

How on Earth Did I Become a Radical Environmentalist Grandmother?

By Iona

(a.k.a. Susan Wynne Norris Hnatt Topf Iona Conner)



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Cover photos: (*front*) Iona as a little girl, probably taken by Dad or Mom; (*back*) Photo by John before I learned how to take selfies, which usually turn out awful.

**Dedicated to Joan Coe Norris Daurio, my lovely and loving sister who is
always coming to my rescue.**



Joanie (right) and me.

Introduction

Why is this book so important now? As the Earth gets warmer and climate change produces so many catastrophic events which are now well publicized, it's easy for ordinary people to get overwhelmed and feel helpless but my life proves that this is not the best way to deal with distressing news. Yes, we must face the new situations but then we must seriously work to figure out how we as individuals can become involved in the issues that matter most to us.

When I first started out 50 years ago simply by recycling when that wasn't common, or pulling weeds instead of applying herbicide near our waterfront home and also reading labels before giving my babies food and drink, I was a loner. When I showed up at meetings involving development of beautiful places and was the only one speaking up for the trees like the Lorax, I felt out of place, but my voice took on a tenor which was deep and powerful, though quiet. Sometimes I trembled and got tongue-tied in my solitary stance, but my messages were delivered and, as time went by, there were others by my side echoing my sentiments.

How on Earth is something that will help people have the courage to start becoming active in their own way, in their own place, in their own time. We need every voice now to challenge the people who destroy the planet, like in *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn – there are “takers” and “leavers” and it's time to stop the takers and increase the numbers of givers, those who give life and voice and heart and soul to preserve our precious planet and all life. I believe it's that serious. And that is why my stories and articles need to be given a wider audience than I alone have been able to give them.

One thing I have learned over the years is that by following our hearts and starting with small actions, we feel jubilant when we realize we're doing the right thing. I have often told people in numerous talks to do what they can regarding an issue they care about and, as they learn more, stronger and deeper feelings will result in stronger and deeper actions. Living this kind of life gives us a constant opportunity to expand ourselves and to teach others either verbally or by example. It's been an amazing way to reach new people and get them motivated on their own paths. This way of life becomes habitual and wonderful. Of course, there are discouraging moments and defeats but it's crucial to keep trying our best and finding friends who share our values.

Very few people have a background like mine and have put it to use in the way I have. Starting as a nurse, I learned the implications of toxic substances; continuing as a first-grade teacher, I learned the importance of bringing complex topics to simple terms; as an air-pollution inspector in the most polluted part of New Jersey, I suddenly found myself in factories learning about deadly chemicals, worker exposures and poisonous releases and spills; in the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Hazardous Waste Management, I learned about underground water plumes contaminating people's drinking water; in my marriage to John Conner when we started the Grassroots Coalition for Environmental and Economic Justice, I learned about organizing campaigns to vigorously reach new audiences; as a newspaper publisher, I learned how to find interesting articles and how to lay out an attractive publication, which is now called *Groundswell News Journal*.

These are the highlights of my life, which have been supplemented by numerous jobs to finance our non-profit work through which I've learned many other skills and met different types of people.

I have given hundreds of talks to people of all ages and all persuasions. I'm the kind of person who prefers personal relationships and talking with a handful of people versus a crowd. This gives everyone a chance to ask me questions and have discussions with each other. I have been on local TV and my articles have appeared in dozens of newspapers and magazines. My personality is gregarious with a slight touch of humor, especially when I admit to some of my more naïve antics. I can get people to laugh while also getting them to think seriously about what they're doing day by day.

May this book “serve as lightening rods about whose points fulminations are being discharged, with, I hope, some light and not too much noise.” (Direct quote from my father's paper ‘Preliminary Study of Changes to be Made in the Legal Structure of the Atomic Energy Program;’ Dad wrote the law for peaceful uses of atomic energy.)

I love inspiring others; it is one of life's greatest pleasures — at least for me it is. I hope you enjoy my memoir. If you'd like to keep up with me, I'll gladly add you to my newspaper's email list; please email me at groundswellnews@pa.net. Thank you. Now, sit back, relax, and come along for an adventurous experience with me.

Found in an Old Journal

In the beginning was the Prince of Tegengle who begat and begat and begat and begat Dr. Thomas Wynne of Carwys, Wales.

And Dr. Thomas Wynne of Carwys, Wales, begat and begat and begat and begat ? who begat Grandma Elizabeth Pearce Norris, who begat George Norris, Jr. who begat me with Margaret Elizabeth Dyer in 1945 and named me Susan Wynne Norris.

8/18/05 I brought home an opened ream of paper when I cleared out Dad and Cee's home and this is it!

NOW I MUST STOP
THIS ENRICHING FAMILY
WORK AND GO FIGHT
GLOBAL WARMING - LOGGERS
DESTROYING WOODS RIGHT ¹⁷⁴NOW!

May Day! May Day! 2014

Five years ago today I met a spiritual teacher. His spirit brought me to him through his friend Al, who picked me up at the airport in Idaho and drove me to his home, where I was to sleep in one of Al's campers.

The next morning Al and I visited him. I could FEEL his wonder; Al had told me a lot about him. I don't know how long our visit lasted or precisely what we talked about but, since he had been a singer in rock bands, I asked if he knew the Eagles' "Peaceful, Easy Feeling." He did. We sang it together.

As Al and I were leaving and I was getting into his little Citroen, my new teacher quietly said, "Most people bow."

That idea had never entered my thoughts, nor had I ever bowed to anyone. I instantly lowered my head and, with one foot in Al's car, twisted my body toward him and gave him a lopsided bow.

* * *

Now that you know about the start of my year, let me introduce my family.



My father left my mother when my sister Joanie was four and I was five. We've had our share of confusion and turmoil resulting from that day, so Joanie and I share a deep understanding of our family dynamics and flaws. Our parents were extremely bright but didn't know much about marriage; I have the same characteristic as I'm on my third marriage. Mom graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Mount Holyoke with a master's degree in education and psychology and Dad was a genius, majoring in nuclear physics at Haverford (Quaker) College and earning a law degree from Columbia Law School.

Joanie and I were born in Greenwich Village (the beatnik section of Manhattan). Dad took us to Quaker meetings. The only memory I have of those outings is that, in a Christmas pageant, we were lambs.

I had an interesting insight as I thought about writing this book. If I had been a boy, I would have been raised differently -- coached and equipped to become a lawyer, as Dad, Grandpa and my great

grandfather were. I also wondered how Joanie's and my lives would have been different if we had had an older brother.

...BUT then I thought, "What if I rewrote our family history as if my spiritual teacher had been guiding everyone's life with his Sacred Rules and his Council of Elders and we all bowed to his leadership and were obedient and lived with no domination or lust or greed or fear or hate anywhere in all Creation? What would THAT feel like? How would a family be different? What if all life, including Nature, followed his Council of Elders?"

To help you imagine this, here are some of the Elders:

LOVE	PATIENCE	COMFORT
TRUTH	TOLERANCE	HONESTY
WISDOM	JUSTICE	THANKS
COUNSEL	FAIRNESS	TRUST
UNDERSTANDING	JOY	CONFIDENCE
KINDNESS	CHARITY	HOPE
COMPASSION	GENEROSITY	SECURITY
PEACE	HONOR	MERCY
MODESTY	FRIENDSHIP	CHIVALRY
HUMILITY	GIVING	RESPECT
INNOCENCE	RECEIVING	GENTLENESS
FORGIVENESS	RESPONSIBILITY	GOODNESS
RIGHTEOUSNESS	SHARING	CHOICE . . . etc.

What if these qualities had brought Heaven to Earth and we all worked harmoniously together to fix the mess we humans have created? What would that be like? I don't really know but I can imagine. He has been my teacher for six years and has shown me what human (and non-human) relationships would be like if he led us with his wisdom.

On my 11th visit to Idaho in 2014, I asked if he had put the thought in my heart to write a book.
"No."

He said all books are full of lies and exaggerations so, if I wrote a book, it must be totally truthful; therefore, what you are about to read will not be fictionalized. Please feel free to join me in imagining how my family and I could have been helped by my spiritual teacher's influence.

How On Earth Did I Become a Radical Environmentalist Grandmother?

Heart leads, I follow.

Please join me for an adventure through life.

Part 1: Young Years



*Grus grus migration in Nedde, France.
Permission by Creative Commons*

It started with my grandmother -- a nature walk on an Audubon trail, a bird feeder outside the dining room window and a beautiful rock garden.

As I begin writing, one of my favorite things is happening overhead -- a bird migration. Hundreds of birds in the trees and skies going somewhere, serenading me as I begin this long-awaited project.

Years ago, I attended a workshop where the discussion leader asked what motivated us to work on environmental issues. Most people answered that a person had inspired them. I answered, "Birds." Many other species (humans included) could have motivated me but somehow birds' beauty, flight and fragility touched me most deeply.

An Outdoor Girl



(left to right) Joanie, holding flag; Tyla, me, "Guy" (Matt), Doug

Recent email from Matt, Tyla's brother:

OK, girls, I guess I need to weigh-in here on the photo that looks like circa 1955 that has mysteriously resurfaced. Joanie, you look great holding the flag but you get a demerit for not locking your heels together. Tyla, I'm not seeing any merit badges on your uniform. Iona, is that a proper Girl Scout salute or perhaps a 1960's strike fist? Of course, I look so cool. And the last guy? That's Dougie. About that same time he and Hank tricked me into asking the Good Humor man for "s - - on a stick." Some Boy Scout. I'll give him a salute! Fact is that those were fun days. The Norris' had the shiniest kitchen floor in town, the best driveway for cart riding, the first color TV on the block, the best basement sock hop complete with balloon dance and the two cutest blonds on the street.

I loved playing outside. After leaving New York City, we lived in a quiet, suburban neighborhood in Mamaroneck, New York with small families where all the children played together in the streets and in the woods. It was an amazing way to grow up. Now I'm trying to remember the rules for Spud and Hit the Bat so I can teach those games to my grandchildren and tear them away from electronics. Sledding, ice skating, biking, swimming, roller skating -- all helped me treasure childhood and ensure that I'd grow into someone who cherished being outdoors.

My mother had to work in town after the divorce. Joanie and I often walked a mile to meet her after school. We also walked to school every day. Nowadays, when I see children outside playing or

walking or biking with full-out energy, I feel gleeful for them as it's such a rarity. I'm not referring to organized sports; I'm referring to kids being kids.

Mom became legally blind from multiple sclerosis when we were 11 and 12 and suddenly we had more household duties than just taking care of our rooms. We alternated cooking dinner and doing dishes; then on Saturdays, we were The Cleaning Team.

I rushed through my chores to be free to play outside. Mom let us play till dusk. Sometimes I wonder if that's why I live in fifth gear as I approach 70 and sense that it's not the best way to be. My teacher keeps telling me, "Slow down, Iona."

I also loved playing dolls with my friend up the street, Gail, who was a year older and a bit mischievous. When things weren't going great in our lives, we pretended we had been adopted and those women weren't really our mothers.

Two incidents stick out in my mind with Gail. One: We played Spin the Bottle on the boulder at the top of our street. I got my first kiss in second grade. Two: After Gail had been mean to me, Mom told the story that Joanie smacked Gail and "sent her home wailing." Then Gail's mother called ours saying that Joanie was a vicious child. [1/10/15: Joanie and I got the giggles trying to piece this story together because Joanie is the most gentle person imaginable and I'm certain she was smaller than Gail; she was certainly smaller than me. My younger sister was defending me with all her might.]

Basically, I was a happy little tomboy but I didn't stay "little." At some point after the divorce, I started putting on weight and developed asthma. Mom had to give our cats away and one night I was rushed to the hospital because I couldn't breathe.

I must have eaten too much because, even though I played outside for hours every day, I was the first one to reach 100 pounds in elementary school and, back then, the weigher called out the weight to the recorder in a voice the other children could hear. I was mortified.

At recess one day, a boy called me "Fatso." I punched him. We ended up in the principal's office. That's the only time I remember ever hitting anyone in anger.

I have tried to deal with my weight most of my life; here's a relevant story I wrote 14 years ago.

[Many parts of this book have been published previously and I use italics and single spacing to separate them from my current writing.]

Making My Dancing Dreams Come True



I am the woman with glasses.

First published in The Gazette, Frederick Maryland on July 12, 2001.

*Heel dig spank shuffle heel dig spank. Remember to smile. Heel dig spank heel shuffle dig step.
Faster! Faster!*

This refrain followed my feet during the past three months as I tried to catch up to my classmates in an adult tap dancing class. We were working on our dance for the recital last month at the Weinberg Center for the Arts.

At 55, I was preparing for my first tap recital.

My dance history is brief.

When I was seven, I took a modern dance class with my six-year-old sister. When it was time for the recital, they cast my sister as celery and me as a plump tomato, crushing my self-image.

Three decades later, I signed up for an adult ballet class. There was no recital.

And then, when I was 51, I saw Riverdance.

I wanted more than anything to do that.

The closest I came was adult beginner tap for a three-month Summer class. Again there was no recital.

Then I found an Irish Step Dancing class, which I joined immediately, although late. Thankfully, one woman offered to help me learn the steps I had missed.

Ecstasy! This was the dance of my soul, my roots. We were learning how to dance in our hard shoes like the Riverdance cast (well, hardly).

Interesting footwork, vigorous exercise and oh, such FUN.

That was until my knee crippled me for a few months and made it painful even to walk. My knee knew that a 202-pound, 52-year-old woman was abusing it. The doctor diagnosed arthritis, spurs and floating kneecaps.

Gradually, with intervention, my knee healed. We moved from Columbia, Maryland to Frederick and I celebrated my 53rd birthday.

I signed up for adult ballet at the "Y." A gentle return to dance. But only two signed up so that class was canceled.

I called my former Irish Step Dance teacher to see if I could return to his class. It was OK with him so I started practicing the Irish jig and reel religiously before showing up again.

While my friends were glad to see me, it was frightening to me to see how advanced they had become in my two-year absence.

But I didn't have to worry for long because my other knee gave a shriek and I had to quit again.

Darn! Where to dance? What to do? Time was passing. I was 54.

While walking through Frederick one Summer day, I spotted signs for a local dance studio but it wasn't open for business yet.

I kept checking until one day, the instructor was there getting her new studio ready to teach the Isadora Duncan style of dance.

I became her first student. I liked it. Feminine. Free-spirited. Easy on the knees.

But it wasn't Riverdance.

When my knees felt stronger, I decided to go back to beginner tap (since that never hurt) and lose some weight.

I found an adult tap class in town and started dancing again this January, at age 55 and 190 pounds.

Costumes had already been ordered for the recital when I showed up for my first class but, after participating for an hour, I confidently told my teacher I could learn the steps they were doing.

I plunged ahead and ordered my costume.

"Do you have extra, extra large?"

"No."

"Do you have queen-size tights?"

"No."

"Well, order me the largest sizes you have. I'll be smaller by then." (P.S. Not)

So I worked and worked and practiced and practiced.

At a time when I felt I'd better drop out so I wouldn't disgrace our teacher and mess up the dance for everyone else, my teacher agreed to give me a private lesson.

I recorded her calling out every move and then actually doing the dance to the beat of the music. The crisp staccato of her taps inspired me. I then had the courage and faith I needed to see it through.

I realized this was no beginner class. I also began to understand that the others were struggling with a few of the steps. The music for our dance was frightfully fast in my opinion but I loved it.

By this stage of the game, I knew I had to perform. I felt this effort symbolized closure on an important piece of my life -- to claim revenge for the humiliated, chubby, little girl/tomato.

In contrast to my costume 48 years ago, our costumes this time were gorgeous! Bright blue Lycra flowing pants and graceful tops; tons of glitter on the top and velvet shoulders.

There was a slit in the front, up to the bra line, which I prudishly wanted to sew together. Then I relaxed. This was the first time in my life to leave behind the conservative dresser and be a "showgirl."

Dress rehearsal was interesting. Our teacher reminded us to smile. But I wondered if I could smile and remember the steps?

I practiced that evening and again the morning of my debut. I was ready.

Our turn came. The curtain rose. The music started. Tears came to my eyes. Fortunately, our dance started off with our backs to the audience so a few quick blinks did the trick.

We all danced perfectly.

The day of the performance, my husband was out of town and my friend didn't show up. There was no one in the audience to watch me.

But, do you know what? It didn't matter. I danced for ME!

The crushed tomato is gone.

A dancer clothed in glitter and velvet has taken her place, with sparkle in her eyes and a triumphant smile on her face.

* * *

Four Parents

Joanie and I had two adjunct parents. Dad married Cecelia Hill (Cece) the day he and Mom got divorced and, a couple of years after that, "Uncle" John started courting Mom. They remained a couple until the day he died decades later.

Our visits to Dad and Cece were dictated in the divorce papers. Dad and Cece set up a pleasant home and tried to have a normal family situation. We went there for Summers, long holidays and for shorter visits when they lived close by.

Uncle John came to our home Wednesdays for dinner and weekend days but did not sleep there as he kept his own house and ran his appliance business half an hour away. He was German and an outdoor enthusiast. Sometimes, when Joanie and I were with Dad and Cece, Mom and Uncle John traveled together.

When Mom became blind and hospitalized with multiple sclerosis, it was Uncle John who nursed her back to health. I attribute whatever bravery I have to Uncle John. Dad and Cece made sure we had tennis and swimming lessons but Uncle John was a real adventurer. Both homes provided wonderful beach days so our lives had double advantages.

Back in the 1950s, hardly anyone got divorced. I learned to enjoy being different at an early age despite the angst and confusion of having parents in and out of courts and learning to keep (or trying to keep) secrets between the two homes. In a letter to me dated July 19, 1981 when Joanie was in Germany and we were in our 30s, she wrote,

"As far as I know, Mom doesn't know you visited Dad and Cece in Florida. At least that's the impression I got having spoken to her a few times on the phone since then. No snide remarks, no open statements or questions (more likely the case). Please be sure to tell me immediately if she finds out -- call collect, if you must!! I hate being secretive and this is a touchy issue, especially since they've now been down there so long and Gerd, Anneliese and Ludwiga were there!!!!!"

An example of one parent getting too much information out of us is that Dad was shocked when he learned that, in my senior year of high school, I had done a parachute jump with Uncle John. That was NOT the sort of activity he considered safe for his daughter. Oh, how hard we tried not to upset anyone but we were young and not very sophisticated.

One of the things -- perhaps the only thing -- that helped me accept the divorce was that I knew Dad loved us very much from his huge bear hugs when we were reunited and the gentle yet firm way he treated us. Also, since I was a sassy lassie and argued with Mom a lot, deep down I could understand why he left.

Looking back, I have happy memories of the joy Mom gave us like letting us swivel our hoola-hoops in the kitchen to rock and roll music, which her classical background surely detested. My first two 45s were "Get a Job" and "At the Hop." I loved to dance. For birthday breakfasts, Mom would light candles in the middle of crumb cake and start our day with a Happy Birthday song and a little party in our sunny, yellow kitchen.

Mom was a wonderful mother but, with her cool New England upbringing, I didn't recognize her love until I was married to John (my third husband) and confided in her that I had no idea where our rent money was going to come from. Even though she was toward the end of her life, almost immobile and nearly blind, she sent us \$850 (enough for the rent plus an extra \$100).

The fact that she didn't consult anyone and sent more than we needed was such a surprise and contrary to her habitual frugality, that I FINALLY understood that she loved me even if she didn't understand why I married John or was doing the work I was doing. That gesture spoke a lifetime of love that I had been too blind to see.

Toward the end of Mom's life, when Joanie and her husband Joe were caring for her in the beautiful basement apartment they had fixed (including an elevator to allow Mom and her wheelchair go up and down the stairs), I decided to ask Mom for advice. Does the fact that I waited till she was *that* old to ask for my mother's advice clue you in to my independent nature?

I love what she told me and put this into the church bulletin for her farewell service in 1998:

"Mom taught us how to live and how to die. Gracefully. With dignity. With love and laughter. Without complaining. When I asked for some words of wisdom two years ago, this is what she said:

- 1. Make lots of friends.*
- 2. Have one special friend that you can talk with about anything.*
- 3. Get a pet. They do so much for you.*
- 4. Don't feel sorry for yourself. Think of others who have less than you do or who have more problems.*

Isn't she beautiful?"



Life with Dad and Cece

Dad was a gentleman genius. Cece was born and raised in West Palm Beach, Florida and had been in an abusive marriage before meeting Dad in New York City, where they both worked. Mom and Dad's divorce settlement with child support and alimony made them struggle financially because, after a couple of stints in the private sector, Dad ended up working for the federal government with a standardized salary and Cece sent some of her earnings to her mother in Florida.

Dad and Cece had apartments in and around the Washington, D.C. metropolis and moved fairly frequently. My fondest memories include swinging on vines in the woods behind one apartment complex even though I ended up with poison ivy. One of the stupidest things I did in that home was trying to see how far I could ride my bike in the parking lot -- with my eyes closed.

One Summer Dad and Cece took Joanie and me on a cross-country car trip headed to Albuquerque, where Dad had business. We spent a night with Cece's sister and her Army husband in their trailer home in Kansas; galloped on rented horses in Estes Park, Colorado with Cece screaming in fright; saw the Grand Canyon and Native Americans dancing in Arizona and spent a night in the Badlands of South Dakota, with Cece terrified of bears.

Cece was frightened about a lot of things but, even today, I give her credit for squelching her squeamishness in thunderstorms so that we girls could enjoy their excitement and beauty.

When we vacationed in Florida with Grandma Hill, I loved getting swimming and tennis lessons. Team Dad & Cece hoped I'd get unchubby but it wasn't until Mom was hospitalized when I was in junior high that we got to spend a whole semester living with them and going to new schools.

Cece quit her jobs whenever we arrived for long visits, so she was able to get me to a doctor who ordered diet pills. That helped but I've had a lifelong sorrow about being heavy even when I wasn't. Dad tried getting custody a couple of times. I wanted to live with him, but Cece was not an easy step-mother so I'm glad that didn't work out.

We were pampered by Dad and Cece -- new clothes, fun trips, good food and plenty of intellectual stimulation -- or at least they tried. Cece took us to Congressional hearings while Dad's Atomic Energy Act was being debated in 1954 on the House floor. The Act stipulated that private parties could participate in atomic programs through power production. It also allowed the U.S. to cooperate with other nations on peaceful uses of nuclear energy with adequate government regulations to protect public health. The Act provided safety protocols and language about national defense. Cece, Dad's cheerleader, wanted to follow the proceedings; Joanie and I brought our coloring books. The best part was riding the underground jitney between office buildings and the Capitol.

As Joanie and I reached our teen years, our desire to stay in Mamaroneck with our friends and jobs outweighed our desire to leave, so our visits dropped off but not entirely; however, Dad and Cece always showed up at important events like graduations and weddings even though Mom would be there. I always felt a little uneasy but nowhere near as uneasy as they must have felt.

I'm going to skip all the little (or big) difficulties along the way in Dad and Cece's life to conclude with the most wonderful images I have toward the ends of their lives.

When Dad's Parkinson's reached a later stage and he needed a lot of help, I'd greet him in the morning, freshen him up and help him get out of bed. He'd slowly make his way through the living room

and down the hall to the kitchen with his walker. My most magnificent memory of him was, upon seeing Cece, he gleamed with joy and greeted her, "Hello, Beautiful" with great love in his eyes, beholding his bedraggled wife fixing breakfast.

Dad died first. His last words were to her, looking soul to soul, "I love you."

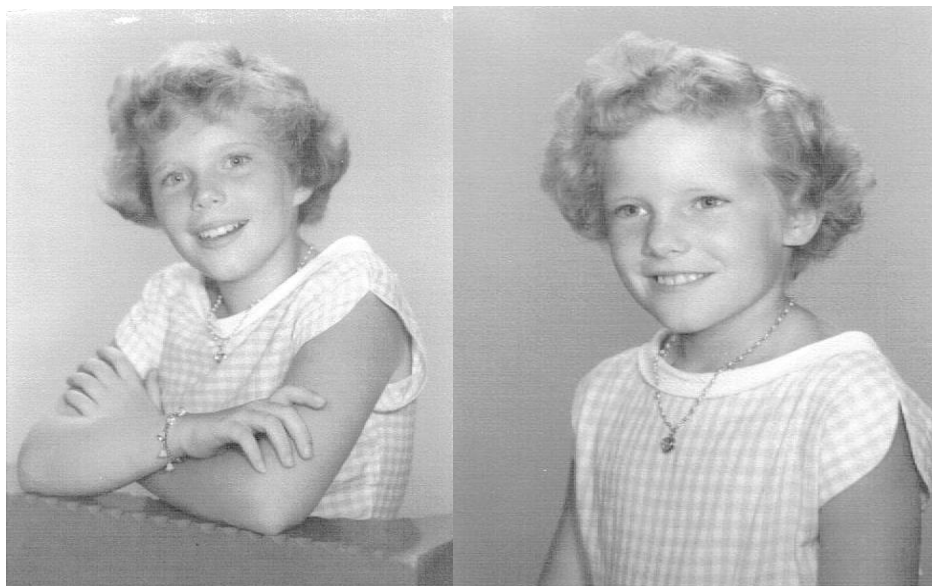
About two years after that, Cece lay dying in her own bed with round-the-clock Jamaican aides. She was petrified of death. As she was close to her end, one of the aides told me she had seen Dad standing by their bedroom door waiting for her.

Cece and Me

Cece was the parent who tried hardest to change me. Although my memories are stronger from adulthood, when the differences became more apparent, childhood memories are blurred. Even though both were working full-time, one Christmas Dad and Cece made us precious cradles and mini-bureaus for our dolls, decorated with flowery decals. I still treasure the ones that survived of the four pieces. I passed mine (and even Joanie's) on to my granddaughters. One cradle remains intact with a little mattress and pillow, sheets and a ruffled quilt I made when one granddaughter passed through her doll phase.

Cece also made us the sweetest outfits and Halloween costumes and dressed us up as if we were *her* little dolls. As a child of poverty, she had a keen sense of fashion later in life and enjoyed shopping at the finest stores and "upgrading" us during the Summers, even with haircuts and perms.

One first day of school, I wore a bandana to hide the freakish way I looked. I doubt that Mom was pleased -- about the perm *or* the bandana -- but there was little she could do. Cece also forced us to eat our "stings" (onions in salad) and peas, which made me gag.



Cece goaded me so I would argue back as I'd been great about speaking up for others but hiding a lot of my innermost feelings.

Cece's caring showed through brightly after I left my first husband and flew to Florida (where Dad and Cece had retired) for Christmas. As I sit here writing at age 69 in my Writer's Cabin, her white ceramic Christmas tree with tiny colored lights is on my desk reminding me of another mother's love I never understood.

I was fragile after I left Bill and craved the feeling of family; I also thought it was a good chance to brighten up their holiday since I would not be with the Hnatt clan for the first time in 16 years. Cece always had a freshly-made cake for us whenever we arrived and, that night, this tree was in my bedroom cheering me up. I love that tiny tree; it represents "home" to me.

Cece noticed my emotional state after the divorce and drafted her own Health Care Plan for me:

MORE SLEEP -- 8-9 HOURS 9:30-6:30
 10:30 - 7:30
MORE NAPS WEEKENDS -- AFTER EATING A GOOD TIME
CUT DOWN TO OUT ON SWEETS -- USE FRUIT
PLENTY FLUIDS -- MIN. 2 GLASSES SKIM MILK OR WHOLE MILK PER DAY
1 BANANA PER DAY
WARM FOOD EVERY MEAL
NO LIQUOR, WINE OR BEER
WARM CEREAL, FRUIT & TOAST FOR BKFST
CREATE A CALM, HAPPY, RELAXED SUSAN
AVOID OVER-EXUBERANCE
LIMIT EXERCISE TO NO MORE THAN 1 HR. PER DAY; DO IT ALL AT ONE TIME
THEN FORGET SELF -- FOR A TIME UNTIL CALM RETURNS
CONSTANT ATTENTION TO WEIGHT, EXERCISE, DIET -- A BORE TO OTHERS
EAT 3 WARM MEALS A DAY -- EXERCISE AND FORGET IT
NEED QUIET ATMOSPHERE -- SEE THAT YOU GET IT
LIMIT TOO MUCH TALK -- TOO EXCITING

In Dad and Cece's quest to upgrade Joanie and me, they gave us the finest gifts they could afford -- like beautiful outfits and Tiffany silverware -- piece by piece -- birthday, Christmas, birthday, Christmas... slowly growing to a service for eight, which I sold years later to help pay for John's dental work.

Despite the fact that Cece had a fine collection of antiques, there were only two things I wanted from their home -- that little tree and a delicate lamp with an old-fashioned country woman carrying a basket of apples.

As Dad and Cece reached the final stages of their lives, Joanie and I were on call to help her when things got out of control. She and I often had heart-to-heart talks, which was something I did not do with my more private mother. One evening she stunned me by saying, "Men with mowers ... ought to be banned from the Earth."

TWANG! Is this coming from my staunch opponent? I did not know that, deep down, she too loved Nature.

Later, when Dad died and I was there for the funeral, my friend called to offer condolences while Cece was sitting in the living room with me. I mentioned my step-mother in the conversation and, when I hung up, she asked emotionally, "Why don't you call me your mother?"

Cece had wanted children of her own, but we were all she had.

* * *

Cece died in her bed with Joanie and me at her side. We inherited their beautiful condo on the Inland Coastal Waterway, a home she had meticulously decorated and maintained. When we split the proceeds, John and I finally had enough cash to buy our own home and stop rental hemorrhages.

There was a difficult time in my third marriage when I longed to live alone for a while. My best friend, Rainbow, knew I had left two previous, high-earning men abruptly and abandoned my share of each household so as not to inflict legal battles on my sons with #1 husband or on my sweet #2 husband. All I wanted was freedom.

As I was going through this stage, I visited Rainbow, who is super spiritual and had given me a message from Mom after she died and one from my grandfather (who had been the libel lawyer *The New York Times*) after I had to abandon my cherished broadsheet newspaper.

As we sat out on the steps behind her apartment one night, Rainbow asked if I'd like to receive a message from Cece.

"Sure!"

"Hold onto that home. I gave that to you. Do not run away. It's yours." (paraphrased)

Could it be that it took me *that long* to truly understand and appreciate Cece's love for me?

* * *

All in all, our parents (all four) did a good job of hiding the ugliest parts of the divorce, but we were nevertheless victims of the subtle nuances. It wasn't until I was preparing to write this book that Joanie and I sat in Joanie and Joe's living room with divorce documents she had saved since our parents' deaths and glanced at them together.

I brought the pile of papers to my Shade Gap, Pennsylvania "loft" (the room over our garage) and quietly read them. Early in the process, I realized that Joanie and I could simply recycle the remains of a marriage gone bad and bury the animosity since we are the end of the Norris line. Joanie wasn't ready to concede so I read on. I selected a few of the papers I considered most important and have been waiting for Joanie's O.K. to deep-six the rest, which we eventually did together.

Our High School Years

High school was a blast. I was a good student, had a few sequential boyfriends and a solid group of college-bound friends, with whom I studied and partied. We girls had sleep-overs, made box pizzas to eat with chips and soda and laughed at each other when we applied egg facials. In Summertime, we visited the boys at the amusement park where a few of them worked, but my fondest memory is the parties in our large kitchen. We'd play records, do the Twist, the Cha-cha, the Stroll and, for songs like "To know,

know, know you is to love, love, love you and I do, and I do and I do ... ," we'd turn down the lights and dance with the boys. We were a tight group of eight -- five girls and three boys -- with additional friends showing up now and then.

We were in the marching band and wore hideous, wool, black and blue uniforms with even uglier caps. I went from squeaky clarinet to glaring glockenspiel but returned to clarinet so that my mistakes would be less noticeable. We played at football games (which I never understood) and marched in parades.

It was lots of fun being with my friends so often. We were alive. TV was limited to treat status as we were growing up so we learned to fill the days with our own minds and were never bored. We became close to each other via person-to-person, face-to-face interactions. We didn't text or tweet. Goodness, we didn't even have computers or cell phones or Facebook. We were on our own to live and enjoy life without electronics or electromagnetic radiation. We read real books, played cards with real cards, played board games with real boards and real objects to move. Things were gentle, quiet and peaceful -- leisure activities were created to educate and entertain, not kill and maim.

Two other high school memories remain viscerally strong: socialism and plastic. One teacher spent about 10 minutes describing socialism and I thought, "What a wonderful idea," a thought I hold to this day. Secondly, I remember my shock when first learning about plastic. "This is horrible. It's not REAL!" I still hold that thought, too.

I had my dream -- to become a nurse. Back then girls were basically limited to three career paths -- secretary, teacher, nurse. Even though we lived in an upscale New York City suburb with a quality school system, feminism had not arrived. My graduating class of 1963 was the last small one with only 75 of us.

We were the Elvis and Beatles generation. Gail and I even formed an Elvis Presley Fan Club. Nobody else joined but we didn't care. I never put "President of the Elvis Presley Fan Club" on my résumé but that might have given an aware person a clue as to what type of woman I'd become. In high school, I mellowed and picked up guitar -- John Denver and Peter, Paul and Mary were my favorites.

I'm not sure where my helping heart came from -- my childhood asthma and being hospitalized or Mom's MS -- but, once I set my mind to it, nursing was the path I followed.

Mom had a kind heart. When she was legally blind, she volunteered for the Westchester Lighthouse Association for the Blind and received this letter when she was ready to "retire" in 1985.

Dear Peggy:

This is to add a personal note of thanks for all that you have done for the Lighthouse over the years and to tell you how much it has meant to us.

And believe me, Peggy, your efforts on our behalf have really been effective. We have not had a volunteer who has done more or been as effective as you. Whenever we cried 'help,' you were always ready to pitch in.

You should feel proud that your work has helped to enhance the lives of many people. We are proud that you were a part of our operation and know you'll keep answering our cries for 'help' whenever we need a job done.

Thank you again, Peggy, and be assured that we'll continue to be in touch.

Sincerely, Chester T. Williams, Director

In her early years of marriage, our musical Mom wrote "There is a Yearning in my Heart," which we sang at her funeral:

*There is a yearning in my heart,
To live a nobler way,
To love, to give, to have a part,
In brightening someone's day.*

*(chorus) Lord God, I pray,
Lead me Thy Way.
Let me find someone to serve today.*

*There is a hoping in my mind,
That midst the poor and lone
Some may a little comfort find,
In sharing what I own. (chorus)*

*I have a feeling deep inside,
That will not let me rest
'Til we have stayed the growing tide,
Of our world's dark distress. (chorus)*

*I have a longing in my soul,
To serve the ones who need.
Despairing, they have lost their goal,
And want a friend to lead. (chorus)*

*There is a yearning in my heart,
To live a nobler way,
With love and joy to do my part,
To make a better day. (chorus)*

Growing Up, Getting Out



I received the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen award in high school. They should see me now!

Volunteer candy-stripping in our local hospital was fun and my grades were good enough to earn a Regent's scholarship plus seven smaller ones, so I went off to beautiful Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York full of excitement and glee to study nursing, never to live at home again.

Within my first month, I had a crush on Bill Hnatt, who treated me to my first legal drink when I turned 18 and taught me how to inhale cigarettes. He treated me well (if one can call that "well"). He also let me have his freshly-baked donut during our morning break (in addition to my own).

It wasn't long before we were spending almost all our free time together. This relationship was so blissful that, when Bill moved back to New Jersey, I transferred to Wagner College on Staten Island to be near him -- still studying to become a nurse. We anticipated getting married one day.

On October 5, 1964 I mailed this letter to Joanie at Wells College:

Dear Coz, (her middle name is Coe)

The jacket-shirt is just gorgeous! I'm going to buy some slacks to match one of the colors in the plaid since I need slacks anyhow. It's really nice and fits fine -- it'll be great when it starts getting cold. I had so much fun opening it -- just sat on my bed laughing as each little witticism (get that?) popped up. The glass is really nice, too -- I've already put it to use (don't worry, just Diet Rite!). It's great 'cause it holds a lot more than my mug even.

You'll never believe where I am right now -- on a subway-train on my way to the Fair with Winkie! She had a couple of tickets and wanted to use them before it closes for the year.

Thursday night nine girls gave me a surprise party! They'd bought a delicious chocolate cake and drinks so we feasted. Friday night U.J., Mom and Dot came and took Bill and me to dinner. Our food here stinks so it was really nice eating out.

Your basketball training sounds GREAT! How on Earth are you surviving? Oh, yea, congratulations on making the team -- that's pretty d___ good! Are you a forward?

Bill was here yesterday. He gave me a beautiful tennis sweater (which I'll NEVER use to play tennis in!) I just love it! I got a madras blouse from the twins and a print one from Nance; money from Mom & U.J. (also things from Shobers Bakery from Mom which aren't in existence any more -- less than 24 hours to disappear!) She also gave me a beautiful cake. Winkie gave me some saccharin! (I'd just run out) and I got loads of cards and a telegram from DD & CC -- they'd already given me a check to buy a good dress with and yesterday Bill took me into the city to shop around. I decided a good suit would be more useful so Bill's going to help me pick it out at Best's or Saxe's or one of those. Yesterday he took me to THE VILLAGE -- it was fabulous -- the neatest stores are all over the place -- you'd love it there. It's so great to have the city so near -- only \$.20! (bus .15 & ferry .05) each way!

My classes are all right (except that I got a D on a paper we had to write in class for Eng. -- I could not tell what he wanted so I couldn't very well give it to him!).

I'm going to start doing 1 hour volunteer work at a mental health clinic here on the island each week. All we do is go there and speak with patients who are well enough to be out of a hospital or institution but who haven't quite made the re-adjustment to their normal lives. It's based on the idea that they often keep things to themselves which would be better to air out in a casual conversation. By just talking with them, they can realize that someone is interested in them. It has all sorts of psychological implications but after listening to me, whoever I "parlez" [French = speak] with will probably end up back in the hospital!

Did I tell you I'm going to operate the switchboard now and then and do office work when I've got some spare time? Maybe I'll get rich on my light schedule anyhow.

I'm in line for Johnson's Wax now while Winkie's next door in Austria's exhibit.

Guess who I got a birthday card from -- Norm B. ! I haven't heard from him since Christmas so I was sort of surprised! Mom also brought your letter to her and one to the Donohues so I'm pretty well caught up on your "gad abouting." Hope you had a fabulous time at Hamilton (if that was the place). By ALL means, go to as many of those as possible -- they sound great (so does your blind date bureau!) and out of 90,000 you ought to meet some real dolls -- I'd love to hear about the other colleges, too.

Well, believe it or not, I'm running out of things to say. As it is, I'm in a state of depression every Sunday - Thursday and in sheer ecstasy Friday night and Saturday when Bill comes. He's just had a wisdom tooth pulled and the dumb dentist cracked one of his molars while he was doing it! That's in addition to the 31 cavities he's having filled! My poor Bill! We can't wait to get married -- sounds funny doesn't it? But we're both so miserable when we're not together it's ridiculous.

Well, I guess I'd better stop writing 'cause we're almost going to be let into Johnson's -- after about 1 1/4 hrs!

Good luck with the basketball, "even."

Thanks again for the gorgeous shirt (I'm not too sure what to call it but I LOVE it!) and for the glass. Write when you get a chance.

Toodles.

Love, Sooze

Young Adult

After my second year of college, Bill and I were wed. We lived in his home town (Rahway, New Jersey) but I wanted to continue my education so I transferred (again) and switched my major to teaching, since the closest college didn't have a nursing program. By comparison, that was a lot easier.

Honoring my heart, I got a part-time job at Rahway Hospital as a nurse's aide. Thankfully, my supervisor knew I'd had two years toward an R.N. and encouraged me to take the L.P.N. exam, which I passed. That enabled me to get better jobs off and on for the next 20 years.

Meanwhile, Bill and I bought our first house and started a family. I always attribute my Environmental Awakening of the birth of our first son, Michael. My father, George, was probably crushed that we didn't choose his and his father's name for our first-born, but he was so jubilant anyhow that he and Cece sent me a dozen red roses in the hospital.

I think I was the only new mother who nursed her infant; I knew that was the right thing to do. From that moment on, I started caring more about my baby than myself and did my best to learn what sorts of things would help him grow up healthy. Enter eco-consciousness!

One incident is still clear 49 years later -- a visit to my bedside by a priest. He was kind and just doing his job in coming to chat with me. After the initial greetings, I told him, "I don't believe in organized religion." I wasn't trying to be rude; I was not annoyed; I simply didn't want to hear whatever he was telling me.

I've always felt a direct link to God and, as a child sitting in the children's choir in my angelic robe, I could see no point in that man up front talking about God, when I already had God in my heart.

Four years after Michael was born, Mitchell arrived and, once again, I was trying to have the best birth possible. I had heard about "rooming in" where the baby stays in its mother's room so she can care for and nurse it prn (that's nursingese for "as needed"). I was enchanted by that idea and switched my OB/GYN doctor to one who would deliver our second baby in a hospital offering rooming in.

When my labor started, my chosen hospital's maternity ward was full and we had to go to Perth Amboy where a different doctor gassed me. I was horrified because I had wanted a saddle block (like I had had with Michael) so I could also watch the second birth.

How on Earth did my wishes get ignored? I'll never know. Thankfully, Mitchell was a healthy, normal baby despite the more mechanized, less humane way of bringing a child into our world.

Our Early 20s

I finished my Bachelor's degree 11 years after starting college while raising two sons, caring for a husband and our home, working part-time as an LPN and becoming the elementary school's PTA president.

Toward the end of that 11-year period, I mistakenly registered for a course which had been renamed. Realizing that it was sounding familiar, I bolted to my counselor to see what else I could take. There was an opening in Conservation of Natural Resources. It was fascinating and our teacher spent about 10 minutes telling us about the group she belonged to, the Sierra Club. That class changed my life.

As I prepared a post card for my final grade to be mailed to me, I wrote: "May I please have 2 applications for Sierra Club? Friend and I want to join. Thanks a lot." On its return, my teacher had written in green: "A+ and 'Good!'" adding, "I really have enjoyed reading your paper so much - if you don't mind I'd like to send it, with one other, to one of the publications, with credit, of course. MCK"

I joined the Sierra Club; we moved to a river-front home at the Jersey Shore and I sent another post card to the local chapter offering to be an editor. Mind you, I had no idea what that meant; all I knew was that I liked fixing up other people's writing. They asked to meet me and told me I could edit their newsletter.

I sat at our kitchen table with my typewriter while the boys played, putting in my best effort -- oh yes, my heart and soul, too. This was fun. This was important.

That Christmas I wondered what my 90-year-old grandfather would like for a gift -- something unusual. How about a colorful, glorious Sierra Club calendar? Bingo!

Weeks later, Grampy (Mom's dad) sent me this typed letter:

From the desk of

KIRK W. DYER

Jan. 6, 75

Dear Susan and all:

Many thanks for the beautiful calendar of more or less my old stamping ground. SIERRA is truly beautiful and hangs in the living room.

Did I ever tell you about running into John Muir with 250 of the SIERRA Club at the Big Oak Flats on our first overnight stop when leaving Yosemite back in 1899? Harry and I were near the end of a bicycle trip from S. Cal, a trip of one month. Had ten days in the valley. BIG OAK was full of these 259 on their way to Hetch Hetchy country. So full there had to sleep on floor. John Muir and my uncle Theodor Lukens were pals. Muir tried his best to dissuade to tarry another six weeks and join them. We were in a hurry to get back. He even said he would grub stake us. What a wonderful experience that would have been.*

Tourists should be arriving now in a few days. What a lark.

Have a bang up 1975, you all and again thanks.

Kirk



("Uncle Herman standing," probably Grampy on the right)

**John Muir founded the Sierra Club in 1892, establishing the modern conservation movement in the United States. "...The Sierra Club derives its strength by organizing concerned citizens into a force with the power to successfully advocate for our wildlands and the species which live there."*

Joanie Stays in Germany

*Joanie on her way to Germany (below)
and after being met by Uncle John's large
family on her arrival (right).*



Joanie completed her college education in an all-girls school in New York, majoring in modern languages, where she studied French and German. Long ago, Uncle John had promised that, if we ever learned German, he'd send us to Germany to see the country and visit his family. I had no interest in doing that -- besides, I butchered French, hated Latin and had no desire to travel, so his offer didn't grab me but, true to his word, Uncle John gave Joanie a ticket to Germany for her graduation.

Off she went for the Summer, returning 19 years later. Joanie came home for visits and Mom and Uncle John went to Germany a few times so those three were reunited. Joanie loved Germany and Uncle John's people so much that she made it her home.

As I began writing this book, it occurred to me to ask her why she stayed so long -- was she escaping the feud between Mom and Dad or what?

No. One reason was that her boyfriend back in the States had asked her to marry him and she wasn't ready. [Good move, Joanie -- but *Germany?*]

As Summer was ending in Germany and her departure was approaching, Joanie told her friends, "O.K., folks, I've got to go."

"*What?* You're not staying for Oktoberfest?"

"O.K., I'll stay....."

(after Oktoberfest) "O.K., folks, I've got to go."

"You're going to leave before Christmas?"

"O.K., I'll stay...."

(after Christmas) "O.K., folks, I've got to go."

"You can't go now, Fasching* is coming."

"What's Fasching?"

"It's like Mardi Gras or Halloween."

"O.K., I'll stay"

She finally admitted to me, "It was never a conscious decision to stay; it was Uncle John's family I so adored. This is your procrastinating sister -- she went for the Summer with one suitcase and came back 19 years later old and gray."

