

RIDGE LINES

Woolman Hill Newsletter Summer/Fall 2007

www.woolmanhill.org



107 Keets Road Deerfield MA 01342



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NAMING LOGS

"Smoky!"... toss.

"Big One!"... uggh.

"Scotland!"...giggles.

"Princess Peederpants!"...guffaws.

So went the work project of the Mt. Toby Meeting Junior High gathering this past June the third. The task was to move a stack of firewood to the woodshed, as a bucket brigade. The job was not long begun before names were being given to each stick by the first person in the line. The role of first person in line was a hotly contested one, as members further back in the line were bursting with a supply of fresh names for the wood. At times, there were pauses in the work as the stick was closely examined for clues of its true identity. In one long sequence, each log was given a word in an elaborate story.

Many thanks to Alan Eccleston, Will Savitri, and Daphne Bye for putting together the event. When next you are at Woolman Hill in the winter, do take time to listen to the sticks before you toss them in the stove; they may have a story to tell!

Co-Director Mark Fraser loves tapping human energy to minimize using up the earth's resources.

WELCOMING NEW STAFF TO THE HILL

In September 2006, STEVE HOWES and his partner Jensey Graham moved to Woolman Hill so that Steve could begin work as our resident Host/Caretaker the following month. Steve has brought professionalism, integrity, and attention to detail to his work thus far, as well as an enthusiasm for developing systems and approaches that bring greater ease and effectiveness to the work. He has also boosted the average height of Hill residents by a considerable margin. After many years in private business as a body worker, Steve spent time living and working at the Yokoji Zen Mountain Center, a Zen Buddhist Monastery in Mountain Center, CA. Steve has a passion for road biking and weather forecasting, for yogurt shakes, for researching and learning new things, and for listening for truth. Jensey works full-time at nearby Smith College and in her spare time dedicates many hours to improving the landscaping and gardens around the Red House and Blacksmith Shop.



BECCA HOWE joined our staff in October 2006. Becca works one day a week keeping the main building and the meetinghouse spotless. With an eye for aesthetics, she adds little touches of beauty: a vase of fresh flowers on the windowsill or a simple display of pottery on the foyer shelves. She also has a hobby of nature photography, so two of her elegant photos now grace the walls of the conference center.

Our most recent staff addition is PATTY SMYTHE, who has been cooking for our Quaker program weekends. Patty has a massage therapy practice in nearby Greenfield and lives in Wendell. Her Lebanese Feast is already a favorite Woolman Hill meal. One recent workshop evaluation read: "Now I have to go and feed myself and that will be a heavy disappointment. The food was inspirational!"

Margaret Cooley and Mark Fraser continue as Co-Directors, and Mark and his family still live on the Hill. Our loyal bookkeeper Pat LaMountain still pays our bills and fills us in on the history of Woolman Hill (she's been here longer than any of us). Jontz comes and helps with maintenance from time to time. We are grateful that Steve, Jensey, Becca and Patty are all part of our community now too!

MILDEW BE GONE!

A constant challenge of our old buildings is the level of moisture that collects in every nook and cranny. We are taking a number of steps that have made significant improvements in our moisture problems lately. Last fall we purchased an air-purifying device (affectionately called "The Gizmo") which we rotate among the rooms on a regular basis. We have also repaired gutters, re-graded the drainage areas around the conference center foundation, cleaned up the basement, bleached and painted several interior surfaces, installed insulation beneath the library floor, and removed a large portion of our rather extensive miscellaneous linen and pillow collection. This summer we will also be installing a "floating wood floor" in the west bunk room, which will greatly reduce the moisture collection on the concrete slab that currently greets people's bare feet when they get out of bed in the morning. As for the meetinghouse, we made the difficult decision to remove all the historic coconut-hair cushions that harbored years of dust and mildew, and we have shifted from sweeping to vacuuming. A recent guest with severe chemical and mold sensitivities commented that she is amazed by the difference she has noticed in our facilities over the past couple of years. We are delighted that she is now able to attend gatherings in both the conference center and meetinghouse.

RECENT PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

renovating back storage room
installing new outdoor lighting
sorting and replacing linens
repairing and painting screen doors
scraping, repairing, painting exterior walls
repairing and replacing furniture
re-grading ground near foundation
sanding and finishing wood floors
painting interior walls and ceilings
re-grading and re-seeding of main lawn
landscaping and garden work
repairing three roofs

**Many, many thanks
to staff, board and volunteers!**

"Woolman Hill continues to have a special place in my heart.

