

RIDGE LINES

Woolman Hill Newsletter Fall 2006

www.woolmanhill.org



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413-774-3431



Woolman Hill's Dirt Pile, photo by Kevin Lee

THE MINISTRY OF LIGHT BEAMS

Gretchen Baker-Smith is one of the dedicated adults who bring New England Yearly Meeting youth to the Hill.

I was gently woken at 3am by a Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) Retreat attendee who needed to pee. We trudged up through the 'sloshy' wet field from Salt Box Cabin, where we were sleeping, so that she could use the Meeting House's bathroom. I gave her the big yellow JYM flashlight to hold, thinking she could best shine it on the footpath in front of her, but instead she had a grand time shining it all over the sky. The half-moon was visible and there were some stars -- though I've seen it much clearer on other midnight bathroom runs over the years. We chatted about this and that as we walked until, on the way back, with her flashlight pointed up towards the sky, she said to me, "Sometimes when I shine it like this, I wish I could climb up that light beam to the stars."

That moment holds all I know and cherish about this ministry. We try to ensure that each quirky, glorious child has a flashlight to see the miracles of the world a little more, and so find their own walkway out towards those stars, their own heart's yearnings, and God's Eternal Love. The blessings for us, the manna that we feast upon, is that as we accompany them, the children always show us, too, a little more of that Light, mystery and hope...a little more of that heaven on earth.

My heart's silent answer in that moment was, "Oh, dear child, JYM Retreats at Woolman Hill is the clearest, strongest light beam to the heavens that I know. We are on it. We are here."

"Although somewhat hesitant and cautious upon arrival, not knowing what to expect, I leave Woolman Hill enriched beyond expectations. This was just fantastic."

Program participant, February 2006

TRIBUTE TO JUDE AND JONTZ

Such humility, such tenderness and holding, such radiance... After many years of dedicated work at Woolman Hill, Jude and Jontz Johnson have decided to join several others in starting an intentional community in nearby Colrain. Jude and Jontz came to WH in 2000 originally to live near Juanita and Wally Nelson. After

interning at Traprock Peace Center for a couple of months, Jude and Jontz began taking on Woolman Hill work. First cleaning, then maintenance, then phone coverage, until after a few years Jude and Jontz became central to the staff and identity of the Hill.

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“Being in an environment that really nurtured a safe space to cover some very difficult terrain... being in a group of people sharing turned out to be a great experience.”
Retreat participant, February 2006

HILL HAPPENINGS

Watching and hearing snippets of scenes through the office window, I participate vicariously in various events on the Hill. A wedding couple and their parents stand grinning on the lawn outside the Meetinghouse as they greet friends and relatives after the ceremony; a troop of volunteers heads off with tools over shoulders and wheelbarrow in tow; a daycamp's pre-teen version of an old rock-n-roll hit emanates from the Blacksmith Shop; a woman stops by to ask if she can spend some time worshipping in the Meetinghouse.

One Saturday morning, two board members, my co-director Mark and I prepare for a day of interviews. We sit in a small circle in the Meetinghouse chatting. I have positioned my chair so that I look straight out through the open door, across the meadow to the woods. How delightful it is to work in a place where the external view reminds me to still my inner self, and where interviewing candidates for a job unfolds not as a competitive jockeying for power, but as a multi-faceted conversation with truly fascinating people.

Not even a week later, we are facing the turnover between the final day of Journey Camp and the beginning of a family reunion weekend. The conference center is abustle with Journey Camp crew collecting musical instruments, sorting through the refrigerator, re-uniting stray sweatshirts with their rightful owners. Woolman Hill staff are vacuuming, sweeping, emptying trash. Every now and then a thirsty child wanders through the chaos in search of a cup of water. As the camp staff carry all their equipment out the front door, the family reunion begins unloading their food through the back door.

While the dust settles, one of the newly arrived guests walks through the conference center saying, “This is a great place!” Out on the patio, several generations of his family visit peacefully with each other. The land slopes down away from them towards the valley. Behind them, the sun makes its way toward the ridge. Another day on Woolman Hill, where the veil between earth and heaven is thin...

MIGRATION

(for Catherine and Holly)

You hold up your hand, flat and open
to say, “Stop. Listen.” And for a moment
we are silent for a Black-throated Green Warbler.

