing to make in our spiritual practice, meetings, and individual spiritual lives to reflect a strong witness for the Earth?

It is our hope that this prayerful consideration of our responsibility to the planet that sustains us will generate the actions necessary to bring us into deep harmony with our beloved Earth.

Suggestions and Contacts

In discerning an action plan you may want to consider the following:

These four categories are part of everyone's daily life:

- **food**
- **transportation**
- **clothing**
- **energy**

This is not an exhaustive list, but we can begin to examine these four vital areas to understand how they affect the life of our planet and what changes we can make in our behavior.

We suggest that you begin by considering: the manufacture of items in these four areas; the means and distance of their delivery to you; your use of them; and the ultimate end of their life cycle. How have they impacted the life of the planet and your own health during these periods of time?

For instance, in the case of food, how far did it travel to get to your table? (The average is 2000 miles. Someone might want to calculate how much CO2 was put into the atmosphere in that trip.) How can you stop buying some of these foods from so far away? An increasingly popular solution is to eat food that has been produced locally.

Enjoy this journey! We look forward to hearing news of your action plan.

Regional Coordinators

New York City region: Janet Soderberg jesoderberg@verizon.net

Upstate New York: Angela Manno amanno@angelamanno.com

Central and Western New York: Liseli Haines liselih@juno.com

Zoning Hearing – CT Friends School—July 18, 2007

I am speaking tonight simply as a Norwalk resident – and a parent.

By now you've heard about all of the cool and unique design features of the proposed project. I wholeheartedly feel that it is a wonderful project and proudly support it. I just wanted to share a little about the personality of the school so you know what a great addition CFS will be to Norwalk. It truly is a unique school that fills a void in today's educational choices.

My husband and I moved to Norwalk 13 years ago because we loved its diversity, mix of unique neighborhoods and variety of things to do. We didn't worry too much about the schools at that time because we were young twenty-somethings and kids were nowhere on our radar screen. We thought we'd figure that out when the time came.

Zoning Hearing (Continued from page 10)

Well time flies and soon enough we were the parents of a 4 year old and we were posed with the question of what to do about school. We weren't hearing wonderful things about the Norwalk schools and weren't sure what to do.

So many of our friends had moved out of Norwalk to towns with bigger houses, lower taxes and so-called "better schools" (as measured by test scores and college enrollment rates), but that seemed a bit extreme to us – especially since we had grown to love Norwalk so much.

We visited several of the Norwalk public schools and while they seemed better than what we had heard, we decided that we wanted a place that wasn't so focused on test scores and No Child Left Behind. We wanted a place that would really expand our daughter's mind – not just be concerned with what percentile she fell into.

We investigated several of the area private schools and found that while they were academically excellent, they seemed to be missing something. Maybe it was the sense of community that is so prevalent in Norwalk. Our neighbor suggested that we look at CFS – where their son had attended. We have never looked back. We really embrace CFS's educational philosophy that fosters a love of learning. CFS views learning not as a set of principles to be memorized, but as a continual process of inquiry. They practice experiential learning where the children really interact with what they are learning – and they can take time to explore something of interest to the children rather than needing to rigidly stick to the curriculum. (A huge icicle hanging from the roof created a whole impromptu math/science lesson - "how long do you think that icicle is?" "when it melts, how much water do it think it will be?") We are also impressed with the community that CFS creates. They believe that every member is truly valued and they strive to make the school community welcoming to all. This supportive environment allows the children to really grow both academically as well as socially. CFS lives its mission everyday. Community service is woven into the curriculum. Last year's kindergarten/first grade class raised \$600 selling their artwork to purchase 300 tote bags that they filled with donated blankets, stuffed animals, books and toothbrushes that they delivered to homeless children in area shelters.

The good that this school does for its students and the community at large is simply amazing. The students leave CFS with such a respect for the world around them – and their place in it. These students are uncommonly confident and compassionate; when you meet the graduating 8th graders, you get the sense that they could go skip high school and head straight to college. I could go on talking about the good of the school, but I will shift gears and quickly wrap up.

When CFS became interested in the White Barn property I thought this was such a perfect fit for the school, the Cranbury neighborhood and the entire Norwalk community.

As a neighborhood leader I was at the White Barn Property the day Governor Rell distributed the open space check to the City and the Norwalk Land Trust. I wasn't even aware that such a beautiful parcel of land existed in Norwalk. Along with many neighborhood leaders, I supported the Save Cranbury Association at their rally to preserve open space and save the White Barn Theatre. I really do believe that the school is the best use for this special property.

CFS appreciates the special-ness of the property and has worked diligently to engage neighborhood leaders, land trust volunteers, elected officials and many others to ensure that the plans would be sensitive to everyone's concerns. It has indeed been a strange colliding of worlds for me as CFS enters into the Norwalk civic arena that I often participate in as a neighborhood leader. But it has been a wonderful process with so much support along the way.

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Zoning Hearing (Continued from page 11)

This project will be a transformational one for the school – to take it from its inception as a home schooling coop in a couple of modular classrooms (Kim always has to remind me not to call them trailers) to a model of leading educational practices in a cutting edge sustainable building.

I am excited about the plans that the school has created and I look forward to seeing them come to fruition during my daughter's time at CFS. I also envision generations of children coming through its doors and being taught all of the wonderful things about our world in the special way that CFS does it.