Such a perfect place for spiritual uplift - both indoors, in the fine Meetinghouse and Conference Center, and outside, under the great trees or walking along the ridge."

Former board member, December 2006



COUNTING SHOE STRINGS

Co-Director Mark Fraser aims at keeping Woolman Hill's spending to a minimum.

In the current budget, the Board decided to allocate \$6000 of operating funds for major capital expenditures. Thus far, we have repaired all the slate roofs on the property, and we have painted the conference center. With the remaining funds, we plan to replace the asphalt portion of the Red House roof, and install a wood floor in the west bunk room of the conference center. These expenditures, together with a slight drop in weekend rentals of the conference center over the winter, are making our finances look very tight indeed this fiscal year. We are very grateful for the generosity of all who have made donations already; if you feel you can give again, or if you haven't yet given, please consider a gift to Woolman Hill today.

WISH LIST

Farm tractor
Lawnmower
Food processor
Metal mixing bowls
Cushions

Please contact us to confirm that what you have is what we want...

HILL HAPPENINGS

It is a great joy that Jim Lyons and Jill Horton-Lyons are now hosting midweek worship in the Meetinghouse at Woolman Hill. All are welcome to join in unprogrammed Quaker worship from 5:30-6:30pm on Wednesdays. Please contact Jim or Jill if you have questions (413-548-3940, jim@winterberryfarm.org). + The General Board of Friends United Meeting (North America) will be coming to Woolman Hill for their October 2007 meeting. We hope that the Board's time here will be blessed by a spirit of love and faith. + Mark your calendars! Our annual fall WORK DAY will be Monday, October 8, 2007. Come see how Woolman Hill shines with a little elbow grease! And join us for our spring work weekend May 9-11, 2008. + Many thanks to Lisa Gurland and Victoria Dickson for recent donations of material goods. + Welcome to new board members Chris Corcoran, Rachel Donovan, and Bruce Kay! + An article about Juanita Nelson appeared in a recent edition of *Harvard Press*. When she's not entertaining the media, Juanita keeps herself busy with speaking engagements, gardening, planning a Winter Harvest Fest for the local community, and hob-nobbing with fellow war tax resisters, land trust promoters, homesteaders, and other radical revolutionaries...

**"Woolman Hill looks wonderful -
so cared for, so loved."
*Program participant, spring 2007***

TRAPROCK PEACE CENTER TO MOVE FROM WOOLMAN HILL

David Ahlfeld (Mount Toby Meeting) is clerk of the Woolman Hill board.

Traprock Peace Center is moving from its long-time Woolman Hill home to a new location in our area. Traprock has long been a fixture on Woolman Hill and for many years was the major activity here. Traprock began its time at Woolman Hill in 1979 when it took up residency in the Brown House, formerly occupied by Milton Mayer. Early participants, including Randy Kehler and Frances Crowe, focused on the problem of nuclear weapons. In 1980, Traprock organized the right ballot referendum for a nuclear freeze in the U.S. Through the early 1980's, the Brown House was the headquarters of the National Freeze Campaign. During this period Traprock was the primary focus of activity on the Hill. In more recent years, Traprock has been led by Sunny Miller and has focused on a range of peace and social justice issues (the Vernon, VT nuclear reactor and the war in Iraq primary among them). One of the peace center's key tools has been an internationally prominent website (www.traprockpeace.org).

Traprock's move from the Brown House opens opportunity for some significant rearrangements at Woolman Hill. We expect to move one of our staff households into the Brown House. Making this move will allow us to utilize the Red House for several functions, including housing for program attendees with limited mobility.

During its history, Traprock has made remarkable contributions to peace and justice in our region, our nation and the world. Woolman Hill is glad to have been witness to this work and looks forward to Traprock's continued presence in our local community.



Photo: Mary Fraser & Jensey Graham on Workday

**Dedicated to the Oak Tree
by the Post Office,
Greenfield, Massachusetts**

Oh, the beauty of a tree
So brown with the death of winter
I t's such a queer thing
How skeletal it seems to be
And yet with the gentlest of hands,
The Earth, she tells it that it hasn't died.

People walk by all day long
Not noticing how the beauty of the Earth
Shows itself in the body of a tree
Dead brown leaves blowing in the wind.

Dance and sway my friend, dance and sway
You are beautiful in a way unexplainable
You are loved by the Earth and Sky
Never give up on yourself, never give up
You know who I am, and I am still
You are still, you watch, you wait.

And tell me my friend,
Are you waiting for me?