We giggled as we often do -- as we did with Mom -- like schoolgirls. Those giggly moments are some of the most precious times we have together, as they were when my jovial mother was alive.

** Fasching is Germany's carnival season. It starts on the 11th day of November at exactly 11minutes after 11 am and ends at the stroke of midnight on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. Fasching is a time of festivity and merry making -- a time to break the rules, poke fun at those who make them and then to make your own new rules. (<http://www.deutscheshaus.cc/html/>)*

Why On Earth Did I Go to Germany?

Once I realized that Joanie wasn't coming home, I started to wonder what her life was like abroad. I decided to let Bill watch the boys so I could visit her. I got my first passport on July 1, 1983.

"What do you want to see?" Joanie asked on the phone.

"You."

There was no tourist residing in me; I simply wanted to see her. After a few days, when the question had settled, I called back and added, "Castles."

It was an amazing visit. Joanie had some wonderful friends (Anneliese and Ludwiga, who remain like sisters to her) and Gerd, with whom she was living in a fourth-floor, walk-up apartment.

My first impressions were how much smaller the cars were in Munich than in America and how subtle the clothing colors -- much more natural than some of our garish garb in the U.S.

On our first day of sight-seeing, Joanie and I were gazing at the view atop St. Peters Kirche when a photographer showed up from *BILD-Munchen*. The next day, we were on page five.



"302 Stufen zu Munchens schonster Aussicht."
302 Steps to Munich's Most Beautiful View.

"Bei diesem wunderbaren Ausblick vom Alten Peter sind die Strapazen des Aufstiegs vergessen. Auch Susan und Joanne Norris aus Amerika sind begeistert. Das Drahtgitter rund um den engen Balustraden-Steg schützt Schwindelige und Lebensmüde." Translation by Joanie: With this wonderful view from Alten Peter, the exertion of the climb is forgotten. Susan and Joanne Norris from America are also inspired. The wire railing surrounding the narrow balcony path protects the dizzy and the despondent.

I loved Joanie's small fridge, which held daily fresh food from an outdoor market and the small, instant-on water heaters over her kitchen sink and luxuriously huge bathtub.

By the time I met Uncle John's family and saw a couple of castles, it was clear to me why Joanie had made Munich her home. Of course by then, she was fluent in German and they all adored her -- who wouldn't? I have a very sweet sister.

Life on the River

Back home with Bill and the boys, life went on. Our home on the Metedeconk River in Brick, New Jersey, on a dead-end street, was the ideal place to raise children. Like their mother, they played outside all year round -- not in organized sports but games *they* organized with their friends randomly running around with hockey sticks on the streets or on the ice or whizzing by on our ice boat; swimming, fishing, sailing, boating, water skiing, crabbing in Summer and biking and other outdoor games year-round.

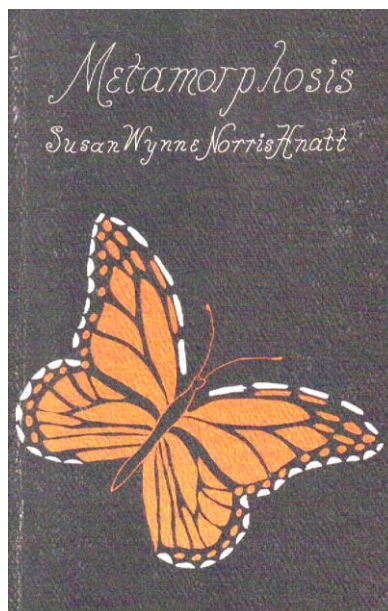


Mitchell (left) and Michael (right) with our iceboat on the Metedeconk River and me reading on the brick patio I built.



Writing My First Book

Here is a story from *Metamorphosis*, a book I wrote and published for Michael and Mitchell after leaving their father to help them understand why I had to go.



I had gotten used to going places alone during our marriage because there were certain things I really wanted to do as badly as Bill really didn't want to do them. One of my all-time favorites was my solo trip down Cedar Creek in a canoe.

It was September. I had read a lot about preserving Cedar Creek as the last local place where water was pure enough to drink. It is in the Pine Barrens and many naturalists had canoed down it and even convinced the Governor to do the same. After reading the publicity, I was determined to try this myself.

Bill was taking a bunch of guys out fishing that day; my girlfriend who might have joined me had just had a baby; the kids were in school. I would be starting Title I [teaching] work soon and it was my last chance to go on a weekday without worrying about the boys.

When I arrived, the rental fee was about \$8.00. The man asked me what size oar I wanted. I had no idea. I'd only canoed once or twice in my entire life. I didn't even know paddles came in sizes. I chose a small one figuring it would be easier to handle.

He also asked how long of a trip I wanted -- two, four, or six hours. I said four would be fine. It was about nine o'clock and I had to be home by three o'clock for the kids.

We loaded the canoe on top of his van, drove my car to the park where the creek ends, and then we drove about fifteen minutes through isolated woods that had once been a Girl Scout camp. Some people might have been afraid at this point -- being alone with a stranger in the woods -- but I trusted him. I don't remember experiencing fear.

I hate fear. I refuse to let it interfere with my enjoyment of life. I've been known to take walks at 11:30 p.m. and even recently at 2:00 a.m. It's a beautiful time of night but people used to worry for me. That's fine. Let them get gray hair. I'd rather get exercise and enjoy being outdoors.

Anyhow, this fellow helped me put the canoe in at the narrow beginnings of the creek where I could practically reach out with either arm and touch both banks.

He asked me if I knew how to portage. I'd never heard of it. He said there'd be times when I'd need to carry the canoe or drag it over land. That was cool. I'm fairly strong.

Then he advised me to put my key ring in the pocket of my life jacket. That was not so cool. That worried me. Did he anticipate my tipping? But, as I said earlier, fear was not about to interfere. I kept smiling and waved goodbye. His motor was the last sound of humanity I heard for the next hour.

Within five minutes I was stuck sideways in the creek on some tree trunks. I knew I should have chosen the longer paddle for pushing off! I did get free (obviously) and was enjoying the natural setting. No one had manipulated (notice the first three letters of that word) Mother Nature here. Things were just as She left them.

The creek flowed slowly. It was a beautiful 70-degree day. Cedar Creek was indeed beautiful. I could see clearly below me through the unpolluted water.

Being a novice, I did have some trouble steering through the obstacles. It finally became crystal clear to me that whenever my canoe ended up traveling backwards down the creek, it was a lot easier for me to go to the other end and turn myself around than to turn the whole canoe around.

I continued to get stuck several times and started laughing aloud imagining what a silent observer might think about this blonde going down Cedar Creek backwards or, better yet, not moving at all because she was tangled up in overgrowth. If she'd only known how to control the thing!

My laughter filled the woods until I started imagining how on Earth the rescue helicopters were going to find me through the lush vegetation. Then my mood became more serious. I thought to myself, "Well, Susan, this is a fine mess you are in. If this journey takes two canoeists who know what they're doing four hours, just how long do you think it might take you alone?"

"Good question," I answered, "I'd better paddle like crazy if I'm going to make it home in time for the kids."

Just about then, the creek widened, and I found myself in the midst of what appeared to be an old forest fire area. Charred stumps were everywhere but by now my ability to maneuver had increased. The water was calm. So far I had not seen one sign of human life -- no houses, cars, roads, telephone wires -- NOTHING -- I was visiting God's country.

I was just beginning to feel some self-confidence growing when I heard rushing water, like a waterfall, in the distance. This surging sound made my blood surge; it also made my bladder surge. I followed the course of the creek and as I got closer, I could see that there was a small waterfall. Thank Goodness it was boarded up so I wouldn't roll down it by mistake.

There was a bridge and a dirt road on top of a ten-foot incline. This was my first portage. I was wondering how I was going to lug the canoe up such a steep hill but Mother Nature called first. I couldn't hold my coffee any longer. I went to the top of the hill, found some bushes, and pretended to be a dog for a minute.

Just as I was zipping my jeans, two teen-age boys walked past with a dog. What close timing! I am super modest and would have been mortified to be caught with my pants down. As if nothing unusual had happened, I greeted them with a cheery, "Hello!"

They returned my greeting. I asked if either of them had done this canoe trip and they said, "No."

Then I asked if they would help me drag my canoe up the hill, which they gladly did. Again I felt no fear, just relief that these two teen-agers had crossed my path at that particular moment of my life and not a moment earlier. They placed the canoe down on the other side of the bridge. I scampered back in and waved goodbye. I was off once more.

The whole scene changed again and the creek became like a snake, twisting and turning every few hundred feet. It was grassy, sandy and shallow. I could see each blade of grass as I glided along. I was finally getting the knack of speed canoeing. Now my deadline drove me.

I had picked up speed in my own way by now but still couldn't turn very successfully. As the creek would turn, I would ram into the sandy banks. It felt like I was in a bumper car at an amusement park. It was amusing all right, but I was anxious to reach the park where my car was. Lucky for the canoe, the banks were soft and forgiving.

In my ignorance of strokes, I was putting the paddle in on one side, giving a push, crossing in front and giving another push on the other side -- back and forth, back and forth. [After I got home, one of Bill's friends asked me if I had done the "J" stroke. I'd never heard of a "J" stroke. I learned then that there are different strokes for different folks.]

I stopped for a diet soft drink. I grew up on the stuff but now I try not to drink those chemicals, hoping I haven't already given myself a dose of carcinogens over the years.

Anyhow, not to waste time, I just kept paddling once my soda was finished. The sun was glorious and when I saw a gentleman in a business suit up ahead, I knew my journey was nearly complete.

We smiled at each other. He was dressed up in his suit and I was dressed up in a life jacket with my long blonde hair streaming like a zombie. He couldn't possibly have known the depth of my smile -- glad to be back in the park; glad to see another human being.

I had canoed 16 miles in three-and-a-half hours. I would be in time for the kids. As a matter of fact, I even had time to stop for a vanilla cone. I had earned it -- the calories had been burned off long ago. I wonder what the salesgirl thought when I reached out for it with palms as black (from the aluminum paddle) as the vanilla was white.

And Now I Must Leave ...

I was doing a good job of pretending to be a suburban housewife, trying to please everyone to such an extent that Dad and Cece, after a short visit, sent this:

Whereas the American Amalgamated Association for the Care, Feeding, Preservation and Survival of Susan N. Hnatt, Unlimited met in open session to consider the pending business, and

Whereas Susan N. Hnatt is beset by housekeeping problems - Thou doest, or Thou doest not, but all housewives are beset by the same problems, and

Whereas Susan N. Hnatt is in a class all by herself, and is trying hard to complete her housework and her homework at the same time, and

Whereas Susan N. Hnatt considers its all down hill when she skies - for the bus will return her to home base, and

Whereas Susan N. Hnatt frets over her guitar playing, and

Whereas Susan N. Hnatt sails through everything she does boat ashore and afloat, and

Whereas Susan N. Hnatt provides luxury accomodations for all and sun dry at her boatel, and

Whereas Susan N. Hnatt now collides for survival, and

Whereas Susan N. Hnatt has so much busyness but she is still a doll through it all, and

Now Therefore, in consideration of the premises set forth above, and for good and valuable consideration in hand received, the American Amalgamated Association for the Care, Feeding, Preservation and Survival of Susan N. Hnatt do hereby proclaim

W H O A

CANIT YOU SAY NEIGH?

Adopted in open session, this 18th day of March, 1977.

Cecilia H. Harris
President

George Harris
Major Domo
Maitre Dee
General Factotum
Recording, Taping and Playback Secretary
Chancellor of the X checker

Have you smelled the roses today?

We had joined the little yacht club nearby and sailing became our family's passion but it wasn't enough to hold a fraying marriage together. Bill was commuting about an hour to work several days a week and, when he told me he wanted to get an apartment up north, I felt uneasy. I told him I'd work harder on our marriage, although I wasn't sure I knew what that meant after 15 years of partnership.

The marriage was disintegrating.

One night it hit. I must leave.

During the last 10 days that I spent in our home, I wasn't sleeping well and one morning I woke up around 5 and drove to the ocean. I was exhausted. I sat on the sand and waited for the sun to come up. As it was appearing, I walked to the water's edge and, with my feet in the waves, felt my molecules vanish as I became one with the ocean. It was unlike any experience I'd ever had and later I recognized it as a mystical event. Nobody had ever told me such a thing was possible. I had to experience it to know how my spirit is really part of everything else, not separate.

Here's my journal entry:

I AM THE EARTH!

The world as I knew it was changing and I went to the Earth for comfort and inspiration. My 15-year-long marriage was ending with my decision leave my two precious sons with their father and carve out a new life for myself. I no longer loved him. He had killed my love for him by not knowing how to communicate and by belittling me in some way every day. I had lacked the knowledge and courage to respond. In other words, I didn't know how to communicate things which troubled me, either. I never said to him, "That hurt my feelings" or "Why did you say that?" I just kept quiet.

The decision to leave my sons with him was heart-breaking but clear. It seemed to be the best choice.

During the 10 days that I was packing and preparing to leave, I didn't sleep well, nor did I eat well. I was deeply saddened about the break-up of the family but joyful with the possibility of living without being nagged and not being under the same roof of someone I didn't love any more. I was wretched.

One morning I got up early -- early enough to go to my beloved ocean to watch the sunrise. We had chosen a home near the ocean because it held an inescapable attraction for us and we wanted to raise our sons where they, too, could fall in love with Nature.

So I went to the ocean by myself.

I sat and waited. I filled my lungs with the fresh ocean air. I filled my head with the roar of the surf. I filled my Self with the rhythm of the waves.

I waited for the Sun to rise.

The sky was getting lighter.

As the sun first started to show herself, I walked towards her, my feet bare in the sand. I stood at the edge of the water, at the edge of my world as I knew it, at the edge of time, at the edge of the Universe. I stood. And as the sun was rising, my molecules -- my body, my material physical self vanished.

I was pure spirit. I was one with the universe. I WAS the ocean!

I had entered a realm I never knew existed. I was 34. I never planned this or expected it. I didn't know it could even happen. Nobody had ever told me about such a glorious, beyond-belief experience. It was my first true experience of/with God, or with what I now call

*THE SPIRIT
OF UNIVERSAL
GOODNESS,
ENERGY AND
LOVE*

This experience helped me to know (and to verbalize many years later) that I AM EARTH.

* * *

DREAM OF JOHN



During the same period of time -- the days I was preparing to leave my family, my life -- I had three dreams (nighttime slumbering dreams).

The first was that I would write a book for the boys about all that was happening. The second was an image of what the cover would look like -- a big, monarch butterfly -- orange -- on a black cover. The title would be

METAMORPHOSIS

And there would be no price. No dollar sign would disgrace and defile the cover of my book.

Within a year and a half I had accomplished the task and on the Valentine's Day following the Summer I left that world, I proudly presented my book to my two sons over a pancake breakfast in the garage where I was living at the time. On that day, I also introduced them to the man who would eventually be my second husband -- a very loving and kind Jewish man with black, curly hair.

The hair is important.

My third dream. The dream which gave me new life and new love ten years later (1990) was the most beautiful dream of my life.

Ultimately the reason I left my first husband was that we had entirely different values. We had an entirely different way of looking at the world. We had entirely different ways of treating people.

On the day I left, he had ten boats, two older model Jaguars and a Thunderbird. We were yacht club members who drank and partied a lot. We raced our sailboats and owned a lovely home on the river.

I left it all.

Because my own parents' divorce had caused a lot of financial grief on both ends, I clearly decided to take no money, no alimony, nothing.

All I wanted was my freedom from the environment which was suffocating me and where I felt no love from my husband.

So now the good part -- my third dream.

In the turmoil and sorrow of leaving my family, God gave me a dream of John.

The dream was extraordinarily short -- I can only recall about three seconds. It was more of a feeling of total happiness.

I had given birth to a baby with a radiantly happy white-haired man and the joy we experienced together came from the fact that we were raising (or going to raise) the baby out of a set of values which we shared! The contentment of those few moments can still be felt today as I write. I had not known such joy and contentment in 15 years of marriage.

It was John's face -- his high forehead, his dancing eyes -- the eyes I see exploding with happiness when we are close enough to kiss. Only his head was in my dream -- not his strong body, which I grew to love many years later.

So here I was with a baby and a man who shared my value system. For three seconds.

Life rolled on. I left my marriage and married a second man -- one with dark, curly hair.

My second husband didn't want a baby. As a matter of fact, he didn't even want to be my husband come to think of it. It took him three years to marry me. I finally proposed to him!

The marriage was a mistake.

Do you know why?

We didn't share a value system. We didn't view money the same way. We didn't view the corporate world the same way. I wanted a baby and he didn't. He was happy in a snooty condo and I wasn't.

He was a good man but we didn't share values.

My beautiful dream rarely came to mind. I forgot the white-haired man. I forgot the baby.

Nine years after the dream -- after I was re-married and living in a different home -- I went to Israel to work on a kibbutz. That is a story which I will go into later.

What is important is that I met a man named Zohar on a hill in Nazareth at sunset. He reminded me of Moses. The scene was idyllic. We skipped small talk and started having a spiritual discussion high on a hill as we watched the sun go down.

A day or two later, we had another discussion and somehow we got around to my dreams.

Only one other person in my life had ever asked me what my dream was and he was a virtual stranger (oddly enough, he asked me on the second day I knew him, also and that story comes later).

So I was telling Zohar about my three dreams -- two of which came to pass.

The third dream was beyond my control -- finding a white-haired man to raise a baby with harmoniously.

I told Zohar I had forgotten about trying to make that dream come true.

Zohar looked me straight in the eye and said, "No, you haven't."

He was right.

I hadn't.

Part 2: On My own

Heart leads, I follow.

Silence

The first night in my whole life living alone, though I was probably in shock, I had complete silence from television. There has been no real TV in my life since then. Norm had a TV but I didn't watch it and, by the time I moved in with John, he had ditched his to accommodate my hatred of the beast. By then I had read (and was captivated by) Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the **Elimination** of Television*. I clearly understood what a menacing vehicle TV could be. I suddenly and unexpectedly loved silence.

I kept teaching first grade and moved to a warmer and tiny apartment after the pipes in my rented cottage kept freezing. It was a fixed-up, two-car garage and remains my all-time favorite home. Small enough to easily clean with a little heater to warm the place instantly.

During that year, I focused on writing *Metamorphosis*. I also entered a contest for Ocean County Conservation Teacher of the Year and won with the following story, which was published in the March 1986 issue of *Today's Catholic Teacher*, though I was never Catholic.

Sowing Seeds

By Susan Hnatt

*(graphic of seeds being strewn onto the ground and three seed packet labels:
"conservation," "endangered species" and "ecology lesson")*

My degree is not in environmental education, nor do I conduct elaborate experiments with my 28 six-year-olds. But every day, I plant a seed.

Most of my daily living is guided in one way or another by an environmental conscience, which senses conservation or ecology lessons in nearly everything we do. It has led me to assist students in developing a constant awareness of nature as it relates to them.

Today's penmanship lesson, for example, was a letter addressed to the Massachusetts Animal Welfare Fund, pleading for protection of baby seals from slaughter. This was an offshoot of yesterday's reading program, in which children created their own first original sentence on the blackboard. The sentence, inspired by my teacher's manual, was simply, "I love seals." But it permitted the nurturing of an environmental conscience.

Easel cleaning led to an impromptu lesson on the value of using a sponge as opposed to paper towels. As the result of a few thought-provoking questions, children came to the realization that paper towels come from trees and will never be used again, while the sponge will be used over and over. As a result, we save paper towels by drying small hands on towels torn in half.

Many reading lessons come from Aesop's Fables. Each time a story deals with an endangered animal, such as the tiger, I take an extra minute to explain why the tiger hide is valuable to some people who do not respect wildlife. By showing the animal's point of view alongside the environmentalist viewpoint, I hope that a respect for living creatures will grow.

It happened that on the day the class read, "The Tail of the Snake," I was wearing a cobra belt purchased unthinkingly a number of years earlier. I passed the belt around the room for students to see and touch. At the same time, I expressed the horror I experienced when I realized that an animal had to die so I could have this belt.

It is important, however, to present a balanced, rational explanation of the use of animals raised strictly for their fur or hide. Animals are important to us, and we must learn which practices mesh with ecosystems and which destroy them. Only then can we make right decisions.

When my rabbit had eight babies, I needed lots of newspapers for their cage. The children responded readily and I was soon flooded with papers. We took the excess to the recycling center for processing to save branches of some other tree.

Last year, our school collected aluminum cans for recycling to raise money for the fifth-grade trip. We went one step further this year by collecting foil from sandwiches, which was otherwise doomed for the dumps.

Almost all my art projects involve recycled items, ranging from Red Rose tea-bag labels (which adorned our Valentines) to planters made from bleach bottles dotted with material scraps. We've made creations out of bottle caps, creamers, egg cartons, buttons, boxes, lids, baby-food jars, cereal boxes, orange-juice cans, popsicle sticks, light-bulb wrappers, vitamin packing cotton, packing straw, Styrofoam chips, discarded Christmas cards, used flower pots and old workbooks and coloring books.

I have a complete set of 75 covered blocks made from empty half-gallon milk cartons. We use discarded racquet balls to develop eye-hand coordination. Most patterns for art projects are cut from old cereal, cracker and cupcake boxes. Nothing interesting goes to waste.

We also borrow directly from nature at times. Our "gray squirrels" have marsh-grass tails and hold an acorn in their paws. We press beautiful leaves.

A collection of wildlife cards helps children "see" creatures they might not otherwise experience. At home, their awareness of animal habits can result from the discovery of a dead skunk or opossum along the road. Children learn that bulldozers in "development projects" often level animal homes.

Cooking has its place in Room 209, too. Our yearly menu contains such foods as turnips, honey, applesauce, pumpkin soup, cranberry bread, fresh fruit, barley soup, bean sprouts, raisins and sunflower seeds, to name a few. Children learn the benefits of natural foods as opposed to those processed or containing chemical additives and preservatives.

When I ride my bicycle to school, the children see an adult trying to save gas. We discuss the benefits of fresh air and exercise and the value of reducing gasoline consumption and carbon monoxide fumes. I urge pupils to play outdoors, rather than turn on the TV set, which wastes both electrical energy and their own.

In themselves, these are small things, but seeds are usually small, too. Every day I proudly sow seeds, which will contribute to tomorrow's harvest.

Susan Hnatt is a teacher and environmental household consultant in Secaucus, NJ.

* * *

This was one of the best years of my life. I loved that little garage apartment and my freedom. I had a few boyfriends and fell in love with Peter, a folk musician (my spiritual teacher teaches that we "rise" in love but that wasn't in my vocabulary back then). Through Peter, I met another "folkie," Joel, who owned an old schooner and, after Peter and I broke up, Joel invited me along on an otherwise all-male cruise to Block Island. He thought that having a "token" woman on board would minimize cursing and

soften the mood. I readily agreed to join them. It was on that sailboat that I met and became friends with Norm. He was so sweet and kind that I soon found myself in love again.

I worked hard on *Metamorphosis*, even setting the type at a small print shop where the owner showed me how to use his equipment and paste up the finished pages.

On Valentine's Day 1982, I asked the three men in my life (Mitchell, Michael and Norm) to join me for pancakes and I gave them their copies of *Metamorphosis*.



Here am I in the garage apartment making breakfast for Michael, Mitchell and Norm on Valentine's Day when I gave them their copies of Metamorphosis.

Why On Earth Did I Bother to Journal?

I have officially abandoned my intermittent practice of journaling. So the question is: Why did I bother to journal for so many years? Here's some wisdom from the introduction to the journal I used in 2002:

The Essential Writer's Notebook is a place where you keep your hand moving, even if you think you have nothing to say. Stop your day-dreaming. Put pen to paper. Trust yourself. Write whatever is on your mind. Write what you see, taste, feel. Write about what's in front of your face -- the man with a red nose and bushy black hair and a dachshund on a leash; the way he keeps his left hand at his waist and guides the dog with the right. The spruce by the curb, the red Pontiac that drives by. It is a November afternoon and the world is almost dull except that you notice and record it. That single act makes it alive and wakes you up.

In this notebook, you are free to practice -- you don't have to begin the great American novel or write like Toni Morrison, Hemingway or Virginia Woolf. This is the place to meet your own gritty mind -- to learn how you think and to write how that first kiss felt, how that last pear tasted, who you were in the Summer of 1987.

Tell the truth: Winter is your favorite season, you never liked avocados and you're afraid to swim. Record the honest details of your life -- not how you think you should be but how you are. What do you remember about the old house you lived in, the bike you left behind, the café on the corner where you ate croissants and sipped Earl Grey? What great mistake have you made in your life?

And now I'm going to show you drawings I've never shown anyone before. These are in my 2002 file. You can see how I smile even when I'm angry inside or when I feel like I've been beaten over the head with a 2 by 4; how I smile even when I'm not really happy. Even today, February 8, 2015 (13 years later), as I'm looking at these drawings, I feel something like tightness in my chest. I don't think it's a good idea to keep hiding my emotions.



That's the end of my dark side. It's not pretty and it's not fun; however, I will say that I'm grateful for the suggestion to do journaling and these drawings; I'm sure it helped to put on paper what I was feeling deep inside.

Moving along (but back in time) to the contents of another journal ...

Why On Earth Did I Take a Solo Bike Hike Through the Pine Barrens?

I wanted to learn more. Wherever I live, I take an active interest in the bioregion and anything that is threatened. Since my garage-apartment's back yard was on the fringe of the Pine Barrens and since I felt close to that ecosystem, here's what I did.

Through the Pinelands by Bike and Backpack

By Susan Norris Hnatt

The New York Times: June 13, 1982

"Speaking Personally" page

(Two-column photo of me on bike with helmet and gear taken by Pamela Johnson in Millville and three-column map with route, bike graphic and arrows showing my itinerary, plus numbered stops where I spent each night)

It was not until I was 33 years old -- three years ago -- that I became interested in bicycling. But I've made up for lost time since then, taking to my bike for day trips and using it to commute to my job as a teacher. So far, I've put well over 2,000 miles on the odometer.

I live in Brick Township, on the fringe of the Pine Barrens and that, plus several other factors, roused my interest in the pinelands.

The other factors?

I became a member of the local Environmental Commission. I am involved with the Sierra Club and I read the Pinelands Commission's Comprehensive Management Plan (all 430 pages of it, not counting the appendices).

It was only natural, then, that those two interests should come together, and they did when I decided to bike through the pinelands last Summer.

When I told friends about my plan, I usually got one of two reactions: Some thought that perhaps a screw was loose (and not on my bike) and some thought the idea exciting and offered to lend me equipment, if I needed any.

I did. My tent, tarp, sleeping bag, foam cushion, water bottle and two paperback books were borrowed.

The men at a local bicycle shop helped with their advice and concern, and one friend offered to provide rescue service anywhere in the state.

For my own peace of mind, I had a tire-changing lesson the night before I left. Early birthday presents included tools and a camera.

And so, off I went.

Wednesday, Aug. 26, 1981 -- Departure. My first goal was Lebanon State Forest and I had made no other plans. There was no particular place that I had to be at any particular time.

I got to Lebanon State Forest around 1:30 P.M., four hours after leaving home. Route 70 has some lovely examples of Pine Barrens vegetation -- "barrens" is such a misnomer -- and so I started taking photographs right away.

After setting up camp near Pakim Pond, I hiked along one of the trails, went for a swim and climbed the lookout tower. For \$5 a night, I got excellent shower and laundry facilities. (If your timing is right, you can even catch a free concert.)

The day's mileage: 33.

Aug. 27 -- Initially, I headed east on Route 72 because a friend had mentioned the pygmy forest and I wanted to be sure to see it. Although the trees there are 40 years old, they are less than five feet high. That forest is one of the reasons the pinelands need protection.

Then I backtracked to Route 563, heading south toward Batsto. Pedaling down Route 563, I spotted a sign inviting me to pick my own blueberries. It directed me to a side road and, after several miles, I came to a farm that appeared abandoned.

The only intruder on the scene -- not counting me -- was a white-tailed fawn. When it spotted me, it darted off into the woods.

Tracing its path through a thicket, I came to an old cranberry bog that also seemed abandoned and I contented myself with huckleberries.

Farther down the road were several thriving blueberry farms. I stopped to talk with an old farmhand who was pruning the bushes; he not only gave me some berries but also posed willingly for my camera.

That night, I ate at an inn on Route 542 and made some new friends. They helped me arrange to stay at a private campground with a grandmother who does carpentry and who, every Spring, single-handedly, builds 145 picnic tables with attached benches.

Mileage: 41.

Aug. 28 -- I set out to see Batsto and Bass River State Forest. The historic village at Batsto has an ironmaster's mansion, a sawmill, a blacksmith's shop, a nature center, several functioning craft exhibits and an impressive collection of local books for sale.

At Batsto, a visitor can get insights into the way people in our state lived a century ago.

From Batsto, I headed east along Route 542 toward Bass River State Forest, stopping for a dip in the cool, clear, cedar water of a stream. The state park offers a self-guiding trail and alongside the campground is Lake Absegami. The lake is perfect for swimming (especially for children because of its shallowness and its lifeguard), canoeing, sailing and motoring with small engines.

At 7 o'clock, courtesy of the State Council on the Arts' parks series, fiddlers and guitar players treated everyone to an evening of fancy-pickin' country music on the beach.

Mileage: 18

Aug. 29 -- After breaking camp by 8:30, I headed north on Route 9 for Waretown to hear the Pineconers at Albert Hall. The Saturday night concerts there carry on a tradition established long ago by Joe and George Albert, who got together with friends in their cabin -- tucked off in woods -- to sing songs of the pinelands. Eventually, the little cabin was unable to accommodate the crowds and the music-making moved to an old warehouse in Waretown.

I spent that night with friends in Waretown.

Mileage: 19.

Aug. 30 -- My day of rest. A friend drove me (and my bike) around Wharton State Forest and to Friendship, Apple Pie Hill and the Carranza Memorial, and finally to the campsite at Atsion. My tired legs appreciated the respite.

Mileage: 0.

Aug. 31 -- My destination was Millville, via Routes 206 and 54, to visit family. This took me out of the Pine Barrens but I did pass some lovely farm country. The Wheaton Glass display offers still another insight into Colonial New Jersey.

Sept. 1 -- I started heading home, by way of Medford Lakes, because an old friend lives there. This was my longest and least-scenic journey but my eagerness to be home propelled me along. I was exhausted when I got to my friend's house but luck was with me, for the only downpour of my trip started five minutes after my arrival.

Medford Lakes -- 200 years ago, it was the site of an ironworks known as Etna Furnace -- used to be considered the beginning of the Pine Barrens because the terrain changes so drastically. Forests of scrub oak, pitch pine, holly and laurel mingle with bogs and cedar swamps.

Mileage: 44.

Sept. 2 -- This was to be my last night of camping out and my plans were to return to Lebanon State Forest. But I wanted to walk around Mount Holly first and so I headed north on Route 541.

As I locked my bike at Police Headquarters before setting out for a leisurely stroll, I saw two tourists studying brochures. They gave me one -- a map of the town and its historical highlights laid out to make a do-it-yourself walking tour easy.

Fifty-one buildings were marked by plaques indicating the original owner or builder, along with the dates of construction. Although many homes are not open to the public, I did visit the Prison Museum (the first fireproof building in the United States and aptly known as the Haunted Dungeon) and the John Woolman Memorial Quaker Center.

From Mount Holly, I returned to Lebanon along Route 530 (dangerous for cycling) and went to sleep very early in the same place where I had spent my first night out.

Mileage: 30

Sept. 3 -- Dark clouds crossed the sky as I pedaled frantically along Route 70. But two friends who were on their way to Philadelphia stopped and helped me load my gear into their trunk, thus enabling me to make the last stretch unencumbered as I tried to beat the approaching storm.

My luck had held for nine days: The weather had been fine, my tires had remained inflated and the people everywhere had been friendly.

Several of my friends had feared for my safety because there are so many ill-conceived notions about the Pine Barrens, the people who live there and, of course, the Jersey Devil. I wanted to prove that their fears were foolish -- and I did.

I arrived home physically fatigued but spiritually invigorated by an increased awareness of our precious pinelands.

Last day's mileage: 33. Total on the odometer for the whole trip (including some unrecounted side trips): 261.



During my bike ride, I met a well-known "Piney" named Sam, who was a carpenter. In addition to making boats, he made rocking chairs. They were so beautiful that I ordered one and picked it up after I got home.

From the Pine Barrens to Secaucus

Shortly after returning from this adventure, on October 12, 1982, I moved to Secaucus with recently-divorced Norm. He was buying a condo in a development on the Hackensack River. What a shock -- going from the clear, clean waters of the Metedeconk River to the shores of the filthy, abused and neglected Hackensack River -- from the leisurely life of the Jersey Shore to the ugly, overbuilt, polluted, trafficky New York metropolitan area, where he worked.

Oh my, what had I done?

I applied my two careers to part-time work doing private-duty nursing and Title I teaching while continuing to develop some environmental lifestyles like composting in the patch of dirt under our home in the carport between the units. I broke condo rules by stringing clotheslines between the railings of our deck and hanging clothes out.

Norm had a sailboat we used on the Hackensack River since there was a mini-marina attached to the housing complex. If that water splashed me, I felt a visceral creepiness and washed myself off ASAP.

One day I decided to post flyers on the 400 units announcing a meeting at our home inviting other residents to work with us on the environment. Norm helped me. We started the not-very-successful Harmon Cove Environmental Committee and then four of us started the Hackensack River Coalition (HRC). With our youthful energy, we tabled at events describing our goals of cleaning up the river and protecting the precious Meadowlands from further devastation. Our brochure said this:

The human race has not been kind to the Hackensack River. For years we have covered its fertile wetlands with our landfills and tainted its waters with our sewage and our toxic waste. Along its banks, we have built offices, warehouses, factories, housing, the sports complex.

And still the Hackensack remains a vital, living asset for both wildlife and people. Its northern, freshwater section provides much of our drinking water in Bergen County; the lower section, with its tidal

marshes, absorbs flood waters and actually helps to cleanse them of the human and industrial wastes they carry.

Slowly, the HRC grew to 350 members covering 44 towns along the river. I loved this work. I had gained a beginner's knowledge of ecology from my volunteer work back in Brick as the editor of the statewide Youth Environmental Society's newsletter and by being a Brick Township Environmental Commissioner, ending up on the Board of the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions. This was work I enjoyed doing with compassionate people, who also cared about their environment.

Our upstart Hackensack River Coalition attracted the attention of larger environmental groups, which had given up on our area because there was no local base to act as a spark. When statewide and nationwide environmental veterans learned about us, they helped arrange a meeting in New York City with Chris Daggett, then head of EPA Region 2.

Having been partly brought up by Cece, who believed in quality shopping, I had bought a navy blue and red plaid, flannel dress at Brooks Brothers but had already entered my No-Ironing-To-Save-the-World stage. It was my prettiest outfit so I took a bus to New York City where I met my new friends and Chris Daggett wearing my unironed dress and a backpack.

I spoke with passion at the conference table, as did others. That discussion led to the Meadowlands and river gaining additional federal protection -- at least for a while.

We had an annual HRC meeting in the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission's (HMDC's) auditorium with guest speaker Abbey Hoffman. He was phenomenal. Abbey asked our audience of about 70 why they had gotten involved. Long-time residents gave emotional flashbacks to their childhood outings along the river, like fishing with their fathers, but I (fortunately last) told them I used to live on a clean river where my sons could swim and fish and crab and sail without my worrying about them getting sick. I had started the Hackensack River Coalition because I was disgusted and revolted by its filthiness and the posted fish warnings.

Personal Pine Barrens Preservation Plan

After my move to North Jersey, my work in South Jersey traveled with me.

When I had been earning \$12,500 as a teacher, I started setting aside money for an idea which I hoped would catch on with hundreds or thousands of others. It didn't.

Lee Cohen wrote this summary (probably in the *Bergen Record*):

Susan Wynne Norris Hnatt doesn't live near the South Jersey Pinelands any more but she wants to ensure their preservation. Last Christmas she sent a \$1,000 check to Governor Thomas H. Kean made out to the New Jersey Green Acres Program, urging that the money be used to preserve the environmentally-sensitive area.

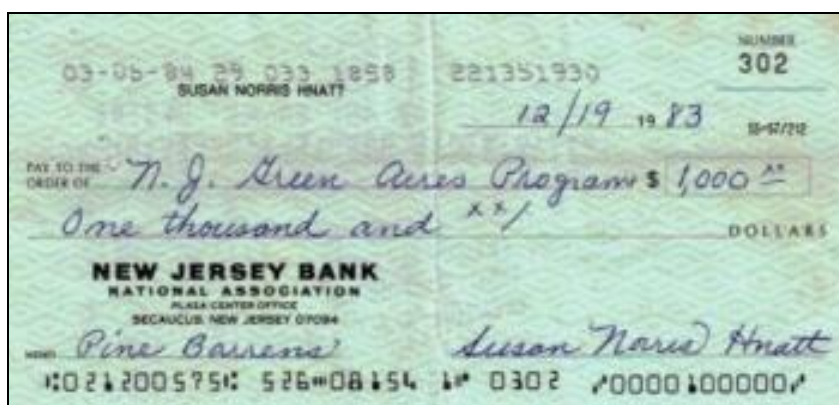
"I'm not a philanthropical person," says Susan Wynne Norris Hnatt, a former teacher at the Emma Havens Elementary School in Brick Township. "As I studied the Pine Barrens issue, the question seemed to me the big problem was that people in the area designated as the Pine Barrens were not being compensated justly for their land."

The Pinelands, a forest of scraggly conifers and soil mostly too sandy and acidic for farming, covers an estimated 1.1 million acres stretching through Monmouth, Ocean, Burlington and Atlantic counties. It's an area with no definitive boundaries but, through the years, development has encroached on its unique ecology, which covers one of the East coast's largest fresh water resources.

Today, the state-appointed Pinelands Commission oversees development of the area. Strict zoning regulations have been imposed to cut down on building but exceptions have been made.

"When I took a nine-day biking trip through the Pine Barrens, I saw bulldozing and development everywhere," says Ms. Hnatt, who lived in Brick Township until her divorce two years ago. "It seems the Pinelands Commission was giving waivers of the building moratorium left and right."

Her \$1,000 canceled check [dated 12/19/1983] sits conspicuously on a desk in her Secaucus condominium apartment, a reminder of her preservation crusade and the two years it took to save up the money.



[Footnote written April 29, 2015] My \$1,000 dwindles in scope and appears fruitless when, on March 19, 2015, I read this editorial in New Jersey's Asbury Park Press:

Keep Fighting the Pipeline

The back-channel, backroom political chicanery that has characterized efforts to run a natural gas pipeline through the Pinelands continued Monday with the Senate confirmation of Robert Barr, Governor Chris Christie's nominee to the Pinelands Commission.

Unless Barr has a heretofore unseen backbone and is able to stand up to the political pressure of Christie and Senate President Steve Sweeney, the pipeline could soon be built in a restricted area of one of the nation's most precious ecological treasures.

Barr is widely viewed by environmentalists as the potentially decisive vote should the pipeline, which last year was rejected by the commission, come up for another vote. That could happen if the state courts rule in favor of a lawsuit contesting the vote or if the commission/Christie/Sweeney can concoct another reason for a second commission vote now that the balance of power has shifted.

The commission opposed the pipeline despite unethical attempts by the Christie administration to push the project through and later to subvert the process by replacing qualified commission members who opposed the pipeline with those willing to do the administration's bidding. Hence, Barr's nomination.

The pipeline, to be built by South Jersey Gas Co., would run through the Pinelands Forest Area in violation of Pinelands regulations. The pipeline, which has been controversial from the start, poses unacceptable environmental, health and public safety risks. Critics of the pipeline – and of Barr's nomination – included a bipartisan group of four former governors: Brendan Byrne, Thomas Kean, Christine Whitman and James Florio.

If you care about the ecological health of the Pinelands and other environmentally sensitive areas of the state, as well as the importance of preserving the autonomy of independent commissions, you should be outraged by the bipartisan political machinations. And you should join the fight to defeat any subsequent attempts to get the pipeline blessed by the reconstituted Pinelands commission.

Why On Earth Did I Go to Wales?

I wanted to learn more about my radical, Quaker ancestor.

After my bike hike and the \$1,000 donation, Norm and I planned a vacation in Europe starting in Germany, after which I would carry on alone to explore my Norris/Wynne family heritage, trying to learn more about Dr. Thomas Wynne (my middle name and the historic former owner of a beautiful home, Wynnestay in Philadelphia, which I learned about through an old photo my grandmother, Elizabeth Pearce Norris, a descendant of Thomas Wynne had given me).



Grandma gave me a photo of Wynnestay with this note: "Wynnestay" at Wynnefield, Pa., home of Dr. Thomas Wynne, physician to Wm. Penn who brought him from Wales in 1682 on Penn's second voyage to America and gave him a large tract of land from the 'Penn Grant.' Built 1690."

A summary of Thomas Wynne's life was in a book I bought when I finally found him, *Caerwys: Official Guide to the Smallest Town in Great Britain*. Looking back at the paucity of information I had when I left the USA, I'm amazed that I succeeded at all.

Excerpts from Travelogue

Norm and I stayed with Joanie and Gerd and travelled to many beautiful and ancient places in Germany and Italy, including Dachau (not beautiful, horrifying), then we took off on our own toward Switzerland and France, where we parted. He went back to work and I carried on alone.

Here's an excerpt from my journal:

July 7, Wednesday: *Norm got off by 7:00 a.m. I'm having breakfast alone now (8:25) and miss him already. Now I'm really on my own.*

"Took off for shower & shampoo at other hotel -- bought shampoo (22F), tube for posters (16.50) and mailed them (8.50) plus postcards (17.50). Walked back to Notre Dame once more -- girls at breakfast from Michigan had told me about archeological crypt unearthed while digging out a parking lot. Roman ruin from 12th century. Also looked at gardens behind cathedral and stained glass once more -- glorious glass! Walked into central courtyard of Hotel Dieu -- really pretty but couldn't find building I was looking for. "Home" to pack. Left amidst turmoil from Indian family who had our first room -- overcharged on telephone bill -- 190F for two nights. Took subways to sewers. Was really interesting -- so huge! We were right down IN the sewer system. First a display of the history, then a film, then a tour to see the stages of filtering and washing (large ball, six-foot round, to purge system). Had trouble with French man wanting to hold hands. Took subway to Stalingraad early for bus to London. Bought bleu cheese, beer and one French pastry. Had trouble with two Algerians wanting to hug and kiss. Leave in a panic for the bus station (safety in a bus station?). Met a young woman from Iowa anxious to leave Paris -- she's been bothered by 15 fellows on way to station. Carol tells us we're in "red-light district" -- only time I've ever been actually afraid of traveling alone. We're both glad when bus pulls off and share an eagerness to reach England and speak our native tongue. We sit next to each other and share experiences -- at 21, she's already been to Europe twice.

July 8, Thursday 3:00 a.m.: *We're on the ferry now leaving France (no regrets from either of us). It's a perfect night -- calm and a full moon. Have my first cup of real English tea -- great stuff -- and chocolate chip mint ice cream. Slept another hour on bus. Arrived London 5:30 a.m. Carol and I had tea but tubes weren't working yet. Around 6:00 we rode to her hotel and waiter brought us coffee. Her hands were sore, my feet. Slept one hour on park bench in Kensington Garden. Walked back into town -- bought Wales books, found St. Peter's church and crypt and left backpack. Walked to pub and had Shepherd's Pie and stout. Kept walking past Westminster Abbey, House of Parliament, Downing Street, Horse Guards, Trafalgar Square, to Foyles Book Store. Shared an Italian ice, then parted. My feet are killing me -- blisters on pinky toes especially. Walked home through St. James Park barefoot for a way. Passed Buckingham Palace and wanted to soak feet in lake. Stopped to cross street and practically got killed by huge black taxi which jammed on brakes and slid sideways -- was about two feet from me. They drive on opposite sides and I hadn't looked. Wanted to cry -- was lost, scared by the close call, feet hurting every step. Stopped to ask tall, slim British gentleman directions and he escorted me 50 yards in right direction -- his wife's daughter lives in Toms River! Bought ticket to Swansea (6 pounds). Leaving 8:30 tomorrow a.m. Found park with watering sprinkler -- finally soaked my feet. Damned if two punk drunks (British guys, 22 years*

old) didn't start making passes. Carol and I had decided British guys were shy! Back to St. Peter's. My feet won't go another block. Three girls from Holland arrive and will bring back some orange juice tonight. Will spend tonight planning for Wales.

Lots of friendly people (mostly girls), many traveling alone -- from New Zealand, France, Germany, Hungary, Holland. Only foreigners are admitted.

July 9, Friday: Took the 8:30 bus to Swansea. Wales is gorgeous -- sheep on the hills, lush vegetation, rows of neat houses in the cities. The ride to Port Eynon was great -- local bus, back roads -- fabulous view of countryside, ocean, cliffs. Arrived after 4:00 -- Youth hostel full. Met Alan from Country who's walking 1,000 miles around coast (over a five-year period). We find Bed and Breakfast place -- pretty house (5 pounds). I must stick to hostels. Can't afford this but can't wait to have a good breakfast either! Had fresh, warm pasti for lunch in Swansea, speaking of food. Just hung around nursing my sore toes tonight. Tried to call Mom for her birthday -- no luck. Man seemed willing to try but woman got uptight. Would have to go into Swansea for overseas call.