And I wonder then what brought you here—
the years of attending to quiet, teasing out
trilling threads of sound. You explain
that the Indigo Bunting will migrate
year after year, to the same spot, call out
for its mate, wait for a reply,
that predictability of return

-Red-winged Blackbird, late February
-Eastern Bluebird, mid-March
-Black-and-white Warbler, end of April.

And when songbirds don't arrive, or when
the timing is off, you worry about winter
in Belize, hurricanes in Mississippi, rivers
and bodies of water across the Eastern
seaboard, the impossibility of skyscrapers
in an ancient system of celestial navigation.

We walk and notice, pause and ask,
“What's that?” You answer: Oven Bird.
Mourning Dove. Yellow-rumped Warbler.
Fox Sparrow. Scarlet Tanager.
And a rare pair of Great Blue Herons.

Cindy Snow, from Shelburne, MA, attended “The Practice of Presence in Poetry” workshop at Woolman Hill in May 2006. She joined the concurrent program, “Exploring the Natural World,” for morning bird walks and shared this poem at the final joint session of the weekend.

NEWS OF OUR NEIGHBORS

On June 25, **Traprock Peace Center** and Woolman Hill co-sponsored Keith Harmon-Snow speaking on "Occupied Afghanistan: a Shotgun Wedding." On July 4, Sunny Miller's beautiful signs welcomed people to Traprock's peace fest on the lawn of the Brown House. Children romped in the grass, a band played. There was sacred circle dancing, t-shirt decorating, singing, a potluck picnic feast, and a general celebration of community built by good folks working together for good causes. For more information on ways to help amplify the power of peace, please visit: www.traprockpeace.org. Traprock's phone number is 413-773-7427.

Juanita Nelson sponsored a watermelon-eating party at her place recently, and has been busy giving away garlic greens and protecting her crops from pesky varmints. Her efforts at coordinating a Free Harvest Supper in downtown Greenfield met with great success in August. Over 400 people attended the community feast.

SPRING WORKDAY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

removing storm windows
cleaning/sorting through office
weeding flowerbeds
leveling land around yurt and vernal pool
painting interior walls of Saltbox cabin
restoring view at ridge lookout
thinning raspberry bushes
engaging in general fun and merriment
sharing yummy vittles

**Many, many thanks
to all our volunteers!**

TRIBUTE TO JUDE AND JONTZ (continued)



Jude and Jontz outside the Red House, photo by Karen Will

Jude's easy laughter spills from her like a waterfall. She would fall in love with each new rental group, grinning: "They're just *adorable*." Looking into her loving eyes and sensing the warmth of her heart, you can't help believing that everyone *is* adorable.

Jontz would drift by on his sturdy bike with a milk crate on the back, making his rounds to check on the cabins. The mere mention of a small task one day brought completion the next. His laughter, too, flows like water.

Jude and Jontz's kitchen table became a circle of light in which tales could be told, secrets shared, laughter bathed in. Woolman Hill is a better place because of their love and their labors. Staff and guests will miss our dear friends Jude and Jontz.

"Oh, their smiles, their laughs, their hugs, their warm friendly voices... These will all be missed as Jude and Jontz leave Woolman Hill in September. These two lovely people have the amazing ability to make just about anyone feel immediately welcome. Jude and Jontz's love for and curiosity about people is evident in all their interactions." (David Ahlfeld, Woolman Hill Board clerk)

"Jude and Jontz are models to me of grace-filled living. They are remarkable people in how present they are to what they are doing, saying, or experiencing in the moment. In the same way that the old wide floorboards have glowed with their elbow-grease and care, so has the Hill's ministry of presence and hospitality. I have loved Jude's open armed 'welcomes,' and the bottomless well of sparkle in Jontz's eyes. Their love and understanding of our retreat programs' children and teens has been an extraordinary gift, and we will miss them dearly." (Gretchen Baker-Smith, Junior High Yearly Meeting coordinator)

We have just completed the hiring process and are pleased that Steve Howes and his partner Jensey Graham have joined us on the Hill. Steve is our new Host/Caretaker, while Jensey works full-time at a nearby college. Jontz will continue to do some part-time maintenance work on the Hill. Look for more about staff changes in our next issue!

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

David Ahlfeld, from Mount Toby Meeting, is clerk of the Woolman Hill board.