Mary Fraser lives at Woolman Hill with her family, cat, violin, books, and writings. Mary is thirteen years old and has just published her first book of poetry: MY POEMS and me.

HOMAGE TO MOLLY

In February, we honored Molly Duplisea-Palmer for facilitating journaling workshops at Woolman Hill for over two decades. Several of her loyal participants put together a collection of program flyers, photos, writing, artwork and other memorabilia. Molly's humble, unassuming, accepting, and self-revealing leadership has allowed many, many people to nurture their own inner voices. It seemed fitting to raise our voices in appreciation for her dedication and love over all these years. Molly's retreats are exceptionally tender; though no writing experience is necessary, it is always amazing how eloquent people can be when their words come from the heart. If you want to experience deep self-exploration in the context of a supportive community, come to Molly's journaling workshop in spring 2008: "Exploring Our Emotional, Physical, Spiritual Reality: what I used to believe, what I believe now."



One of Molly's trademark activities is a Saturday evening "fun" writing exercise. At this year's retreat, the assignment was for each participant to choose one word from something they'd written earlier in the day. These words were then shared aloud, and everyone was tasked with composing a story using all twelve of the words. The list emerged with a spontaneous theme, but you will see from the two examples below how widely the outcomes varied and how much laughter resulted!

A Life-Altering Tale in Five Verses of Haiku

So frazzled was she,
no fun scurrying
to her own wedding.

Alas, a tantrum!
No Valentine's heart for him!
Aha! Revelation!

Commitment is out!
I can be faithful only
To bumping against

emancipation.
Freedom for the two of us
to journal apart.

*Ann Baird, a Hanover (NH)
Friend, has attended Molly's
workshops for many years.*

The Fire Fairies of Woolman Hill

This was Mt Toby Friend Anne Patterson's first time at a journaling workshop.

It was a bitter, cold Valentine's Day evening at the Woolman Hill Conference Center in Deerfield, Massachusetts. Molly and the last of the journal retreat attendees had finally gone to sleep for the night. They had had an amazing evening with much laughter, fun and games. The woodstove in the Yellow House had been ablaze all night, thanks to Ann Marie's talented hands, and there had been a sense of festive warmth among all who were there. As is often the case, a day spent writing and sharing heart-felt stories can bring a closeness and special community feeling amongst the participants.

On this cold February night, after Margaret said goodnight to everyone and turned off the lights, she heard a noise coming from the woodstove. "Oh, that was just the last piece of wood bumping against the back of the stove," she thought, and left for the comfort of her own bed.

What happened next may surprise those of you who aren't familiar with fire fairies. Even if you're an expert at making campfires, or know how to roast a marshmallow over hot coals, you still may not be able to believe what I am about to share. It takes a certain commitment, a leap of faith. . .but, if you are willing to make that leap, I will tell you what happened on that chilly night.

Fire fairies are distantly related to elves. Like elves, they also have a mischievous streak and are known for having tantrums at the drop of a hat. The feisty fire fairies of Woolman Hill are particularly creative and resourceful. This comes from years of listening in to all the journaling workshops, by the way.

Two of these fire fairies had been faithful listeners over the years. Instead of dancing and scurrying around like the rest of their clan, they would sit and listen with attentiveness and soak up all the wisdom they could from Molly's many workshops. It

was on a night like this one, two years ago, that they had fallen in love. The other fire fairies wouldn't hear of it, of course. "Why, we can't have our kind falling in love with each other! It's way too hot in here already! What would happen if we all gave in to such silly feelings? We would burn the whole house down!" So it had been decreed by the frazzled fire fairies that falling in love was simply not allowed.

This particular night, however, something incredible happened. These two fire fairies had a revelation. When the other embers had all bedded down for the night they stayed awake and yes, you guessed it, had a secret wedding!

What happened next is only for the fiery lovers to know. However, I will tell you this: they discovered emancipation, and that their true love did not burn down the conference center. Instead, it ignited a passion that lives on in the hearts of all of the journal writers that have taken Molly's workshops; it sparked a love that touches the lives of all who come to Woolman Hill.

PROGRAM NOTES

The upcoming '07-'08 program season brings a wide variety of workshops. We welcome George Lakey in November for a program on "Sustainable Activism" (see article below). We'll have three favorites returning this year: our year-end silent retreat, a couples retreat, and a journaling retreat (see article on p. 4). Forgiveness as a spiritual practice, conflict in meetings, the interplay between resistance and surrender in our faith journeys, how to communicate about our Quaker beliefs, and the great outdoors are other topics we'll be delving into this season. We have a sliding scale program fee as well as scholarship funds. Please keep your eyes out for our season brochure and for individual program flyers, and visit our website (www.woolmanhill.org) which has more information about all of our programs.