July 10, Saturday: Went walking around Port Eynon -- up hill overlooking bay and cliffs. Gorgeous! Walked down to ocean (bay). Although rain was forecast, the sun shone brilliantly. Went to visit old church -- was ready for a wedding with white bows on each pew and flowers (sweet and delicate) all over. Broom and spoons hanging outside door. Went for a swim (chilly -- low, low, low tide) then came back to take pictures of wedding. Bridesmaid looked like she came from "Gone With the Wind." Bride walked down the street to the church! I walked down the street back to the beach. Alan treated me to a Cornish pasti for lunch -- good, warm, filling. Used to be made for farmers to take to fields. Saw a boat being launched by tractor! Lots of English vacationers here. Didn't realize we were surrounded by caravans (campers) and self-service (tents) until we reached the top of the hill. Hiked to top of cliff for dinner -- loaf of bread and butter, and orange juice. View was even more spectacular! Wildflowers growing in rocks; water everywhere; cliffs on either side. Ate on a precipice jutting out. Back to Bed and Breakfast place. The man brought tea and was talking about his son's friend, who was financial editor of The New York Times, and about his desires to vacation in British mountains. Speaks glowingly of Vermont but it's too far for him. I should get to Vermont!

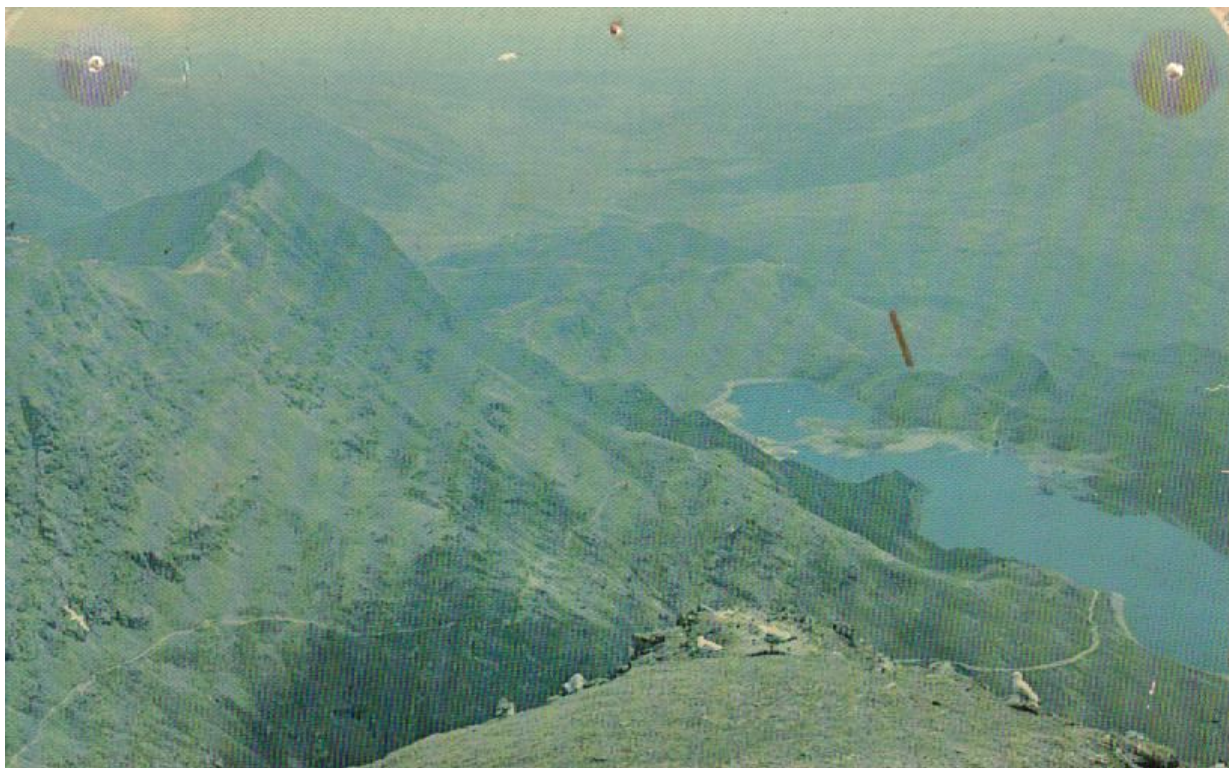
July 11, Sunday: One more delicious breakfast and we're off to Rhosilli Cliff -- climbing up and down rocky trails. Fabulous, fabulous views -- shores being gently washed by waves, rocky precipices rising above, green pastures on the tops and sheep! Pulled lamb's wool out of gorse bushes to wrap around my toe. We walk right through the flocks but they run. My feet are almost back to normal. Glad Alan knows his way -- five miles of cliffs without landmarks would have been impossible for me alone. It was tough climbing for me but each peak (really plateau) had a wonderful new surprise for me -- looking down, around and up. Totally alone -- such peacefulness. My favorite site was a fairly large growth of daisies projecting from the center of two rock formations with a gully very far below. Some climbs really took all my breath → frequent stops to catch my air and a gulp of water. Reached Rhosilli about three hours later. Very tiny town. Had apple cider and mince pie atop a cliff overlooking the beach -- very wide beach with lots of people. Very small town but popular with tourists (unfortunately, but who am I to speak?). Saw old church -- foundation from sixth century. Came upon National Conservancy -- environmental organization which has purchased 400 miles of coast for public use and maintains footpaths. Trying to buy another 100 miles. Bought three little recipe books to help the cause. Walked down to beach before catching bus back. Went into cave where an intriguing, inviting pool had formed along edge of cliff. Had to rush back for bus -- HOORAY! My first ride in a double-decker! What a great way to see countryside -- could see over hedges and fences and stone walls (lots of stone walls here -- no mortar -- 30 feet takes two men all day). Back to Youth Hostel -- 1 1/2 miles from bus stop. Great place -- old boathouse on beach. Gruff old Welsh warden -- our job = wash kitchen windows -- first time this year. Naturally, rain followed. Bought a can of soup and

tea bag for dinner. 39 p. Young people here from Germany (group), Switzerland (two 24-year-old girls headed for Scotland) and America (Suzy from Texas). Warden lit fireplace -- an unexpected treat. Will miss another unexpected treat -- being woken up at 7:30 by the warden playing bagpipes!

I'm setting my alarm for 6:15 to leave at 7:00 for a 7:25 bus to Swansea.

July 12, Monday: Bus back to Swansea. Bought Wild Wales and Love Spoons plus some food. Caught bus to St. David's. Discovered hostel was two miles away. It was drizzling and feet aren't up to this so, after seeing three girls hitching, I tried. About the 10th car stopped -- couple from Birmingham, England (19 years old) gave me a lift to Fishguard. Will save me about an hour travel time in morning plus fare. Went straight to travel assistance and booked B&B for six pounds -- way over budget today. My lack of planning is hurting purse. I keep ending up paying more than I want because hostels aren't always so easily available. Was walking around on foot path, studying stone monuments and reading intro. to W.W. -- discovered ELLIS WYNNE mentioned! Percy the Painter came up and started a conversation about stones (from Estafeds). Walked to store with him, then saw pretty Welsh house he was painting. Asked if I might see house -- what a warm welcome -- ended up staying for tea, dinner (port, gravy, potatoes, peas, carrots, cabbage, wine, coffee and fresh strawberries with ice cream and whipped cream), followed by a tour of the natural wonders of Wales within a 10-mile radius. (Garnfaur, Pwllderi*, hostel -- so very remote on cliff, Dinas, Llanychaer and two pubs -- Bridgend and Royal Oak -- to see table where peace treaty was signed after French were defeated (thanks to Welsh women). Also saw monument alongside church for women. Back to B&B. Tried to call boys -- no luck. Wrote post cards. Mrs. Phillips home and offered me tea and homemade biscuit with her Welsh man friend who's a train engineer on strike, afraid entire rail service could fold. Nice people, helping map out next couple days traveling. Bed 12:30 -- didn't sleep well last night as storm hit Port Eynon.

*climbed into prehistoric cave dwelling hidden in ground.



Post card sent to Michael and Mitchell. LlynLlydaw from Snowdon Summit (3,560 ft.)

July 13, Tuesday: Gloomy, drizzly day -- dedicated to traveling. Was ready for 8:05 bus 20 minutes early but it never showed. Two men I'd met last night with the Johnses offered to drive me half way to Cardigan. I accepted, got out and tried hitch hiking when I realized next bus wasn't for over an hour. Got short ride, got out and start hitching rest of the way. Then I heard the thunder. A slow rain turned into a downpour. I spent an hour in a phone booth with my large backpack waiting for the next bus, very glad there was a phone booth in so remote an area. Decided then and there hitch-hiking leads to depending on others and I refuse to do that anymore. I'll take buses. Got on the bus around 10:30, paid 2.97 pounds and was able to ride all day! Made many changes, saw many towns and rode through glorious Snowdonia National Park. Got all the way to Llanberis and youth hostel was full. Decided not to use them anymore if I can help it -- steep climb uphill about half mile. Back to town for B&B with Mrs. Evans. Five pounds. Tried phoning kids -- crazy machine kept beeping. Will try another time. Took a walk -- saw waterfall and path to climb Mt. Snowdon tomorrow. Nice bath, nice bed -- so welcome after 11 1/2 hours of traveling!

July 14, Wednesday: I finally climbed a mountain today! Mt. Snowdon 3,560 feet. Two-and-a-half hours, five-mile path. No one around for first hour -- just a few sheep. or Abigale! Feels like I'm getting close. Called D & C but couldn't reach Norm.

July 15, Thursday (the rest of this journal is written in red): A red-letter day! One week before my flight home and I've located Thomas Wynne. After traveling six hours, I told the bus driver I wanted to find a farm B&B just before Ruthin -- tired of towns. He asked woman passenger getting on who mentioned the Francis Farm. Walked one mile down a dirt road and came to an ELEGANT farmhouse -- 200-acre farm -- seven pounds for the night. Couldn't turn away -- couldn't face another mile uphill with pack or another bus ride. Showed me grand room -- gorgeous antiques. I figured if I'm not doing the Welsh Manor at \$40, this would be a marvelous substitute. She mentioned walking into town through three fields along river and a craft center where her two men visitors were taking courses. Traipsed through wet fields (poured all morning), climbed over barbed wire and found craft center. Bookbinder attracted me after Metamorphosis, went to Calligraphy shop and introduced myself to Graham (farm guest), told him of my quest and his teacher listened as I described my misspelled, "Coewys, Flintshire." He then directed me back to bookbinder who lives in Caerwys, who tracked down small historical pamphlet on that town. Loaned it to me overnight and I left. Couldn't resist glancing through it and there he was -- THOMAS WYNNE -- with his history covering 1/3 of the page!!! Now I know I must go to Caerwys. After months of planning a trip, having no idea of quite where I was headed, I feel as though my prayers were answered when I least expected. Got a chance to walk around Ruthin and walked right into WYNNSTAY HOTEL! Will go to archives tomorrow, buy film and Chester-Manchester ticket, then shop for presents before I head for the smallest town in Great Britain -- Caerwys. Back to farm -- got ride with Graham and Nicolas just as cows were ready for milking. Asked to watch -- fascinating. Modern machinery one year old. Messy -- got splattered with piss and shit -- but also got to put suction cups on two cows (first one popped off when next-door cow took a leak and scared me -- second one went fine but she knew I was a stranger). "Live and Learn." Back in farmhouse, Thelma made me dinner -- I joined them in the kitchen. We spent all evening chatting. I asked 1,000 questions about farms. Neighbor came to drop off her 16-year-old daughter and told how they created a two-mile farm trail for earning extra money. Twin 13-year-old sons love farming. Hugh got this farm from his father when he retired. Thelma showed me some family/farm pictures and gave me two. Hugh came in around midnight after working on trailer for sheep.

I'm sleeping like a queen tonight -- silky, pink, ruffley sheets; elegant old farm furniture. My dream came true today. Wish Norm was here to share all this. Called him this morning at least. Would love to bring the kids here. Maybe someday!

[Notes on the Francis Farm, Plas-y-Ward, Rhewl]

400 sheep

340 lambs

4 sheep dogs

58 cows

4 bulls

30 calves

1 sow

9 piglets

1 pony

1 rabbit

12 cats

Caerwys

July 16, Friday: *Thelma drove me to Ruthin and I did some souvenir shopping after cashing travelers' checks in bank with beams in ceiling and offices in loft. Caught bus to Denbigh -- had tea and did wash. Caught bus to Caerwys. Met Audrey McLaughlin, who knew Ann Rogers and pointed out her house. Called kids -- reached Mitch this time. Ms. Rogers not home -- walking past school, saw children outside and started conversation with Alma Evans, who invited me in for lunch, coffee and cake and then brought me over to the Headmaster to watch their last half hour of the year. 78 children -- three teachers (including him). 150-year-old building. Met 4-6 year olds. Missed teaching then.*

Ms. Roberts busy -- couldn't find B&B. Alma makes me welcome. Across street to Mr. Roberts antique book store. He's a historian and starts looking up Wynnes. Busy today -- will go back tomorrow. But he did tell me how to get to Maes-y-Coed, where Wynnes lived. Beautiful large old farm -- knocked on door (young woman offered me ride down the hill). Mr. and Mrs. Matthews welcomed me in and offered me tea and cookies. Stayed about half hour as he found old newspaper clippings. They've been there 32 years, family there 101 years. Will record tape of Wynne lectures for me. Back to Alma and George's for dinner. Mr. Matthews has called inviting me to "tea" (dinner?) tomorrow! Walked around church. Had glass of sherry with Mrs. McLaughlin and her mother across street. Met Mrs. Mogan and a woman named Pauline. Noticed sign for Scout buffet and dance with music. Went just to peek. Pauline says I can sleep there if I'm stuck! Wanted to make roast lamb for Alma's family tomorrow but we all have a busy day. She to her Mom's with the girls (Rachel and Claire) and me off to see Ms. Rogers, Mr. Roberts, Mr. and Mrs. Matthews, and going to local pub with Alma and George in the evening to hear Welsh music. Stayed up till 11:45 talking with Alma and George comparing ways of life here and there. Nice, nice family.

Read "Hansel and Gretel" to Rachel and Claire.

[Notes: surnames begin 16th century with John Wynn. The History of the Primes, The Lords Marcher and the Ancient Nobility of Powys Fadog and the Ancient Lords of Arwystli, Cecewen, and Merionydd and many of the Descendants of the 15 Noble Tribes of Gynedd. 1887. Subtracting dates: 1986-720=1260]

Sketches of two shields: Wynn of Copa'r Goleuni in Tegeingl

Susannah Maria Welchman Wynne, daughter of Thomas Welchman Wynne, Esq. "grandson of the above-named John Wynn, died 28, 1764.

July 17, Saturday: *Went to see Miss Rogers at 10:00 but she wasn't home so went to Mr. Roberts. Wonderful, warm, ancient house. Mrs. Roberts (his mother) and I chatted as he showered and dressed.*

Spent five hours poring over genealogy books and he copied the Wynne lineage for me. Broke for an hour for lunch, then went to visit Trelawynd Church and graveyard. Found two John Wynne graves covered with overgrowth. Went to their ancestral home, from 1400s -- Cop-r-laini now known as "The Gop." He drove me to the spot where Thomas Wynne was born -- Bronfadog -- but I was rushing to be at Maes-y-Coed for dinner with the Matthews. Sweet people and wonderful lamb dinner. I asked if Mr. Matthews held a position in town because of his interest in Monday's civic meeting. He's a councilman, county representative and former mayor. Mrs. Matthews said she felt as though she's known me a long time. Alma and George picked me up about 7:30 and we went to Royal Oak pub to hear Welsh music -- one woman playing piano and half the crowd singing and harmonizing, filling the pub with song. Wished I'd known the words to sing along. [1/18/15: I loved how the children were there, too. Wholesome, family night. Nobody rowdy or drunk. All just having fun and singing favorite songs together.]

July 18, Sunday: Cooked leg of lamb for dinner. Picked fresh beets from George's garden! Made beet greens, too. Baked potato, fresh carrots and "cauli," mint sauce, gravy and cheesecake for dessert. Walked up TV-pole mountain -- great view. Could see coast of Dee Estuary, met girls and Alma in park. Back home for lamb sandwiches then off to Trout Farm. Stopped at a Mrs. Wynne's on way home. She welcomed us all in and told of other Americans who were descendants of Thomas Wynne. Girls gave her a birthday kiss (tomorrow). She's invited me for tea Tuesday. Warmth exudes from her. Read "Jack and the Beanstalk" to girls, then Alma and I chatted all evening till George got home from work. Perfect weather all day!

July 19, Monday: Made burnt pancakes for breakfast. George and girls took me to Afonwen Wool Mill -- sheep on hill, beautiful store, saw wool being woven on noisy old machines. George used to work there. Would have loved to go Christmas shopping here. Picked up few little gifts. Girls surprised me with slate carvings. Off to farm -- saw barns, puppies, farmer drove us up to field where cows grazed. Back in farmhouse talking about renting pasture land, variety of grazing grasses, etc. Children playing with baby rabbits. What a wonderful way to raise children -- baby dogs, baby rabbits and a baby brother.

Back for midday dinner. Fresh salmon steaks, potatoes pulled straight from garden, etc.

3:00 -- off to see Mr. Lloyd-Roberts and Hazel for more information.

6:00 -- Girls from whole town doing Morris dancing. 25 out of 40 were there. Hilda (the leader) made special trip home to get shakers. SO impressive! Little legs all in unison, seems to come naturally after 12 months of work. Small-town spirit exemplified. Mothers helping with music, juice and raising cash. Great way for young girls to keep fit and have nice legs -- twice a week. Alma will do "Slimming with Sponsors."

8:00 -- Civic group meeting. Not enough people for quorum. (about 12 out of 25). Small-town spirit exemplified. I shared my inner laughter at Brick Town small-town spirit exemplified in Environmental Commission (four members out of seven). They asked me environmental questions -- I dissented with one who accepts nuclear power and an arms build-up. Then they wanted to know about my ancestral search -- told them my real delight in their town comes from the people living there NOW! Alma and George, Mr. Lloyd-Roberts, Mr. and Mrs. Matthews. Back to Alma's for an evening chat. Busy day tomorrow.

July 20, Tuesday: Bountiful breakfast -- scrambled eggs, sausage, bacon, black pudding, bread, toast. Off to Welsh craft store with whole family. Then to Afonwen Mills for sweater. Evanses bought me Welsh doll, bookmark and hat. To Matthews' to pick up tape -- really clear this time. Then Mr. Matthews drove me to Brunfadog where Mrs. Hughs was mowing lawn. Invited me in for tea and offered me lunch. Picked potatoes and chose two for souvenirs. Nice long walk "home." Quick walk to telephone center where Alma works to meet guys there, Pauline's at 2:00 for coffee, Mrs. Wynne's at 3:00 for tea, little sandwiches and homemade cakes. She reminds me of Grandma -- 81 yesterday, sparkly eyes, warm and

sweet. Made chocolate chip cookies with the girls, then off to meet the Darlings. Their daughter lives in Manchester so I have a place to sleep tomorrow night!

Town Council meeting at 8:00. Gentlemen in ties and jackets. Mayor enters wearing huge medallion on huge chain. Chairman gave me new booklet on local government and, with an elaborate introduction and a great deal of ceremony, introduced me formally to mayor and council. Manners reign. Small matters handled courteously and efficiently -- crossing guard for new school, litter cans, dropping town from bus route, motorcycle accident at bad intersection. All but Mayor smoked. All in all quite impressive, especially for "the smallest town in Great Britain." Woman was previous mayor -- first in town's history. Back "home" to read girls "Cinderella." Alma says the Darlings' daughter is coming out tomorrow and will drive me to her home in Manchester! Chatting with Alma till George gets home. Mr. Matthews drops off photocopies, says Archangel is watching over me.

Amen!

July 21, Wednesday: Since I don't have to do busses all day, I've got a gift of an extra day. No plans. Took my book, Alma packed me a lunch (she's SO GREAT!) and I was off for a walk. Couldn't find first footpath, so took another. Read a couple chapters Wild Wales under a dense pine forest and a couple chapters on a stone wall and a couple chapters in a grassy field with cows grazing at the other end. Fell asleep in field for about half an hour as sun shone. Glorious! Getting cloudy later so went "home." Last packing. Gave Alma a few of my things. Wonderful dinner -- pasties, fresh beets, potatoes and turnips from George's garden.

Off to the Darlings at 6:30. George drove me. Chatted with their friends for about an hour and they drove me to Darling's daughter just outside Manchester. Lots of friends were there having drinks. After lots of discussion about Chinese orders, we switched to fish and chips for my sake. Really crispy and delicious -- went with Frank to the place "Chow's Fish and Chips" (Oriental!) to watch the process. Got mine wrapped traditionally in newspaper.

Rolled out sleeping bag in dining room on pillows. They fold up and get covered with zippered cover. Up at 6:00. Frank drove me to airport after we all had a cup of coffee.

Heading home anxiously.

[Notes at end include, "Thomas Wynne wrote a book on Quakerism." Also places I went and names and addresses of my new Welsh friends. List of 24 photos I took and a few pronunciation guides for speaking/reading Welsh, which I didn't do.]

Part 3: Deepening Environmentalism

Heart leads, I follow.

Why On Earth Did I Go Back to School?

I wanted to learn more about the environment so I could switch careers and know what I was talking about. I was enjoying my volunteer, environmental work more than either nursing or teaching so, when I read about a Summer course at Rutgers, I applied and was accepted.

I was getting so heady in my knowledge about environmental matters from reading books like *Hazardous Waste in America, The Politics of Cancer, New Jersey Environment and Cancer*, etc., that I figured it was time for me to start teaching others. I lined up speaking dates using my nursing background to impress people with the problems of poisonous chemicals and my teaching background to put together intelligible talks.

I remember giving a talk for a professional woman's organization wearing a beautiful, red blouse Cece had given me -- unironed. I stood there talking about the evils of coal, oil and nuclear energy. One way we could all minimize our impacts was to stop ironing. I was serious but, in retrospect, I must have looked comical in my wrinkly outfit.

I created my first business, Avatar Environomics -- I was going to become a Household Environmental Consultant and go to people's homes charging \$25 an hour to analyze the contents of their drawers, closets, rooms, etc. and show them alternative products and choices. I asked a friend to let me practice in her home. We laughed so hard at all the items I would have tossed on the floor screaming, "OUT!" that we never did finish. Even though I posted flyers, I had no customers.

Leo Carney, the environmental reporter for *The New York Times*, included me in a much longer piece on October 2, 1983.

...Household Consultant Susan Norris Hnatt of Secaucus, an environmental activist of long standing, probably is the first person in New Jersey to claim the title of "Environmental Household Consultant."

For a fee, Miss Hnatt, a nurse, writer and former schoolteacher, will rummage through a homeowner's garbage, garage and cabinets and formulate a plan for saving "hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars a year," she says, through recycling, energy conservation and health tips.

In an interview last week, Miss Hnatt said:

"I'll be frank with the people by looking in closets and cabinets to point out useless, wasteful or even dangerous products and making the people realize what they've chosen as average consumers entrenched in today's advertising campaigns. They've lost the ability to discern good, necessary items from harmful, frivolous ones."

* * *

I was still working hard on the Hackensack River Coalition and was on the front page of the *dispatch* (sic) on March 6, 1985. The headline for Tom DiPiazza's article was "She Wants People to Enjoy the River." The caption to my photo amidst reeds was, "Susan Hnatt walks along the Hackensack River yesterday."

Susan Hnatt lives near the Hackensack River on a street named for a water bird. The egret, which has been scarce in the meadowlands marshes, is being lured back to the Hackensack River.

Hnatt, who lives in Secaucus, is trying to do the same thing with people.

"It's really a beautiful river," Hnatt said. "And every bit of it is precious."

Hnatt is the founder of the Hackensack River Coalition, a group which in part is dedicated to increasing the recreational use of the Hackensack River. Hers is one of two groups formed recently with that intent. It is also a goal that the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission (HMDC) backs with its master plan and its Environmental Center.

But the HMDC has not been able to bring people to the riverfront. In nearly 12 years, no construction has taken place on the spots along the river zoned for waterfront recreation, a zone which allows only marinas and other related uses.

No marinas have been built on the river, according to the HMDC staff, because the boating season here is short, access to other waterways is limited and bridges limit the size of boats that can use the river. As a result, the commission already has held a hearing on a proposal to include hotels and other commercial uses when built with a marina.

Tomorrow morning, a hearing is scheduled in the commission's Lyndhurst headquarters on a proposal by Hess Oil Co. to change the zoning of property it owns on the river.

Hnatt, 39, said she knows decisions by the HMDC on these two issues will go a long way toward shaping the future of the riverfront. "It's unfortunate that we've only gathered speed at this point," she said.

Hnatt said she opposes bringing hotels to the waterfront or allowing Hess to build an office tower here. She said the HMDC should wait until market conditions change and a marina without a hotel becomes profitable to build.

"The hotel construction would change the sense of the river," she said. "Now there are still lots of reeds and you get a sense of the ecological system. You're not going to have that with a parking lot."

[Note 1/18/15: Once again, I showed up for a hearing with a few others defending the watershed. I wore a white, short-sleeve, belted cotton dress with small, dark blue flowers I'd discovered for \$1 at a used clothing sale. Although I remember my dress, I don't remember HMDC's decision.]

But things were not all roses. On December 7, 1984 I heard a Jewish rabbi on the radio say, "Happiness is not having what you want but wanting what you have" and I wrote this note to myself: "After frustrating HRC meeting -- should be satisfied with four good people -- forget increasing membership for now, forget new projects, forget public hearings, forget legislative updates, forget 'programs,' forget people who 'forget.'"

A few days after that, I received a check for an article I had written called "Apathy and Ignorance" during a discouraging period with this note to me: "Don't give up! Remember Rachel Carson." Messages like that help rejuvenate me to carry on my life's work, even if I'm not sure what it is at any particular moment and am not feeling successful.

What On Earth Was Going on With My Sons' Lives?

Once again, I'm relying on journal notes from 1984.

"After six straight days of (sailboat) racing, Mitch went home with a young girl (Amy) who had won the Mid-Atlantics in order to crew for her in the Bay and Jersey River races for four days. They won!

This is why I don't see too much of my boys over the Summer. Last Summer Mitch brought a friend to the Poconos for a week's vacation with me and Norm and his kids. On the way home Mitch asked me if we had to spend another vacation all together. I said No. We spent a week together at Easter instead.

My feelings are that these relations shouldn't be forced on the kids. My boys have already adjusted to my leaving, Nola's moving in and her two children. I've caused my boys enough grief without expecting them to form relationships with Norm's kids at an unnatural pace. They like each other but I feel that it's only fair to my kids to devote my time to them -- there is so little time.

Our lives are like a three-ring circus these days. It's fine if our four kids are together two or three times a year but I'm not forcing something that just isn't there. I'm learning that I can't make people do what I want them to do just because I think they should do it. If they want to do it, great, but it's not fair for me to push people when they don't want to be pushed.

Speaking of pushing, I can't push Norm into marriage. How I've tried! It's still frustrating to me to feel so betrayed. My thinking (on moving up here nearly two years ago) was that we'd be planning and talking about marriage. WRONG! Norm won't mention it. I've told him how I feel -- how it lessens my idealistic relationship with him. There's a hurt and a perplexity that will probably never disappear. I can't understand why, if he loves me as he says he does -- "forever and ever" -- why isn't he anxious to marry me?

Wedding and Work

After three years together, I finally reached the limit of my patience and, one day in the car, I turned to Norm and asked, "Do you have any idea how frustrating it is to wait three years for you to ask me to marry you?"

That was the proposal. He accepted. We chose the HMDC Environmental Center's gazebo over the wetlands as our "church." We had a beautiful marriage on June 1, 1985 with all four children, all six parents, both sisters and several friends.

Here is an excerpt from my notes:

Our wedding was wonderful beyond words. Just when I stopped writing because I simply could not concentrate, Gwen [my English friend] showed up. She's a joy. Now there was someone to talk with and wait with. We put a kettle of tea on and chatted until Norm and his kids arrived. Then Norm's parents came.

Before too long, Joanie, Mom and Uncle John showed up -- much earlier than we expected! They were loaded with presents. Mike and Mitch were next. Then, as I was about to make a last-minute tuck in my wedding dress, Dad and Cece got here after travelling since 3 a.m.

What excitement! We opened the presents and then dashed out the door -- Gwen, Helen, Barbara, Greg and I rode over to the environmental center with the food in Gwen's Jeep. She kept us laughing all

the way imagining how she'd have good conversations for a month telling her friends about driving the bride to the wedding, past the dumps in a Jeep.

We had 47 people with us as we said our vows. It was really fun to have so many loved ones around.

We are married. We are one together forever and ever. Finally.

Since Norm's company is having a convention in Hawai'i in the Fall, we'll have a honeymoon there. Since I couldn't stand the thought of coming back to Harmon Cove after such a glorious celebration and, since Norm's "ex" had insisted that we keep the kids overnight even though we purposely picked a "kid-free" weekend for the wedding, we had Helen and Irv sleep over so that we could go to Spring Lake for one night. I wasn't about to let a little thing like that stop me from enjoying our first night as man and wife.

We had a room in an old house right on the ocean. Around 4 a.m. I was wide awake, enjoying the sound of the surf. I wanted to tip-toe across the street and sit alone on the beach since Norm was peacefully snoring. That didn't seem Kosher for a wedding night so I finally woke him up around 5:00 and we walked up and down the boardwalk until the sun rose over the ocean. "Here Comes the Sun" is my spiritual clue that everything is going to be all right. I love this man so much, that I know in my heart, it will.

Hawai'i was gorgeous! I never suspected that, decades later, one of the places we visited would become the world's primary location for measuring and documenting the rise of carbon dioxide -- Mauna Loa!

A Student Again

Next Summer school started. I carpoled with people from North Jersey and loved being back in a college environment. Most students were young adults, many of them with jobs which paid their way and gave them allotted time to study.

Our curriculum was packed with rotating lecturers on fascinating subjects like air pollution, water pollution, incineration, and hazardous waste but also topics like pests, refrigeration, and communicable diseases.

We were in school all day, every day for most of the Summer. We learned about landfills, toxic chemicals, lead, asbestos, septic systems, water treatment plants, cockroaches and other things pertaining to public health. I was horrified at the assignment of essentially memorizing the Center for Communicable Diseases book. Why cram facts into our brains when they were so readily accessible?

O.K., O.K. I'll make a gigantic chart with headings such as: Name, Identification, Infectious Agents, Occurrence, Reservoir, Mode of Transmission, Incubation Period, Period of Communicability, Susceptibility and Resistance, Methods of Control.

Looking back 30 years, I realize it was that chart which started a lifelong friendship with a brilliant and sweet Korean man who was in my class, Dr. Pyong Roh, a veterinarian and college professor. He saw me studying my chart during our breaks and said he would tell his students about me. This Summer (2014) Pyong arranged for me to travel to Korea as a foreign correspondent to cover an event his International Nature Loving Association was hosting in Daegu, his hometown. But let's return to school. I'll discuss that Korean adventure toward the end of my story.

I loved the stimulation of learning so many new things. Pyong and I were two of the oldest students -- both in our 40s -- yet we aced the final exam, which, after all this excitement and hard work, earned us Sanitarian licenses.

A Sanitarian license? What's the use of THAT?

My internship in a rural New Jersey health department checking restaurants and septic systems wasn't what I was expecting. When I considered "public health," I considered widespread toxic chemical contamination, not food poisoning. Granted, food poisoning is serious -- I've had it twice and thought I was going to die, but it was the more insidious, long-term and invisible threats to public health that I had hoped to stop.

What a let-down. I finally told my supervisor, "I don't want to do this; I want to be inspecting factories."

He listened and helped me get placed in an old industrial city -- Paterson. I hadn't really understood the implications of my Sanitarian license but it gave me Police Power!

A Novice with Police Power

My friend Lydia (from Rutgers) ended up in Paterson, too. She was Russian and passionate about worker safety and OSHA regulations and I was passionate about the environment. We were two white, middle-aged women in an ethnically-diverse city -- with Police Power. Our boss was the academic type who preferred staying in our basement office to giving us field experience so we trained ourselves on the streets and came back to him for advice when we needed it.

The two most shocking inspections I did were of a blue-dye factory and a post-fire inspection at a plant where both automobile paint and nail polish were made; however, my most meaningful inspection was after a fire in a deli.

On my first day, a City policeman gave me a tour of the industrial section; he thought I should see the blue liquid being discharged to the ground next to the Passaic River. After he dropped me off back at the health department, I returned on my own.

Since I hadn't yet learned the enforcement codes, I walked in with my badge, asked for the manager and told him flat out, "You can't do that."

The reason this single inspection was etched into my memory is that the grass outside the factory was blue, the tree was blue (and dead) and, inside, the workers were bluish and the whole interior had a blue hue. Neither my previous suburban housewife existence nor the Summer's classroom lessons had prepared me for such a scene. The company rerouted the pipe discharging the contaminated water but I have no idea what they did to improve the rest of the place.

Another morning we got called out to inspect the damage after a nighttime fire in the auto-paint/nail polish plant. It was a ghastly mess and reeked of poisonous chemicals. Again, the location was along the banks of the Passaic River so we KNEW the firemen's hoses had washed toxic chemicals into the ground water and river -- not to mention the fire having created exposures to the firemen plus those of any other life or the neighbors, even to me, as I had no respirator then.

That was the day I promised never to wear nail polish again. If its manufacture caused such horror, I could live without it. And these days nail polish has become a national obsession with nail salons everywhere and women flaunting polished, decorated nails in a most unnatural way. Strange -- they're just nails!

Here's an email petition I received May 15, 2015:

Walk into any nail salon and the pungent, eye-watering smell will hit you immediately.

As customers, you and I can quickly escape the choking fumes as soon as the nail polish dries. But nail salon workers — predominantly immigrant women, many of whom are unaware of their right to basic workplace safety — are forced to constantly inhale noxious vapors during their 10- and 12-hour work days.

There's one easy step we can all take to help these workers, who have been exploited and ignored for far too long. Tell the EPA to regulate toxic chemicals used in salon treatments.

I also did noise inspections and helped others test for lead and asbestos. When things were slow, I was loaned to the men upstairs to help with heat complaints. Oh my -- talk about being unprepared for factories, I was equally unprepared to walk into roach-infested, freezing slums where a heat/rent feud was being waged. I can still picture snowflakes coming down one chimney as a mother and child shivered inside.

I took more than one slum lord to court (remember, my badge gifted me with Police Power -- but not common sense). I wore a rose-colored Winter jacket, was 5' 8" with white skin and fair hair walking the streets of Paterson. When I wrote up one violation, I had no idea that that slum lord was a very huge, very dark policeman. And he chose not to show up for the hearing so they put out a warrant. I was too naïve to be scared but nothing came of it, except justice when he finally did go before a judge and was ordered to fix his house.

And now for the last inspection that made an indelible mark on my memory -- the post-fire deli one. Lydia and I were asked to oversee two insurance adjusters as they calculated the damage shelf by shelf and can by can. We were bored watching them so we volunteered to help. I'm not sure that was the *modus operandi* but we were high-energy women who didn't like to waste time so we worked with them for a few hours and they treated us to lunch.

As we were waiting for our meal, one of the men looked directly at me and asked, "What is your dream?"

DAMN -- I was in my 40s and nobody had ever asked me that! I had no idea how to answer. I ignored my food and sat quietly trying to figure it out.

What *is* my dream?

After a long time, when their plates were nearly empty, I had it. "I want to help people stop hurting each other."

Moving Again

Norm's job changed and we were able to escape the congested, metropolitan North Jersey area. We found a beautiful, split-level home in East Brunswick with a luxurious back yard surrounded by huge trees and flower beds.

I got a job as an air-pollution inspector with the Middlesex County Health Department and my life changed dramatically. I was in an office where everyone cared about the environment -- especially my boss, who was a tiger about enforcing the law. He taught us the codes so we could write up every single violation we found once we entered a facility. I was fit-tested for a respirator by standing in an enclosed booth with a mask on while the operator pumped in some harmless, smelly substance. She adjusted my respirator until I could smell nothing.

I asked myself, "What have I gotten into this time?"



Gloria, a petite and wiry woman with exuberant dark curls, trained me. As we entered our first factory together, she carried her clipboard and did not smile. She meant business. She had an engineer's awareness of what to look for and a policewoman's knowledge of which laws were being broken. I, a wide-eyed novice who smiled readily, served as her foil.

Gloria and I returned to our cramped office and she showed me how to fill out the Notices of Violation, which would be submitted to the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and force the company to amend their ways "or else" ... fines or court.

We could only enter a factory if we received a complaint from neighbors as we were a public health agency. Our tools were primitive by today's standards -- an anemometer in the office to show wind direction, little county cars with radios, and our noses. We provided 24-hour coverage, rotated shifts and were required to be on the scene within half an hour.

The protocol was to arrive at the complainant's home, compare odors with them (in New Jersey the law essentially stated that you could stink up your own property but nobody else's), then drive a 360° circle around the suspected source, check the wind direction and, if it was blowing over the resident's home, we could enter and inspect. We not only looked for the cause of foul emissions but unfulfilled requirements of other permits.

I was horrified at the things I saw. Again, no suburban housewife duties had prepared me for the assault on my nostrils and eyeballs from the toxic chemicals, Dark-Ages scenes and ghastly worker exposures found inside the worst of these plants -- and it was often the worst ones which drew us inside.

I inspected chemical plants, a leather-tanning and dyeing facility with colorful hides hanging all over (think: car and airplane seat covers), steel mills spreading red dust on their neighbors, oil refineries, a tape-manufacturing factory, electroplating plants, an automobile factory, dye houses, boilers and many others.

In 11 months, I wrote 90 violations before realizing that a job with more preventative possibilities might be preferable as, in these situations, the damage had already occurred: the people had been poisoned (it's important to remember that with carcinogens the only safe limit is zero), the air and water had been contaminated and the workers had been at risk. It was especially shocking to see so many people (usually men) with such awful jobs making ordinary household products for us without adequate protection.

During one of my forays coming back from an inspection, my county car broke down on Route 287. As I sat at the edge of a stream of fast-moving traffic waiting for help, my gut told me that I was living at the wrong time. I wanted a life without TV and without cars. The Amish have such a life. Mine is only minus TV -- a very extraordinary way to live. When we are watching TV, we are not really living. We sit around watching people pretend to be someone they are not.

I had a few minutes to sit and think about all the air pollution these cars were creating as they whizzed past me. I had already been to "Smoke School" where we learned how to gauge the degree of opacity from various plumes of smoke emitted by a contraption on the lawn at Rutgers, so my eyes were trained to evaluate smoke stacks and nearly every single factory, business, store or home has a chimney of some sort to allow the by-products of burning fossil-fuels to escape.

As I sat on Route 287 awaiting rescue I had another revelation. If one combines all the vertical stacks in the world AND all the horizontal ones on these hundreds of cars and trucks passing me, it is clear that we are COOKING THE EARTH!

That was in 1988, long before Global Warming became a common phrase.

Two episodes have a humorous twist. One dark night during the Christmas holiday, I was on call. We received a complaint from a woman who said the odor was so horrid that they had evacuated their children to a house farther away. I sped to the scene, matched the odor I smelled with the one she smelled, did my 360, checked the wind direction and prepared to enter the facility -- only to learn that it was shut down for the holiday.

Curious.

I called the hotline from an all-night diner and reported that the residents had evacuated. Little did I know that, by using the word "evacuated," the whole state's emergency response community would be activated. Thankfully, when the first man arrived and I described the puzzling situation, he was able to call off the others.

Further investigation revealed that one of the pipes with nasty effluent had ruptured -- ergo, the stench.

The second episode involved a simpler, day-time inspection of a small company with black smoke pouring into the atmosphere. It had a boiler problem, which was quickly fixed.

The next day, flowers arrived at our office for me with a note containing a pun about "boiling." My boss thought I should refuse them but, since I seldom got flowers, I kept them.

Why On Earth Did I Decide to Start an Eco-Commune?

It was such a thrill to be working with others who cared about Earth and my friendship with three other air-pollution inspectors felt so good that I started wondering what it might be like if we all lived near each other and could share the good times and help each other out in the not-so-good times.

I started researching intentional communities* (aka communes). I learned that New Jersey was losing a farm EVERY DAY to development. Could we form an environmental community and save a farm at the same time?

Again, I called a meeting and the seed of an extensive, three-year effort was sown. I read about Findhorn (where plants grow beyond normal size because the people honor their spirits) and community land trusts (whereby housing remains affordable and cannot be sold at a profit, just purchase price plus improvements).

Furthermore, I was resisting domesticity and decided that the role of a traditional suburban housewife would be easier if people worked together.

I used my spare time learning how to organize a community and what it might be like to raise sheep. I wanted to raise sheep and learn how to weave while others could grow vegetables or whatever appealed to them. I don't mind doing laundry or dishes but I don't like to cook so I thought we could barter chores.

"HOME" was the name I chose but someone suggested adding "LAND." Can you believe that for three years of my life I worked on "HOMELAND?"

There were 50 people who expressed interest, with a core group of six. I worked hard but collectively we never had enough money to rescue a farm and Norm was never wild about this whole idea.

**An intentional community is a planned, residential community designed to promote a much higher degree of social interaction than other communities. The members typically hold a common social, political or spiritual vision. They also share responsibilities and resources. Intentional communities include cohousing, residential land trusts, ecovillages, communes, kibbutzim, ashrams and housing cooperatives....Though intentional communities do not claim to be utopias in the sense of perfect places, many do attempt to live a different and better sort of society. (Wikipedia)*

Getting a State Job

When I worked in Paterson, I helped a woman on the phone who had concerns about the off-gassing of chemicals like Scotch Guard that were applied to furniture. She wanted to buy a non-toxic sofa

because of her allergies. With my nursing background, I was better equipped to help her than my colleagues.

Little did I dream that when I decided to search for a preventative job, Grace would be the one to whom I applied. She was Bureau Chief of Community Relations in the Division of Hazardous Waste Management at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP).

I was hired. My job was to work with people living near Superfund sites and plan the required public hearings.

When I first arrived excitedly at the seven-story DEP building, I was dismayed to learn that, for most employees, theirs was just an ordinary job. I had expected to be surrounded by eco zealots. I found a few who became my friends.

One day I was in the Ladies' Room and another new employee was there. Madalene was surprised when I took a hankie out of my pocket to dry my hands instead of using a paper towel. She also smiled later on when we were all given electric pencil sharpeners and I refused mine. I was outraged that the Department of Environmental PROTECTION would purchase such stupid, anti-environmental products.

Grace had just completed a slide show explaining the correlation between hazardous waste sites and consumer products. She needed someone to take it on the road. I became a traveling spokeswoman for the department and loved it.

I had a little Toyota Tercel and crammed it with safe alternative products and so many other things that, when the DEP made large posters of the hazardous sites they were trying to clean up, I bought a station wagon.

During that period, I took a day off to attend a DEP hearing on pesticides. I stood before a room full of men in suits and ties and gave one of the most powerful and well thought-out testimonies of my life. "Let me speak for thousands of women and children who are not here, who probably don't even know about this hearing. We don't want your pesticides, herbicides... ." Then I reminded them that the suffix "-icide" means "to kill." I presented a lot of facts with a lot of conviction.

The next day at work, I was informed that it's not permitted to take a day off from one DEP department to go testify at another DEP department's hearing. That had not occurred to me. But I kept my job.

Being in the public eye, both as a full-time employee and as a local grassroots activist, formerly on the boards of two statewide organizations, and as a member of our local food coop, I was well known and respected in the world of ecology. I was serious and dedicated.

I was also enchanted by the idea of Nature Spirits. After reading about Findhorn, biodynamics and other philosophies which recognize that all plants and animals have spirit, I was convinced that fairies could be seen.

In stark contrast was my hazardous waste job, for which I was auditing a course and cramming for an exam when I had another mystical experience. Here's what I wrote in 1993:

Six years ago, I was studying Toxicology -- the Study of Poisons. I was learning how chemicals hurt the human body -- lungs, livers, brains, hearts, skin, every organ of the body can be hurt by chemicals. Ever since I was a teenager, I was interested in health and wanted to be a nurse. I studied nursing and

eventually saw a LOT of death. I did home care for people who were dying of cancer. During that period, I would bring many books to read when my patients did not need my care: The Politics of Cancer, Hazardous Waste in America, New Jersey Environment and Cancer, etc.

I was at the wrong end of public health -- instead of being at the deathbed, I wanted to be preventing cancers and sickness. I took a hard course called Public Health and Environmental Law and became an environmental inspector. That job took me into factories -- horror houses -- where they use deadly chemicals in sloppy ways to make ordinary things for you and me. People must wear respirators to protect their lungs from deadly exposures to chemicals. They often need gloves, suits, aprons, etc. to try to minimize their risks. Often these workers are poor and uneducated. Many of them do not speak or read English well enough to read the warning labels on the chemicals they work with.

I also worked in the Superfund program in New Jersey, where they try to clean up horribly contaminated industrial sites and dumping areas.

So I was seeing some awful things and I myself had to wear a respirator when I made my inspections. I wanted to know all about this so I was studying Toxicology. I decided that most scientists don't know what they're talking about. Much of life is too miraculous and mysterious to pull it apart and actually know a great deal. Each one of us is so unique that what may be true for one of us or for a rat or a dog, is not true for another one of us.

When I realized that, all in all, "THEY" didn't know what "THEY" were talking about, I decided to take a break from my studying.