Thank you.
Maribeth Becker

The Progressive Film Forum

Wilton Quaker Meetinghouse
317 New Canaan Rd. (Rte 106)
Wilton, CT
Sunday November 11 at 6 PM

The Acoustic Café
2926 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT
Tuesday November 13 at 7 PM

WAR MADE EASY:
How Presidents & Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death

Narrated by Sean Penn

War Made Easy reaches into the Orwellian memory hole to expose a 50-year pattern of government deception and media spin that has dragged the United States into one war after another from Vietnam to Iraq. Narrated by actor and activist Sean Penn, the film exhumes remarkable archival footage of official distortion and exaggeration from LBJ to George W. Bush, revealing in stunning detail how the American news media have uncritically disseminated the pro-war messages of successive presidential administrations.

War Made Easy gives special attention to parallels between the Vietnam War and the war in Iraq. Guided by media critic Norman Solomon's meticulous research and tough-minded analysis, the film presents disturbing examples of propaganda and media complicity from the present alongside rare footage of political leaders and leading journalists from the past, including Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, dissident Senator Wayne Morse, and news correspondents Walter Cronkite and Morley Safer.

Letter from Columbia: Targeting Those Who Turn in Their Weapons

Yesterday, September 29, we were supposed to meet with a young man who was demobilized from one of the armed guerrilla groups here in Colombia called the FARC. He had turned in his weapons, left his life of violence, and committed himself to re-enter civil society. He moved to a small farm outside of Bogota with his wife and child where they felt relatively safe. But some members of the paramilitaries, who had infiltrated part of the government and obtained information about demobilized persons, identified him as an ex-FARC member and said that if he wanted to stay on the farm, he would have to work for them. So he and his wife fled the farm one night to come back to Bogota, leaving their 13-year-old son behind with an old neighbor couple, as they did not have enough money to bring them with him.

This was two weeks ago. Now it is hard to say where the young man is. He has been missing for four days. One week ago, our contact spoke with him and his wife and they said they were very concerned for their safety. And now their fears have come true. He is gone and it is hard to say, or even guess, as to his whereabouts. Yesterday our contact went to where the wife was staying to bring her some food, and she did not show up either. The paramilitary mentality is often that once a guerrilla, always a guerrilla, even after demobilization. So, demobilized persons are targeted and terrorized, even though they are trying to turn to lives of nonviolence. All our contact and we can do is wait to hear some news, some bit of information. Wait and hope.

In the process of looking for peace here in Colombia, the government has given the option for those bearing arms to lay them down and reincorporate them into civil society. But, laws concerning demobilization unfairly favor rightist paramilitary groups, often ignoring those in leftist guerrilla groups who lay down their weapons. Paramilitaries who demobilize are promised housing, health benefits, food, education, and technical training to prepare them for a civilian job. Sometimes, the land that is given is land that those paramilitaries had stolen or received through forced displacement of campesinos. And the biggest thing is that they receive immunity and can only get a jail sentence of up to eight years no matter how grievous their past crimes have been!

Yet at times their demobilization is just a front and they go on terrorizing and killing. Plus, some leaders of the paramilitaries are drug lords who have bought their position in the paramilitary forces to gain the benefits of demobilization, especially immunity. The drug lords have been involved in grave crimes that may have involved many death sentences had they been prosecuted and often they would have been extradited to the U.S. But with the immunity, they go unpunished.

30 September 2007
Colombia Delegation Blog

This article was written by a member of the fall 2007 CPT delegation to the Colombia. To read additional information, please access the blog at <http://cptcolombia2007.blogspot.com/2007/10/30-september-2007.html>

Wilton Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

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Please note: Any editorial comments expressed herein are solely the opinion of the newsletter editor, unless otherwise noted, and are not intended to represent the opinion of Wilton Monthly Meeting.

Editorial

It was a long time coming and as it approached it gave one the feeling that it was just going to fizzle out. But suddenly the woods were ablaze with color and all was well in the world. I have been fortunate these last couple of weeks to have seen the Fall in Massachusetts, all the way to Washington, D.C. and back, and along the Merritt on my way to New Haven. I hope all of you have seen it too.

The Arboretum has been missing in action the last couple of months and all I can offer is my sincere apology. This issue should bring it back on schedule.

Another election has come and gone. A few changes have been made. Because most were local, there was national attention was absent. One almost wonders if it matters. We have now learned that a majority in Congress is 60% and not 50%, at least in the Senate. One item after another, what we learned in school has to be relearned. The President is not above the law—except when he writes notes in the margin that tell the Executive to ignore aspects of a law. Congressional joint committees have the power to do what they want with a bill, regardless of what the greater body desires. Ear marks smear marks, billions of dollars gone. No wonder Congress has a black eye in the public's mind. What right have we to tell other countries how to run their democracy? Another dynasty in the White House? Will we live through it in one piece? Politics is getting very discouraging. I hope it changes. Do we need another huge crisis before they/we will begin to see the light. If you are planning a trip to Europe, it is best to be rich.

Which brings me back to the falling leaves. At least we know that they will be back in the Spring. Thank God for that. May the light be with you.

Notice

Experienced sitter for baby, toddler, older child or elder person. \$15 an hour plus gas. Call Virginia Auster, (203) 846-9288. Cell (203) 252-9528. Email auster@localnet.com

Our Name

The Newsletter has been named **The Arboretum** in acknowledgement that trees thrive in the Light and, through photosynthesis, use it to convert suffocating carbon dioxide to life-giving oxygen for other life forms. They might serve as a metaphor for Meeting. Trees play a dominant role in the changing appearance of the acres on which the Meeting House rests. Our memorial garden is nestled amongst them. We trust you find the name agreeable.

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