2007-2008 PROGRAMS

Sustainable Activism
Year-End Silent Retreat
Building the Beloved Community
Transforming Conflict in Meetings
Couples Enrichment
Forgiveness as a Spiritual Practice
Getting Outdoors: A Place for Folks in the Natural World
Exploring Our Emotional, Physical, Spiritual Reality
Holy Resistance, Sacred Surrender
Love Made Visible: a work weekend

"We had a terrific and peaceful weekend, a halo around the moon to light up our bonfire, and delicious food as always."

*Retreat participant
January 2007*

GEORGE LAKEY COMING TO THE HILL

It may be hard to believe, but there are people in New England who have never heard of George Lakey. If you are one of them, you should sign up for a unique opportunity to join this internationally respected visionary activist for a November 17-18 workshop on sustainable activism. If you *have* already heard of George, you will already know many good reasons why you'll want to participate in this event.

Author, activist, and founder of Training for Change, George Lakey has given leadership to a number of social change movements. Well-known for his conflict resolution work in high-conflict areas, he has run trainings for coal miners, therapists, homeless people, prisoners, Russian lesbians and gays, Sri Lankan monks, Burmese guerrilla soldiers, striking steel workers, South African activists, and others. Currently serving as senior associate at Swarthmore College's Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility, George has taught courses titled "Humanitarian Intervention: Nonviolent Options" and "Nonviolent Responses to Terrorism." On the personal side, George is a Quaker, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather in an interracial family. He received the national Giraffe Award (1992) for "sticking his neck out for the common good," and the Ashley Montague Peace Award (1998) from the International Conference on Conflict Resolution. (More information about George Lakey can be found on the Training for Change website: www.trainingforchange.org.)



JUDITH SHEA JOINS GEORGE FOR THIS WORKSHOP. Long-time health care activist and co-founder of the Movement for a New Society, Judith Shea will assist George in leading this workshop. George and Judith will share stories from their own lives, and draw out the stories of workshop participants. Participants will explore how to deal with the emotional, physical and spiritual demands of activism. What are the challenges of being an activist for the long run? The workshop will be highly experiential and will include participatory activities, small group sharing, mini-lectures, reflection, and fun. It's an experiential "package," which means that it won't be possible to come late, leave early, or take time off in the middle -- we'll be journeying together as an intact group. Be open to the possibility that emotion may show up in the course of the weekend. Come prepared to inspire one another and pick up some tools for personal sustainability in the process!

Note: This workshop will begin Saturday morning at 10am and end on Sunday at 4pm. Participants are welcome to sojourn at Woolman Hill Friday and/or Sunday night. Information about the workshop is available on our website (www.woolmanhill.org) and from our office (413-774-3431, margaret@woolmanhill.org).

*Nobody sees a flower, really – it is so small – we haven't time,
and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time.*

- Georgia O'Keeffe

Newsletter Editor: Margaret Cooley

To be added to or removed from our mailing list, please e-mail margaret@woolmanhill.org, call 413-774-3431, or write to 107 Keets Road, Deerfield MA 01342. We welcome questions, feedback, articles and artwork for [Ridge Lines](#).

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WOOLMAN HILL STAFF

Margaret Cooley... .. Co-Executive Director
(Administration, Quaker programs)
Mark Fraser... .. Co-Executive Director
(Finances, Facilities management)
Steven Howes..... ..Host/Caretaker
Becca Howe... .. Cleaning
Jontz Johnson... .. Maintenance
Pat LaMountain.....Bookkeeper
Patty Smythe... .. Cook

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WOOLMAN HILL
New England Quaker Center
107 Keets Road Deerfield MA 01342
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WOOLMAN HILL, a Quaker retreat and conference center situated on 110 ridge-top acres in western Massachusetts, is dedicated to fostering, developing and strengthening the testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends. Named for John Woolman, an 18th-century Friends' minister and abolitionist who preached simple living and economic and ecological responsibility, our rustic facilities offer a quiet, peaceful atmosphere for retreats, meetings, gatherings and celebrations. Our newly renovated historic Meeting House seats up to 100 people. Our accommodations include a 150-year-old farmhouse that sleeps 26 and has kitchen facilities to serve 50. Three small cabins provide up to 12 additional sleeping spaces, and are also available for individual sojourns.

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