My mind drifted to DEVAS, spirits of the plants and trees I had read about many years ago in a book called Findhorn. Findhorn is a community in Scotland where people believe in and honor the spirits of plants. Their vegetables and flowers grow MUCH bigger than average, presumably because of the great love and reverence the people bestow on the plants.

Some Findhorn people believe one can actually see Deva fairy spirits. I guess I can believe that, too, although I have never seen any Devas.

I need to say here that I LOVED my back yard. I never put any chemicals on it and I pretty much let the plants grow as they wished. I only mowed a small patch (with a hand-pushed mower) and I let all the border beds grow relatively wild. I knew the animals who shared my back yard were safe from poisons as long as they stayed on my property and not my nasty neighbor's who used poisons and tried to hit squirrels -- my favorite land animal.

SO -- I took a break and decided to go out back and see the Devas who lived in my back yard.

Since I had been learning a lot about the life and spirit of Earth, I figured I was ready for Devas. I wanted to see fairies dancing and playing in my yard -- far superior to studying Toxicology.

I gently but boldly and eagerly went out back.

It was about 9 or 10 at night so it was dark out.

And then it happened.

My entire being opened to the universe -- my eyes, my ears, my lungs, my heart, my soul, my mind.

I was flooded with an acute awareness of the spirits of the grasses, the mosses, the violets, the ajugas, the lilacs, the hostas, the ivy, the daffodils, the unknown grasses (some people call them weeds); the spirits of the chipmunks, the squirrels, the ants, the crickets, the ladybugs, the unknown animals; the birds; the trees, the bushes -- LIFE -- ALL THE LIFE IN MY BACK YARD!

Then I looked upward to the heavens, the stars, the galaxies and beyond -- beyond my imagination -- just beyond forever.

My awareness switched to all the peoples of the world -- all colors, shapes, sizes -- all the religions of the world.

All the goodness of all these people and all the spirits of all these plants and animals at my doorstep and all the stars and planets TOGETHER SHOWED ME "GOD."

I saw nothing I hadn't seen before but I FELT everything good in the universe at once!!! I felt "God's" awesome love over everything and in everything. I didn't use the word "God" then and I hesitate to use it now -- it's too limiting.

What I felt and knew I can only describe as a universal Spirit of Goodness, Energy, Life and Love which escapes definition on paper.

All I can say is, keep yourself open to this possibility. It's there for you.

Happiness is Being With My Family, My Friends and People Who Share My Values

One day I met Trina Paulus, author and illustrator of *Hope for the Flowers*, a wonderful little book about butterflies and dropping out of the Rat Race. She invited me to go with her to a weekend workshop on Earth Spirituality in New York State. Sr. Miriam MacGillis of Genesis Farm led about 20 of us into Thomas Berry's love for the Earth with his book, *Dream of the Earth*. We bunked in a spacious home owned by the Grail (a community of women). We shared the jobs of cooking delicious, vegetarian food and cleaning up. I was enchanted by soul-enriching rituals and discussions plus the camaraderie.

My life was a juggling act -- work at DEP, Homeland, family and friends and now monthly retreats. I felt such deep pleasure in being with these people that I kept going back.

On August 26th, 1989, I was invited to give my hazardous waste program for children attending "Inherit the Earth: A Service of Thanksgiving," a workshop hosted by The Alliance for a Living Ocean in Beach Haven, New Jersey. My friend, Judy Morgan, who worked at the DEP in water resources, was also invited and she invited her old friend, John Conner, and his girlfriend, Gloria, from Maryland to meet us there.

"You'll like John Conner," Judy told me.

Indeed. After the talks, we four went to the beach. John and I took off for a rapid walk along the shore gabbing and gabbing while Judy and Gloria remained sitting and gabbing.

When we left that event, I headed to a friend's wedding. I changed into a festive dress and gaily performed an Irish jig, although I had no idea what I was doing. Something inside me was very happy.

Back at work several days later, John started asking me for literature he could use in his environmental work with church members in Maryland, so I naturally obliged as that was my nature -- doing whatever I could to help people learn as much as possible to motivate them to ACT on behalf of our planet.

During Fall 1989, I kept working, going to monthly retreats, sending environmental literature to John and planning my trip to Israel. I have no recollection of how I was able to take six weeks off (four for volunteering on a kibbutz and two to tour with Norm).

I loved the kibbutz! Here are my journal entries.

Why On Earth Did I Work on a Kibbutz?

I worked on a Kibbutz in the Negev desert in Israel because I felt so stupid when I described Homeland and people asked in smart-alecky tones, "Well, have you ever lived in a community?"

"No."

"Have you ever worked on a farm?"

"No."

I was embarrassed by my ignorance and decided to develop one answer, "Yes," to future interrogations by working in a farming community. Please don't ask how I decided to go all the way to Israel to gain experience I could probably have gained right here. I could not tell you.

My first impressions of Israel were weird -- so many armed soldiers in the Tel Aviv airport; then I took a bus to the kibbutz and was startled to see the entrance guarded by a man with a gun.

Below are excerpts from my journal.

Night #1 10/29

I have mixed emotions -- nice nutritious meal but it seems as if veggies and dairy products are not from here. Will ask tomorrow. No sheep but one young man volunteer has been helping in dairy barn with calves. The young girls say there are chickens here.

Tomorrow I have off so I can roam around -- really seems like a little village. Somebody at dinner told me they make missile parts here. The price of being surrounded by enemies!

Neat laundry system. I have to meet Yehudith at 8:30 a.m. Breakfast starts at 7:00.

I'M POOPED!

10/30

While talking with teachers at lunch I got some excellent advice for Homeland from Noa -- we must find the fine line for our creative, individualized ambitions between support of them and interference with them. When I said I was interested in attending Board meetings, Susie reminded me that they are held in Hebrew -- never occurred to me! When I said I was interested in how problems get resolved, one woman substituted the word "limitations" for problems -- that's what I like -- positive thinking.

10/31

Nice small homes (Noa and Elvil). New problem -- kids will be sleeping home Friday nights -- no extra bedrooms. Three sleep in living room plus one in doorway. Neat kids -- all happily playing when In Bok and I visited. [In Bok, Nam was my Korean roommate; staff writer, The Joong-Ang Daily News...Seoul, Korea.]

11/3

My most important impression today (Friday, the Jewish Sabbath) was at dinner when all these usually casually-dressed women got dressed up and all of a sudden I found myself looking at clothes. I want to try not to comment on anybody's clothes -- they are so damned unimportant.

I met 12-year-old Shachof doing dishes -- he's Guidon's son! I was really surprised Guidon has a 3-year-old and four grandchildren. His first wife died and I met Mickie, his pretty second wife. They also have a 10-year-old boy. I was invited to their house Monday.

There was a political discussion after dinner but it was in Hebrew so I couldn't get any of it. Guidon and Mickie were there too so I'll ask on Monday what was so funny.

Right after this were two women performers -- singer and pianist -- FABULOUS --free entertainment here.

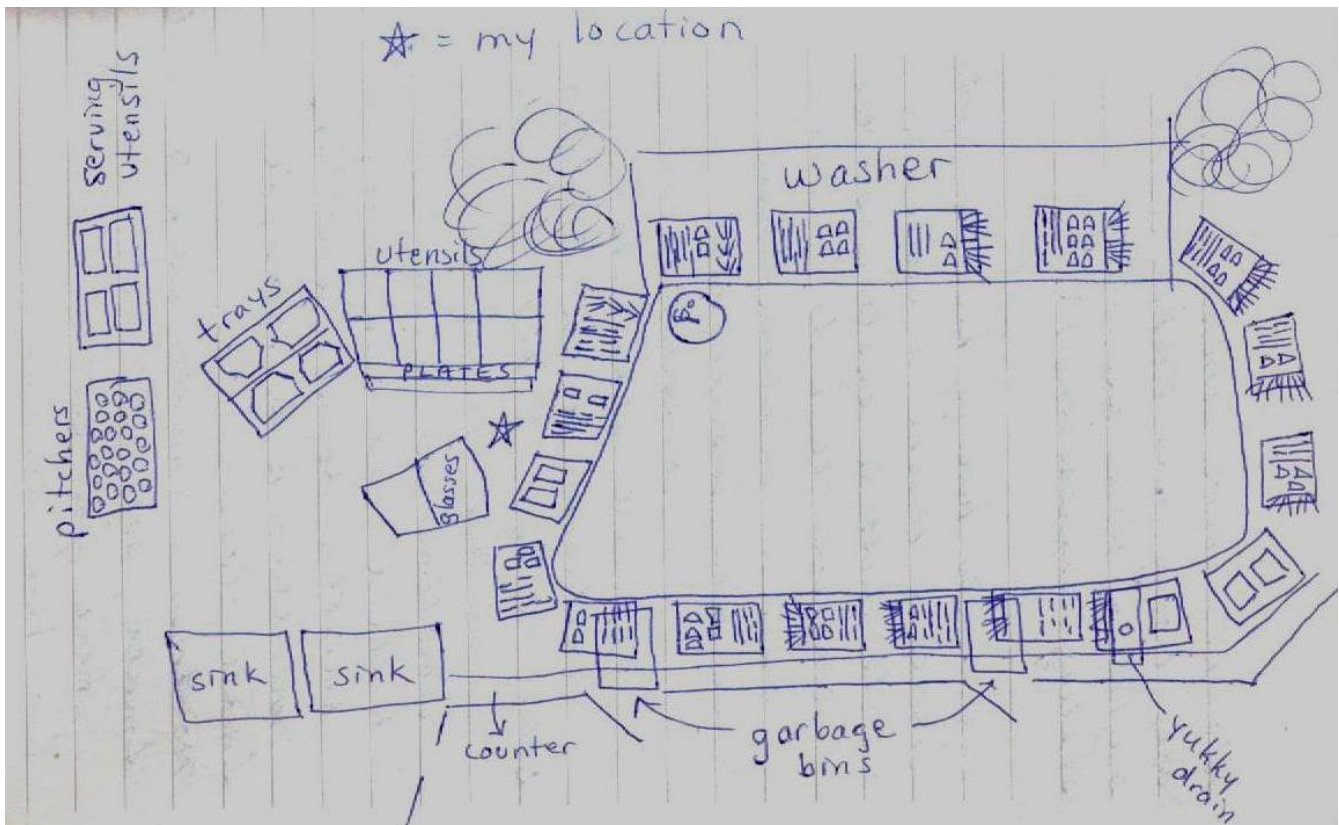
I also realized that we (Homeland) may not have enough energy (once we get more into farming) for heavy-duty activities at night. In Bok and I took a three-hour nap this afternoon after work. That is the only explanation of why I'm still awake at 1:50 (the disco goes on -- that might contribute).

[list of 33 Kibbutz Friends]

VOLUNTEER FRIENDS!!

[list of people from Belgium, West Germany (3), Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Poland, England (5), the Netherlands (2), Norway, Australia and one Arabic-looking name and address I cannot read.]

A Day in the Life of a Kibbutz Small Dishes Worker (me)



What the job consists of:

Emptying thousands of clean dishes, utensils and small serving dishes plus egg cups, serving spoons, lids, sugar bowls and an occasional ashtray from a continually-revolving conveyor belt.

This was my first time ever on an assembly line. When a large group stops eating at once and a lot of dishes get put in the racks, it is really hard to unload them. I worked with Guidon mostly and Nadove one day. They scrub large stainless steel pots and help unload.

Here goes:

6:10 Wake up, shower

6:30 Walk up to dining room and sit quietly and read and have a cup of coffee.

7:00 Start putting away dishes left from last night. On a kibbutz, we can take cups, dishes, even pans to bake a cake, back to our room to use and we can return dirty dishes to dishwasher. Some homes

have little dishwashers because families sometimes cook at home. Noa had made spaghetti for her four kids and Avi last night and Susie had baked a few batches of cookies and shortbread for her uncle's visit. Her oven and fridge are on her front porch.

7:30 Eat breakfast.

8:00 Back to do dishes. When breakfast dishes are done, wash out conveyor bottom, garbage drop point, drain which holds food scraps and utensils which fall out, and sink. Then scrub the floor area there and in the kitchen.

10:00 Finish -- go home, or take a walk, or have a cup of coffee

11:00 Back to finish breakfast leftovers

11:15 - 11:45 Eat lunch

11:45 - 1:30 or 2:00 Dishes, wash counter and sink

8:00 Work one hour at dinner dishes. Wash counter and sink.

Typical afternoon:

2:00 Drag chair out to sun and snooze. Write letters

4:00 Tea with In Bok, write journal, take walk

4:30 - 4:45 Watch sunset

7:00 Dinner

Lots of leisure time!

** * **

Peeling Room

Cabbage - dozen heads quartered

Onions - lop off ends - 60

Carrots - lop off ends - 150

Potatoes - remove spots and quarter - endless

Garlic - peel 30

Not a bad work environment

In Bok, Thea, Mette and two nice kibbutz women at work

Andrew doing big dishes in background listening to Mozart opera blasting

Thea had nice country-western tape

Worked 6 - 1:15

1/2 hour breakfast

1/4 hour coffee

1/2 hour lunch

Afternoon walk with In Bok to cemetery and orchard. My first time really seeing Israel -- beauty and peacefulness belie the fact that this little nation is at war.

Extra lovely cemetery -- perfectly cared for, stone caskets all the same, lots of flowers and bushes.

Sky was changing -- white cumulous, dark gray clouds too. Here and there a brilliant spot of blue peeking through. I found Rosemary's stone as a light rain started to fall. I know she'll feel its spirit.

Committee meeting Saturday 9:15: planning cultural events

Wednesday night 9:30 dancing

Really super terrific people. Guidon's eyes sparkle. Mickie just returned to University to get degree in archeology and Bible. She has fabulous stamp collection -- will give her Chris's envelope. If their two

sons (10 & 12) had to sleep home every night, they would want to leave the kibbutz. They were born and raised here so usually prefer children's home.

Very lovely home -- lots of cow bells. Mickie has done some fine counted cross stitch.

Guidon very interested in Homeland. Mickie really believes ecological approach is great idea.

Mickie's pretty white-haired mother was visiting from Haifa.

Guidon had to go back to dishes at 6:45 and Mickie had to go with boys to feed dog in process of delivering pups before she went to the dairy to milk at 7:30 p.m.

The End of a Good Visit

* * *

I have had little red bumps on my hands for two days now because of rubber gloves. Left them off Sunday and was in peeling room today with no gloves. Tomorrow folding clothes with Yehudith so hands might clear up. I think each volunteer should get new pair of gloves and keep them in our room to dry. Small dishes gloves holey, wet and tossed in bucket with no air.

Conny has only been here two weeks. Interested in religion. Somewhat turned off to Catholicism. Will loan her Fate of the Earth. Lovely use of English!

Andrea is a doll -- worried about Nauga. Keeps trying to be her friend but Nauga keeps crying. She was happy today because she had a piano lesson.

Wilka loaned me super paper he had written on Shoval. He'll marry an Israeli woman who's in the army now but, because he's not Jewish, they'll have to marry outside of Israel.

Andrew is BRILLIANT with languages (probably brilliant with everything!) and he showed me two books about Green thinking -- one about the oppressed -- plus some computer disks he's using here to prepare himself for future political studies in Queensland.

Very frustrating trying to call Norm and Joanie -- apparently our phone is off the hook and Joanie isn't home. Woke up at 5:30 a.m. to reach them -- same thing. Will try using Sprint card to call Norm at work today. Lots of time and energy thinking about how to reach these two to ask about their jobs.

* * *

Thoughts on Communal Child Care

(children are raised in a special building designed just for them in the center of the community so they are sheltered in case of attack; only saw tucking in at night so these are very sketchy impressions)

Noa likes having kids sleep home.

Susie and Moshe believe in the kibbutz system so don't want to confuse the kids -- always sleep in children's house.

Much more independent

Much more comfortable with opposite sex (share bathrooms until 5th grade)

Better to have four kids in same room than American style of isolation in affluent homes

Each child had own cubby hole, bulletin board, collections, needlework by Mom, etc.

Small classes

No busses, no long walk to school

Small, safe, intimate world here for little ones

Kids here somehow seem to be more vibrant -- they run, sing, play without obvious conflict, very little crying

All these kids will be in the Army -- need to be independent -- this country is at war

Maybe sense of "home" here is broader than one house -- probably whole community = "home;" probably sense of "family" is broader for same reason.

Much better than day care for kids -- they don't get packed up and "commuted" early in the morning or late in the afternoon. They wake up, get dressed, eat and attend school without interruptions, then go home at 4 → bedtime. Better in case of divorce, too -- still have stable home.

* * *

Thoughts on Clothes

I love the communal work clothes and sheets -- absolutely nothing fancy! Patches and stains on many items and it's O.K. -- they're clean and useful.

My ration as a volunteer for a week was two pairs of pants (but there was only one in my size), two long-sleeved mechanics shirts, two short-sleeved T-shirts, two thin cotton sweatshirts, work shoes, five pairs of socks, four sheets, two pillowcases, a sweater and a Winter jacket. I asked for a second nightgown since I only brought one and that was gladly given to me. Yehudith (Volunteer Coordinator) is very gracious about satisfying our needs. Free sanitary pads, too. (I brought my own underwear.)

We drop off dirty laundry on Monday evening so I guess it gets done Tuesday. My job today is to help Yehudith fold volunteers' clothes. There are bins for Sabbath clothes, work clothes, undies, whites, blacks. I'm not sure what system residents use but I see lots of workers in clothes like mine. It's breakfast time now so I'll try to find out. I know that my clothes have V-22 and my bin # is 22. I had to ask for extra pin-on labels for my own dirty clothes and I felt as if I had too many items. I will say though that I used my own jeans (both pairs) and my own socks and each item needs a pinned-on label.

To breakfast....

Before we get to fold laundry, there was housework in volunteers' area to do -- washed four toilets, eight sinks, two refrigerators, five floors and a few garbage cans, then swept the sidewalks. (8:30 - 10:15). Then we folded about seven huge laundry bags full of clothes and Yehudith patched while I ironed. Juan had four items to be ironed out of a total of seven! Helle walked in and ironed her own. Thea took her pants and said she'd iron them later. In Homeland, we should make sure people understand if and when and why personal habits might make workloads unfair. For 22 volunteers, having only seven items to iron was great but one young guy seems a little carefree. I also noticed something similar doing small dishes -- when people load up dirty dishes packed against each other, they do not get clean and others have to repack them and send them through again. Careless scraping also makes extra work. I think if people understood these little things, they would help.

So -- back to clothes. It was nice to feel cotton. Nearly 90% of the clothes here are cotton. Sheets get ironed. One young man had four sheets in a week -- again -- waste of people's time plus waste of natural resources. Yehudith says he always has four sheets a week and he doesn't even menstruate!

Again, I liked having people around as I was ironing -- Helle behind me, Yehudith on my right and people coming in for their clean clothes -- cookies (a weekly treat). Some music was on so the atmosphere was nice. Work has less drudgery this way. Unclaimed items went in one bin, items needing repair or buttons went in another bin.

Yehudith asked if I would run such a room and I realized (through her) that Homeland's total population is that of our Volunteer Community.

"Most Kibbutz Members are Satisfied with Their Lives" *Jerusalem Post* 10/2/89 (my 44th birthday)

"Kibbutzniks are entering the new year highly satisfied with their lives and especially their work, a new survey shows." -- Telephone survey, Haifa U., over 650 people, 436 = United Kibbutz Movement; 225 = Kibbutz Artzi

70% satisfied or very satisfied with lives

10% "more or less satisfied"
90% fully satisfied with jobs
80% believe work morale is "middling to good"
50% believe economic situation of their kibbutz is not good
20% believe social situation is bad
70% have faith in future of their own kibbutz
50% have faith in whole kibbutz movement
The level of satisfaction with life found by the survey was "remarkably high."

* * *

Tour of Machine Shop today -- they make parts for tanks and flaps for opening the doors for bombs to fall out (like hinges) -- CREEPY. Someone mentioned how ironic it is that capitalism is necessary for this socialist community to survive.

Had a very interesting conversation with a young German man over dinner whose most important thing to him is freedom to live in peace. He HATES American TV, too, but will study graphic design and learn about media layouts. Has no idea what he will do next. He does not like the advertising industry but he knows he needs to study this once he is accepted at school.

He doesn't think it's a good idea for kids of the same age to be housed together because young children learn so much from older folks plus protecting younger brothers and sisters. Nauga was sitting with us but I never know whether she's listening to us or daydreaming, so we continued our conversation.

Nice talk with In Bok about feminism. In South Korea, only 10% of women go to university and only half of them finish. Then they only earn 80% of what men earn.

Thea, Michael and his younger brother came to our room at sundown and lit two candles and said a prayer to welcome the Sabbath. We had challah and wine. Nice thing to do!

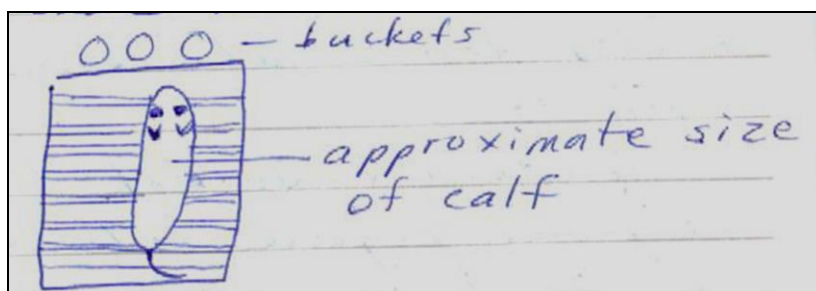
* * *

New idea for Homeland -- repair bikes

* * *

I started the Shabbat by rising early (6:30) and having a fresh-picked grapefruit under the pine trees at the side of our room. I realized there wasn't one job I wanted to do here for two more weeks and thought perhaps I'd check out the dairy to see if I could stomach that place somehow. It seemed relatively peaceful -- an old man giving baby calves warm milk (or formula -- brownish liquid) and a young German woman training a baby calf to drink from a bucket. The baby's head naturally turned up to grasp a nipple and it was turned around, rump to the feed buckets. She wet her fingers in formula and as he sucked her fingers, she drew his mouth downwards into the bucket.

Next, as I was leaving, I saw baby calf #1092 sliding around on shitty bars, trying to lie down and he wasn't comfortable so he stood up again. The whole place is too cruel. I could not work there. His cage left little room and some cages had TWO calves in them. I later learned that he's a bull.



* * *

*I walked up to the dining room, got my coffee and was reading about Rock Dust for healing dying forests and even people [from the book I had brought with me: Secrets of the Soil by Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird]. At the end of the chapter, I knew I needed to go to the place where they practice Anthroposophy. * I spent most of the day trying to figure out how to do it without hurting people's feelings here. They love Shoval. It's just that it's too big and there's nothing here I can work at that relates to Homeland. I wanted desperately to work at Michel's place. After a long, soul-searching day filled with telephone kinks, I called her and they don't take short-term volunteers.*

Andrea and In Bok tried to help me figure out what to do. If I can't arrange anything, I'll take two days off and go stay as a guest.

** Anthroposophy is a human-oriented spiritual philosophy that reflects and speaks to the basic deep spiritual questions of humanity, to our basic artistic needs, to the need to relate to the world out of a scientific attitude of mind and to the need to develop a relation to the world in complete freedom and based on completely individual judgments and decisions. Anthroposophy was mainly developed by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. It is born out of a **philosophy of freedom**. (www.waldorfanswers.com)*

* * *

Make sure we have a way of dealing with loud music.

MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL

Make sure we think about biological continuation of Homeland. (Avraham)

* * *

Ruth: *communal production, communal consumption*

Easier to start a kibbutz in a land of poverty than in a land of affluence -- everybody is already equal

Gave father's inheritance to kibbutz 100%

Today would give three children 20% and rest to kibbutz

Two sons have left kibbutz, one daughter remains

They all mean more to her than anybody in kibbutz

Joel Darom: *(recommended by Yehudith as knowledgeable about communities around the world)*

What I must do:

1. Decide how to build my life (our lives)

2. Create a world of my own (our own)

Wrote The Alternative Way of Life, Kfar Menachem

When Naiveté is Possible. 15 years after The Seventh Day Shdemot #18, 1982:

Utopian Views: 'Gustav Landauer: Jewish Utopian by Ruth Link-Salinger

"In his search for true community and communality, the mature Landauer differentiated among three types of relationships: 1. The relationship to self and one's innermost being; 2. The relationship to the external world -- state and society -- which is 'given' to everyone as his social reality; and 3. The relationship to that which is yet to come -- the creation of free temporary associations of like-minded

individuals. Significantly, the ideal community and association of free individuals envisaged by Landauer is a temporary one, based on mutual interest. The very fluidity and spontaneity of the ideal association based on "enlightened self-interest" not only showed Landauer to have been -- via Goethe -- a direct descendent of Spinoza, but demonstrated theoretically what was always true for Landauer practically, that relationships held fast as long as they satisfied a real need for him. When he had transcended the need for affinity, he let go with ease, resignation or enlightened wisdom.

"The importance of nationalism was to create spirit -- spirit in society, in the people, in corporations and in social organisms. To be a nation is to be a Bund of like-minded individuals who accept their task and become active; it is not enough to be a bridge between generations and to be a precursor of or seedbed for the future. The tradition which is being prepared is of the very essence of revolution for and regeneration of mankind."

"The task of all modern nationalism, Landauer taught, was that the ethnic group must realize its own destiny but **MUST** also participate in the common brotherhood of humanity."

* * *

Cottage cheese on my sleeve, wash night -- will be there all week until next wash day unless I do hand wash. Only one shirt like this.

Found "shortcut" to Sericraft [my new assignment in women's silk-screening business] -- now only 145 steps to work

Came early to talk with Elisa (reminds me of Grandma -- little, lively; short straight white hair) She must sew so she cannot talk (She warned me ahead of time but I forgot.)

Conny: (Waldorf school)

enthusiastic teachers have a lot of power

usually quiet -- no fights

*Freinet (not religious)

parents come to eat and cook, birthday parties

if kids make fruit salad, parents come to eat

when there is a problem, all kids come together and talk about it

kids must not talk unless they're holding stick

they talk one at a time and others ask questions

one child per week is leader and asks if each one wants to talk

subjects evolve from talks --- project for week or two

make things for pet

working corners -- more like life

school is old farm

corners: speaking, building -- crates, sheets, tacks, build castle, hammer, nails, wood

how-to books

Nature corner -- experiments with plants

animals

sand/water table, cups

fantasy corner -- clothes, shoes, hats, mirror

1/2 hour observe kids with problems or special interest -- one kid a day -- see how they act and interact, write notes, **LEAVE HIM ALONE**

go every week to child's home to visit -- play or visit, neighborhood points of interest

11 kids

(early years -- just stay in home -- older -- play football, swimming, library 9-3:30, 3-6 years)

nap 12-1 (only if they want to)
kids need borders -- very firm and consistent signals for quiet -- must be obeyed or system won't work
once a week -- open school
afternoon -- everybody in school can go in each other's classroom, look around at projects
garden -- little kids do flowers, older kids do veggies.
whole school grades 3-12 Parliament, two from each class go to weekly meetings -- talk about problems (dirty tables, hitting, etc.) teacher leads discussion, make list of jobs for whole school
Waldorf -- children may not see rest of world -- TV, guns*
problem = kids don't learn to express troublesome impressions
public opinion = sharpest weapon that exists -- lose status in society
no rules about lazy people, problem finds own solution

****Waldorf (Steiner) education** is a humanistic approach based on the educational philosophy of the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy. Steiner described child development as taking place in three distinct stages. These stages were reflected in his program of early childhood education, which focused on hands-on activities and creative play; elementary education, focused on developing artistic expression and social capacities; and secondary education, focused on developing critical reasoning and empathic understanding. The approach also placed unique importance on the role of imagination in learning, as well as focusing attention on the intersection of different elements of curriculum, eschewing specialization and compartmentalization. The overall goal is to develop free, morally responsible and integrated individuals equipped with a high degree of social competence. (Wikipedia)*

* * *

Motivation now -- higher standard of intellectual situation than rest of country, socialist ideals, when you are not part of political groups, you cannot keep a kibbutz
Communism not working in Russia and East Germany
Democratic socialism -- socialism which understands people and leaves them a choice to find another way
45 years peace
Figure out how much we will need per month and how to earn it
Semolina -- milk, sugar, cinnamon (my favorite breakfast)
600-700 people/day
200 families
***Susie:** John Cheever books -- suburban emptiness*
***Yakov:** coil under floor to heat hot water*
***Jerusalem #99 bus** = better than a car*
***Avraham:** (deep, deep thinker) wants for his son to be a happy man, a good man (nothing more he can do about it)*
How?
He admires naiveté and innocence -- may be way to be happy
Is he happy or good?
Neither -- he has seen too much
So, so deep

Doesn't like "managing" people = manipulating = making people do what they don't necessarily want to do.

Anthroposophical Kibbutz

Harduf: Learning through art -- not "teaching." Must be art in first grade

Education Towards Freedom -- Steiner??

Varda gave me a break -- 32 shekels/night, includes meals

Farewell dinner for Jan at Jonathan's (soup, pita toast)

Send Jonathan "Gift to be Simple" song

Schools -- Not Without My Daughter -- Margaret Mahmoodis

** * **

Last night before Norm arrives

Rescuing five abandoned Arab pups -- trip to watch sunset at cemetery -- Andrea, Thea Mette, In Bok, me

Like underground RR -- not supposed to bring strays to kibbutz. Fed them milk, cottage cheese and eggs. Left them barricaded overnight in palace. Then Andrea plus new volunteers took them all by bus to shelter in Beer Sheva

** * **

Last day at Shoval -- showing Norm around

BABY CALF #1092 DEAD IN HIS CAGE

(Valerie Salice says maybe that's the best thing that could happen to him.)

Suggestions for Shoval

Don't iron (synthetic) sheets

Hang clothes on line -- at least sheets and towels at first

Water-saving devices

Conservation education

Train (and remind) people to respect others' jobs

English translations in small dishes area -- others?

B&B

Hayride tours

Solar hot water

Would cows give more milk if peacefully grazing away from noisy street?

Pick-your-own

Sinks in dining room -- dilute soap -- hankies, pockets

Universal color-coded sponges for sinks and toilets

Movies -- Exodus, Masada, The Chosen, Yentl, Crossing Delancy

Israeli folk dancing lessons

Hebrew lessons/kids?/tutor

Families adopt a volunteer

Recycling

Diapers

Sericraft -- hot lamp

What Could I Do for Shoval My Last Week?

Organize litter clean-up

Put up energy and water conservation signs

Educate volunteers and others on how to make other people's jobs easier for them by a little consideration

Find out what chemicals Sericraft uses and get fact sheets

Susie's class [2/14/15: I forgot to put my eco talk to high schoolers from four kibbutzim in my journal but I did go to Susie's classroom and told the students about my life's work. I also donated an Earth flag to them. Shoval was the central educational kibbutz for three other kibbutzim.]

The way kibbutz life is structured, with shared work and shared resources, made so much more sense to me than anything I'd experienced as a suburban housewife in the U.S. I had SO MUCH FREE TIME -- I mean, totally free! Once my job was done, I was free. Others did the food shopping, cooking, dish washing (except, of course, when that was MY job), laundry, ironing, even child care in the central Children's House, which resembled a miniature version of a normal home and reminded me of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs with little beds, little sinks, little toilets, little tables, little chairs.....

I was frustrated by not having assignments which furthered my cause of learning more about farming. When I realized that washing dishes wasn't supporting my vision and purpose, I asked if there was farm work I could do. In addition to the dairy, one man told me I could get up early and cut off chicks' beaks. The idea STILL turns my stomach. I'd rather do dishes.

But because I was in my 40s, they came up with an alternate plan for me and placed me in Sericraft, the silk-screening business they had set up for "older" women. Insulted, I took it anyhow. Among other things, we decorated beautiful tablecloths with matching napkins on high-quality, durable, brightly-colored cotton with pomegranates (symbolic of something). I brought back three sets as gifts.

It was through one of the women who worked there that I was able to arrange my weekend "vacation" in a Waldorf kibbutz in Nazareth. Since Kibbutz Shoval was in the Negev Desert in the South and Harduf was in the North, I took a bus. It was fascinating to see Bedouin (Arab nomads) encampments along the way.

When I reached Harduf, it was dusk and the first person I met reminded me of Moses -- a slim, serious and seriously bearded figure standing on a hill peacefully gazing out over the valley.

Zohar showed me around and became my teacher about Waldorf ways for the two days I was there. It wasn't long before we were having a spiritual discussion. I told him about my three dreams (writing *Metamorphosis*, its cover design, and the white-haired, smiling man). Ruefully, I said I had accomplished the first two but had forgotten about the third.

Zohar looked me straight in the eye and said, "No, you haven't."

He was right.

When I returned to my "home" kibbutz, there were two letters awaiting me -- one from Norm and one from John.

My husband's letter was short. John's was written in large, strong penmanship with green ink.

Here's John's letter:

11/10

8 p.m.

Dear Susan,

I am sitting thru a boring meeting of church reps near Wash DC so that at the end I can appeal for church contacts. It's worth it because about 30 churches are represented here. They are now discussing the budget. BORING.

I'll spend tomorrow sending out to 225 churches the 3 pages I sent you. In a week I'll call them to prod them. I'm now thinking of setting 1 nite each month for each area to meet.

I've been going to meetings of pastors to recruit them. Usually about 8-10 pastors whose churches are near each other get together once a month at a church or a restaurant. They are usually open to my (or your) talking to them for 10-15 min. I try to get their name & church & address & phone #. Then I mail them something & call to ask for a good contact person. If I keep pushing, I can usually get what I want.

In Md. I find that Methodists are generally the best.

My life is strange. Virtually nothing means anything except bringing together church and synagogue people to work for humanity & the Earth.

I'm told this meeting is over at 9:30. The budget discussion has been going on for 25 min. The F_ _ _ _ _ treasurer won't shut up.

At last he's done. Now we're onto the charter amendment discussion. No less boring. We (they) finished in 10 min.!

I liked community life as a Jesuit, although I was a bit of a renegade in some ways. Some of the rules were absurd and deserved ignoring.

At that Catholic church I mentioned in my other letter the 51 people who signed up were of all ages, starting in high school up to 50's and 60's. I've invited them to a meeting on Nov. 27 & I want to fire them up & make that church a model. It was interesting to spend Sat night & Sun a.m. at that church to get a sense of what things are like. I wouldn't call any of the priests intellectuals. None of the magazines in the church lobby are geared to thinkers.

The guy running the meeting has NO fire. I'm surprised that everyone's not asleep. I would be if I weren't writing this letter.

For the past year, I've had more expenses than income. So I've been borrowing from Citicorp. I now owe them over \$8,000! Who cares. Now I'm spending time cutting trees & my income is almost as much as outgo.

It's 8:20 now & I'm beginning to think I may get time to make my pitch.

By the way, I've got an expensive computer which a doctor gave me but I never use it. Why not have dinner 1 nite after you return at a place halfway between us?

The paid (\$38,000) director is now saying in 20 min. what he could say in 5 min. He's been the director for 17 yrs!

My turn is almost here & it's only 8:30!

This by the way is a meeting of church people in Montgomery County who work on social problems. One way or another I'm getting out of here in 45 min since it's now 8:45. Sometimes you win; sometimes you lose.

Here's a concrete suggestion. Find a liberal group of pastors in Trenton & talk to one of them about this effort & see if they will let us (you & I) talk to them & I'll come up & we'll be started!

I got my 5 min!! Lots of people signed up. 15-20 new churches! Ask and you shall receive. The revolution is coming.

* * *

REVELATION --
JOHN HAS WHITE HAIR!

John was (and is) working in churches to activate enough people to change the world.
CHANGE THE WORLD!
THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO DO.

My dream -- my thought-out dream to the person who had asked me concretely a few years before all this -- my dream had been to help people stop hurting each other. But I was married to a very sweet and gentle man.

Here was a man utterly devoted to helping create a better world for us all. His letter included a suggestion that we get together for dinner when I got back from Israel. We did and now we are happily married, working day and night, seven days a week for a better world -- together.

The night we had dinner (our second time together), his presence filled the restaurant. His energy was boundless. His hopes and dreams and actions went straight to my heart. I remembered my dream -- my third dream -- and, when I got back into my car to drive home, I said to myself, "I love this man."

He had a girlfriend. I had a husband.

We started writing letters.

In the midst of Winter, I received a letter from him in which he told me what would create happiness for him:

1. *A cause on which to work.*
2. *Good people to work with on the cause.*
3. *A mate.*

Then he wrote, "*Only #3 is missing.*"

And for the first time, he signed his letter "Love, John."

I took that letter with me to another Grail weekend and, unlike previous times, I had a room of my own where I read John's letter over and over before falling asleep, trying to decide whether I was receiving an implied message or creating one to suit my heart.

Since I needed clarity, John and I met a third time in Philadelphia. It took me hours to gather enough courage to ask if he ever imagined us living and working together. His face lit up.

"Yes. What about your husband?" he asked.

"I'll leave him," I answered.

We touched for the first time. We hugged for the first time. We had five minutes in the train station to share our joy and anticipation. Then I caught the train home.

At a time when most people would probably have been a nervous wreck -- going back to tell somebody you were leaving them -- I experienced only

PEACE

a deep, deep, deep peace.

Part 4: Stronger and Stronger

Heart leads, I follow.

Happiness is being with people who share my values.

Why on Earth Did I Marry John?

I married John because of my dream of his face long ago plus his goal was larger than mine. I wanted to save one farm and he wanted to save the whole world. He had named his organization Ecumenical Coalition for Peace and Justice Throughout the World.

On Valentine's Day 1990, while I was still living in New Jersey, John sent me this letter:

Dear Iona whom I love,

Will you be my Valentine for the rest of our lives?

Will you be my soul-mate in restoring the Earth?

Will you be my partner in bringing justice to this world?

Will you work side by side with me till we drop from exhaustion?

Will you love me as much as I love you?

John

Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes.

We kept writing letters and I moved out of Norm's house to my friend's, who lived near Trenton, where I continued to work. I visited John on weekends to make sure I knew what it might be like to live together.

During one of these visits, we were eating dinner and I told John that I was married to the Earth. My love of Nature was so strong that I would have given my life to protect it like Chico Mendes* in the Amazon Rainforest or Fernando Pereira** on Greenpeace's Rainbow Warrior ship fighting to end nuclear testing or, in John's world view, like priests and nuns who have been martyred for helping the poor and oppressed overcome the greed and cruelty of the rich and powerful who were abusing them and wrecking their land and their lives.

I wanted John to know this about me before we were married.

** Chico Mendes (1944 – 1988), was a Brazilian rubber tapper, trade union leader and environmentalist. He fought to preserve the Amazon rainforest and advocated for the human rights of Brazilian peasants and indigenous peoples. He was assassinated by a rancher on December 22, 1988. (Wikipedia)*

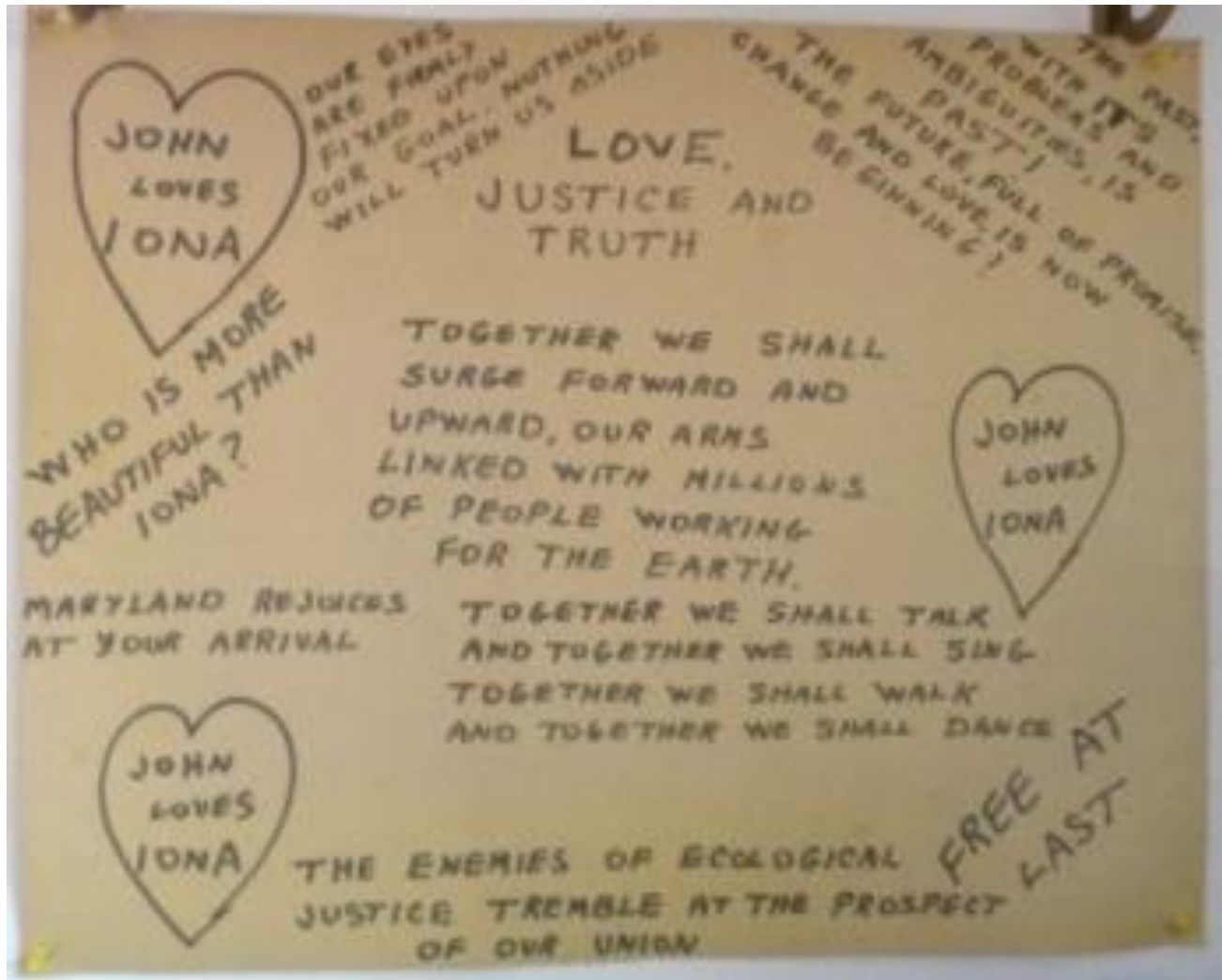
*** The sinking of the Rainbow Warrior was an operation by the "action" branch of the French foreign intelligence services carried out on July 10, 1985. Two operatives sank the flagship of the Greenpeace fleet, the Rainbow Warrior, in the port of Auckland, New Zealand on its way to a protest against a planned French nuclear test in Moruroa. Photographer Fernando Pereira drowned on the sinking ship. (Wikipedia)*

* * *

I eased my way out of one life and into another.

On May 11, 1990, my friends at the DEP gave me a farewell party. John took the train to Trenton to join us and meet everyone, then we drove to his apartment in Columbia, Maryland.

This sign greeted me upon my arrival at his sparsely-furnished home. It still hangs in my office.



John extended his desk so I could work on the other side facing him.

I was befuddled. What was my role now that I had left everything behind? John started introducing me to everyone as his wife, Iona. I chuckled inwardly because we hadn't yet married. I had to get divorced first and our wedding wasn't until July 28th. By the time I finish writing this book, we will have been married 25 years.

I've had several nicknames: Mom called me Susie-Q; Dad, Suzer; Joanie, Sooze; Cece, Uncle John and my cousins, Susie; Bill, Sue; Norm, Sioux and, recently, my work supervisor called me Braveheart when I was having a horrible time in an unfamiliar, remote area with nearly everything going wrong. I felt instantly better.

Here's how I came to be known as Iona:

SHORT STORY ABOUT A NAME CHANGE

Chapter 1:

Susan Wynne Norris Hnatt Topf Conner
WAS my name.

3 birth names + 3 husbands' names = 6 names
But you can call me Iona.
No last name.

Susan. Sue. Lawsuits.
Wynne. Family name.
Norris. Parents' name.

Hnatt. First husband's name. I'm 19, Susan Hnatt now.
"How do you spell that?"
"Hnatt."
"Nhatt?"
"No, Hnatt."
"Nhatt?"
(I give up.)
For 15 years this conversation continues.

Chapter 2:

Topf. Second husband. I'm 37.

Striving to maintain my identity, I hyphenate both names.
Now it's Susan Hnatt-Topf.
YIKES!

Nobody can spell this one.
I have a community relations job in a state agency.
I spell my name dozens of times every day.
My cube-mates are going crazy!

An idea emerges from this mess.

I will name myself.
By my 50th birthday, I promise that I'll have just one name
which any moron can spell.

I draft a list, adding names as they burst through my brain:

Sunflower
Sunshine
wildflower
violet
Evergreen
(I'm an Earthy woman.)

Serendipity.
(No good. It will have to be spelled.)

...a name I'll never have to spell...

what shall it be?

who shall I be?

Chapter 3:

I discover a group of women working to increase their knowledge of, passion for and ability to communicate about Earth. Each month I vanish for a weekend with them. We work. We study. We laugh. We cook. We do dishes. We share lives. We climb a mountain to watch the sun rise. We welcome each new day with song.

One weekend a young couple brings their infant for a naming ceremony. Our focus is now names. Twenty-five of us gather in a comfortable, old room Friday night relaxing, chatting, leaving our world for another. Our coordinator suggests that we each talk a bit about our name.