One of the many strengths of Woolman Hill is the love and care brought by our Board members. This fall will see a significant change of membership on our 21-member Board as terms end and members move on. We expect to refill the Board to full capacity - more on that in the next issue of *Ridge Lines*. Here is a little bit about each of the members who are departing.

Karen Will (Hartford Monthly Meeting) is ending her tenure at Woolman Hill after a six-year term. Karen served on our Nominating Committee bringing individuals with diverse talents and new energy to the Board, helping to keep us vibrant and strong. Karen has also found great joy in her work with Scott Nielsen and Perry Norton on the Woolman Hill volunteer construction team working on Meetinghouse reconstruction and yurt fix-up.

Mary Lee Morrison (Hartford) has served on the Board for six years and was Board Clerk for two years, during which she steered us through the challenges of completing construction and financing for the Meetinghouse at Woolman Hill. Mary Lee also was instrumental in deepening our personal and institutional relationships with New England Yearly Meeting. Later, she joined Karen on the Nominating Committee to continue that good work.

Don Campbell (Mt Toby) will be ending his six years of service to the Board. Don has enlivened us with his passion for awareness of the world's energy problems. He has helped us to find ways to reduce our energy use, such as the photovoltaic solar panels that were installed on WH several

years ago. He has also kept us aware of the need to consider the world's energy future as we plan for Woolman Hill.

Arthur Fink (Portland) has contributed much to Woolman Hill during his six years on the Board. His steady presence and insightful discernment have helped us through many a weighty Board discussion and decision. His committee service included leading the Capital Campaign which raised the funds necessary to complete the Meetinghouse and place Woolman Hill in its current healthy financial condition.

Roger Conant (Mt Toby) will be leaving after a three-year term as he continues his many contributions to the local community. Roger, a former professor of electrical engineering, manages at least six web sites for Quaker and peace and justice groups. He manages the Woolman Hill web site and has assured us that he will continue this service to Woolman Hill for the indefinite future. Thanks, Roger!

Sue Reilly (Lewiston) is concluding her service on the Board after three years. She has brought her friendly, playful spirit to the work with us. As Recording Clerk for the Board, Sue cheerfully took on the challenging task of distilling our lengthy discussions into concise minutes.

Tom Antonik (Portland) has decided to leave the Board after serving since 2004. Among other roles Tom served as liaison between the Woolman Hill Board and New England Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel. Tom has been a valued presence both on the Board and as a facilitator for several Woolman Hill programs.

Please let us know if *you're* interested in serving!

ENERGY EXPENDITURES

Co-Executive Director Mark Fraser is passionate about good stewardship of our land and resources.

In the last year, Woolman Hill installed three new woodstoves, two in the Conference Center and one in the farmhouse. These stoves are high-efficiency, low-emission designs, which re-burn the smoke. Woolman Hill has an ample supply of wood, hence we can wean ourselves of the oil habit as the price of heating oil climbs.

In 2001, we purchased a photovoltaic (PV) installation behind the red house, and a solar hot water heater for the farmhouse. Both were bought with the help of generous donors, and the PV installation with a grant from Western Massachusetts Electric Company. The PV installation is rated at one kilowatt and is grid-tied. For seven months of the year, it supplies more electricity than we use in the red house, blacksmith maintenance shop and the office cabin!

As many of you know by the french fries smell of my cars, I run my two old diesel cars on waste vegetable oil I collect from two local restaurants. What many folks don't know is that I've been sharing this waste vegetable oil with the furnaces at Woolman Hill. Ten percent of the oil burned in the conference center furnace and hot water heater is waste veggie oil; this coming winter I will increase that to fifteen percent.

It gives great satisfaction, and is empowering, to produce our own energy and fuel here. However it is humbling to realize what a small proportion those efforts represent of the total energy requirements of Woolman Hill. I am reminded that we will never be able to replace fossil fuels with sustainable alternatives; the only solution will be to use much less energy.

Quick glimpse of Woolman Hill unadjusted year-end finances (Oct '05 - Sep '06)

Total income	\$122,370
Total expenses*	111,210
Net Income	\$ 11,160

**not including depreciation*

In other words, we're doing okay!