Most people have pleasant memories of a grandmother or an aunt or at least a family story associated with their names. I express my misery about the two husbands' names that I am SO TIRED of spelling.

The discussion about names ends.

Chapter 4:

Our guide silently lights a candle in the middle of a low, round table. The flame shimmers alongside a space photo of Living Earth. The lights are off. Miriam sits on the floor and slowly reads a mystical story about an island off the coast of Scotland -- a place of soul and imagination, of the sacred and the feminine. Iona.

My heart stops.

My breath ceases.

My eyes expand.

I sit motionless.

I know instantly and without doubt.

I am Iona!

Chapter 5:

I'm 45, five years ahead of my target date. Great happiness! My search is over. Do I tell anyone that weekend? No. I remain quiet. It's the baby's weekend.

Do I tell my husband the moment I walk in the door when the weekend is over? Yes.

What's his reaction? Dumb idea.

What do my teenage sons think? Mom's nuts.

How does my boss take it? She's horrified.

What do my parents say? They hate this whole idea.

Chapter 6:

Next month, back with my Earth friends, I tell them. They LOVE my new name and start calling me "Iona" immediately. It feels good. So good. But I use it only in their company.

Chapter 7:

A year later, I fall in love again and marry John Conner. I move to Maryland and fearlessly tell all the new people I meet that my name is Iona. It's that simple.

John and I are working on environmental issues in hundreds of churches. Most people are rather traditional. They expect me to be Iona Conner. OK, OK. I'll use "Conner" whenever I need to, just to make life easier for us. Conner seems like an easy name.

WRONG!

"Is that -er or -or?"

-S-C-R-E-A-M-

Chapter 8:

I am 51 today. I adore my husband of six years but can think of no good reason to use his name.

I have one of my own.

It's Iona.

Period.

* * *

New Mate, New Home, New Name, New "Job"

I didn't believe in organized religion and John was working in churches. That was all right; I simply went everywhere he went and brought my environmental knowledge with me. John had been a Jesuit for 16 years. I had no idea what a Jesuit was. He had become an ordained priest long before I met him but had left the Jesuits and led an ordinary life with a job, a house, a wife and a divorce before we met each other.

John's closest friends were also former priests and nuns and a former monk. Sister Miriam had shown me one type of nun and now John and his friends were showing me other forms of religious life, although these new people had also left it behind and were married. Two special couples became my friends, too.

John refused to tell me what to do. I was on my own to figure that out. Golly -- I'd never known such freedom. I'd always had jobs with bosses and a job description I was to follow, either written or built into my daily tasks.

John was a free human being -- unchained and living exactly as he thought best considering the state of the world and his capabilities. Years before I met him, he had ditched his job, home and security to work on U.S.-Soviet relations after reading Jonathan Schell's *Fate of the Earth*, describing nuclear holocaust if the Cold War ended in nuclear war. John made three successful citizen-diplomacy trips to the Soviet Union with groups of about 30 before the apparent end of the Cold War when he switched his

focus to environmental issues, also threatening life on Earth. He was accustomed to creating his own work schedules, educational materials and meetings.

John had warned me over the phone before I moved that he was in debt. I told him I never lived like that (both former husbands had good-paying jobs, as did I, so life was easy).

"You'll get used to it," he snickered.

Yeah -- I'm used to it all right. We've managed to get out of debt a few times like with my inheritance from the sale of Mom's house or with large grants but essentially, our whole married life, we've relied on credit cards to finance our work when our income wasn't sufficient. I took many part-time jobs to ease the financial strain and we even went bankrupt for our organic cotton, non-sweatshop clothing efforts. As of August 1, 2015, we owe \$5,530.09 on our home equity loan and I'm working hard to pay down the \$3,000 I ran up when I was laid off and my unemployment compensation ran out.

Back to the honeymoon period. Life was lovely -- living simply, working hard together with enough leisure for long walks in the woods and swimming in the river, visits with family and friends and even some tree work John was doing to help pay the bills. I went with him to help as much as I could. John loves the outdoors. He has spent most of his life chopping and splitting wood, planting trees and taking long walks in Nature.



John in the Patapsco State Park, where he made us a primitive little campsite for cookouts when we were first married.

One day I was sick when John wanted to change his checking account to a joint one. He told them my name was Iona even though I'd never changed it legally. Once our checking account had "Iona" on it, it was relatively easy to insert that as my middle name on my Social Security card and driver's license so that's how we did it -- not conniving, just a simple statement, "Her name is Iona."

Throughout our marriage, John has always provided that kind of instantaneous support for me and my ideas. He has never stopped me from doing what I felt was right.

We lived in a basement apartment in Columbia, Maryland, a planned community with small shopping centers within walking distance of most of the homes.

One day John rushed home excitedly and told me about a fancy affair for professionals with free food. We hurried over and, oh my, did we pig out! The part I remember best was John dribbling chocolate down his chest. I got the giggles so bad we had to leave. He STILL wears food on his chest. Once I asked him how he managed to reach 70 without learning how to not slop food on himself.

Life was REALLY INTERESTING -- and wonderful -- two full-time activists in love. Although my tendency was to help John with his work, he let me find my own ways to do that and, years later, I would break away completely and publish a newspaper separately.

* * *

Wedding

Invitation

(Earth photo from space on Earthnotes card, printed on 100% recycled paper)

JOHN AND IONA
PLEDGE THEIR LIVES TO
ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE

Today a few, tomorrow a multitude.

Today oppression, tomorrow liberation!

*Iona and John Conner
Joyfully invite you to
Participate in an
Earth Celebration and Their Wedding
On
July 28th, 1990
At
12:00 Noon
At
Steppingstone Farm Museum
Darlington, Maryland*

R.S.V.P.: by July 10th

Fifty-one people came to our potluck wedding.



JOHN AND IONA CONNER'S WEDDING

INTRODUCTIONS AND WHAT EACH PERSON LOVES MOST IN NATURE

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

UNIVERSE RITUAL

TANYA'S SONG

OUR PLEDGES TO EACH OTHER

COVENANT WITH THE EARTH BY ALL

BLESSING UPON THE WEDDING

PLANT TREE

NATIVE AMERICAN UNIVERSAL DANCE OF PEACE

KATHY'S SONG (Bread and Roses)

"WE SHALL OVERCOME"

My dress came from an old yacht-club friend's yard sale. The Catlins gave us recycled paper plates and napkins for the event as their gift and the Hathaways paid for the use of the place. Michele Hartman wrote out Chief Seattle's whole speech. We had non-alcoholic, Quaker punch and the Ransom family brought a grill and made jambalaya, which I stubbornly didn't eat because I was being a vegetarian at the time. I was so inconsiderate in upholding my values.



*Wedding photos by Joanie with Joanie's note on the back:
Surprise! This one did turn out and it's neat (especially with Phoebe -- who
performed the marriage -- and your Homeland friend!)*

Here is the Universe Ritual: a 180-foot-long rope laid on the ground in a gigantic spiral with gorgeous geodes marking key events on the timeline and orated by John's friend in his deep, luxurious voice:

UNIVERSE RITUAL

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE DREAM AND THE DREAM WAS WITH THE MYSTERY AND THE DREAM WAS THE MYSTERY (at which point John and I were poised at the outer end of the rope):

THE DREAM WAS WITH THE MYSTERY IN THE BEGINNING.

THROUGH THE DREAM ALL THINGS CAME TO BE,

NOT ONE THING HAD ITS BEING BUT THROUGH THE DREAM.

15 billion years ago	The universe came into being. (We slowly walked 120 feet inward to the first geode.)
5 billion years ago	The Earth and solar system emerged. (an 18-foot walk to the next geode)
3 1/2 billion years ago	Life emerged in simple bacteria.
2 billion years ago	Oxygen formed in the atmosphere.
1 billion years ago	The Earth reproduced life sexually.
800 million years ago	Multi-cellular life emerged.
520 million years ago	The first fish emerged.
420 million years ago	The first land plants appeared.
360 million years ago	The first insects came to be.
220 million years ago	The first mammals emerged.
180 million years ago	The first birds took flight.
130 million years ago	The first flowering plants appeared.
80 million years ago	Dinosaurs became extinct.
100 thousand years ago	Homo sapiens emerged in Africa. (Now our steps are tiny as the timeline grows crowded with smaller and smaller intervals; this one is only one foot.)
10 thousand years ago	The last ice age occurred and agriculture began.
Several thousand years ago	Abraham left Ur in Chaldee.
2 thousand years ago	Jesus of Nazareth was born.
2 hundred years ago	The Industrial Revolution began.
47 years ago	The atom was split.
20 years ago	The first human stepped on the moon.
Yesterday	The wall between East and West disintegrated.

Today the universe dreams us forth by name: (John and I are at the center of the spiral and our wedding begins.)

John's vows to Iona:

1. Lifelong loving relationship
2. Rich and full lives
3. Grow in quest for Justice and Truth
4. Respond to physical, spiritual needs
5. Work unceasingly till environmental justice comes

Iona's vows to John:

1. Sensitive, caring mate, glowing with exuberance or tired, sick, discouraged -- will you be the same?
2. Support as you live according to your values
3. Cherish uniqueness
4. Squeeze in as many hugs and kisses as possible without slowing down The Coalition.
5. To Home Planet Earth immersed in beauty, time for renewal, reflection, reverence, flowers, clouds, stars, moon, soils, winds
6. Walk though life together

Closing -- Earth Covenant: A Citizen's Treaty for Common Ecological Security



*Joanie and me; she would marry Joe Daurio a year later --
her first wedding*

Our wedding album is filled with notes, mementos and a few "illegal" photos. In my anti-toxics stage, I had requested NO PHOTOS to avoid the chemicals used in developing them back then but we did get a few contraband photos -- thanks to Joanie and another friend who ignored my request. The photos are stuck on the blank sides of heavy, bright blue paper I salvaged from the DEP. The flip sides read: Management Plan 1983-1986; For Hazardous Waste Site Cleanups in New Jersey; August 1983, N.J. Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Waste Management -- Hazardous Site Mitigation Administration.

Tom McCarthy's letter to us contained Mark Twain's 1894 quote, which is applicable today: "Love seems the swiftest but it is the slowest of all growths. No man or woman really knows what perfect love is until they have been married a quarter of a century."

Why On Earth Did We Start a Non-Profit?

We started a 501(c)(3) corporation because we were serious about our life's mission and wanted to be able to get funding. Less than a month after our wedding, we drafted the papers and filed our application with the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation to start the Grassroots Coalition for Environmental and Economic Justice. It was approved August 20, 1990.

Our Statement of Purpose starts:

"The Grassroots Coalition for Environmental and Economic Justice, Inc. is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to creating the critical mass of active participants needed to bring ecological justice to this Earth by providing information and resources to individuals which encourage and assist them to make lifestyle changes beneficial to the environment and to promote and facilitate group activities that effectively grapple with local and global environmental concerns."

How On Earth Did We Get Publicity?

We got publicity because we met so many people during our meetings all over Maryland. We were often in the limelight.

Coalition Forms to Save the Earth

By Phylis Kepner

The Columbia Flyer: January 10, 1991



Environment-conscious, Iona and John Conner live simply and want to teach others to do the same. The pair is planning a meeting on rainforests at their home on January 15 and on the environment on January 22, both at 7:30 p.m. Staff photo by Micahel Holahan

John Conner doesn't mince words.

"We human beings are short-sighted and uncaring to a significant extent and are concerned in large measure about what's two inches in front of our noses," he says. "We look for the short-term profit, therefore we're quite content to screw up this Earth and our fellow human beings either because we don't care or don't know, or love comfort too much."

He became exasperated over the world's cavalier attitude toward the environment. His frustration led to action.

"The whole key to (saving the Earth) lies in putting together a process whereby the average person can take a small step forward," he says with conviction.

Now Conner teaches those "small steps" through his Grassroots Coalition for Environmental and Economic Justice, an organization he founded in 1990 in Columbia. The organization seeks to provide information and resources which encourage and assist people to make lifestyle changes beneficial to the environment and to promote group activities that effectively grapple with local and global environmental problems.

At the coalition's first meeting, 65 people came together to explore the possibilities of gathering great numbers of the religious community to work for ecological justice.

Conner, an ex-Jesuit priest, chose his ecumenical audience partly because of his background and because he felt there is a great potential for environmental work among caring, organized congregations.

His choice is proving correct. Now, two years later, over 100 churches and synagogues in Maryland, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania are involved in Conner's work.

And on the home front, Iona Conner, John's wife of four months, has also become a partner in the cause. Saving the Earth is both their full-time job and their recreation. "It's all we do," says John.

Simplicity

John perches on the edge of an earth-toned sofa in the Conners' uncluttered apartment, ready to jump up to retrieve documents and evidence to further support his life work from the map-lined office in the next room.

"We maintain a simple lifestyle," says John, who formerly taught theology at the University of Scranton and math at McDonogh School.

In fact, the Conners practice what they preach and believe that most people are willing to make changes in their lives to benefit the environment if they are invited to do so in a gentle, friendly manner and if the changes do not, at least initially, require substantial sacrifice.

"I think we have to get much more discriminating about what we're buying -- and not buy so much," says Iona, who studied public health and environmental law at Rutgers and who worked as an air pollution inspector in New Jersey. "And I think we have to be willing to put in labor where we're used to appliances. For instance, I don't use the dishwasher or the dryer."

Meeting at individual churches, the Conners provide a list of ways to make a difference by setting up the church as an environmental model/teacher. They encourage the congregations to plan an Earth Day worship service, to recycle and use recycled paper for bulletins and church announcements, to rid the church kitchen of plastic, Styrofoam and hazardous cleaning products, to make compost from their organic leftovers, to carpool and to test the church for radon.

"When the church begins to do these things," John says, "The church becomes the vehicle by which one influences the members to make lifestyle changes."

From these meetings, members with concerns about major environmental issues -- rainforest destruction and ecological legislation -- are also recruited.

Then, using the Grassroots Coalition Action Manual, a compilation of concrete suggestions and resources, individual members spread the word, inviting others to general meetings. And so the coalition grows.

"Here are all our contact persons," John says, showing off his "prize possession" -- a blue plastic file box. In it are the names of leaders at several Howard County churches -- St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church, Kittamaquindi Community, Rockland United Methodist.

And, in fact, the churches are appreciative. "(The Conners) have been very, very helpful to us as we've proceeded, by letting us know what's worked and what hasn't for other churches," says Tom McCarthy, a member of St. John's Environmental Committee. "We've been able to benefit from their experience. There were at St. John's -- as I suspect there are at most other churches and synagogues -- many people who saw a clear connection between their spirituality and love of Creation," McCarthy says, "but it wasn't until the Grassroots Coalition approached the parish that we began to form an ongoing group concerned with ecological issues."

Lately though, it's not just places of worship that are receiving the Conners' message. Iona Conner, who calls herself "a resident expert in lifestyle changes to minimize exposure to chemicals," is taking the Conner message to high schools, community associations and industrial parks.

On a larger scale, Iona Conner is planning a meeting on rainforests on Tuesday, January 15 at 7:30 p.m. and a county-wide environmental meeting on January 22 at the same time. Both meetings will be held at 9685 Basket Ring Road, Apartment 1, Columbia.

Survival

Despite that the Grassroots Coalition operates solely on grants and donations, John Conner is confident that his cause will provide.

"If I walk up to you and say I have this vague, ill-defined hope, will you please contribute, that's not so likely," says John. "But if I say, 'Here is this concrete plan, it's in operation,' then it's much more likely for your group to help."

While the bulk of his group's funds comes from churches and grants, individuals can participate. A \$10 donation per year entitles the donor to a monthly newsletter that keeps environmentalists apprised of issues before Congress and offers in-home conservation tips.

"(We) started from scratch, with only common sense and energy and no real training (by saying) things are good," says John.

And in a few years, he feels that most of Maryland will know about his group.

How far would he like to take it?

"To Timbuktu," he quickly retorts.

Choosing My Own Way

I told John I wanted to work with teenagers and people who didn't go to church. I applied for two successive grants from the Maryland Department of Education to work with high school students. This was an extraordinarily fun part of my life. I received both grants to organize teenagers in our county and then other counties to help them work in unison on larger projects.

Since I had spent so many years on the ugliness of toxic chemicals and hazardous waste, I wanted to work on beautiful things like forests and rainforests. I was also starting to write environmental books for the young people to help them break away from the rigid conformity in their lives (schools, churches, etc.). I used to call myself a "Body Snatcher." I viewed my work as the antithesis to ROTC recruiters, hoping the lure of environmental or peace work would prevent young people from signing up for war.

I never thought that taking a bunch of teens with me to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to protest clear-cutting our state forests -- and standing outside with our signs waving to people in passing cars hoping they'd honk in support -- was contradictory to using Maryland Department of Education money to do so.

Once I realized it many years later, I chuckled. How nervy and naïve can one woman be?



The teenagers I worked with painted my car for a caravan of several vehicles to Green Ridge State Forest to protest clear-cutting on our public land.

We also painted many cars and, linked with other environmental groups, helped organize a caravan to the DNR office in the forest. "My" students worked with a few adults to make a video of the clear-cutting we witnessed. One man was so upset that his parents had killed two huge trees at their home that he volunteered to edit our video using melancholy Native American flute music as the background.

When a public hearing was scheduled at a nearby community college, the students helped prepare a shock for the government officials who ran the meeting. When it was my turn to testify, the curtains on the stage opened and our film rolled showing the destruction in state forests on a huge screen with powerful music. THAT was our collective statement.

We also worked together to put on vegetarian dinners with local high school bands to raise money to buy rainforest acreage. We showed rainforest videos and, in order to avoid disposable products, borrowed real silverware from a church, trays from a school where our students had convinced them to stop using Styrofoam trays and switch to reusable ones and I brought dozens of cloth napkins.

At one point, the teens helped me compile eight Student Action Guides (one for each of our top issues). I worked with a gigantic calendar tacked to the wall in our apartment and we plotted deadlines and ideas together. Our work was published by Sheed and Ward; unfortunately, it was not a best-seller but I'm convinced that the students who contributed to this project (including several elementary children) learned a great deal from the effort, as did those who bought the set.

John and I created a lot of documents; he handed his out at churches but I sent my thoughts and experiences to ... well, anywhere.

Here's something of mine that was published in England in 1992 in the "Fourth World Review: For Small Nations, Small Communities & the Human Spirit."

Great Teens

Our high-schoolers are starting up Home Study/Action groups in different parts of Maryland. They are very similar to the "People Power" groups described by Peter Cadogen in FWR 52/53. The students meet weekly outside of school so they escape bureaucracy and negative adults. They read serious books, have discussions, plan their own actions and act within our larger network on broad issues such as clear-cutting of our state forests and Native American issues.

Some of their ideas so far are:

- 1. Vegetarian, potluck, letter-writing dinner;*
- 2. Painting signs to save forests, to be placed in the forests at prominent places as well as to use at demonstrations (we "lift" illegal real estate signs and repaint them);*
- 3. Environmental fashion show (old clothes from thrift stores, etc.);*
- 4. Make life miserable for polluting businesses;*
- 5. See a socially-responsible movie together;*
- 6. Visit the forest and see the clear-cutting.*

The teens are GREAT!

Why On Earth Did I Study Revolutionaries?

I wanted to know more about fully-committed lives so I blocked off the Summer of 1992 to do some reading. I selected four people who had made a difference in the world, alternating female and male and going back in time (Gloria Steinham, Ghandi, Emma Goldman, Jesus) and read these books:

Blessed Simplicity (about monks)

Emma Goldman, An Intimate Life by Alex Wexler

Emma Goldman in Exile, Wexler

Man, The Unknown by Alexis Carral

Breaking Free From Compulsive Eating by Geneen Roth

Dream of the Earth by Thomas Berry

Revolution From Within by Gloria Steinham

The Perfect Resume

Mahatma Gandhi, His Life and Influence by Kumar and Puri

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches

Bible (I almost got converted to Christianity. I even wore colorful wooden Earth beads with a wooden crucifix dangling in the middle for a while and another time, I sat with about 25 nuns in a group called Sisters of the Earth and told them that, despite being on my third marriage with two grown sons and five grandchildren, I wanted to be an environmental nun. Something about their seriousness and community support appealed greatly to me. But there was not enough about women or the environment for me in the Bible and my fundamentalist Bible-study teacher said there were military people in her

church. That seemed like the greatest hypocrisy so I refused to be baptized in her church. My studies ended with me hugging a tree in the woods near our home and crying.)

Boy, that was close!

Done with revolutionaries.

Next book list:

The Peaceable Kingdom

Book about Bonhoeffer

Gnostic Gospels including *Gospel of Thomas*

Seven Came Through by Eddie Richenbacher

Principles of Christian Theology by Mac Quarrie

Who Will Tell the People? by William Greider

* * *

Later that year, John and I prepared a 90-page booklet, *Environmental Lifestyles: Howard County Edition*. We took it wherever we went. Our introduction reads:

Dear Friend of the Earth-Community,

The Grassroots Coalition has been working with churches and schools for several years. Our goal is to involve very large numbers of people in effective efforts aimed at achieving environmental justice in our society. We have come to see that we Americans do not hesitate in much of our lives to choose wealth and comfort over the health of our Earth and its inhabitants. This short-sighted selfishness leads us to poison the water that we drink, the air that we breathe and the soil that grows our food. It is bringing about Global Warming and the destruction of the protective Ozone Layer. It is leading us to cut down our forests and to make extinct thousands of species.

We can rescue our Earth-Community if all of us join in a well planned, persistent effort to:

- 1. Make appropriate personal lifestyle changes.*
- 2. Work together in our communities to improve local environmental conditions.*
- 3. Influence governments and corporations to do what is right.*

If you ever have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the Coalition Office. We will either know the answer to your question or tell you how to find it.

Sincerely,

John and Iona Conner

Wonderful Times with My Family

One of my favorite things to do is visit my family in New Jersey. It was extraordinarily exciting to be in Joanie and Joe's wedding, then in Michael and Billie's and Mitchell and Ginger's as Mother of the Grooms. Now I have seven beautiful grandchildren and I see almost everyone whenever I return to the Jersey Shore. My eldest granddaughter lives out of state but I get to see the others regularly. Those trips are an important part of my life. Spending time with my "kids" and their kids is always fun. It's also great to spend time with Joanie, Joe and their cat, Abby.



(left) Joanie's wedding day; she's on the right.

Directly Below: Joe and Abby.

Below left: Michael and Billie's wedding day

Below right: Mitchell and Ginger's wedding day



50-Years-Into-the-Future Dream

*(When I woke up I wished I had known a good movie producer to bring this one to large audiences.
Sometime after Gulf War, around 1993.)*

WHIRLWIND -- John and I are doing our work, getting ready for a meeting in some building.

TORNADO -- We're lifted off our feet -- everything is turning GRAY -- we're bumped into walls but
not hurt -- we're both airborne -- spinning from one wall to another individually
Trying to get to him -- success -- Now WE'RE TOGETHER -- holding on to each other

ROOM FLOATING -- not much fear: I say to him for encouragement: "THINK OF GOD!"

MY OWN THOUGHTS -- Our work (I was not a Christian -- did not think of God for my own
comfort)

**CYCLONE STOPS -- ALL IS GRAY -- ALL FACES NOW PRETTY MUCH
THE SAME!**

My face looks like all the other women's; John's like all the other men's -- like an old "TWILIGHT
ZONE" show

Clothes, ages, facial hair and hairdos are different BUT --

Basic men's faces are all the same

Women's, too -- very little difference

PEOPLE EVERYWHERE

**EVERYTHING ARTIFICIAL
ARTIFICIALLY BRIGHT COLORS**

NO EARTH

NO GRASS

NO TREES

NO FLOWERS

NO ANIMALS

NO SKY

NO NOISE

SILENT PEOPLE EVERYWHERE

PEOPLE -- LOTS OF THEM --

Aimless, all moving as a herd

LARGE BUILDINGS -- FOUR STORIES HIGH

ALL GRAY

ALL CRUMBLING

PEOPLE SLOWLY, CONSTANTLY MOVING IN THE SAME DIRECTION

Faces coming out of a GRAY building --

Smoothly -- constant silent motion

They have faces of shiny, colored plastic with slits for mouths which don't move or speak.

NO HORROR OR PAIN -- Just coming out of the building like roaches as building is about to
disintegrate

NOBODY TALKS TO ANYBODY, LOOKS AT ANYBODY

NO SIGN OF INTERACTION OR CONCERN

SLOW, STEADY MOVEMENTS --

NO PANIC
SAME PACE
NO RHYTHM OR BEAT
ONE HOMOGENIOUS MOVEMENT

NEXT BIG GRAY BUILDING CRUMBLING

PHONEY PHONES BEING HANDED DOWN AND AROUND
(like Dr. Seuss's Whisper-ma phone in *The Lorax*)
PHONES MADE OF LEGO-TYPE MATERIAL
POOR SECTION -- EVERYBODY USED SAME PHONE
– COULDN'T PAY THE PHONE BILL –
"EVERYBODY" SLOWLY LEAVES BUILDING AS BUILDING
CRUMBLES
FALLS
SLOWLY
C R U M B L I N G

NOT REAL PEOPLE ANYMORE --
LIKE LEGO PEOPLE -- PLASTIC
BROWNISH, BLUISH
SMOOTH, SHINY, PLASTIC FACES
NO PAIN
NO FEAR

A N A E S T H E T I Z E D

Occasionally John reappears -- not much like himself but somebody to talk with as I'm walking through this

STERILE, CRUMBLING CIVILIZATION
LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE THE SAME
WALKING AIMLESSLY
NO EMOTION
JUST GOING ALONG
NO NATURE LEFT

GRAY BUILDING (NOT DARK)

D
I
S
I
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W A T E R

Building had been made of recycled, GRAY material, did not last!

RECYCLED PAPER -- **ALL** THE BUILDINGS WERE MADE OF RECYCLED GRAY CARDBOARD

NOT LASTING

NOTHING IS LASTING

EVERYTHING IS CRUMBLING

NOTHING IS "REAL"

NO CHILDREN

NO CARS

NO MORE TECHNOLOGY

NO MORE NATURAL RESOURCES

NOBODY

CARES!

EVERYBODY JUST KEEPS MOVING IN ONE DIRECTION AS IF IN A

DAZE/HAZE



THE WHOLE MOOD CHANGES



I find an old, cotton book cover on the ground on which I had written a letter to John when I was in Israel.

I'm excitedly showing it to him -- the cloth feels good -- it's REAL cotton, well-made, worn but holding up after all these years. It had endured! Natural cotton. One could see the threads woven together.

It was reddish in one corner -- blood? paint? Not startling, just a curious stain.

BRIEF IMAGE OF WAR

ALL OF THE GLORY BOYS HAVE MELDED INTO ONE EVIL IMPRESSION FROM SADDAM HUSSEIN TO
NORMAN SCHWARZKOPF -- ALL THE KILLERS -- ALL THE FEROCIOUS MALE WARRIORS BECOME ONE EVIL
IMPRESSION -- NOT ONE STANDS OUT -- ALL EQUALLY AWFUL -- DEADLY MEN

ONE MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN COMES LOPING, BOPPING OUR WAY

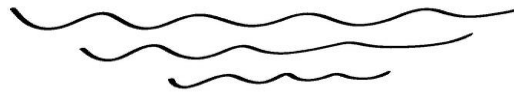
BOUNCY

HAPPY

She wears a T-shirt full of slogans.

SHE IS

ALIVE



She has messages of hope on her T-shirt.

SHE HAS

A SMILE

The first smile in the whole damn dream --

SHE'S REAL



She's got some quirky religion -- New Age? Fundamentalist?

WHO CARES?

She is the first human being who is awake mentally in the entire dream!

She's not "pretty" by Hollywood standards but she's much more beautiful than all the actresses in the world because she is

HERSELF.

She is not made up to be anybody else.

SHE IS HER **S**ELF

She wears glasses and has a pocketbook slung recklessly over her shoulder.
Her religion is not exactly mine but she's

VIBRANT

HAPPY

ALIVE

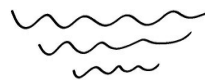
and willing/eager to

THINK AND TALK

SHE HAS ENERGY

SHE HAS HOPE

SHE IS REAL



Epilogue

John and she and I are now together -- we have somebody to talk with and to plan with and to work with to change the world.

As I woke up I wondered whether John and I got our own faces back. The answer has to be

YES.

Part 5: The Order of the Earth

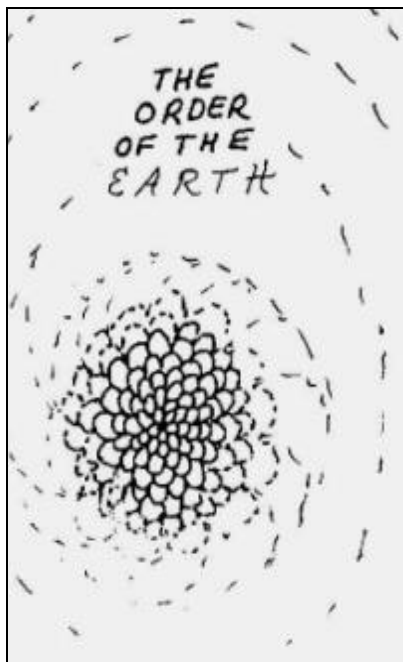
Heart leads, I follow.

1995 was a wonderful year for me. Mom sold our childhood house and moved into a cozy basement apartment with Joanie and Joe. It was a perfect home for our aging, nearly-blind mother whose MS had taken its toll and she was no longer able to walk alone. Pam, a lovely Jamaican woman, was her caregiver. Pam, Mom and Mom's cat had a good life with Joanie and Joe.

Joanie and I split the profit from the sale of the house and suddenly John and I were able to get out of debt. I could coast for a while with no emergency part-time jobs.

I put my best environmental thoughts into a book, concentrating on every word. It was a concise summary with my boldest ideas. The cover started with a seed (me) in the center and grew to a flower, then spiraled out to cover the Earth and on into the Universe. Since I was at the height of my anti-technology stage, I hand-wrote every page. Then a group of friends and I made 11,000 of these 32-page, pocket-sized books. We had book-making parties on our living room floor – fold, trim, staple; fold, trim, staple; fold, trim, staple....

"The Order of the Earth" was made of two pieces of unbleached, recycled paper folded in half three times. We trimmed the edges and stapled the insides. The dimensions were 2 3/4 inches wide and 4 1/2 inches long. Mostly we gave them away until the day one of our friends was at a fair and saw a whole box of them made up from the originals we had distributed. Once I knew that my little book had a life of its own, I moved on.



“THIS IS THE WAY I BELIEVE A LIFE SHOULD BE LIVED!”

says my friend, Valley.

And thus she lives.

This little book is a composite of thoughts and actions my friends and I deliberately choose as we live day to day. It describes a Lifestyle Rebellion. If our thoughts touch your hearts, please join us!

The Order of the Earth (OE) is an invisible community of zealots of all ages, both sexes, all faiths, all ethnic backgrounds, living with reverence for all life.

We live with an acute awareness of and sorrow for the human misery and environmental devastation we see. We are taking serious steps to eliminate these problems.

We are building the future NOW!

OE is a Revolution of the Spirit. We are creating gloriously simple ways of being, living minimally and showing younger ones how to do so, too.

We constantly think about what we are doing, saying, observing, buying.

We make value judgments about what promotes life and health and what does not. Then we act accordingly.

We are falling in love again with Nature. We celebrate Earth's gifts to us.

We rejoice in the sun and the moon and the stars, the flowers, the birds, the raindrops.

We are grateful for the beauty of the Earth every minute of every day.

We walk quietly in wilderness as often as possible.

We listen.

“Beloved Creator,
You have given us Earth, the sky and the seas.
Show us the way to care for the Earth, not just for today,
but for ages to come.
Let no plan or work of ours damage or destroy
the beauty of your Creation.
Send forth your Spirit to direct us
to care for the Earth
and all Creation.”

Columban Fathers, St. Columbans, Nebraska

Our daily use of time, talent and energy reflects our innermost beliefs.

We renounce personal pride, racism and nationalism so that peace lives in our hearts all the time. God lives in every one of us.

We understand that we are intimately connected to all other life. We have suffered together.

Now the healing has begun. The work ahead of us is Holy.

We search for ways to achieve spiritual growth which benefit society.

We are joining local groups and working on common problems.

We do not waste our time, energy or money on trivial pursuits.

We do not fuel the competitive atmosphere in our country by watching, listening to or participating in organized sports/games.

We seek pleasure in non-competitive, spontaneous activities.

Our lives are a

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

from multinational corporations and a militaristic society.

We resist the influence of all patriarchal institutions even if it means withdrawing from them COMPLETELY.

We will not adapt.

We will not be silenced any more.

We are part of the non-violent movement revitalizing this country. We are discovering the lies, greed and violence of many major, well-known corporations and we are boycotting them every chance we get.

It is so EMPOWERING to finally understand their evil ways and to KNOW that we don't need their "stuff" anymore!

We do not own TVs. When we are watching TV we are not really living.

We do not pay attention to commercials or advertisements. We think for ourselves.

We are making wonderfully radical lifestyle changes and enjoying our newfound freedom from deadly old habits, traditions and media brain-washing.

We are redesigning our lives and our culture.

We build healthy bodies and spirits through more alert living and thinking.

We spend more time with Nature. The Universe is our teacher. We go to parks and forests, streams, rivers and oceans to experience the mystery of the Universe more closely.

When we cannot get away, we are content beholding clouds, geese, squirrels, spiders, ants, grasses, leaves.....

We see the trees falling – our hearts cry out in pain.

What's happening?

Why?

Who's responsible?

Why didn't I know?

What about next time?

How do we STOP THEM??

We try to track developers but it's so hard! In the meantime we wage our citizen's warfare by boycotting new wood products; new, large, obscene homes and suburban sprawl.

We are willing to sacrifice physical comfort and ease. We would rather sweat in Summer than use air-conditioning which hurts the ozone layer and contributes to global warming. We find other ways to cool off.

(In my own life, I decided not to replace my toaster when it died. When my sewing machine couldn't be fixed, I began making clothes by hand. My latest habit is reading by candlelight.)

First we get ourselves back in harmony with Nature, then we assist others to return to a balanced and sacred relationship.

**ALL LIFE IS SACRED.
ALL LAND IS SACRED.**

We are eager to dedicate ourselves to this effort of healing and saving lives, both human and non-human.

We choose life partners who share our values.

[The next two pages in the middle of the book have three words at the bottom.]

WE TREASURE

S I L E N C E .

VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

We are rising to heights of environmental living which North Americans have never seen before and we are delighting in our escape from TOO MUCH.

We combine passive resistance to mindless habits with active encouragement of younger people to hold tightly to their ideals and to this new view. We work together unflinchingly for the flourishing of life.

We live as sensibly as we can with so few possessions and such great joy that we are proving that we don't want what the distorted "American Dream" offers. We have our own dream of a low-stress, low-impact, low-consumption, environmentally and socially friendly culture where people help each other – a much more personal society than the one which is currently crumbling.

My friends and I do the bare minimum of shopping. When we do shop, it is in small stores and worker-owned cooperatives, NOT in malls or chain stores.

We support American cottage industries and co-ops in less industrialized nations.

We choose plain things and when possible we make our own.

Our motto is:

USE IT UP
WEAR IT OUT
MAKE IT DO
OR DO WITHOUT!

We see the inner beauty, strength, goodness and intelligence of ALL people. We are not fooled by superficial outer trappings like:

- * fashion,
- * jewelry,
- * hair/nails,
- * cosmetics,
- * cars,
- * houses,
- * wealth,
- * college degrees,
- * pedigrees,
- * youth, or
- * thinness.

We stubbornly avoid chemically-contaminated or genetically-engineered food.

We are determined to buy organic food no matter what the cost or we grow our own.

We search for local farmers and health food stores whose values we trust. We buy from them and tell all our friends about them so they thrive.

We work to set up organic food co-ops if there are none near us.

We place restrictions on ourselves. We are vegetarians. In *Diet for a New America*, John Robbins says:

“My family didn’t understand or agree with my decision to turn down the family fortune (Baskin’ Robbins) and not follow in the family business, but in order to become the person I needed to be, I had to unearth and expose all the beliefs that didn’t serve me.”

We are not enablers to an addictive society which allows (and even promotes) single-use, disposable products.

We are “coming off the power plant grid” by using fewer machines and appliances. When we do this, we minimize our use of electricity obtained through coal, oil, gas, nuclear power – all of which have disastrous effects.

WE MUST STOP THE MACHINES ! !

We:

- *own no more than one small home (if that),
- *use non-motorized recreational vehicles,
- *give non-materialistic gifts,
- *unplug ourselves from electronics and rediscover our brains,
- *unclutter our homes,
- *purge our bodies of addictive and harmful substances,
- *bike and walk more,
- *resist rushing,
- *find inner peace, and
- *prepare the way for the children.

We refuse certain career paths:

- *military/weapons,
- *genetic engineering,
- *animal research,
- *nuclear energy,
- *development of unbroken land, and
- *pesticide spraying.

We seek meaningful work:

- *organic farming,
- *restoration,
- *maintenance,
- *social change,
- *mass transit,
- *holistic health,
- *alternative education,
- *music, dance, art.

We read books like:

- *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television
- *In the Absence of the Sacred
- *When God Was a Woman
- *Hope for the Flowers
- *Walk in Balance
- *Medicine Woman
- *Behaving As If the God in All Life Mattered
- *A Room of One's Own
- *Silent Spring
- *The Monkey Wrench Gang
- *Free the Animals
- *Dream of the Earth
- *Universe Story

These are questions I ask before buying anything:

- *What is it made of?
- *Where does it come from?
- *Were the workers treated fairly? Were they exposed to poisons?
- *Did animals suffer?
- *How is it packaged?
- *What happens to it when I'm done with it?
- *Do I REALLY need it?

The preceding ideas are but a few examples of our thoughts. We are working as hard as we can to break the molds which enslave our souls. We are redesigning our lives and our culture.

Here are some challenges:

- How many days can I go without buying anything but food?
- How many days can I go without throwing anything away?
- How many days can I live happily everafter without television?

We OE people are scattered around the country – sharing ideas, hopes and dreams with each other, forming small groups to research and act upon complex issues, offering one another support and encouragement in this struggle to live out of a whole new value system.

We are learning to trust our intuition. When we are very still, with no distractions, we receive guidance from above and from within.

Why would I want to be part of The Order of the Earth?

* To devote my life, my imagination, my intelligence to the health, safety and happiness of all living creatures.

* To be a neighborhood activist learning what's happening, sounding the alarm and gathering friends to act when foul deeds are found.

* Freedom to live my life the way I believe a life should be lived!

My heartfelt thanks to Lou for rekindling my hopes for OE, to Chris for superb editorial comments, to Fran for a wonderful new friendship, to Scott for loving Fran, to John for loving me enough to let me go my own way and to Mom -- whose many gifts enabled me to do this.

Love, Iona

10/2/95

"How Can Such a Bright Girl Be So Stupid?"

(quote from Mom, still appropriate)

I was trying so hard to do so much. Early in 1996, I saw a cover story in *The New Yorker* magazine which horrified me. It was about hormone-disrupting, synthetic chemicals and described (among other things) men's sperm counts going down worldwide. In retrospect, given the enormous growth in population since then, I might have considered that a good sign but back then I was horrified.

Theo Colborn had just released her book, *Our Stolen Future: Are We Threatening Our Fertility, Intelligence and Survival? A Scientific Detective Story*. I read the book with growing dismay.

I decided to write a counterpart to the article and tell everyone what various environmental organizations were doing about the situation. I started calling well-known experts and told them I was writing an article for *The New Yorker*. I was well received even though most of the people had never heard of me.

By December 24, 1996, I had completed a 7,000-word article, "Grassroots Action Plan: What You Can Do About Global Poisoning," including this quote from the book: "*Animal and human studies are linking persistent organic chemicals to low sperm counts, infertility, genital deformities, breast and prostate cancers, hyperactivity and attention deficits in humans, as well as devastating developmental and reproductive anomalies in wildlife.*"

I sent my opus to *The New Yorker* and was surprised that it was rejected.

About a year later, I realized that the reason I had such wonderful responses from the people I interviewed was that I told them I was writing for *The New Yorker*. But only I knew that. *The New Yorker* had never heard of me, nor had they authorized me to write such a story. I was simply telling people that it was their publication I was writing for but the way I phrased it so innocently was construed as if I had an official assignment. I knew so little about the world of publishing! I just wanted the story of the grassroots response to hormone disruptors to be told.

* * *

Not letting a little thing like that discourage me, I continued my writing "career." Feeling more and more like a writer with something to say, I compiled an 8 ½ by 11" booklet called "The Order of the Earth: Stories by Iona" and tried selling it for \$5. The contents were:

- Celebrations (Earth Day)
- Ten Ideas for a Radical Environmental Activist
- Keep the 2 in 32 (our effort to keep a scenic highway two lanes instead of four)
- Action Plan for Adopt-a-Highway Volunteers
- A Motivated Road Warrior (My lead was: "I live in a war zone. In my body. In my work. In my culture.")
- Weaning Myself from Christmas Trees in the Face of Global Warming
- Book Review: Silence, A Precious Gift in a Precocious Culture
- Global Poisoning (*New Yorker* story above)
- Notre Dame Students' Response to Hormone Disrupting Chemicals

- Iona's Song
- Short Story About a Name Change
- Hello, Is Anybody Home? (about a bus ride with a TV showing nonsensical material: "CAN YOU SHUT THAT THING OFF?" I shouted from my seat in an unladylike manner, inwardly hoping that the others would join me in a raucous chorus of dissent. Silence. The bus driver suggested I ask the other passengers, so I walked up and down the aisle gripping the back of each seat as the bus sped along, asking if each person wanted the TV off. Silence again. I went back to my seat amazed at others' apathy.)
- An Invitation to Go Back
- What's New? (dream of a little girl with her head and hat covered in plastic wrap)
- Dream: 50 Years Into the Future
- The Order of the Earth
- Jason's Letter
- Iona's Truths (by Sylvia Diss)
- HELP! (maze on the last page: "I'm drowning in debt. Is there a philanthropist in our Order of the Earth universe? \$12,000 per year would free me from the bondage of poverty. Who will sponsor this work for a few years? ... ")

At the very end of the book, after the maze, I typed this Murray Bookchin quote:

"Nor do piecemeal steps, however well intended, even partially resolve problems that have reached a universal, global and catastrophic character. If anything, partial 'solutions' serve merely as cosmetics to conceal the deep-seated nature of the ecological crisis. They thereby deflect public attention and theoretical insight from an adequate understanding of the depth and scope of the necessary changes."

How On Earth Did The Go-Back Club Begin?

(Some of you may be surprised to learn that I first put out the idea for The Go-Back Club around 1997; I found this Invitation in the above collection of stories.)

An Invitation to Go Back

I'm going to come right out and tell you what I believe:

WE NEED TO GO BACK! That's right -- back. B - A - C - K. We've gone too far. We have too much, we do too much, we work too much, we want too much, we waste too much. We even know too much. Too much. Too much. Too much. Too much.

Too many choices. Too much confusion. It's crazy, isn't it?

Do you think for a moment that the nonsensical patterns of living today are what our species was created for? Vast destruction, violent death, illness, restlessness, unhappiness, turmoil, confusion?

Twenty years ago, I was living with the wrong person, so I changed that. Eighteen years ago I was living in the wrong place, so I changed that. Fifteen years ago it dawned on me that I was living in the wrong time! I longed for simpler days -- pre-TV and pre-car! Now, how do you change THAT?

Since I haven't learned how to time-travel, I started analyzing my life to find ways I could simply step out of the Rat Race and go back in time in many ways while remaining an active participant in life. I have found great joy and satisfaction in doing this.

Just so you don't think I am a lone lunatic, let me share the thoughts of an Australian man who sent me a letter five years ago:

"It's not a case of conserve or slow down. It's a case of GO BACK, GO BACK NOW!

"And go a long way back! You won't solve this problem by recycling and sorting your garbage, by turning off the air-conditioning or driving a smaller car. You don't cure an alcoholic by reducing the amount he drinks; he has to STOP. To cure us thing-a-holics, we've got to STOP our rate of consumption/production.

"I've lived in 'the bush,' grown my own food, done without electricity and all those other things. It ain't easy. You try selling Mr. and Mrs. America a program where they can't have a car, air-conditioning, heating, out-of-season food. Try telling them that it's not going to get bigger, better, more comfortable. Promise 'em hard living and LESS and see where you get, particularly when the mass media will be telling them, 'The Greenies are exaggerating. Science and technology will come up with the answer.'"

Today I am taking up his challenge. I AM going to spend my life trying to convince "Mr. and Mrs. America" to go back! To give up much of what they think is necessary. To stop shopping as a pastime. To seek bottom-line simplicity. To "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, OR DO WITHOUT!" (Old New England proverb)

I'm going to suggest that when an appliance breaks, if it can't be fixed, it ought not be replaced. I'm going to urge you to learn how to mend things so they'll last longer; to lower your standards; keep old furniture, carpeting, clothing; don't paint your home or wash your clothes so often; let your lawn go wild.

Hold on to what you need but selectively unload your cumbersome "stuff" to people who can use it. Choose items and corresponding recipients carefully so that your possessions serve their highest possible use. Don't just dump things in a hurry. Treasure OUR natural resources for they are not yours alone -- they are an inheritance to be shared amongst all of us. Use your brilliance and imagination to create a life you love and believe in.

Can you see how simply the Amish live? They do not rely on technology for happiness. They have community, family, faith, love of the land. They are complete with very little.

I was ecstatic when I read a recent piece in The Baltimore Sun on May 7, 1997 by John Brain. As part of Baltimore's bicentennial celebration, children living in a section called Govens were invited to enter an essay contest. The themes were either "Why I'd Like to Have Lived in Govens 100 Years Ago" or "Why I'm Glad I Didn't Live in Govens 100 Years Ago."

MOST of the children decided that life 100 years ago was preferable to today's living. Although they acknowledged the need for harder physical work, most of them envisioned deep rewards: "...a placid environment without television or street violence, terrorist bombings, drugs, gangs or gangsta rap with its bad role models and cuss words." One child basked in the notion that, "There were no words in songs! There was just nice, soft music."

The young people had fond impressions of families spending lots of time together, going places -- dads AND moms. One 10-year-old understood that 100 years ago, "Children lived in their own world and were not involved in adult concerns."

What I learned from these young writers was not about their dreams of the past but about their dread of the present. Their yearning for security; for close, stable families; for Mom and Dad together; a Little House on the Prairie life. Or, as one child wrote, "Parents should look back to the future."

So, now we have Govens students, one man from Australia and me in the "GO BACK CLUB." Anyone else care to join us? Just call Iona.

[I wrote the introduction to this story at 7 a.m. travelling 50 miles an hour with my husband in Chicago's early-morning rush hour. It was cloudy and we were surrounded by concrete and steel. Commuters were starting their day at train platforms bundled like mummies against the cold, while those who were driving alongside of us were all going through the same motions, at the same pace, all of the same mind. Gray. Gray. Gray. Gray day. Gray place. Gray people.]

Iona is the founder of The Order of the Earth, a Maryland-based group which helps people make radical, environmental lifestyle changes. She and her husband, John, run the Grassroots Coalition for Environmental and Economic Justice. They (with colleges, churches and high schools) work to eradicate the root causes of environmental degradation and societal decay. The first draft of this story was written with a quill pen and the final copy was prepared on a typewriter using salvaged paper.

How On Earth Did We Survive Financially?

We didn't -- despite the fact that we did everything we could think of. We received food from food pantries, mostly in churches, John wrote impassioned and successful fundraising letters, we got grants in the early years and, when nothing else worked, I worked. I found the most unusual jobs and invented a few of my own but the latter were always -- consistently -- financial failures. I am not a business woman. I am an environmentalist.

My favorite job was at PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), where I met my lifelong friend Rainbow Moon, a deeply spiritual woman who receives and shares messages from those who have crossed over to those of us still dealing with life in the physical dimension.

At PETA, I experienced my first real protest. My first day of work, we were herded into vans and driven to the Capitol because Republicans were using elephants (their symbol) for some promotional purpose on a cold, cold day. This was cruel. Elephants are warm-weather creatures, so off we went to defend them.

Our area was cordoned off and I remember carrying my sign to the edge of the tape and staring down a policeman with righteous indignation. How could they let Republicans mistreat helpless, innocent and noble animals?

I also worked in a nursing home, which was so bad that I unintentionally walked out one day and never came back. At first I was looking for a pay phone in the lobby, but there was none. So I got in my car and drove to the nearest gas station to call John.

"Can we afford for me to quit this job?"

"Sure. Come on home."

So, I did.

* * *

I started developing a "Kitchen Sink" résumé so I could keep track of all the jobs I had. Here's what part of it looks like:

WORK HISTORY (* = paid)

Experience Works! Participant Assistant; March 2014 to present.*

Attended Progressive PA Summit in Harrisburg representing The Go-Back Club; Winter 2014.

Started The Go-Back Club (a Simple-Living Brigade) and online newspaper (www.gobackclub.org); September 2013 to present.

Wrote article about my newspaper and anti-fracking work for an anthology by AK Press titled Grabbing Back: Resistance Against the Global Land Grab; authors include Noam Chomsky and Vandana Shiva; Spring 2013.

Edited second edition of The Long, Hard Road to Korean Medicine by Dr. Chung-whan Byun.*

Launched alternative, global warming newspaper, "The Order of the Earth: News, Views and Musings;" (changed to "Earth News;" iLoveEarthNews.com); January 1, 2008 to December 17, 2011.

Library Helper and Experience Works! federal training program participant developing skills needed to become self-employed newspaper publisher; August 2007 to February 2008.*

Phase II Presenter for Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth* educational outreach program; Spring 2007 to program's conclusion in winter 2008.

Wrote cover story for Land Trust Alliance magazine, "Climate Change: Land Trusts Take Action;" Summer 2008.*

Article published in H.E.R. Local: Her Everyday Resource, The Herald-Mail Company, "How and Why I Started My Own Newspaper;" Fall 2008.

Machine operator, Dallco sewing factory; periodically from August 2008 to May 2012.*

Auditor, Cromwell Township; January to March 2007.*

Substitute Teacher, Mount Union Area School District, Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11, Fulton County School District, Huntingdon Area School District; 2006 to June 2007.*

Substitute Teacher, Southern Huntingdon County School District; 2005 to June 2007.*

Freelance Writer: Created cover letter for Cottonfield USA organic cotton clothing company; October 2006.*

Freelance Writer, *The Valley Log*, a weekly newspaper, Orbisonia, PA; August 2006 to January 2007.*

Acting Editor, *The Valley Log*; March to August 2006.*

Kindergarten Teacher Aide, Southern Huntingdon County School District; October 2005 to June 2006.*

Grants Coordinator, Department of Natural Resources, Cunningham Falls State Park; 2003 to 2004.*

Teacher, Community Learning Center, Minority Achievement and Intervention Program, Sykesville Middle School; started Life Savers Environmental Club; 2003 to 2004.*

Home and Hospital Tutor, Carroll County; 2003.*

Office Manager, Dr. Marianne Rothschild; 2002 to 2004.*

Home and Hospital Tutor, Frederick County Public Schools; 2002 to 2004.*

Reporter, *The Gazette* (a *Washington Post* company), Frederick, Maryland; 2000-2002.*

Co-Director Grassroots Coalition for Environmental and Economic Justice, Shade Gap, Pennsylvania; 1990-present.

Environmental Teacher, two Maryland State Department of Education Service Learning grants to work with public, private and Catholic high school students and church youth groups on environmental issues in Howard, Ann Arundel, and Baltimore counties and Baltimore City; 1992-1993.*

Teacher, Reading Lab, Howard Community College, Columbia, Maryland; 1991-1992.*

Senior Area Coordinator, Bureau of Community Relations, Division of Hazardous Waste Management, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection; Trenton; 1987-1990.*

Air Pollution Inspector, Middlesex County Health Department, Perth Amboy; New Jersey 1986-1987.*

Environmental Inspector, City of Paterson Health Department, New Jersey; 1985-1986.*

Teacher, Bergen County Department of Special Services, New Jersey; 1984-1985.*

Wrote and Published Metamorphosis; 1981-1982.

Teacher, Brick Township Public Schools, New Jersey (Ocean County Conservation Teacher of the Year); 1975-1981.*

Nurse (various institutions and private duty cases): Middlesex, Union, Ocean, Bergen and Hudson counties, New Jersey; 1965-1985.*

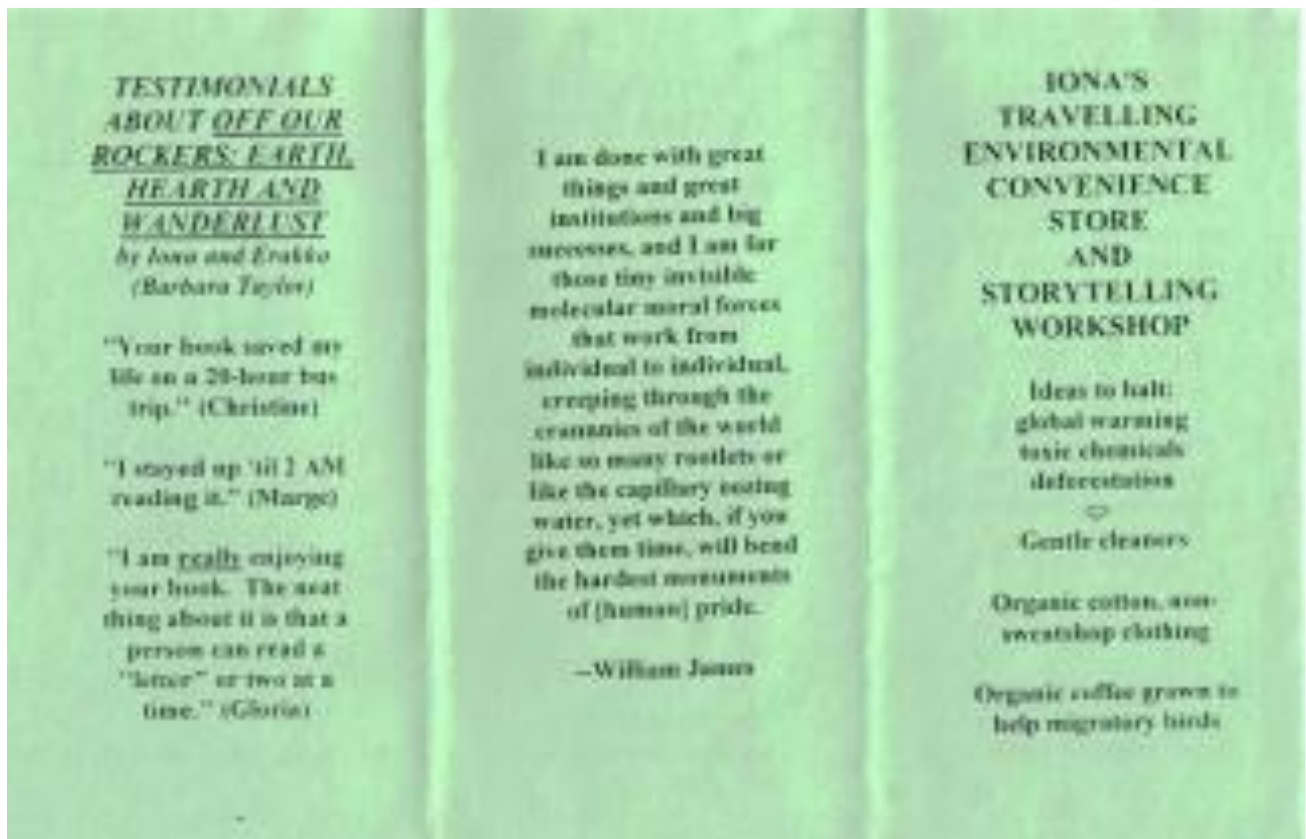
My Kitchen Sink résumé also included headlines from dozens of my favorite articles published at *The Gazette* and *The Valley Log* plus my name-change story in case a future employer wanted to check out a job I held long ago; they'd never find me under my current name.

Here are some businesses cards for my creative ventures:



- New View Partnership (Shaklee, the letter I sent with my final check to the Comptroller of the Maryland Treasury said: *Dear Tax People, My New View Partnership has been doing a slow death. I have decided to drop it.....*)
- Environmental Educator
- Dyslexia Reading Tutor
- Iona's Earth Works
- The Order of the Earth Newspaper for Environmentalists and Global Warming Presentations
- Farms First! Nutrient Management Consultant

And here is my all-time favorite. This brochure was half the size of a normal one (saving trees).



I wasn't going to put my Wanting-to-Get-Arrested-With-Shaklee-Profits story into my book until I spoke with Rainbow recently and she told me how that story had inspired her.

When I was starting to sell Shaklee products (safe cleaning formulas, supplements and cosmetics) I went to a meeting my "Upline" hosted with about a dozen other suburban housewives. She asked us to describe what we hoped to do with all the money we were going to make selling Shaklee products.

I sat and listened to the others until it was my turn. Big cars, fancier homes, ritzy vacations. Not me. I wanted to earn enough to go out West and help protect an old-growth forest with my friends who were sitting in trees and trying anything they could think of to stop loggers from devastating gigantic swaths of forests. I told the women I wanted to earn enough money to be able to fly out, get arrested, pay my bail and fly home again.

Silence.

I never did go out West and I've never been arrested but that's what was in my heart at the time. Here's what Rainbow told me:

Your Shaklee story inspired me. That experience was so important to you. Your sharing it inspired me and provided me the permission I needed to up-level my activism at that time. What I heard you expressing was, "This is how strongly I feel about the environment and this is what I'm committed to doing about it." It let me know that I wasn't alone in my regard for our beloved Earth and Nature -- that I wasn't crazy. When did it become man against Nature? We ARE Nature -- human beings ARE Nature. It's like a primal urge inside me to defend the Earth and the Natural world.

Your story helped me accept this aspect of myself and realize that it's not bad or wrong being a Nature Girl or Boy. It helped me embrace and appreciate a natural aspect of my being that is routinely discredited and ridiculed by big business, capitalist government and mainstream American society.

Your story watered a seed of activism within me that was just beginning to sprout at that time. It's what provided me the confidence to go set up a community Reiki tent at Occupy 2013 -- using YOUR red tent, Lady!

Some folks have a cause they're willing to die for; when we first met 20 years ago, I needed to meet myself where I was at and begin with willing to be arrested. Your story assured me then -- as it continues inspiring me now -- that it's ok to feel that strongly committed to my values.

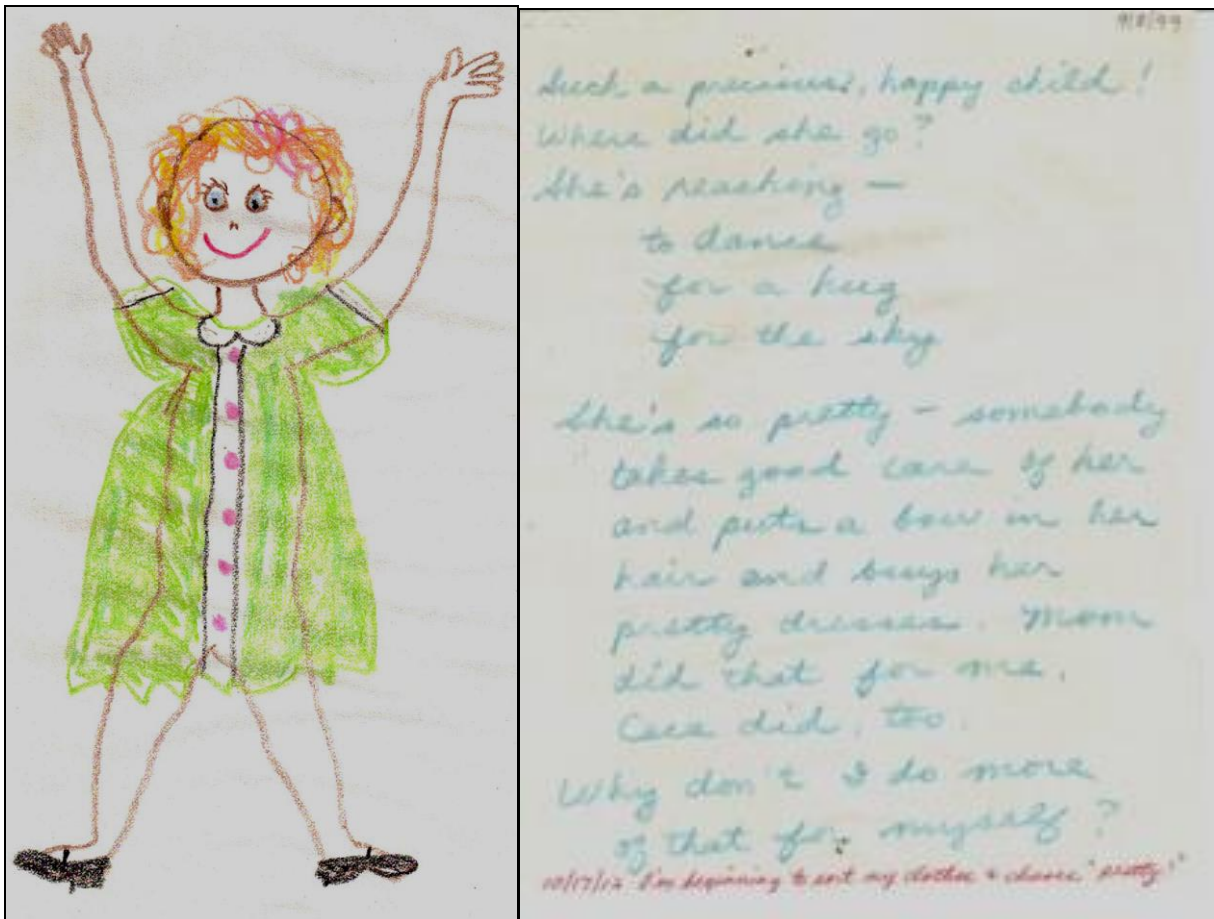
As ever, infinite love, gratitude and return to you for everything always, beautiful, beloved girlfriend!! May your dearest dreams and visions for the Earth and all Life continue to come true!

* * *

Around that time, John and I decided to move out of the apartment. We needed a place with enough room for us and our organic cotton clothing inventory. We ended up renting a 250-year-old house on a 125-acre farm on the outskirts of Frederick, Maryland. I even had a packing room and John built a table for me to box up orders.

In 1999, John had a triple bypass. That made a big difference in our lives but, being the sturdy sort, he recovered beautifully and resumed his work quickly.

Meanwhile, I was doing a lot of spiritual development and going to Overeaters Anonymous, where my weight dropped from about 190 to 175 and I started feeling pretty again.

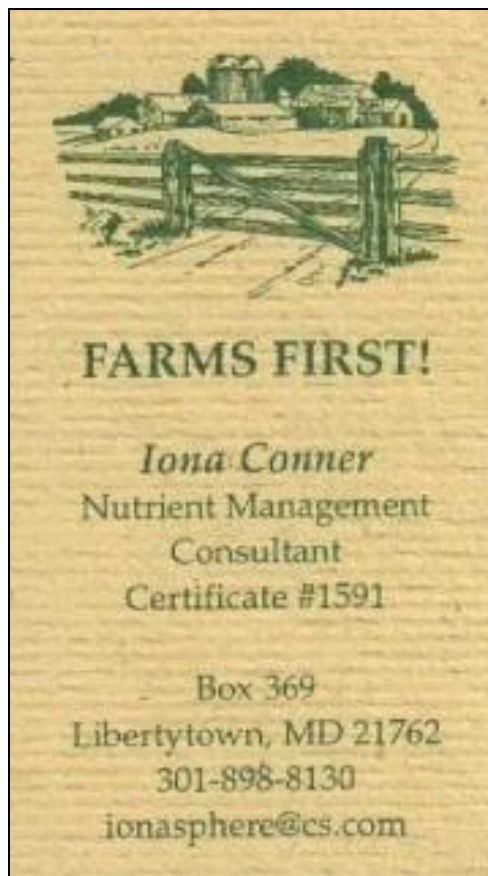


* * *

In 2000, I took another job. This time with a small company doing asbestos work in the Washington, D.C. schools. I had to get my asbestos certification (3-Day EPS AHERA INSPECTOR). I was the oldest inspector at 55. My knees did not like this job; we had to sample floor tiles among other things. I did not like this job. I think the boss knew that so he suggested I take the Nutrient Management test. Mind you, I knew NOTHING about farming but I crammed and got one more certificate.



My friend at that job was a petite ex-Marine who had just bought herself a Silverado pick-up truck. One day she confided that they were going to let me go so the next day I got dolled up, walked in to our morning staff meeting, asked to speak privately with the owner of the company, resigned and walked out.



Well, now, what's next?

I thought that, since I had my Nutrient Management certificate, I'd start a little company of my own. Enter: Farms First! I had a special program put on my computer to make farming calculations but I was so ignorant that, despite a very helpful Cooperative Extension teacher/helper, it was hopeless. I did one single inspection with his guidance and then realized that was not for me.

Part 6: Work Intensifies

Heart leads, I follow.

What On Earth Was John Doing?

John is a prodigious researcher and compiler of information he uses to promote his vision. He reads extensively and finds gems in other people's words, then weaves them into documents with his own philosophy and motivational words, hoping to spur people to action. He finds the most horrid conditions and shares them with others. He tends toward the negative. I often proofread the shorter pieces but, when he produces entire books, I don't volunteer to go through them.

In 2000, he drafted "Basic Documents: Our Foundation." He stuck a large address label on it and wrote: "I dedicate this book to Iona, my ever constant mate and partner."

Basic Theological Sources

Which Guide Us in Our Struggle for a Just and Loving World

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The passages from the Bible embody the values and principles that underlie our efforts to bring justice and love to this world. The later documents, which seek to apply those values and principles to our current situation, are and can only be imperfect and limited. Their authors are children of their times.

Accordingly, there is no substitute for an exhausting and ongoing examination of the current conditions of economic, environmental, racial and gender injustice and of the human forces that work to produce those conditions. In addition, each of us is called to search unceasingly for the most effective process for making our society just and loving through systemic change and then to implement the process.

* * *

While John kept focused on his process, I kept doing spiritual work (not Bible-based and not Christian), journaling and saving a few souvenirs, one of which is this letter John received on a pretty Thank You card:

10/26/00

Dear John --

Grace and Peace Be With You!

Thanks for coming our way and sharing your vision and mission with our group of volunteers. The combination of the film and your follow-up was compelling. I wish you continued health and happiness in your work.

Sincerely in the Cenacle,
Shawn*

** John told me Cenacle "has something to do with Jerusalem; it might have been the room in which the Last Supper was held."*

* * *

Gordon Solberg wrote a review of another of John's compilations in *Earth Quarterly: Living in Harmony with the Earth and Each Other*, issue No. 4.

Visionary

JUSTICE DENIED -- "What's Wrong With American Society and How We Can Change It" by John Conner, Grassroots Coalition for Environmental and Economic Justice

This book contains "information from current books, magazines and newspapers which describes the manner in which corporations and governments rule our society, the effects of their activities and a process by which many people can work together to bring about a society of justice, compassion and freedom." In a nutshell, the entire Earth is dominated by a small number of exceedingly wealthy people who control the giant corporations, financial institutions, governments and news media. The consequences of their rule are devastating on every level -- to the biosphere, to indigenous cultures, to our own spirits. The situation is far more extreme than most people are willing to admit.

This book is an excellent documentation of the exploitative activities of the global ruling class. Although it's not fun reading, this information needs to be assimilated by anyone who is not totally anesthetized into our present "entertainment culture." This book should be required reading in every high

school in America. This will never happen, of course, because one function of public schools is to indoctrinate school children with the ideology of the status quo. However, since the status quo is destroying life on Earth, it would seem expedient for the human race to embrace a new way of being, a new mythology, a new paradigm. This book can be a much-needed eye-opener for people who are still immersed in, or are breaking free from, the status quo dreamworld.

At \$15 for 327 pages, this book is a real bargain.

Books, Books, Books

I started writing a book called *Iona and John* and dedicated it "To John, who showed me about love, life, self, selflessness, freedom, dedication, risk-taking and radical Christianity."

My Prologue reads:

Revolution. That was the word I loved. Change the whole fuckin' society, the whole system. It's rotten.

In John's letter, he said, "The Revolution is coming." In my heart I replied, "The Revolution is here. I'm already working on it." I had been an environmental activist in New Jersey for years.

Two revolutionaries. Two Peaceniks. Me, Quaker. He, Jesuit.

John never proposed in the traditional sense, he asked me some deep-life questions on Valentine's Day 1990 to which I answered, "Yes, yes, yes, yes yes" and then he started introducing me as his wife wherever we went.

It had been a remote romance: he in Maryland, me in New Jersey. We had seen each other three times and, without ever touching, agreed to live and work together. Our passion for the environment united us. Our individual loneliness as zealots in a fragile world filled with apathy fed our desire to merge with another who would share the dream of widespread, deep-rooted change.

I fell in love with John and his dream. This man had the strength and ability to name his nascent organization Ecumenical Coalition for Peace and Justice Throughout the World. What activist could resist that title?

Since I had already had my dream about him 10 years before we met, I didn't have to think very hard. His face, his child birthed through me, his happiness. My total joy in raising up a child with someone who shared my value system, my sense of right and wrong, my devotion to a cause greater than myself.

I was ready. I quit my job, left my marriage and four-bedroom house, changed my name and moved to Maryland.

The work is "his child." This story, "my child." Together we have birthed "our children."

The book contains 11 chapters and many pages of documents and emails we created and received from the time of our marriage through 2000. It's stored in my filing cabinet.

* * *

During the same year, I decided it was time to work on another business card to replace our home-made-looking one for the clothing co-op.



(The message on the back said: We Market the Goods and Services of Worker-Owned Cooperatives.)

On April 3, 2000, Susan Guynn wrote up our story for *The Frederick News-Post*.

A Grassroots Movement

Co-op Produces Clothing to Bring About Change



John and Iona Conner of Libertytown are the organizers of the Grassroots Cooperative, a worker-owned cooperative that produces and sells non-sweatshop-made, organic-cotton clothing. Their goal is to offer consumers clothing made by workers earning "living wages" and made from organic cotton. Ms. Conner is wearing an organic, naturally-colored cotton skirt and blouse made by co-op sewers. The women's vest and child's dress are made from organic, color-grown cotton. The cotton bolls displayed on the vest are naturally colored. The vest was made by a cooperative sewer in Baltimore, the child's dress by a sewer in Walkersville. Photos by Skip Lawrence

LIBERTYTOWN, Maryland -- Consumers can learn a lot about a piece of clothing just by reading the label neatly stitched into the garment. Fabric content, size, care instructions, where the item was manufactured -- it's all there.

But John and Iona Conner want consumers to look beyond the words on the finished label.

"Our work is to get people to see beyond what they're wearing and to see the factories behind the things," said Ms. Conner, "to see the workers in the factories and the damage being done to the Earth" in its production.

The Conners are the lead organizers of the nonprofit Grassroots Coalition for Environmental and Economic Justice, headquartered in a 200-year-old log house near here. The coalition's mission is to cure what they believe to be the root of injustice in society -- "the concentration of economic/financial/political power in the hands of a small number of people."

"The primary goals of these three elements are to maximize power and maximize profit," said Mr. Conner. "That would be OK if there were certain limitations placed on that; if you didn't hurt anybody doing it." But, he says, that's not the way it is. "There's great hurt to people and the environment."

The coalition's goal is to create a transfer of that power to others who will use it to create a society "governed by principles of economic, environmental, racial and gender justice," writes Mr. Conner in his work, "Justice Denied: What's Wrong with American Society and How We Can Change It."

"It's a reaction to certain conditions in society," he explained. "There are three powerful elements of society which exercise great control over what happens. The dominant one is transnational corporations. The subordinate elements are national governments and powerful financial institutions, both domestic and international.

"Some people are satisfied with that and others think it's the most awful thing imaginable," said Mr. Conner. He's of the latter opinion. "Whenever you have a small number of people in charge of a large number of people, it turns out bad."

Currently, the coalition is focusing its efforts on the reported "injustices" in the garment industry. Some sewing factories -- overseas and in the United States -- are documented sweatshops where workers work long days, earn low wages with no overtime pay, have no benefits and work in unsanitary and crowded conditions.

"Go to any mall, any department store or smaller store and look at the (clothing) labels," said Mr. Conner. "A high percentage is made in Third World countries and the reason why is not because clothing companies happen to be enamored of the people. It's because it's easier to reduce wages to lower (manufacturing) costs."

"And there are no environmental regulations," added Ms. Conner, who has been involved in the environmental field for 30 years, both as a grassroots activist and professionally.

In their presentations, mainly to church congregations, the Conners often show a short video that exposes sweatshop practices in the manufacture of clothing. Produced by the National Labor Committee in New York, the film was shot in Honduras where most of the factory workers are young girls in their mid-teens. Many earn less than 50 cents an hour and work long hours (often off the clock), six days a week, to meet quotas. School attendance is all but impossible.

Earlier this year, 18 high-profile U.S. clothing manufacturers and retailers were named in two class-action lawsuits filed in California and Saipan in the first attempt to hold U.S. retailers and manufacturers accountable for mistreatment of workers in foreign-owned factories. The companies are accused of using indentured labor -- predominantly young women from Asia -- to produce clothing on the island of Saipan, a U.S. Commonwealth in the South Pacific. Allegedly, the workers were on the job up to 12 hours a day without receiving any pay or overtime and working in crowded, unsanitary factories.

Around the country, students at universities including Duke, Georgetown, Wisconsin, Michigan and North Carolina are making headlines by staging sit-ins to protest the possible use of sweatshop labor in the manufacture of apparel bearing their college's logo.

But the Conners believe there's a workable alternative to the current methods of clothing production -- worker-owned cooperatives. The couple founded the Grassroots Cooperative, a subsidiary of

the Coalition, to establish worker-owned cooperatives that will produce and sell non-sweatshop, organic cotton clothing. The Mondragon cooperative, located in the Basque region of Spain, serves as a model. Started in the 1950s by a Spanish priest, the cooperative began with five men and a kerosene heater manufacturing plant and now employs more than 30,000 worker-owners in a cooperative network.

"We have five part-time sewers in Maryland. One lives in Walkersville," said Ms. Conner, who also designs the clothing. Workers are paid a "living wage," about \$10 to \$13 an hour. "We want to reach out to people living below the poverty line with a job where they can earn a living wage to provide what is necessary for a simple life," said Ms. Conner.

They are also working in major dioceses in the Northeast and Midwest to establish "clusters" of 10 to 12 churches/schools, with each cluster having a paid coordinator who facilitates educational and consciousness-raising activities and periodic sales in his/her cluster. The first cluster coordinator began to operate in Cleveland in February. The first worker-owned cooperative was established in Maryland.

Currently, all the cooperative-made clothing is made from chemical-free organic, color-grown brown and green cotton. A co-op in Texas weaves most of the fabric used by Grassroots sewers. Until the program is firmly established, the cooperative also sells organic clothing produced by other cooperatives and clothing companies in the United States and Nova Scotia that are guided by the same principles as the Conner's.

For women and girls there are skirts, dresses, pants with gentle elastic waist-bands and shirts. For men there are shirts, socks and baseball caps. Infant garments include jumpsuits and bibs. Fabrics are colored naturally or with low-impact or non-toxic dyes.

Prices are reasonable. T-shirts sell for around \$12, a woman's long cotton jersey skirt costs \$43. An organic cotton baseball cap sells for \$15. Three pairs of socks are \$15. "You may pay a little more but it's not sweatshop labor and growing organic cotton (without chemicals) is more labor intensive," said Ms. Conner. "That's why education is important."

The Conners are taking their message to churches as one of the first steps toward their goal.

"It's a way of reaching people," said Mr. Conner, a former Maryland Province Jesuit priest.

"Theoretically, they share our values. And the people respond."

Eventually, as the co-op movement grows, they hope to establish retail outlets and take their message to the peoples of Latin America.

"As more and more people are 'enticed' away from mainstream clothing sources, two things will happen," said Mr. Conner. "In this effort, the people producing and sewing the clothing will be earning a living wage. Enough to earn a decent life. And there's the environmental aspect of it all. With organically-grown cotton, the fields and workers are not sprayed with chemicals. The workers don't suffer and water's not contaminated.

"The second is hard to be sure of," he admits. "You would think, as our form of clothing industry grows, the people running mainstream sources would see the effects of customer departure, to a certain extent, and at a certain point they would check out why and try to regain those customers by taking on certain characteristics (of the co-ops) that influence how they do business."

"It's a long education and lifestyle change process," admits Ms. Conner. "But we see it as a commitment to social justice."

(Grassroots Cooperative will hold a clothing sale at the Common Market in Frederick on April 16 from noon until 5 p.m. For more information on the clothing cooperative, contact Iona Conner. For more information on the organizing effort, contact John Conner).

** * **

The background about the co-op in Ohio is that a nun came to our home and learned how to start up her own sewing cooperative. She is still at it. Her web site is www.esperanzathreads.com and here is what they say about their 15-year-old project:

Esperanza Threads makes and sells organic cotton clothing and baby clothing, towels, sheets, meditation pillows, and more – most from cotton grown and woven in the United States. We use environmentally-friendly dyes for both hand dyeing and digital printing and we use recycled fabric for some of our products. Our organic cotton clothing and goods are free from harmful herbicides, pesticides and bleach. Manufactured in Cleveland, Ohio, our staff is paid fair and competitive wages while working in a safe environment.

How On Earth Did We Manage to Go Bankrupt?

Easy. After a couple of years focusing on the environment and helping churches start environmental committees, John realized that we were never going to have enough wisdom, strength or power to win those struggles if we didn't understand the inner workings of society -- political and economic -- so he started reading lots of books and magazines to learn more about the Big Picture.

We decided to combine both environmental and economic issues into something tangible -- clothing. While we were living in progressive Columbia, two sweatshop workers from Central America came to talk at one of the community centers. They were so convincing that we chose to focus on non-sweatshop, organic-cotton clothes (mostly made in the United States but we did have some hemp products from Canada and Rumania since it wasn't legal to grow hemp here).

After lots of research, we selected a few companies which we felt were ethical with a relatively low minimum amount for ordering. We got our charge cards out and started buying up clothes to bring along in our travels so we could offer people alternatives. For years we provided programs and sales at churches and colleges from Boston to Chicago. Back and forth. Back and forth. The clothes were beautiful and well made. The sales were usually brisk once people heard John's convincing talk at the masses or on a stage, especially when we were able to show a half-hour video about the brutal lives of sweatshop workers making clothing for big-name brands.

We also drafted a business plan and started a small sewing co-op. We found several women who loved sewing and started having meetings either in our home or in Joann's fabric store, where we chose patterns to go with our beautiful, organic cotton (farmed and woven in the United States). We even bought 1,000 organic cotton labels for our own creations.

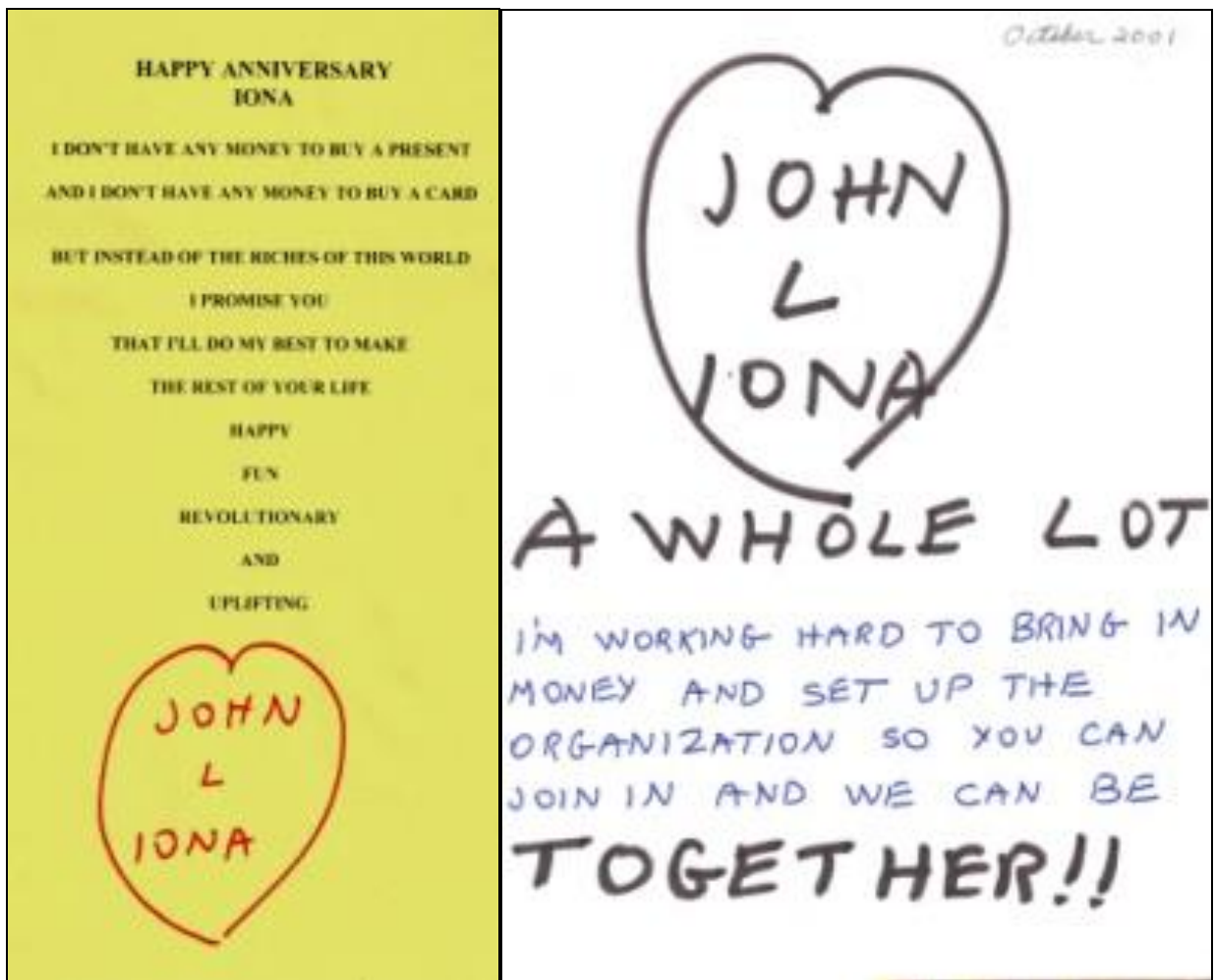


The clothes we made were beautiful; the women did a great job but, since they each sewed in their own home as none of them lived near the others, and we were paying them \$10 an hour, our garments were expensive. Some people could afford them but others could only afford the mass-produced items we were selling from other conscious American companies. We worked so hard on this effort for so long.

We would load up our little Ford Escort with as many suitcases full of clothing as possible (plus our overnight bags) and take off, hop-scotching from city to city where John had made arrangements for us to talk during the week. We'd normally have a weekend sale, head home, reorder, wash our own clothes, unload the newest shipment of clothing, repack and leave in the opposite direction the following week, repeating the process over and over and over and over until I was ready to quit and felt like I was losing my usually robust health.

The core concept for the operation was sound but the travel defeated the profits and us. Being dreamers and activists, we fully expected our idea and our beautiful clothing to be so successful that people would reorder endlessly. We reordered endlessly until our debt neared \$100,000 at which point I decided to stop going with John and work full-time to pay it down.

I saved a few notes from John In my 2001 folder:



Nine months after Susan Guynn's article appeared, I was hired as the Education Reporter for the *Frederick Gazette* and started on January 10th by attending an evening Board of Education meeting.



I earned about \$24,000 annually. That wasn't enough to get ahead -- all we could do was maintain the monthly payments as interest keep piling up. We finally filed for bankruptcy. But I had learned a great deal about newspapering and decided that I definitely didn't like being neutral on controversial issues. I met many wonderful people working with parents of dyslexic children or supporters of the immigrant population.

When my beat was swapped with another reporter's, I ended up on her local beat. I was repulsed by having to write about two dead men (in separate stories) my first week, with a greater dose of trivial stories than in my prior position, so I resigned. That was definitely NOT what I wanted to do with my life.

We went bankrupt. We did not own a home, our cars were really old. There was nothing we could do to repay all that money.

On March 12, 2003, the day of our bankruptcy hearing, both old Escorts were being repaired and it was snowing. Thank Goodness, the doctor I was working for had given me a \$300 Christmas bonus and I had another \$100 stashed somewhere. That enabled us to rent a car for the day to drive to the hearing.

It was over -- that horrible and helpless feeling of out-of-control debt.

* * *

On October 2, 2002, Cece sent me the most amazing Enchanted Universe card (Dad had died the year before). It was as if she knew me -- the real me.



Andromeda's Quest

Andromeda sails away in her magical galleon in search of adventures unknown, her quest carrying her beyond earthly boundaries into new galaxies and dimensions beyond the stars. As she travels she is serenaded by the haunting melodies of flower music drifting gently from her gramophone, spreading a "morning Glory" of rainbow butterflies in her wake.

As the cosmic currents waft through the sails of her vessel, a vision of beauty fills the heavens, guiding her into new worlds of experience.

Dearest Susan --

*May you sail into a year of exciting new adventures
and undiscovered realms of peace and love!*

Happy Birthday

Love Always,

CC

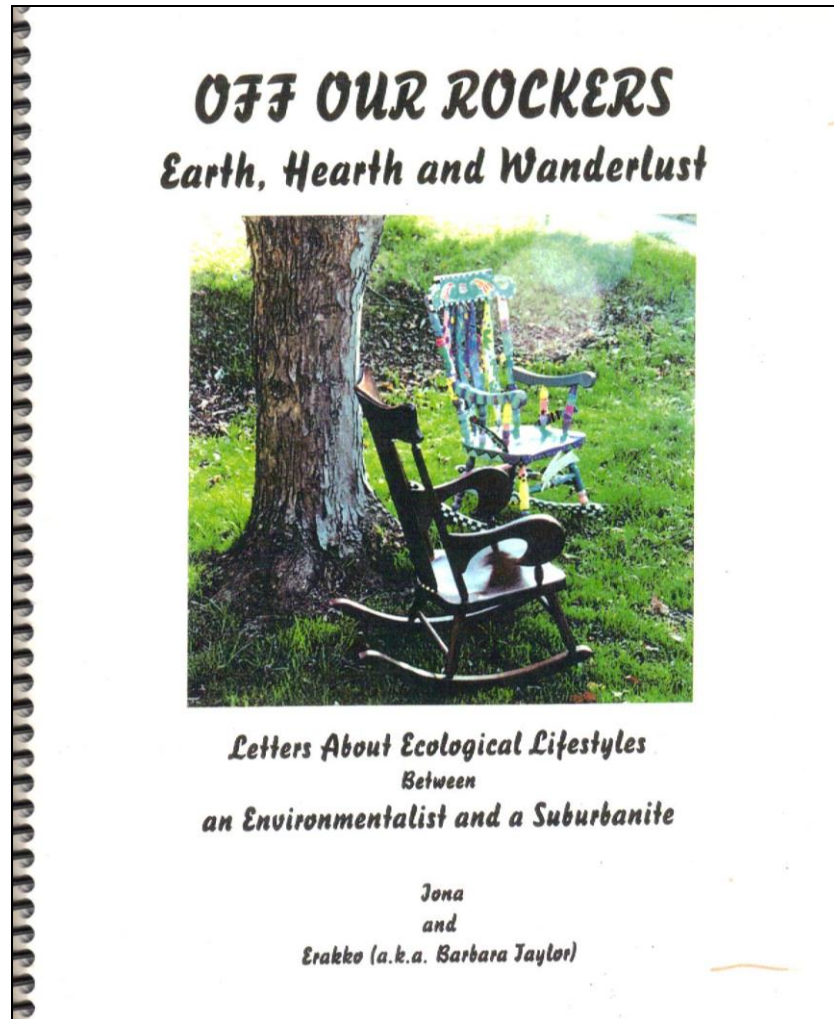
For Oct 2 '02

I think you have your very best year just ahead of you!

C

Why On Earth Did I Write Another Book?

I co-authored another book because my friend wanted to know how I lived an ecology-based life. In 2002, Barbara Erakko Taylor (a successfully-published author of two spiritual books) and I collaborated on a 169-page, 8 1/2 by 11-inch book, which ended up being published at Staples. She wanted to know how I, a strong environmentalist, lived day by day so we started an exchange of letters.



She is an excellent writer with a much different style than mine. We dragged our rocking chairs onto her lawn (hers, sedate; mine painted with colorful critters and designs) and took our cover photo.

Then we dreamed up the title: *Off Our Rockers -- Earth, Hearth and Wanderlust: Letters About Ecologic Lifestyles Between an Environmentalist and a Suburbanite*. We used our chosen names, Iona and Erakko.

*Dedicated to the anonymous young man who bravely confronted
fully-armed riot troops at the World Trade Convention in Seattle, 1999
To every child who shall inherit the Earth
To the parents who left it to them
To the world's birds*

Although we tried 90 publishers, none considered our book worthwhile so we made several copies and tried to sell them ourselves. It was a flop in everyone's eyes but ours. We had worked hard and thought it was wonderful. We even had it copyrighted with this warning: "*Small parts of this book may be copied to enlighten others, but not to enrich yourself. Printed on Recycled or Salvaged Paper.*"

What On Earth Was the Catoctin-Monocacy Climate Change Alliance?

I thought it was time to start another group, this time to work on global warming. I contacted my Earth-loving friends and we started meeting. Our name was derived from the Catoctin Mountains and the Monocacy River, both in our Frederick bioregion.

Our brochure said:

The Catoctin-Monocacy Climate Change Alliance is the first grassroots, non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to fighting global warming in our region. Our mission is to educate the public about actions they can take to:

- *Reverse human-induced climate change, and*
- *Restore and protect the environment of our bioregion.*

One of the most fun things we did was ticket SUVs in a shopping center with cards made to look like official tickets but the language was about excessive carbon dioxide emissions from their huge vehicles. One of my friends and I made the paper with that one, including a photo of us placing a ticket under someone's windshield wiper.

By the time 2003 rolled around, we had moved out of the farmhouse, which needed structural repairs, to a nearly-new ranch. On May 26, 2004, Cece's body died and she and Dad left their beautiful condominium in North Palm Beach to Joanie and me. We split the proceeds. John and I could finally afford to buy our own home. I knew Cece would have loved that decision because I would always have a roof over my head and not be at the mercy of landlords ever again. John kept searching the Internet's real estate sites in three states. It took a long time and we were losing about \$1,000 of my inheritance every month in rent.