WISH LIST

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

Objects (in good condition)

Loppers * Pruning Shears
Lamps * Rugs * Hutch
Food processor * Cushions
Comfortable, sturdy wooden chairs

Skills & Labor

Sewing, upholstery
Gardening (weeding...)
Computer wizardry

GENEROUS IDEAS

Here are two ways of supporting the good things happening on the Hill: Offer to sponsor a friend or relative coming to Woolman Hill for a program or for an individual retreat. (You can contact us directly to arrange payment.) + A Quaker couple that got married over the summer listed several places to send gifts in honor of their wedding. Woolman Hill was on the list, and we've received a number of checks already!

"Love is something if you give it away... You end up having more..."

CONGRATULATIONS to Woolman Hill resident Mary Fraser for winning first prize in the Junior Pie-Making Contest at the 2006 Franklin County Fair! Mary used apples from her grandfather Fraser's orchard, and followed her grandmother Bye's pie recipe. Yum yum.

SPECIAL THANKS to Victoria Dickson, Suzanne & Richard Frechette, Auberta Galusha, JYM, Reuel S Kaighn, Jim Lyons, Trevor Robinson, Alice Scheffey, and Karen Will for donations of material goods!

Upcoming Woolman Hill Programs

Annual Silent Retreat, with Jim Lyons and Jill Horton-Lyons, December 30, 2006 – January 1, 2007

Windows into God's Time, with Deana Chase (co-sponsored with NEYM Ministry & Counsel), January 19-21, 2007

Enriching Worship, with Phil Fitz and Kara Price (co-sponsored with NEYM M&C), March 30 – April 1, 2007

Sing and Rejoice! with Ruth Mobilia Heath, May 11-13, 2007

In February, March, and April, there will also be programs on spirituality in journaling (with Molly Duplisea-Palmer), in art (with Lisa Butler),

in the health care professions (with Rob Spencer and John Cooley), and more...

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PROGRAM NOTES

Our popular intergenerational event, the Woolman Hill Friendly, was held August 24-27, 2006. The informal structure of the four-day program included plenty of time for relaxation, worship sharing, swimming, music-making, sacred circle dancing, deep conversation, walking in the woods, yoga, storytelling, puzzles and games. One Friend wrote, "I come away feeling renewed and ready to meet the year. I found the whole weekend was wonderful."

During the upcoming workshop season we will once again host a silent retreat at year end. We will also co-sponsor two programs with New England Yearly Meeting's Ministry and Counsel committee: a program about balancing our time with our leadings, facilitated by Deana Chase, and a program about enriching the quality of our worship, facilitated by Phil Fitz and Kara Price. There will be workshops about singing, spirituality in the health care professions, journaling, arts, and more. We're also planning to offer a weekend for the gay/lesbian/bi-sexual/transgender/queer Quaker community.

Our experiment with concurrent programming this past spring was very successful, so we'll be using that format again this year. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you can read a poem that emerged out of our first combination: "The Practice of Presence in Poetry" and "Exploring the Natural World at Woolman Hill." One participant said about the experience: "I liked having two [concurrent] workshops – sharing and getting to know the others at meals and free times enhanced the weekend."

We have a sliding scale program fee as well as scholarship funds. Think about coming to a program with someone else from your monthly meeting, or a colleague, or a relative... Let us know if there are particular topics you'd be interested in, or that could benefit your meeting. Keep an eye out for our program flyers in the mail. Program information is also available at www.woolmanhill.org or by calling us at 413-774-3431. Hope to see you soon!

**"I deeply valued
the ground of silence here."
*Workshop participant,
May 2006***

A human being is part of the whole called by us "universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

- Albert Einstein

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 us at 107 Keets Road, Deerfield MA 01342. We welcome questions, feedback, articles and artwork for [Ridge Lines](#).

Printed with vegetable-based ink on recycled paper.

WOOLMAN HILL STAFF

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

2005–2006 Woolman Hill Board of Directors: David Ahlfeld (clerk), Helen Armstrong, Don Campbell, Marcianna Caplis, Roger Conant, Victoria Dickson, Arthur Fink, Judy Hyde, Hunter Kratt, Connie Littlefield, Jim Lyons, Mary Lee Morrison, Scott Nielsen, Perry Norton, Susan Reilly, Nick Roosevelt, Liesa Stamm, Barbara Sullivan, Mary Kate Tedoldi, Karen Will

WOOLMAN HILL

New England Quaker Center

107 Keets Road Deerfield MA 01342

413-774-3431 • www.woolmanhill.org

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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