I was working three part-time jobs. One, with my friend and holistic doctor, Marianne; two, in an after-school program in Carroll County where I started a little environmental club; and three, as a grant writer at Cunningham Falls State Park.

During the after-school program, the students in our club made a solar car (which never worked), we planted a large tree, tried to start a compost pile and collected used cell phones and cartridges for recycling, using the money to adopt an endangered animal.

These kids were darling and a lot of fun to work with.

Moving Again

Finally, we found the beautiful, peaceful home in Shade Gap where we live now. It's a low-income area so housing was cheap. We had three other contracts before this one came through. For \$121,000, we were able to get a beautiful home (not too big) with a two-car garage and my dancing loft above it, six-and-a-half acres with woods and a stream. It's Heavenly here. We closed on January 4, 2005 and moved in on a snowy January 24th, leaving behind the part-time jobs and the Catoctin-Monocacy Climate Change Alliance, which ceased to exist after our move.

Once again, one of my mothers had given me the gift of financial freedom for a while so I started writing another book. Here are the first few pages of that one.

(Book Within a Book)

**HOW ON EARTH
DID I BECOME
A
RADICAL
ENVIRONMENTALIST
GRANDMOTHER?**

Volume I: Trial Run

August 12, 2006



IONA

137

*To CC, who always urged me
to keep a journal
(and fight for myself)*

March 21, 1921 to May 26, 2004

FORWARD

I have never read a book which went forward and backward at the same time.

That's what you are about to experience.

Since, during the past four decades, I have turned from an ordinary suburban housewife to a radical environmentalist grandmother and, since global warming is such a serious threat to the entire planet, I decided I'd better hurry up and publish my journals so I could show you how I became such an activist.

We need as many activists as we can gather to bring sanity to our crazy world.

I have been journaling for many years, usually to work out problems in my life or to help me make decisions about how to prioritize all the things I want to do.

Last Summer I spread out all the journals, books and brochures that related in some way to my life in such an important way that I hadn't wanted to just recycle them.

I thought that when I retired, I'd sit around leisurely, as many old people do, and reminisce as I wrote my memoir.

I have led such an unusual life that I thought others might be interested but mostly I didn't want to leave a large stack of journals and loose-leaf binders for my children to sort through when I'm gone.

My friend, Renate (now 86), self-published two of her books because she couldn't find a commercial publisher and she didn't want to burden her heirs with them.

I am inspired by that gesture. And I love her books! She is a wonderful writer!

So, I spread out everything I thought had been worth keeping up to age 60 and laid it all on the floor chronologically with little cards on each pile denoting the year each had been lived.

But then I decided to go backward so you could see me where I am now as a fully committed adult rather than wade through my younger, learning years. Not that I've stopped learning, just that I've learned enough to be a positive influence on others without holing up to do more work.

I placed the journals on the shelf over my desk with the latest years at the open edge and the earlier years marching toward the corner of my office wall. The story of my life so far is contained in 40 inches of paper.

I have always loved the photo on the cover of this book. Why must we make everyone say "cheese" when their picture is taken? Why must we ruin pensive expressions to please others? Perhaps that's been a problem of mine all along. Part of me loves solitude but still I'm naturally sociable. Even Cece, my "other mother," said that when I was four or five, I came happily out to greet her the first time Dad brought her in to meet us. By age five, Dad would leave Mom to marry Cece.

I don't think that made me happy but it has certainly made my life interesting. I got used to being different from others in my neighborhood 55 years ago when nobody else had divorced parents and a working mother.

Cece was a strong influence on me. We had some rough times over the years. The older I got and the more myself I became, the more horrified was she that she couldn't get me to be more "normal." She once said that she kept urging my brilliant, gentle, quiet father to be more "normal." I was sad to learn that. Be normal to fit in.

NO! I will not be normal to fit in.

The older I get, the gladder I am that I have the courage to be me.

But you will see doubt and indecision in my journals.

Like Kermit the Frog, I used to think it wasn't easy being "Green."

Now I love being "Green," being me.

So, once I decided to write my autobiography backwards, I picked up the most recent journal rather than the earliest.

But I kept wanting to journal as I continued to go forward with life.

I decided that I would tell my story backwards as planned but put my continuing life in boxes to separate them so none of us would get too confused.

If you want to read about my life backwards, just ignore the boxes.

If you want to read about my life as a 60-year-old radical environmentalist, just read the boxes going forward.

Whenever you see “OE,” that’s my shortcut for “The Order of the Earth.” Whatever I’m doing or writing is based on my deepest religious values. At this stage of life, my values are Earth-based. About 17 years ago I envisioned everyone on the planet turning more deeply to environmentalism so that their lives would be guided by Earth Ethics, like a religious order for the Earth, no matter what faith people professed or what their cultural background, age or sex might be. Now, more than ever, we all need to learn the ways of the Earth and follow them if we are to survive.

The first few pages of the very first journal are done in reverse chronological order so you can see the build-up behind the decision to barge ahead with self-publishing.

So here you have it, the first part of my life backwards. The rest will follow some day.

I simply copied my old journals and kept writing about the life I was living. This is still in journalese. I’m going to leave things as they are except for what needs further explaining and these I will italicize for you. I also omitted some deeply important sections to protect others’ privacy.

I am trying hard to not journal anymore.

There have been many times when I’ve tried not to journal but I keep picking up my pen.

The odd collection of journals would be a terrible legacy to leave my sister, my two sons and their wives, and my five grandchildren.

I’m hoping this book will be easier for them all to deal with.

I’m recycling the originals as I go.

My great hope is that this book will encourage you to become a radical environmentalist person, no matter what your age or sex.

We all need you now.

Iona

August 8, 2006

January 16, 2004 -- 6:30 AM

First line for my book:

I'm trying to make some sense out of this life I've lived.

(I found this in an old journal and put it right here for the beginning of my book.

I really love this line because it summarizes the whole point of journaling.)

August 22, 2005

Butch and Betty's murdering of their woods forces me to stop journaling and start my book.

Here is the letter I was going to put in *The Order of the Earth News* today but John is afraid we'll have to move if this gets out locally.

From the Editor *(me)*

Dear Friends,

While John has been out planting 200 trees, our neighbor was negotiating the sale of his beautiful woods. 50 to 60 large trees are being sacrificed for his purse.

And what can I do?

Nothing.

I can tell you how I ache for the loss of the woods down the street.

I can tell you that the sound of the chain saws cuts into my gut.

I can reorient my life to be a more vociferous and compassionate teacher to try to educate people about the importance of leaving the trees alive so they can counteract global warming.

I can try to reach younger people hoping that they will develop an Earth Ethic, which will prevent them from selling their woods for a buck when they are adults.

I can use more 100% post-consumer recycled paper so that there is less demand from me for wood products.

I can boycott new wood furniture and stick with the old.

I tried to talk with the logger himself but [later on] our neighbor came and hollered at John to stay off his property, even though we were in the street and not on his property at the time of the conversation (which, by the way, was not an angry or hostile conversation).

Well, one thing I'm going to do is try to talk people here into mowing less of their lawns and, while I'm at it, I'll try to talk them into letting their trees grow and thrive.

For the Earth,

Iona

The Story of a Radical Environmentalist Grandmother

August 22, 2005

I said I'd journal every day about life in these times but I'd love to STOP journaling and get on with my life and my book — I'm going to start my book!

How?

By copying all my journal notes.

Butch and Betty's tree butcher is at it again.

I really think I don't have time to journal anymore.

*BUT — a book was conceived Friday night and Rainbow Moon sent me — no — sent *The Order of the Earth* — a home-warming present — a Peace Palm.*

*I'm bringing *Rockers* back to life and the mini "*Order of the Earth*" (two books I have written since I married John; for *Rockers* I was a co-author) and I'm going to go talk with people.*

GOOD BYE, JOURNAL!

There are trees to be saved and ignorant people to be educated.

One last thing — as I was exercising, I saw Butch drive away so I grabbed my camera to take pictures for my OE newspaper but John said Betty might be home. So I thought I'd watch their humongous SUV/truck tomorrow morning and, if they BOTH went to breakfast, I'd go take photos.

At 7:30 there was no noise. I thought the job — the murder — was over. But it wasn't.

I would have gotten caught — Butch told, no yelled, at John last weekend to never come on his property again. The loggers were already there.

I want pictures for my newspaper.

John's afraid of recriminations once we start up the retreats. He's afraid we'll have to sell the house.*

John seems to imagine the absolute worst.

I'll get my pictures somehow.

**We only did one small retreat for three people and then stopped. John will conduct them in retreat centers or churches from now on.*

*[I went on for 65 pages before getting it copied and spiral bound.
It remained in my file cabinet until today, December 13, 2014.]*

[END OF TRIAL BOOK AND BACK TO MY MEMOIR]

Part 7: Newspaper Woman

Heart leads, I follow.

DREAM BOARD

I kept on doing spiritual work after our move and saved a large, circular piece of cardboard on which I'd pasted pictures and called it my "DREAM BOARD." It hung in my office until I started reading *Serving Humanity*:

- Young, slim me as a bridesmaid wearing a deep red velvet gown when I was about 22;
- Yoga poses and "Tea and Tranquility" pictures;
- A beautiful angel;
- Flowers;
- A serious woman swimmer with goggles;
- A pretty heart-shaped description reading, "*A Mother holds her children's hands just a little while but she holds their hearts forever;*"
- A very large sandwich with tomatoes, lettuce, sprouts and lunchmeat;
- Yogurt;
- An upright vacuum cleaner;
- A cat;
- A little, dark blue, new car;
- Ocean-front homes;
- A picture of Earth with David Brower's quote: "*Polite conservationists leave no mark save the scars upon the Earth that could have been prevented had they stood their ground;*"
- *Note to Self*: What's *Earth Works* newspaper to do? "My daily newspaper is a financially successful operation, allowing me to work on it full time with no distractions. It is a powerful tool for inspiring young activists and for encouraging all people who are living in the new society;" and
- Kyoto Protocol Working Groups starting up in every state.

I colored the border pink and wrote, also in pink: "I am turning this over to the higher intelligence of the Universe within me, to guide me in creating it all. This or something better is manifesting for me, in totally satisfying and harmonious ways, for the highest good of all concerned."

I've gotten sick of words and paper but I do love getting cards and letters (and nowadays even emails) from people I love and who love me. Here's a letter from one of the high school students I worked with back in 1991, discovered in my 2005 folder.

Dear Iona!

I LOVE YOU! I was just thinking about how if I hadn't met you a couple of years back, that I might be on a completely different path. Thank you!

Here is a piece for the Student News about Leonard Peltier. Next month I should have a petition as well!
Love, Carianne

[another letter in the same folder from someone my age]

Hi Iona!

Please tell me about how "Towards a New Mysticism" will frame the rest of your life. Consider writing this to me as an opportunity for both of us to learn. I'll learn by reading and you'll learn by writing! I've found that by writing, I'm faced with a two-dimensional expression about what I know, don't know and what parts have reached my inner core. Often, when I write, I'm stunned by the magnitude of my ignorance.

Looking forward to your piece!
Love, Madalene

What On Earth Were Kyoto Protocol Working Groups?

I dreamed up the idea of "The People" stopping global warming since governments weren't doing it. If they were acting irresponsibly, let's get millions of people to make the necessary changes to bring down those deadly carbon dioxide emissions ourselves!!!!

Well, "millions of people" didn't exactly work out but I did find an old chart I made in 2006 tracking my talks and my "homework" to prepare for them. Here are the people I spoke with about global warming:

- AAUW
- Christine's Earth Day (in Maryland)
- Cromwell Township (where we live)
- Gettysburg
- Greens
- Local holistic doctor
- Founders of Kilowatt Ours
- McConnellsburg (that went so well that even today there is a local environmental group acting on many fronts)
- PennFuture
- Local schools
- St. Raphael's Church
- Tia Sophia (acupuncture institute in Maryland)
- Valley Log* (local, weekly newspaper, which had a front-page picture introducing me to our new community as a "Global Warming Activist")
- Wesley Freedom Church (Maryland)

I also remember giving a talk at a local civic group but didn't write that one down. In most cases, I showed a video (We Are All Smith Islanders) produced by Mike Tidwell, founder of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network and the man who inspired me to work on global warming. This documentary

showed people living on a tiny island in the Chesapeake Bay whose homes were essentially in the process of being drowned, as were the marshes. It was an excellent resource in those technologically-primitive days -- very moving and well done.

* * *

In 2007, I started breaking away on my own. With the support of three friends, I decided to start my own broadsheet newspaper, *The Order of the Earth: News, Views and Musings*. We met April 4, 2007 at Christine's earthy home and discussed possibilities for topics and how to proceed. With their loving support, I changed from being John's helper or working for others, to using my time and energy for my own work. I pulled together my various talents to do what I loved most.

I can still hear Kim urging me to stop doing a newsletter on 8 1/2 by 11-inch copy paper and publish a "real" newspaper. She was working for a newspaper at the time and had a great deal of skill and knowledge in that field. Christine had just received an inheritance and offered to pay for my publishing software and our first print run of 2,000 papers.

On April 6th, I wrote this Thank-You letter:

Dear Kim, Christine and Marie (Christine's daughter),

You have no idea how grateful I am to you three for your support, enthusiasm and willingness to help me with The Order of the Earth: News, Views and Musings.

I just remembered that about 24 years ago I started the Hackensack River Coalition with three other people. In about two years, we had 350 members covering 44 towns along the River and, among other things, got a federal EPA decision to protect the meadowlands -- at least temporarily.

Four is my magic number.

Love, Iona

* * *

I had no idea where to begin my newspaper even though my part-time work at *The Valley Log* and my prior experience at *The Gazette* had given me reporting skills; I had zero background in layouts or graphic design.

Somehow I managed to find a training position with a federal program for older, low-income, unemployed people like me called Experience Works. (Strangely enough, I'm working with them again but this time as a Participant Assistant since I was, once again, an older, low-income, unemployed person and our Social Security wasn't enough to live on *and* publish a paper.)

I started working on the quiet, second floor of the Mount Union Library doing research and developing a base of environmental groups from which I could receive current information. Experience Works paid for me to be tutored at the local business college so I could learn how to use publishing software. It was fun! In August 2007, I laid out a colorful first edition and followed that with four monthly issues printed on copy paper.

By the end of December, I had graduated to a full-sized broadsheet newspaper and Brian at the Hagerstown *Herald-Mail* worked side by side with me to show me how to get the colors right and answered multiple questions as we geared up for our first press run.

I enlisted good wishes from my family and friends and was so thrilled to receive such warm comments that I created a full page for them in our "launch" edition. It was endlessly exciting! When I went to pick up my first shipment, I was shocked to see how many papers 2,000 were. And I had neglected to develop a marketing plan. What on Earth was I going to do with all those papers?

Eventually, they were distributed, and my future print orders were reduced to 1,000 as the *Herald-Mail* had not been the outfit with the 2,000 minimum. They also invited me to write the following story, which appeared in their publication for women (*H.E.R. Local: Her Everyday Resource*) with a picture of me sitting on top of 2,000 newspapers grinning.

How and Why I Started My Own Newspaper

Just when most people would have been dreaming of retirement, I was dreaming of starting my own newspaper.

The urge goes way back. Thirty-five years ago, our daily paper arrived face-up on the door mat. The photo of a naked, dead woman's body in a ravine, though microscopic, shocked me. I ran into the house and cancelled our subscription, thankful that I had seen it before my little sons arrived home from school. I was unnerved.

I don't like the way women are portrayed in underwear ads, crying or simply as helpmates. I abhor the gruesome, ugly and trivial content of most papers. And I believe that, in these times of grave global warming threats, people aren't seeing the immediacy and truth through their beloved mainstream papers because that would necessitate ruffling the feathers of valuable advertisers.

In addition to these negative reasons for creating an alternative newspaper, I love to write. I have dabbled in newspaper editing for non-profit organizations for decades, including publishing my own newsletters on 8 1/2 by 11" copy paper. I enjoy finding people who are doing wonderful work and talking about them to others.

*So, at 61, I decided to publish what I believe is the nation's first, hard-copy, global warming newspaper, *The Order of the Earth: News, Views and Musings* (a name I thought of years ago). I focus more on women and peace than men and war. I focus more on preserving forests and trees and on income-producing clean energy in the fight against catastrophic climate change. I do not believe this world is as awful as it appears to be through the eyes of news gatherers who scan the world for the gory, the scary, the tragic, the weird. Meanwhile, people everywhere are overcoming obstacles and working hard to create a brighter future. I like to find the kind, the beautiful, the thoughtful, the outrageous. I work long hours to uncover stories showing that we can indeed transform this country to minimize and survive ghastly environmental conditions that climate change is forcing on us.*

How on Earth are we as a society going to find the strength, intelligence and courage to radically change the way the world operates (which has been compared to a car going 100 miles an hour toward a brick wall) if we are numb and depressed from the news?

Given all of the above, I evaluated my talents and my passion (environmentalism after 40 years in the movement both as a professional and as a volunteer) and asked, "What do I want to do for the rest of my life and what needs are not being met in the world of activism?"

Instead of easing back to play bridge, golf or sit in my rocking chair reading on the porch, I look forward to working deliberately long hours. My newspaper is peopled with folks I admire. It is also sprinkled with news from investigative journalists who uncover corruption in all levels of government and

corporations. We are an entirely volunteer publication with many talented, intelligent and compassionate people contributing ideas and articles.

The Order of the Earth is a 16-page, colored, monthly publication; we hope to expand to a 24-page weekly during the next couple of years.

The only obstacle I face is money.

Even though this idea had been building for 35 years, I didn't fully understand (and still don't) the economics of this plan. My husband and I choose to live in near-poverty to run our non-profit Grassroots Coalition for Environmental and Economic Justice. I need to work part-time to help pay for printing, postage and cartridges. Somehow or other, I must bring in between \$650 and \$800 a month over and above our Social Security, on which we try to live.

The paper would never have been born if it weren't for two close friends who agreed to put some energy and generosity behind my dream. One insisted that it was time to switch to newsprint and the other said she'd pay for my publishing software and our first press run.

I nearly forgot someone. A woman I never met in Frederick got her hands on one of my black and white newsletters a year ago and quietly transformed our front page into a beautiful, colorful depiction of the Earth's glory. I was astonished that such a thing was possible since I had zero publishing/graphics background. At that point I knew that The Order of the Earth would be not only a valuable tool for people in years ahead but it would be a beautiful newspaper. I was ecstatic.

With that loving spirit behind me, we planned our "Big Launch" for January 1, 2008. We hoped to bring the environmental community into the homes of the mainstream community. I shopped around for the cheapest printing price and went with a company that was not the cheapest but the friendliest and most convenient to my friends in Frederick, who were going to help me distribute the papers. That company happened to be The Herald-Mail.

Since my comparison shopping had been based on 2,000 papers, I unquestioningly ordered 2,000. Do you realize how many papers that is? Imagine getting a 16-page paper every single day and piling them all up for recycling. The 2,000 papers the Herald-Mail staff joyfully put in my Ford Escort the day I arrived to pick up our January papers was equivalent to four-and-a-half years of newsprint. What on Earth was I going to do with all those papers?

In my eagerness to put together a great paper, I had failed to construct a distribution system. So I mailed them out in little bunches to all my friends around the country and gave my Frederick colleagues 200 each. In time we sent them all on their way. For February we cut back to 1,500. When money is tight, I go back down to 1,000. We ship them to the great groups we invite to write for us and they help us distribute them in their locations in hopes that their memberships and campaigns will get stronger through our publicity and our subscriptions and ads will increase.

Let me back up a minute here to say that we lived in Frederick until three and a half years ago, when we found a lovely home with land we could afford in a place unlike any other I've ever lived. It's heavenly here in rural Pennsylvania but logging, hunting and racing junk cars are common, women are referred to as 'girls' and everybody knows everybody else or is somehow related. These are hard-working, unpretentious people living in "God's Country." This is not a high-income area, nor is it populated with well-paying companies so it's hard to find work offering more than minimum wage.

I have been disappointed in the low number of subscriptions and ads after publishing 11,000 newspapers and giving away roughly 10,000 of them through coffee shops, book stores, supportive businesses and eco-events. Admittedly, I am not strong at sales; however, I have made face-to-face

arrangements with seven businesses in our conservative area to sell The Order for \$.50 to compete with local papers. We are slowly developing a following.

I love every minute I spend on the paper and trust that finances will work themselves out as climate change gets worse and people's desire to read a different type of news grows.

The Order of the Earth and I will be here to help.

Iona Conner is a freelance writer and former teacher, nurse and New Jersey air pollution inspector, where in 1986 she first realized we were cooking the Earth. Iona can be reached at ionaconner@pa.net.

* * *

During this new phase of my life, I decided to create my own press pass, which enabled me to get into events easily and free. I found a plastic sleeve and threaded a cord through the hole so I could slip it over my neck. It didn't look much like the other reporters' official press passes but mine and a smile worked for me.



How On Earth Do I Manage To Keep Going?

I manage to keep going with a whole lot of spiritual work with my teacher and a whole lot of support from my husband, family and friends.

Here's one example of an email I received after starting up my newspaper.

January 2, 2008

Dear Iona,

Since all we have is this present moment and this moment being the eternal now, ALL IS RIGHT IN THE WORLD NOW THAT YOUR NEWSPAPER IS PUBLISHED!!! Hurrah! Hurrah!! Hurrah!!! I am so proud of you for making your dream come true!!! Thank Goddess for the wild & precious gift of you on this dear, sweet planet Earth! And Thank YOU for all that you are and inspire others to do-be-do-be-do-be!

Love, Rainbow Moon

As I mentioned earlier, my friend Kim is an excellent thinker and, in February, after I suggested that she join me in a protest against Shell Oil's attempt to plunder the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Kim emailed this to me:

No, I'd rather meditate. I no longer believe we can use the system to change the system (if I ever really did). I prefer to let it all fall so that future generations of life (human or not) may start anew.

If I could, I would join a group of people who spend their time working to create an all together saner way of being on this Earth by actually doing instead of talking. We can't and shouldn't stop monolithic Western ideologues and their lynchpins from destroying themselves. We merely need to move out of their way, which is what I'm going to try to do. The Earth will remain with the power to create new life; it's human beings who will die, unfortunately taking other creatures with them (and do so every day), but they will reap what they sow. So, I'm going to work to find a way to live that distances me as much from them as possible. I no longer want to live in their world. So, I must create/find my own.

* * *

For my 65th birthday, John gave me a beautiful card with lots of sparkles and the moon and two silvery stars attached on silver strings.

You Are My Dream Come True

*When I was little,
I daydreamed about the sort of person
I would love someday...
I pretended I would find someone out of a fairy tale,
someone wonderful
who wasn't like anyone else
in the world...
When I grew up, I stopped
believing in love,
Because things never seemed to work out the way
I hoped they would
But then somebody came along
and changed my life
in a way I never thought possible....*

*I must be luckier than most people,
because my dream
really has come true...
I love someone wonderful,
Someone who isn't like anyone else
in the world...
I love you.*

Happy Birthday

John reads cards seriously and, when he can't find one that expresses his feelings exactly, he makes them for me so, when I read this one, I was supremely happy. It's one of the most beautiful cards I've ever received.

Keeping My Paper Going

Back home, in my world of publishing over a four-year period, two things happened. First, when *The Herald-Mail* decided to narrow the size of their newspaper (and mine along with it), I didn't like how it looked. I wanted a full-size newspaper so I switched to a closer printing company. At both places, the people were extremely friendly and easy to work with.

The second thing was that in order to come up with the \$1,000 a month I needed for printing and postage, plus incidental office expenses like printer cartridges, I had to find outside employment. Experience Works had let me go in 2008 after only six months because I had succeeded -- I had published my newspaper; however, they didn't keep me long enough to let me learn anything about marketing.

As I pulled up to our local sewing factory, I suspected that they held military contracts. I remember sitting outside before my interview telling myself, "If they do military work, I'm not taking the job." And then, "How will I support my paper without a job?"

I did the finger aptitude test with little wooden blocks and was hired. Many times I felt gut-wrenching throbs as I sewed war items. The sound of my industrial machine reminded me of a machine gun. It was really awful for a woman with a Quaker background to be doing this work. Every so often I tried to escape when other opportunities became available; however, there were times when John was having health problems and I had to rush home. The people who ran the factory were very supportive.

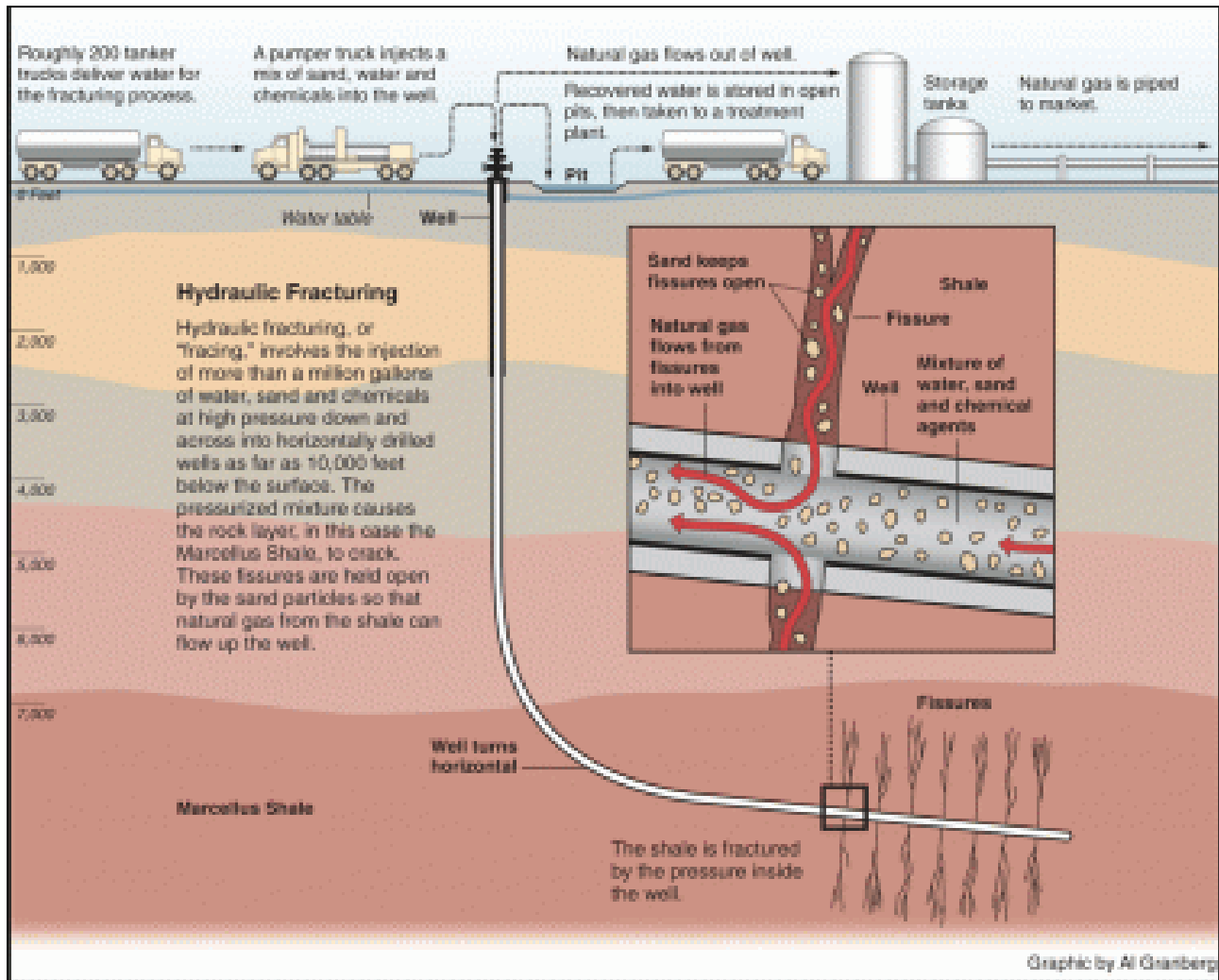


*Friends who came to my Earth Day party/newspaper meeting
(left to right) Kim, Kathie and Jack, Madalene, Sally, Mike, John*

During this period I decided to have an Earth Day party/meeting. I don't really like organizing meetings. I have to clean the house, make some food and try to keep things pleasant. I am not a natural-born hostess. Now that I have put this deeply-buried emotion into words, I'm surprised at myself. The Hackensack River Coalition was a success but I wouldn't exactly call any of the other meetings I organized a success. Homeland wasn't. The Catocin-Monocacy Climate Change Alliance wasn't. Kyoto Protocol Working Groups never materialized. I worked extraordinarily hard on trying to start an Order of the Earth group during the period when I wrote my mini-book and that group didn't last either even though the book was successful. More recently in Pennsylvania, three of us tried to organize a statewide anti-fracking group and that bombed. A few close friends showed up for my Earth Day party/meeting in 2011 and that could be called a one-day success. My preference is to talk with one person at a time, not juggle group dynamics.

Anyhow, my friends advised me not to try covering the whole world but to restrict my reporting to Pennsylvania and the horrendous gas drilling and fracking that were going on in our beautiful state, so I did that and enjoyed meeting dozens of wonderful "fractivists."

Focus on Fracking



I started going to protests to express my anger and fear in a legitimate way, where I didn't have to hide my feelings. I shoved lots of newspapers, my notebook and camera into my backpack and took off to join my colleagues so I could publicize their efforts in future editions of my newspaper. When I was with these people, I felt supported and exhilarated. But sometimes it seemed hopeless. We kept trying; otherwise, we would get that "dead" feeling.

I read and read about hydraulic fracturing (blowing up the Earth to allow methane gas to escape), poisoning people, animals, the water, the land and all other life in the process, even killing workers with explosions and accidents plus numerous other problems while greatly increasing global warming.

One of the best books I read was *The Pipeline and the Paradigm: Keystone XL, Tar Sands and the Battle to Defuse the Carbon Bomb* by Samuel Avery. My friends across the country and in Canada were trying everything they could to stop this project. Tar sands are so corrosive that the workers must replace the teeth on their gigantic shovels *every day*. So, I wondered, what is that going to do to all the pipes this stuff will travel through?

Recently I saw this headline: "The Keystone XL Distraction: Industry Has Built 11,600 Miles of Oil Pipeline With Little Public Resistance." While so much of the activists' attention was riveted on XL, the "dirty energy industry was quietly building a network of smaller pipelines all over North America. ... some of these pipelines are located just a few miles away from proposed stretches of the Keystone XL."

Avery interviewed Chief Bill Erasmus of the Dene Nation. Here's part of that conversation:

...Bill had said something to the crowd at the beginning of the walk that summarized for me the difference between the paradigms I see in conflict over the Keystone XL pipeline. "You said earlier today that 'our purpose in this life is to serve the Earth.' That gives meaning to who we are. That puts us in a place larger than ourselves. But it seems that those who are developing the tar sands believe the Earth is here to serve us. How does their worldview conflict with yours?"

*"Our people believe that everything was provided on this planet and we were brought here last," Bill responded. "We have laws that are very spiritual. Our job -- our goal -- is to take care of nature, not to fight it. We can talk about economy but it has to be balanced. You can't expect to take, take, take from Nature and not provide anything in return. There is a huge imbalance; that is why Nature is fighting back. There has to be a huge shift. The good thing is that there are many other peoples coming back to that thinking. Our original teachings tell us that regardless of where you come from in the world, other people were taught the same thing. The black people in Africa -- they were taught the same thing -- the yellow man in Asia, and the same things with the European people. We were all originally hunters and gatherers and very close to the land. We were all given the same teachings. We all have clans and families but people have slowly moved away from that. The industrial revolution has made people more individualistic. It tore people away from the land. But now we are wanting to **GO BACK....** ." (emphasis added)*

Here is what Avery wrote about consumerism:

...Thousands of people blocking the right-of-way, delaying construction, even stopping the pipeline altogether will raise the consciousness and solidarity needed for the next step but none of that will directly reduce carbon emissions. Civil disobedience will not prevent climate disaster in the long run. The way to defeat the fossil fuel industry ultimately will be to dismantle its customer base. People everywhere will have to stop buying what the fossil fuel companies have to sell.

Consumers rule the world. They are the ones who make the final decision. Not politicians, not protesters -- consumers: people who vote with their dollars to mine tar sands and blow tops off mountains. Consumers are the gas frackers and the pipeline builders. They are the ultimate polluters and only they can stop pollution completely. We are all they. We are all in this together and there is no one else to blame.

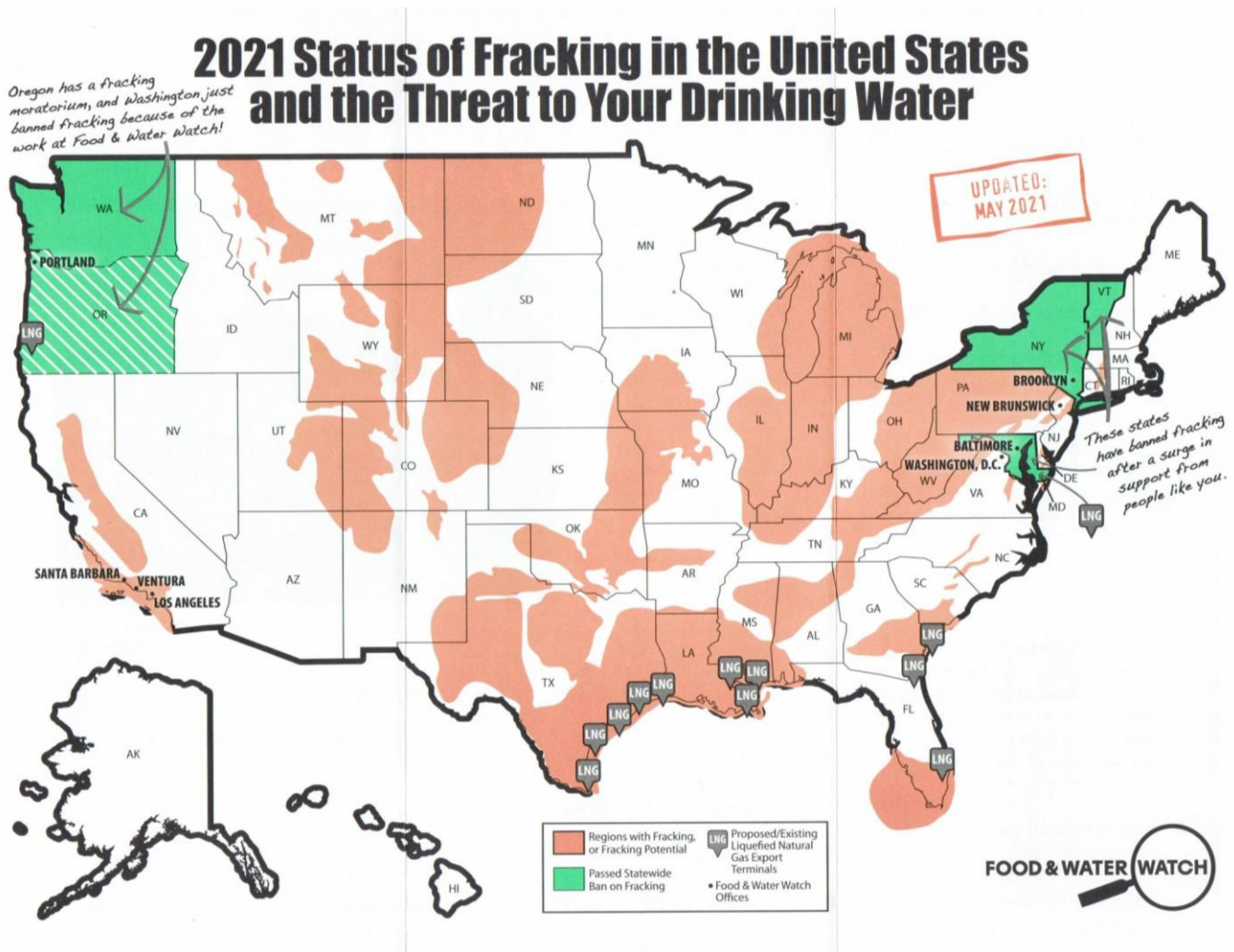
When you buy an item at Walmart and have it scanned at the checkout counter, a signal goes to a central computer recording the sale and removing the item from inventory. Once the inventory is depleted below a given level, another signal places an order at a factory somewhere on the other side of the planet to make more copies of what you just purchased. The money you spend today determines what gets made tomorrow. The dollar bill slipping out of your hand makes people do what they do all over the world.

This happens when you stop at the gas pump or write a check for your utility bill. You may not be thinking about it but every dollar you spend sends signals into the economy that determine what happens next.

The fact that you don't think about it (who does?) means that the economy has no consciousness. Its business is to get people in other places to organize their working lives around getting you what you want.... .

* * *

During that anti-fracking stage of my life, I tried to get our township to ban fracking even though we are not in a prime area for it. Our local newspaper publisher was kind enough to publish two of my stores with the title "Environmental Activist Continues Quest to Ban Gas Drilling in Twp." As with many other small, rural towns, the supervisors had no interest in this. They appear to be either totally bored or afraid of a lawsuit by oil and gas companies to challenge ordinances which protect people and public health.



Coral = Regions with Fracking or Fracking Potential; green = Passed Statewide Ban on Fracking; LNG in gray = Proposed/Existing Liquefied Natural Gas Export Terminals; black circles with capitalized lettering = Food & Water Watch Offices. Small print at upper left = Oregon has a fracking moratorium, and Washington just banned fracking because of the work at Food & Water Watch! Small print by the New York metropolitan area = These states have banned fracking after a surge of support from people like you.

One of the jobs I took to escape the factory was to do layouts at a company in State College three days a week at nearly twice the pay. You would not believe how many times I get myself into situations that are not ideal because I fail to ask questions. This was such a case.

During my first week, I noticed that this newspaper favored Marcellus Shale gas drilling and I had been fighting it in the trenches with my newspaper and at protests with my friends as part of a gigantic collection of people who knew either first-hand or vicariously about the tragedies of fracking.

I kept doing that job for the same reason I worked in the sewing factory -- to finance my newspaper -- until the weekend I attended a nationwide anti-fracking conference in Pittsburgh. I was so shocked that I wrote my letter of resignation. I could do that job no longer and returned to the factory.

Massive Educational Project

Since I was making such a concentrated effort on fracking, the folks at Earth First! invited me to write about my newspaper for a book they were to be publishing called *Grabbing Back: Resistance Against the Global Land Grab*. Noam Chomsky and Vandana Shiva were also contributors. When the book was published, my article was not included even though I had worked hard on it.

Here's the start of my story:

A Massive Educational Project

By Iona Conner

A massive educational project, that's what's needed. Surely if more people know about the dangers of global warming and fracking, they will turn off their TVs, start reading serious books and articles and attending meetings, talking with their neighbors, learning more and working as hard as they can to protect their families, land and communities.

So how does one go about such a project?

Since my background includes having two grown married sons, seven grandchildren, being an air pollution inspector in the most industrialized part of New Jersey, working for the NJDEP in their hazardous waste program, spending most of my adult years as a grassroots environmental activist and, finally, becoming a reporter for a county-wide newspaper in Frederick, Maryland, I decided to publish my own newspaper, first titled The Order of the Earth and later shortened to Earth News (iLoveEarthNews.com).

Working for another paper, I had not liked having to be neutral (it's not in my nature) or cautious enough to avoid irritating advertisers. I also didn't like covering trivia. That wasn't exactly an ideal match for me but I did gain one year's worth of newspaper experience. My dream gradually became to publish my own full-size, broadsheet, "real" newspaper, one that people could pick up and take to their easy chairs or to their doctor's offices and read anywhere, not an online one.

I already knew a lot about environmental issues and somehow (after we moved to Pennsylvania) I connected with people in the Allegheny Defense Project (ADP) who were working hard to protect our NATIONAL forest in northwestern Pennsylvania. Even that precious land is under assault and our new friends took my husband and me on a tour to show us the evidence. It was ghastly. This group works for the "protection of the natural heritage of the Alleghenies" in many different ways.

"This land is your land, this land is my land..." Humph. You thought that was true as you belted it out? Think again. Malarkey. Back when the state was buying up land, politicians only purchased the top of the acreage so they could theoretically lock up more land; therefore, they didn't buy the underlying mineral rights. Who on God's Green Earth ever thought to split the two? Now gas companies think they're entitled to wreck our precious, public forests -- sacred lands, watersheds, home to vast numbers of wildlife, land set aside for all of us to enjoy -- protected for decades, now being destroyed.

I gave this story front-page prominence in my March 2008 issue, shortly after our launch in January. What I love most about ADP kinds of people is that they are so passionate and creative. They seem more alive than others.

I left the sewing factory where I worked to finance my paper for a while and took a better-paying, part-time job at another newspaper, which was fun but an hour-and-a-half away. I was dismayed when I noticed that it was a strong advocate of fracking. After five months at that paper, I spotted an announcement for the first nationwide conference on gas drilling sponsored by Earthworks to be held in Pittsburgh. I finagled my schedule so that I could go and was shocked and disturbed by the stories I heard from dozens of people who were suffering. The next day that I was scheduled to work, I handed in my resignation. I could no longer work on a publication promoting fracking.

That conference determined the course for the next phase of my life. Mainstream newspapers were not covering the activist front very well so I tried to compensate for that.

One chilly, end-of-Winter evening, my husband and I (with my camera, notebook and backpack full of newspapers) drove to Frostburg, Maryland. My heart pounded with excitement when I saw a brightly-lit marquee with this jumbo message: NATURAL GAS & OUR FUTURE; MODERATED DISCUSSION; MARCH 2, 7 PM FREE.

Josh Fox (producer of the powerful film "Gasland") was on the panel and they showed excerpts from his movie.... .

In the story about that event (in my May 2011 paper), I wrote:

Gregory Wrightstone, president of the Eastern Section of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists and president of the Pennsylvania Coalition for Responsible Government (a grassroots political group dedicated to limited government) tried to convince the audience that there were benefits. The audience didn't buy it... Wrightstone said, "We have 1,200 wells. We do things in an environmentally-safe manner. This is low-cost energy for America and the second largest gas deposit in the world and six to ten times larger than the largest gas field in the United States. The gas industry claims that the Marcellus Shale gas field is like Saudi Arabia in terms of providing America with a huge energy source. There are [many] wells hydrofracked in Pennsylvania already," he continued, "and they do no harm to freshwater."

At this point, Fox's eyes started moving side-to-side as he tried to remain quiet until it was his turn to talk again.

Fox challenged the crowd's imaginations by telling them to go ahead and live in a place like Saudi Arabia; live in an oil field and see how you like that. See how it would feel to have chemical contamination and heavy-duty industrialization of your land. "The area is really not worth living in anymore; not worth living in while the gas is being drilled either," he explained.

Fox really let Wrightstone have it and the audience of about 150 people were right there with him. These folks did NOT want gas drilling in their community.

I also included the problems my new friends, Angel and Wayne, were having since I had met them and did two feature stories about their troubles.

Here's a summary in Angel's own words:

We live in a Natural gas storage field. We have been a part of the movement of the gas/fracking concept. We live on a 106-acre farm; we raise cattle and have our pets -- horses and dogs. We started losing animals in 2007 -- a horse, three healthy cows plus calves, three dogs -- when the five production wells shut down to be turned over to natural gas storage. We are also dealing with our health issues, Wayne not being able to breathe and a liver issue and I also have a liver issue and many other health problems that keep popping up. We had to install an \$11,000 water-treatment system because our water was polluted. We have dealt with animals dying, gas smells in our field, compressor station noise and all the 'we are not going to tell you' lines from industry and PADEP. We started asking questions in 2007 and are still asking the same questions and it is still the same answer, "We did not do it!"

We are in federal court and waiting to go and present our case.

We have put on meetings to try to inform our little town of the issues with gas drilling and fracking and water and air pollution. Iona has written some of our stories and she is such a wonderful person. We are all given road-blocks in life but Iona does not waste time going around them, she goes right thru!

Too Broke, Too Tired to Continue

This is the letter I wrote to my subscribers on December 17, 2011.

Dear Friends,

I have decided to stop publishing my newspaper for a multitude of reasons, the main one being financial. After being declined for two large grants which would have enabled me to quit my job at the sewing factory and devote myself to the paper and Marcellus Shale activism, I realized that the paper was a financial flop. After four years and 40,000 newspapers, there were only 45 paid subscribers and a bunch of complimentary ones. I'm tired. I'm behind in everything else and this has turned out to be a life that isn't much fun.

I am going to focus on activism now and I feel free as a bird not having to put together what I thought were interesting articles, lay it all out, proofread everything twice and then somehow come up with \$1,000 a month to pay for it all. Even going to bi-monthly a while ago didn't give me enough freedom to keep up with the increase in emails and people contacting me for help. I love helping people and, as soon as I recycled about 400 papers, sure enough, someone called asking me to help fight fracking in his area. We hope to get together over the holidays and figure out what we will do.

Additionally, I want to work harder on my Fracking Foes Unite! database and the idea of some sort of statewide network to stop gas drilling, which is causing so much damage everywhere.

Also, there is not enough time to dance and I love dancing! Emma Goldman (1869 to 1940, a Russian-born American writer, feminist, anarchist and atheist) once said, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution." And revolution this is!*

I have accepted the fact that John and I can't make ends meet on Social Security alone so I will stay at the sewing factory and work four days a week earning minimum wage (\$7.25 an hour). There is more to life than sitting at a sewing machine all day and at a computer all night and on the weekends. I felt that I was losing my humanity. I want to live a more spiritual way, a saner way.

What else? There are many more things which led to this decision but these are the most important ones. A sincere thanks to all the wonderful people who helped me and my newspaper over the last four years. If you would like a pro-rated refund of your subscription, please let me know.

*For the Earth and All Creation,
Iona Conner*

**http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/e/emma_goldman.html#ixzz1qoPNOu4y*

Nobody asked for their money back and, after this letter went out, I received many replies from friends who had appreciated and enjoyed my efforts. Here are a few of them:

*Iona -- Thank you for your work and dedication to the stewardship of our land, water, air ... our state. Your work and email links have been so incredibly helpful. I have used them as a resource frequently. Wishing you the best and hoping that you will rejoin the effort after a break.
Gratefully, Brenda K.*

Iona -- We will miss Earth News aka Order of the Earth. Looking back, it is incredible that it even existed at all and we are feeling guilty that we did not make more of an issue of keeping it going. It was the best source of environmental information in a wide area, especially on the Marcellus Shale impact.

We are dropping projects too, in our case largely due to aging. We are finding that restrictions apply. Going crazy or becoming exhausted is foolish and we have been risking that in our effort to...save humanity and the planet, etc.

I feel like we should go on the road and find 100 or 1,000 or 10,000 paid subscribers and then urge you to produce their newspaper but, alas, that project needs someone with more zip than we have for such an ambitious outreach. We don't doubt that it could be done if we travelled to events all over the state where fracking protests are taking place and got ourselves on the agenda with sample copies and subscription blanks in hand. But we always had multiple projects going and didn't focus on keeping Earth News when we had the chance.

So, thank you for producing it these recent years, it was great and had great potential! You were heroic. Next...???

Jack for Jack and Kathie H.

Dear Iona -- May I just say that The Order of the Earth was one of the best activist publications I have had the pleasure to read. The fight for the planet is not over..it is just beginning.

Yours Always, Stephen B., President GreenLine Paper Company, Inc.

Dear Iona -- I am very sorry to hear of cessation of publication of The Order of the Earth News! I am very grateful for your publishing of poems sent to you by me -- very grateful and was always happy to see them in the settings that you provided.

I miss you already! Keep on dancing and speaking out -- your voice is very important! (Please keep me posted on anything new.)

Best Always, Sandy C., Newfoundland, Canada

I found a note on May 3, 2015 as I was clearing out old papers. It's dated 12/29/11 right after I quit the paper. It's about a phone conversation I had with Rainbow.

Sad about newspaper ending but it did a lot of good for a lot of people and will continue to do so into the future. 'May I give you a special message?'

Your grandfather is very, very proud of you. Your paper was NOT a failure; it was responsible journalism; it was valid. His smile is very big now. It was not a failure in any way.

Your mother is very proud of you, too. She's there.

You can talk with your grandfather any time, ask him questions....

Feeling Dead

A couple of months after shutting down my newspaper, while still working four days a week at the sewing factory, I confided in my old friend Gloria that I felt dead. My spirit was empty. It took a while for me to lose that inner feeling of lifelessness although I went through my days in the usual manner and didn't mention it to anyone else at the time.

How On Earth Did I Get a Third Son at Age 66?



Just before shutting down my newspaper, I received the saddest letter of my life from a prisoner. He had written it for publication but it arrived too late. Many prisoners had loved my newspaper and circulated it. Exactly how he discovered it remains a mystery. Remember, my background included Suburban Housewife and Newspaper Publisher; I had had no prior contact with the problems of inner city people, poverty or prisoners.

Here is his letter:

Dear Reader,

I'm 31 years old. I've been in jail for about 12 years. I came to jail when I was young, foolish and ignorant. Unfortunately, that got me a long sentence.

Jail is very depressing. There's nothing to do. Everything is monotony, habit and routine. The average person's day is spent in idleness with nothing positive or constructive to do. After being here so long, you start to feel empty and void inside. You start to feel like life don't have no meaning or significance no more. I've been in seclusion for six months. I've got three months to go. Seclusion is very unbearable and the living conditions are inhumane. The way this place is set up it's like it's designed for you to go insane. They got this one method they use against us called sensory deprivation. What they try to do is deprive you of anything that stimulates and activates the mind and senses. It's all designed for you to go insane.

The methods they use against us isn't nothing but psychological warfare at its best. These tactics have been proven to destroy, not only you, but your spirit. This is the reason why a lot of us walk around here feeling hopeless.

It's like they've destroyed and crushed our spirits. To be honest with you, jail don't care if you're blind, crippled or crazy. All they want is your body and if you're not strong your mind will follow.

Another thing I want you to realize is that the actual pressure of isolation can take a man or woman down faster than a 350-pound line backer. This is the reason why I've lost 15 pounds. When you're in seclusion, you're in your cell 23 hours a day and most times 24 when it's cold outside. You go to the yard in something analogous to a dog cage. When you're in your cell your lights are illuminated all day and that's even when you sleep. If you try to cover them up, that gives them the justification to put you in in-cell mechanical restraints. I've actually seen people develop mental illnesses after enduring all of this.

Since I've been here everybody that meant something to me the most, including my most loved and cherished ones, all left and disowned me. So basically I'm here doing this by myself.

Look, I know it's not your responsibility and you're not obligated to do nothing for me but I would like to ask you out of generosity and kindness if you can send me something to read.

Also, I'm asking you this out of the bottom of my heart because I've got nothing!

Truly yours,

Andrew

Kindness is the language that the deaf can hear and the blind can see!

(I sent Andrew a letter and the December/January *Earth News*. That started a long exchange of letters.)

* * *

A couple of months later, John and I visited Andrew and found that he has a very sweet nature. I liked him right away. It was hard to imagine how he had ended up in prison. Before too long, he was referring to me as "Mom" since his own mother hadn't ever visited him; actually, he had had no visitors in 12 years of incarceration. We kept writing to each other and John suggested that I send him some money every month, which I do to this day, although it isn't much.

By Christmas, I was floundering in figuring out what to give him for a present so the idea of helping get his story published seemed like a good one. He thought about it for a while and started writing. Have you any idea what it's like to grow up in a ghetto with lousy schools and rampant crime surrounding you? And dark skin on top of it all? My heart was touched and my mind opened by knowing Andrew.

One of my friends who had done a lot of prison ministry suggested we tell the warden what we were up to so I called him. We had 100% support for our project, initially called *Time to Care: A Young Prisoner Finds A Friend, a "Mom" and Hope*. I thought that the simple exchange of our letters, if published, would help other people reach out to "adopt" a prisoner and bring more satisfaction and joy to their lives but Andrew wanted to write more. His stories are very powerful; he's good at expressing himself so this title may not be our final one and the book has taken a new direction.

Andrew was moved recently to another, stricter prison in a large swap so that those in the new prison with medical and mental issues could receive better care in his former prison. Work on our book came to a gradual halt. Andrew is still working hard to get his GED and comes up for parole in December.

We write often and I visit Andrew occasionally. We both enjoy those visits. I find it frustrating to try to help him from the outside and I can only imagine how frustrating it must be for someone on the inside to accomplish much.

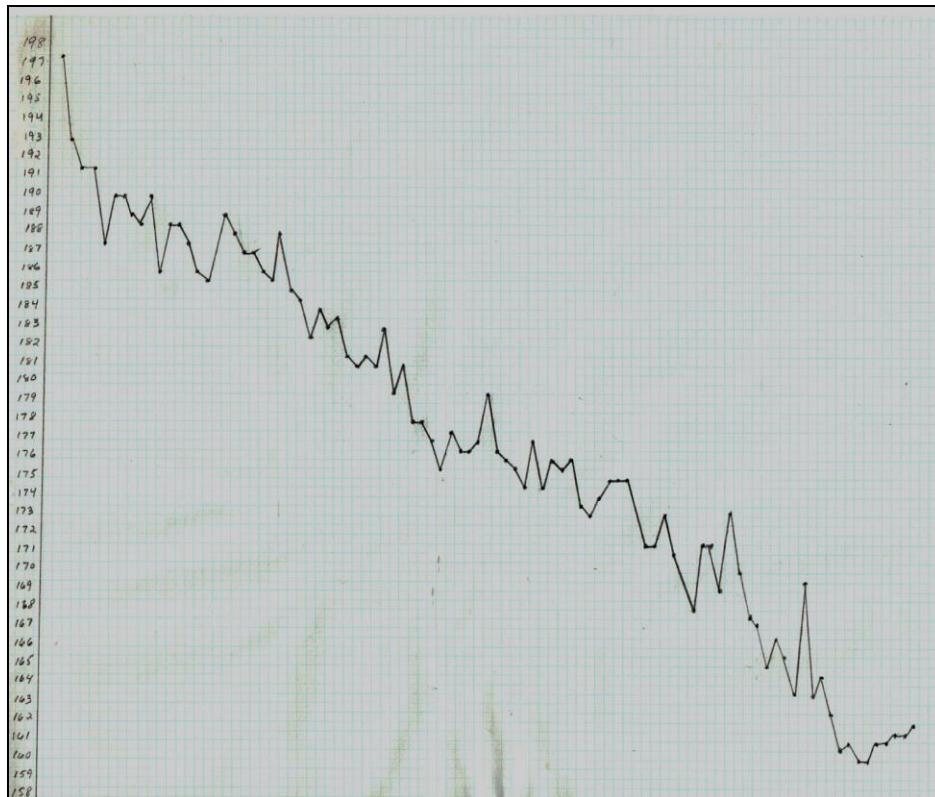
Recently, Andrew has gotten in touch with his mother, cousin, sister and a former girlfriend and, after struggling together to find a reasonable way for him to get phone cards, he is finally able to call all of us! I feel so happy for Andrew now that his family and friends are back in communication with him.

He is a dear man; now I have three sons.

Time Out

After stopping my "real" newspaper, I kept working at the factory, initiated an email sabbatical and started to practice relaxing, which has always been difficult for me.

I was also continuing to lose weight with the help of a friend. We discuss things that are bothering us and keep track of our weights. I found it useful to have someone to be accountable to over the course of a few years. I lost 75 pounds and am doing a fairly good job of maintaining that loss. The numbers in the chart on the next page start at 198 and go down to 158 but, before this, I had reached an all-time high of 225. That was frightening.



My newspaper hiatus and email sabbatical lasted almost two years -- until the idea hit to start up an online newspaper, the thing I didn't want to do. I had only wanted a "real" newspaper which people could read in front of their fireplace or shove in their briefcase or purse to read on a train or in a doctor's office. You get the picture -- a "real" newspaper.

After a sufficient rest, my oompf returned and now I publish The Go-Back Club newsbooklet, which can be emailed and I don't need to earn a whole lot of money to have 10 or 20 copies printed every month.

Letters Written, Not Sent

Three years ago, I thought it a good idea to tell my sons and their wives what I was up to as they are so busy working and raising my grandchildren that I don't bother them with many details about my life from day to day or week to week. Here's what I wrote but never sent:

August 9, 2012 (11 p.m.)

Dear Mike and Mitch,

I need to figure something out and the best way to do this seems to be to block off each morning from my 67th birthday till the end of the year and try to strip away all the thoughts and feelings and actions that were forced on me (or so I thought) by others.

On my last trip to Idaho 10 days ago, my teacher said all I need to do is find inner peace and be the best Iona I can be. But there's a problem here. I have no idea -- well, hardly any -- how to do that. I have

led such a busy life under so many unusual circumstances that I find this new "assignment" very, very difficult.

I have made a good start in stopping the emails and my activism and giving away a lot of books and clothes and things which I'm obviously not using. The disdain of wasting things from my decades of devoted environmental activism crippled my ability to actually throw things away.

But I'm getting off track here. Over the years I have saved a collection of papers and "souvenirs" from my life expecting to write a book if I ever ended up bored in a nursing home (Heaven forbid) and I have weeded these things out BUT I feel strongly that it would help me find/create inner peace by reexamining my life since I wrote Metamorphosis and sharing it with you in letter form. I'd love to ditch my computer. Tonight, as I sit here with this infant idea, I imagine setting up a table and chair in the loft, where my "history books" are stored and just writing away as close to every day as possible, hoping my layoff from the sewing factory lasts. Maybe I'll type it all out for you -- probably will -- since (1.) I do like to type, (2.) It's unlikely I will really toss my computer out yet, and (3.) You'll be able to read this a whole lot easier.

I don't expect to write any more till October 2nd and, as you know, it's way past my bedtime. Good Night, Dearhearts.

*Lots of Love Always,
Mom*

October 3, 2012

Dear Mitch and Mike, Ginger and Billie,

Today I start my three months of figuring out how to achieve inner peace -- a deep, deep stillness which my teacher showed me earlier this morning as I sat on the loft deck with my coffee and his spirit while John was heading to the dentist.

It is a misty morning after a night of rain so my view was limited to our backyard and all the life therein. It was so peaceful -- even moreso after I shut off the radon machine. And now I'm up in the loft with piles of old papers I thought were worth saving for you -- some may be, some may not. Some may contain clues as to my lifelong restlessness and that's what I'll be searching for so I can stop that, look back gratefully on what I've achieved and what I've TRIED to achieve but failed at, including marriage. There seem to be some things about myself I don't understand which keep me in suspense and restless. It's time, at 67, to put those attitudes, fears, reactions to rest.

Naturally, I've been thinking about what I want to do and say to you during these rare, unprecedented and joyful three months. A summary is:

If I hadn't known that I had to leave your father (and you must remember it was your father I left, not you), then I wouldn't have had the dream of John's face before I left 87 Nejecho.

If I hadn't loved sailing so much (and folk music), I would never have met Joel who invited me to sail with him and a few others to Block Island. That's how I met Norm and fell in love with him and his gentle ways.

Now, if I hadn't met and married Norm, I would probably never have ended up on a kibbutz in Israel where a man named Zohar reminded me about my dream of John's face.

Without the memory of that dream, I probably would not have released my heart to fall in love with and marry John.

Without my strong activist life with John, I probably would never have even THOUGHT of publishing my own newspaper, much less do it.

If I had not put my heart and soul into my newspaper, Al in Idaho might never have heard about it or sent three dollars for a sample.

Now comes the most important part: IF AL HAD NOT MADE ME 11 TAPES AND TOLD ME ABOUT HIS SPIRITUAL TEACHER IN THEM, I PROBABLY WOULD NOT HAVE GONE TO IDAHO AND BECOME HIS STUDENT. And that round-about route has brought my heart and soul to Most High God.

That's all I feel like writing for today. Now I'll sort through some old family papers and get them ready for my filing cabinet.

*With Love,
Mom*

October 4, 2012 (11 a.m.)

I got so engrossed in my old life that I nearly forgot to write anything for you today!

I've set up file folders for different stages of my life and been rereading old letters from my grandparents and parents, then on through the first 10 years with John -- what an extraordinary, complicated and interesting life I have lived. Looking back, it seems as though my spirit broke loose after I married John and I then started some serious soul work -- which continues to this day. What amazes me is that my early work and questions and assessments matched so closely to those in my heart right now.

I just reached a point in a Fall 2000 journal where I write a quote from When I Am An Old Woman I Shall Wear Purple [and I am wearing a hand-knit purple shawl as I write]:

"What would you do now if you were NOT afraid?"

Under that question I had written:

BOOM...

... and thus I remain sitting here in the loft, the paper-shuffling done, as I ponder this perfect question.

And that's it for today.

Love, Mom

P.S. I got tired of thinking this through and read the answer I wrote back then: "When I am an old woman I shall have an income." I laughed out loud -- yeah -- the sewing factory -- and now laid off collecting unemployment!

October 5, 2012

I found a gem today that I had written years ago, as I was going through some deep soul-searching and questioning about my life, complicated by Nutrient Management and a potential writing job in Fall 2000:

"...The home I found was in me, not in the meeting, not in the other women -- in me."

Why have I forgotten that???

OH BOY, OH BOY -- A BIRD MIGRATION -- HUNDREDS OR THOUSANDS OF BIRDS FLITTERING BY -- RESTING IN OUR TREES -- CHATTERING AWAY -- ONE OF MY VERY FAVORITE THINGS IN LIFE!!!!

October 9 -- I think

This has turned into a major organizing and filing project -- not a whole lot of "inner peace" but a small measure of it in simply knowing that all these old papers, letters and photos are gradually taking on a logical order.

October 12

By now I've gotten nearly all of the family history plus my life with John organized for you in my filing cabinet and am proceeding through my more personal journals. I've ditched many of them in which I

was battling my addictions and worries like overeating, coffee, sugar and cigarettes. Too picayune and troubled to retain so I put them in the dumpster back at Basking Ridge Road (our Columbia apartment).

A few days ago I relived my Pine Barrens bike ride and filed that one away. I do believe that tiny garage apartment and living alone was one of the happiest years of my life.

Then Joanie and Joe came for two days followed by Madalene last night and today I'm back on track here in the chilly loft.

Now I will read my 1982 mini-journal.

October 15

Gee, I'm pretty exhausted after rereading "Completion" in the 1982 flowered journal and reliving my life of publishing Metamorphosis. Good thing I was young back then!

I wonder if you'd like to read it, too. Maybe I'll bring it along on my next trip -- maybe not. Probably not. Don't know....

[October 16th Horoscope: Become more aware of yourself and what you offer to others. You do not want to pull back but giving too much has its liabilities. Try to detach from situations that might appear difficult or impossible to resolve. A little detachment goes a long way.]

October 17

Yesterday I had 12 1/2 hours to myself and got through six journals! One was so deep and confused that I trashed it. The feelings it aroused were very emotional and I was glad to remember what I had written but there was no thought of potential publication or future help for you or the planet so I gently released it.

Yesterday I got an email from Linda in Idaho describing how our spiritual teacher is facing evil spirits in his development. He uses Wisdom, Compassion, Peace, Love and Truth, etc. to do his work and to show us humans how to deal with each other.

And that's how I learn so much from him about spiritual matters as I go through life these days.

**I forgot patience and tolerance. Also, it's the spirits on/in the people which make them do bad and stupid things; the people themselves are good.*

[Today I clipped one of my notes from an old journal: God's law in reality forbids not only the act of murder but also hate-filled, contemptuous words and thoughts.]

October 18

I called Mitchell first thing this morning to sing "Happy Birthday."

MY JOURNAL WORK IS DONE!!!

Next: labeling the photo albums for you all

[Quote from journal: There is an old me, a new me, an imperfect me and the beginning of a new acceptance of all the me's.]

October 19

Today I labeled the album with both of your weddings and relived the joy we all shared.

Marriage starts out so euphoric!

October 27

I am done!!!! Now I can dance again!

What a wonderful project -- reliving my life up to this point -- SO MANY MEMORIES, SO MANY PEOPLE I LOVE, SUCH GOOD TIMES (WITH A FEW SAD ONES).

And now I ask, "WHAT'S NEXT?"

Love, Mom

P.S. So, have I achieved "inner peace?" Well, I wouldn't go that far but I have experienced it. I know what it FEELS like and I am happier. I let God be God and that makes all the difference.

What On Earth Am I Doing These Days?

By August 2013, I thought I could become a nationwide, syndicated columnist. I considered my ideas so interesting and important that they would catch on with a larger audience than I have ever gained on my own. I decided to create a quiet space to write up in the large dancing room above the garage. I also bought Jill Pertler's book, *The Do-It-Yourselfers Guide to Self-Syndication: Using Secrets, Shortcuts, Strategies & Psychology to Get Your Column in Print*.

I spotted a computer table at a yard sale nearby just as the woman was packing up for the day.

"How much is that?"

"You may have it."

"But how much?"

"You may have it."

"Free?"

Yep.

She even helped load it into my station wagon since John had just had cataract surgery and couldn't lift anything.

I lugged my new "desk" up to my loft, dragged an old office chair over, moved the floor lamp to shine on my work and -- voilá -- my writer's space. Then I blocked out early morning hours to write. I wrote five columns with a heading of "The Go-Back Club." Then I researched 250 newspaper publishers in the Pennsylvania/New Jersey/New York/Maryland area and sent them all a cover email and two samples.

Not one was interested! Not one!

Sigh.

Carry on, Iona.

O.K. I'll publish my own columns. Hmmm.....

I can do an online newspaper for free.

I copied my former template, adjusted it to an 8 1/2 by 11" format so that anyone who wanted to could print it out.


I got back to work. I was instantly happy. I LOVE doing this!!!!

I received unemployment until December 31, when Congress refused to reauthorize long-term benefits.

I was panicky until John tore off a stub from a flyer in our grocery store.

Experience Works again! I was hired instantly and that's what I'm doing now, working as a Participant Assistant, helping other low-income, unemployed people over 55 get jobs in a training program to improve their skills so they can reenter the job market.

I've been publishing The Go-Back Club newsbooklet for two years and feel that I can continue it easily for many more years. My major expense is printer cartridges. I received a \$2,000 grant last Spring and used it to develop marketing tools and stock up on cartridges. A new friend created a better web site and brochure for us and added a lot of enthusiasm to the project until she got too busy with her own work.



Join our Simple-Living Brigade and work with us to reduce global warming in creative and fun ways. Sign up for our free, online, monthly newsbooklet at www.gobackclub.org or by contacting Iona Conner at 814-259-3680; gobackclub@pa.net or 21431 Marlin Circle, Shade Gap, Pennsylvania 17255. Thank you.

Consumer Liberation
Use it up, wear it out
Make it do or do without.

I started giving Go-Back Club talks, looking for others to deliver their own Simple Living messages in different places. As of this writing, I have changed my mind in order to (once again) simplify my own life. I don't want to give talks anymore and neither did anyone else I spoke to. I'm done.

Unfortunately, I must still work part-time to do the things I want to do and pay for my trips to Idaho. It's a good job but cuts into my freedom to follow my heart with The Go-Back Club and to do other things I'd prefer to be doing. The pay is lousy, the work emotionally tiring. I wish I could retire and live the life I want to live every day and not just on my days off.

* * *

I mailed a short summary of 2013 with my holiday cards.

Happy Holidays!

Surprise! I decided to send cards out early this year.

- *My family at the Jersey Shore survived Sandy and Mitch's family got back into their home after five months.*
- *John survived bladder cancer, two cataract removals and lots of dental work.*
- *I survived all of the above and now everyone's doing fine.*
- *My July visit to my spiritual teacher was extremely valuable and wonderful.*
- *John is working hard on climate change, mostly in universities.*
- *I'm selling off our organic cotton clothing/soap/toy inventory at holiday bazaars.*
- *We've worked hard in the vegetable garden and have a freezer full of organic food for Winter.*
- *Together we spent hours, days, weeks, months combating invasive Russian (autumn) olives here.*
- *I'm working on a book with a young prisoner who has a lot to say about his life and I'm hoping it will help others realize that they, too, can make a big difference in someone's future. For now, it's titled Time to Care: How a Young Prisoner Found a Friend, a 'Mom' and Hope.*
- *I started The Go-Back Club (a Simple-Living Brigade) and we have 36 members in seven states, Washington D.C. and three countries. I love producing a small, free, electronic newsletter every month for our members. See www.gobackclub.org.*
- *As long as I remain unemployed, I'm pretending to be retired and loving it BUT I continue to look for a part-time job to help pay the bills.*
- *We enjoy our quiet evenings reading (or me, sewing) in front of the fireplace.*

Life is good! Hope yours is, too.

Love, Peace and Joy,

Jona and John

How On Earth Is John Doing?

John carries on his social justice work constantly, with great vigor and determination to apply his process somewhere, despite an assortment of ailments associated with aging and some poor lifestyle choices. He's had cataract and bladder surgery and seems to be doing fine now. He hasn't had a new stent for about two years. His aches and pains plague him, mostly from arthritis, but he carries on with gusto and the best of spirits at 80, singing and whistling as life goes by. He recently discovered YouTubes on his computer and passes hours absorbing reruns of What's My Line?, Broadway musicals, a few old war documentaries (like the sinking of Yamato, a Japanese battleship), airplane crashes and flash mobs. Sometimes I catch him playing Solitaire but I enjoy that game, too. The difference is that Luddite me plays with real cards.

How On Earth Did I Prepare to Write This Memoir?



Most of my life, I've had the thoughts and emotions, "Things aren't right. This doesn't feel good. What can I do to fix it? CAN I fix it or is it someone else's problem?"

I'm only now beginning to realize that I can't fix everything or everybody. I have limitations. I will keep on fixing myself and doing my best to help others who need me.

I created a tiny Writer's Cabin out of a shed in our back yard. I cleared out the junk, put down a wood floor, insulated it, cut up an old rug for the floor, covered the walls with colorful fabric and left half of one wall blank as my bulletin board where I tack up inspirational papers. I lugged the computer table down from the loft, along with the chair and the lamp from my column-writing effort. Then I carefully carried Cece's ceramic Christmas tree down the steps and inserted its colorful little lights.

Thankfully, my cabin has a shelf and a small window so I can peek out at Nature. I placed the picture of Joanie and me in the "Sisters" frame directly in front of my desk on the shelf with a few other treasures.

John bought a 100-foot extension cord so I have heat in Winter. I wrote and edited most of this book out there but came inside for the month of December to review all the materials I had filed away in my basement file cabinet. Then I typed the first draft on my computer from hand-written notes. Once each draft was done, I returned to my Cabin for editing.

She, who had written and spoken so often and so seriously about simplifying our lives, had created chaos in her own life trying so hard to do too many things all at once. I'm in the process of Going Back to the days when I was able to balance work and fun better. I am learning to live within my spiritual, emotional and physical limitations. I realize I can handle only so much stress and that's it.

I'm having a grand time getting rid of extraneous, ugly or useless "stuff" and greatly curtailing my commitments and activities so I can stay HOME more.

Part 8: Got it!

Heart leads, I follow.

Happiness Is Being With People Who Share My Values



On my 68th birthday, I received one of the greatest honors of my life. I showed up at the Fulton County Environmental Action Group meeting in my hand-stitched dress. I was more dolled up than usual because John and I had been out to dinner. When the leader introduced me, he told everyone that I had been the inspiration for his group. I had done several programs there in the past and had gotten to know many of those in the audience. It was clearly one of the highlights of my life and it was no big deal -- just a simple acknowledgement that I had helped motivate them to action.

Here is the story about making this dress using no electricity, just my fingers and my brain.

Have you ever wondered about life before electricity? Sometimes I do when I'm trying to reduce our electric bill or my contributions to the changing climate.

One of my favorite examples was the day I decided to hand stitch a new dress. I must express gratitude to my grandmother, mother and step-mother, all of whom had enough patience to teach me how to sew hour after hour when I was a little girl.

First my grandmother. My memories include happy days spent making doll clothes and felt doll hats plus doing little needlework samplers by hand.

The next generation of mothers (I was blessed to have had two) helped me learn how to use patterns, choose fabric, cut it out and then use a sewing machine to create new clothes for myself. Oh my, did they ever have patience! I made dozens of garments for myself and them, too, plus curtains, bedspreads, napkins and sometimes even hankies from old flannel sheets.

I loved sewing, even mending and altering my old clothes. One day I realized that all of this sewing was using energy from coal, oil, natural gas or nuclear plants and I was dismayed.

Now what?

When my faithful Kenmore sewing machine (a high-school graduation gift) died after 30 years of service, I found an old treadle, foot-powered Singer. With glee I installed a new belt and sat down to sew, this time letting my feet do most of the work. Alas, it never worked right for me so I gave it away.

O.K., what's next?

I cut out a dress, threaded my needle and stitched it entirely by hand.

Silence.

No roaring motor, no thumping pedal. My needle moved noiselessly through the material stitch by stitch. Twenty years later I can still recall the thrill of it all, not to mention that I had created a unique dress without using any energy but my own.

So far this story includes three generations but there's a fifth coming up. I have two sons whom I never taught to sew; however, one has a very clever daughter who loves to create things.

Unfortunately, I live five hours from her but one day when I was visiting, her mother asked if I'd teach my granddaughter how to crochet. I was excited. We sat down together with a crochet hook and some yarn. My granddaughter then showed me a project she had already started to work on. She had learned how to crochet on YouTube! I was proud of her but felt kind of useless. So instead, we sat and hand-stitched some doll clothes for her little "girls."

This Summer their whole family came to visit us. The two children spent the night with us while their parents had some time alone nearby.

The next morning my granddaughter and I were talking about our long hair and some problems we have styling it. I confessed that every time I try to tie a bow in my ponytail, it comes out crooked. She excitedly told me she had the answer.

After they got home, she sent me a link to a YouTube done by a pre-teen girl showing us how to make a hair bow that would lie straight with no sewing at all.

Now my granddaughter is teaching her grandmother.

All it takes is a little (or a lot) of patience and we can work together or alone to solve some of our problems, tiny or huge. Or are they really the same?

Friends

I get a great deal of pleasure from trying to help my friends. Here's an example via email.

[three emails from Marjorie]

Iona,

In your travels, you have enjoyed exposure to other cultures and have been able to determine the common positive goals we all share. Perhaps you can advise me on my reading list.

My next reading (self-assignment) will be Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior. Do you have any reading recommendations for self-awareness and character development -- I will always have room for improvement. This will be an endless journey.

Iona, I know this may be an unusual request but I know no one I would rather ask. Please reply at your convenience.

Thank you so much.

I have not read Hope for the Flowers by Trina Paulus. I will immediately put it on my list. Thoughtful consideration takes a lot of psychic energy and you are a positive force in the world.

Thank you so much for considering my request for advice. There is no rush for a reply.

I am deeply touched to think you can find value in my thoughts.

You are welcome to use whatever I write; it is hard work to be precise and completely truthful, as we all have a different lens through which we experience the world. I have always been aware that everything I write or say privately may at any time become public; this awareness leads to constant self-correction and paring my thoughts down to the core to seek, if not find, the truth.

Sometimes, such whirling in my head causes me to be unable to respond quickly but it gets sorted out in the end.

Thank you for the book list. I have enjoyed so many books over the years! If I can glean a life lesson or find a universal truth, if only one line, that book is a recommended book.

Two children's books are on my short list: Little Britches: Father and I Were Ranchers and The Education of Little Tree. The former I began reading aloud to my husband and it brought tears to his eyes, remembering his childhood with his father.

Later on, I invited two friends from McConnellsburg to visit who were interested in seeing my Writer's Cabin. They stayed for five hours and we had a great time together, especially with John telling his hilarious tree stories. John and I shared our feelings about our life's work and, afterwards, I received this email from Judy.

...I don't know if you remember that while we were talking on Saturday, John said something about the work that you and he had done hadn't made a difference but you said that it had by influencing the thinking of the people you connected with. It was really eloquent and true and I thought that perhaps it would be a wonderful preface for your book. That what might appear to be insignificant interactions can have subtle but profound influences.

The International Nature Loving Association



This is the picture I took and used on the front page of my 24-page Go-Back Club newsbooklet's September 2014 issue about my trip to Korea. There were 26 dance teams from 16 countries singing, dancing and smiling for love of Earth. I have never been in such a joyful group of people who share my values. It was Heavenly.

And now for the grand finale -- Korea and the 7th International Nature Loving Association (INLA) festival and my all-expense-paid trip to join 1,000 others who are also in love with Earth.

I had an older brother all along. His name is Pyong Ui Roh. He is my "brother in the Universe" who lives in Daegu, Korea. I met him at Rutgers 30 years ago. He has been my faithful cheerleader all this time. He and his wife have visited us a few times and, whenever they were in the United States, we tried to get together. He is like an angel to me.

Last Spring he invited me to come to Daegu as a foreign correspondent for the INLA festival and the Nature and Humanity Seminar. I tried to convince him that by inviting Stephen Leahy, whom he had met in person about a year before this, his group would have much broader coverage internationally. Nope, he wanted me there. I was puzzled but I accepted.

A ticket arrived via email and off I went. Other than meeting my spiritual teacher, it was the most amazing experience of my life. I documented my trip in a highly-edited version for The Go-Back Club newsbooklet so I won't reproduce it here; you can see it at www.groundswellnews.org September 2014 Special Edition in the Archives. I worked so hard on it and wanted to include every dance team that it ended up being twice as large as my usual publication.



The youth dance teams (ages 15-35) had gathered from Asia and Canada. Their happy spirit was everywhere. Their philosophy is Love of Nature and that love is to be spread by joy, happiness and smiles. The dancers were amazing as they danced and sang and smiled. Everywhere we went they greeted us with smiles and waves. I have never been in a group of people with such extreme energy and politeness. I was cared for in a way I'd not experienced before. I even had my own translator/roommate who handled so many logistics and conversations for me that she must have been totally worn out by the time my six-day visit ended.



Dr. Chung-Whan Byun (left) and my brother in the Universe, Dr. Pyong Roh, at the Nature and Humanity seminar, where I gave a short speech.

Dr. Chung-Whan Byun was our generous host; he founded Daegu Haany University 34 years ago. I had met him several years before this when he visited Pyong in the U.S. and edited his autobiography. His

is a fascinating life, overcoming great hardships and poverty to establish not only a university but the first hospital for Korean medicine, too. In Korean medicine, no knives or toxic chemicals are used to treat people; healing is done through acupuncture and herbs.

We ate the most delicious vegan meals all week, served elegantly. That is part of their philosophy - plant-based diets for health and the future of the planet. It seemed that every time Dr. Byun showed up, he had gifts for us.

Pyong asked me to create a 300-word talk for the Seminar. Here's what I came up with.

My Congratulatory Speech for Daegu Haany University

Annyeong haseyo! [Are you at peace?]

It is an honor and a pleasure to congratulate Dr. Byun and those who have worked together over the years to make this university the great institution it is today.

In connecting Nature and Humanity, we have a lot of work to do — a lifetime of work on behalf of Planet Earth and all living creatures.

Wherever life leads you, whether it's to become a doctor, a scientist, a professional or a laborer, a teacher or a parent, a nurse or a healer — in everything that we do from now on, we must consider unborn generations.

We are preparing the way for them and our goal must be to do the best we can in all of our daily decisions to build a glorious future.

I've been in the environmental movement for 48 years, figuring out what I must do to protect my sons so that they would grow to be healthy and wise human beings.

A young student of mine summarized this way of life many years ago: THINK AND ACT. THINK AND ACT.

I have also learned how important the spiritual element is to support us as we meet obstacles — and we will meet obstacles.

We are more than consumers and money-makers; we are a species with the ability to love and protect our home planet, each other and the children.

You will meet many wonderful people as you start (or continue) your lifelong environmental work — like my friend Dr. Pyong Roh, whom I met 28 years ago when we were studying Public Health and Environmental Law.

I hope you learn a lot during this event and will carry this knowledge in your hearts as you greet each new day.

*The future is here. Right here! Right now!**

Thank you for being here to share my joy of working toward a better future.

**I added this line spontaneously after seeing hundreds of young dancers; however, the audience at the seminar was primarily professors. I had prepared my speech for young people. When I looked out at my mature audience, I panicked until I saw a young volunteer taping the session. I gave my talk to him.*

* * *

I met the most adorable person I've ever met -- Collin, a humble Malaysian woman who is so joyful and loving and kind! Hers is a beautiful INLA spirit and her frequent emails are full of poetry and laughter. They brighten any day. I love her dearly. I tell my friends she is like an angel sent to me by God. Her language is Chinese but she uses English in the most incredibly wonderful way.

Dearest Ms. Iona,

Light Light Light...
I saw the moon light here...
And I imagine the sun light in Shade Gap...
I wish it can warm you and John...
Or if the sun hide itself...
I hope you can have a glass of warm water...
Let the water warm you as well...
That's Love of Nature Mother...

Smile, my dear...
you will see I smile to you when you smile...
I wish you will have a wonderful morning today...
Let my smile wish you a good start of today...
Let your smile cheers everyone that you meet...
Let your smile warms John and others...

When you walk to icy hill...
When you drive or walk on snow road...
Say hi to all snow...
They are reminding us always be a pure and naive people...
They are practicing us to be tough and brave in cold or bad situation...

Dear... My Dear Iona...
How lucky we are...
Love are everywhere...
Love are surrounding us all the time...
I wish you be blessed with love forever...
I wish you stay happy forever...

Love,
Collin

* * *

I'll give you two examples of Life with INLA. We were housed in Daegu Haany dorms and, at 5:30 a.m. happy music came through the PA system, meaning that Su (my volunteer interpreter and roommate) and I woke up early every day.

At the other end of my visit, Su and I had to get up at 4 a.m. so I could catch the high-speed train to the airport. Su faithfully got up with me and helped with my luggage. After we arrived at the train station, an INLA man met us to make sure I was on schedule for catching my plane home and another INLA man brought me a full, vegan breakfast around 5:15 a.m. How these people managed to give us all such wonderful care and how things worked out so beautifully I'll never know. I'll also never know who paid for me to be there; I didn't need any money at all. I had cash for presents and I treated Su to a few coffees but I didn't need money at all! It was like being in Heaven on Earth.

What on Earth is Next?

I crave stillness and inner peace. I recently picked up a used copy of a book about Peace Pilgrim, the woman who criss-crossed the country with no money, no food and only ate when people offered her a meal. She spoke of peace, inner and world, everywhere she went.

Here's what the editors wrote about Peace Pilgrim. "Like many people, she gradually acquired money and things. When she realized this self-centered life had become meaningless and worldly goods burdens to her rather than blessings, she walked all one night through the woods until she felt 'a complete willingness, without any reservations, to give my life to God and to service.'"

I want to be more like her. I have her book by my armchair along with *The Order of the Earth* mini-book, hoping to recapture the days when I was stronger in my beliefs and was more able to live by them. I also copied many pages from "The Tempest" I had written to myself back in my air-pollution days from *A Treasury of Kahlil Gibran*. It's about a hermit who also pulled away from society to lead a life of spirit.

These are my future guides to inner peace and living the way I believe my life should be lived, with God's spirit with me always, following his desire for us to be humble servants to everyone.

* * *

That concludes my story. I'm going to rearrange my life so that I have more time to spend with my family and friends, more time to be in Nature, more time to devote to The Go-Back Club, more time to dance, more time to keep my flower garden beautiful, more time to keep the house clean and neat and more time to practice relaxing.

For the last sentence of my memoir, I'm borrowing words from Pablo Neruda's *Canto General*:
"I leave you now with myself, the (wo)man I used to be...."



THE END

Epilogue: 2:15 a.m., January 28, 2015

John and I just agreed to put on a little heat in the basement bedroom. The blizzard is over. God sent two angels to help me get up Slippery Hill Road to my car so I could go to work. Our electric bills have been zero for a mysterious few months and the meter reader cannot possibly get here till the snow and ice melt. So we have the luxury tonight of a bit of heat while we sleep. I'm tired of being chilly. This Winter, instead of lowering the house heat at night to 50, 51 or 52, I've been setting it at 53.

I sleep in sweatpants, a sweatshirt and a long-john top; John finally got pajamas and slippers. We have clean, line-dried, cotton flannel sheets with an Autumn-leaf motif plus a heavy quilt Michael and Billie gave us years ago with two extensions I added -- one on my side for the tug-of-war we engage in with the covers (John is usually the 'loser') and the other at the foot of the bed so I can tuck it in securely hoping that it remains in position.

Yes, I'm content. I'm doing this memoir, working on The Go-Back Club and helping low-income, unemployed people over 55 get back to work with the best boss I've ever had. My teacher tells us to seek contentment, not happiness. I have both. I am safe. I am content. I have a husband who loves me, a wonderful family, many friends, a beautiful, nearly mortgage-free home, two old cars that run well (when they don't, we have a great and inexpensive mechanic nearby) and we have our work.

We spend quiet evenings sitting together in front of the fire in our easy chairs enjoying each other and our reading or, for me, needlework and letter-writing.

I wrote these notes in bed with a flashlight. John is sleeping now with his most serious ailments at bay. We are settling into the future, whatever it may hold. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

Acknowledgements

My spiritual teacher

Linda, for being the link to my spiritual teacher

Joanie, for being my perfect, loving sister (and her husband, Joe) always coming to my rescue
whenever I need help

Michael and Mitchell, for the idea of giving them some way to understand their heritage better
and who have learned to be independent, reliable, wonderful men

John, for his devotion every day throughout my evolution and for his brilliant dedication to his
vision

Rainbow, for being my best girlfriend for 20 years and bringing me messages from the Great
Beyond

Pyong, for being my brother in the Universe, my cheerleader and for bringing me to the
International Nature Loving Association (INLA)

INLA, for treating me so graciously and creating the environment which made me feel like I was in
Heaven

Madalene, for helping me look inside so I could learn how to lose and maintain my weight loss
with weekly phone calls over several years

Keppy, for reminding me not to be an angry warrior and for her enthusiasm and sparkle with the
infancy of The Go-Back Club

Jill, for *The Do-It-Yourselfer's Guide to Self-Syndication*, for her support of my efforts to become a
columnist and for joining The Go-Back Club when my attempt at syndication failed

Michael, for being the best supervisor I've ever had

Collin and Carole, for helping me create space to write in solitude; Carole for donating
construction materials and Collin for the ideas of making it a beautiful cabin with flowers, a
Christmas tree and even a snowman in Winter standing at the door to greet me on cold
days. She also sent pictures of vegan food and sweets to celebrate the Writer's Cabin
completion. Both women try to teach me ways to relax.

Uncountable friends and relatives who have supported me and my efforts over the years -- I might
not have been able to keep going without you. You know who you are. I love you all!

Chiwundu, who is showing me what the next phase of my life might be like.

This poem came to me as I started writing my memoir:

Take me to a place

As uncorrupted as thou knowest

And I will teach thee a love song.

Epilogue #2: Five Years Later

After bravely doing his best to overcome several serious ailments simultaneously, John died in my arms August 18, 2019. I sold our home and moved back to Brick, New Jersey to be close to my family and the ocean again. I was going to write another book but decided to let the past fade away and carry on into the future using my time and energy to protect the Earth and my sanity in an insane culture, still searching for happiness and stability.

In rapid succession, here's what happened:

- Had a memorial service in our home the weekend after John entered Eternity.
- Quit my job as a cashier in the local food store.
- Gave my 2003 Ford Focus to Ralph (our mechanic and friend who helped when we were in a jam).
- Drove five hours to my new home October 29, 2019 in John's 1999 Taurus, which is still running.
- Moved into a one-bedroom apartment, unpacked, settled in, created a cozy home with my office in the corner of the living room.
- Bought a bike.

Back in Shade Gap, while in mourning, I nearly let the Grassroots Coalition die because our Board of Directors had become inactive during John's illnesses and the money to continue it was nearly gone. Then one of the kindest and staunchest priest friends with whom we had worked for many years sent a \$500 check to the Coalition. With tears in my eyes, I called to thank him for saving the Coalition. I would keep it going.

By May Day 2020, I had a dynamic new, international Board of Directors and Advisory Board and we started up again with Zoom meetings. In 2021, Derrick Jensen, Kierre Keith, and Max Wilbert published a book called *Bright Green Lies: How the Environmental Movement Lost Its Way and What We Can Do About It*. Then 21-year-old Julia Barnes started doing her own research and created a documentary with the same name describing the situation where much of the effort and technology in the wealthier world is designed at preserving the destructive, materialistic ways of life which are killing life and ecosystems worldwide.

Now I'm learning more about indigenous cultures and realizing that The Go-Back Club had more merit than I had understood when I canceled it, thinking that my friends in Africa don't need to "go back." We Americans do! But it's also important to help others reject the "American Dream" of comfort and luxury, which so many people globally are striving to emulate. I'm working with dozens of wonderful Africans and publishing their stories. I have a huge global family and am doing my best to prove that their more basic ways of life are preferable and more compassionate than ours.

But even as I'm writing this, I must remind myself that "we are one." I (and we) must stop dividing us up into "us" and "them" camps. Those distinctions do not help humanity shift to the true feeling of unity which is necessary to solve the problems many of us together have created.

I have endless hope that we shall figure this out. I have a new word for our Grassroots Coalition – INVINCIBLE, too powerful to be defeated or overcome.

What am I doing these days?

I have created four sections for *Groundswell News Journal*: Climate Emergency, Earth Regeneration, Ending Inequality, and Human Interest. I'm starting to get paying ads, which helps finance my work. I have had no luck getting grants but now a core group of us is working with a phenomenal

environmental leader in Cameroon who is helping us develop a grant together. When his pilot project is funded, we hope to expand to other African countries. I have fallen love with the entire continent and want to do as much as possible to help these people succeed in their efforts.

On the home front, I've been attending online classes and learning things from events like Clear Thinking in Challenging Times, Land and Leadership Development Community, and a week-long series by Reworlding. I watched the Shift Network's "Shift Your World Film Festival." My favorite movie from that experience (and one I keep watching) is *The Twelve*. Here's what their promotional material says: "*In November 2017, twelve highly spiritual Elders from wisdom traditions around the globe agreed to gather at the United Nations in New York City in a council called The Council of Twelve and Above.*

Setting their cultural differences aside, they conducted a unique ritual in complete unity on an ancestral point of concentrated energy. The United Nations sits on this point. Each Elder holds a specific quality. The combination of all twelve qualities through this ritual enabled the Elders to lay out a new energetic matrix in which humans can live in love and harmony with themselves and planet Earth. At the end of the ritual, the Elders sent their collective vision and intention to the source of all Creation so that it can manifest in our reality in time to come.

Honestly, I need to stop spending so much time sitting and watching classes and movies and focus on my own work. My innermost desire is to be a hermit. I love reading and working on my newspaper and the Coalition. When I'm not working, I'm visiting my family, riding my bike with my grandson, swimming with my other grandchildren and relaxing. I also love reading romance novels. I'm in open rebellion against mainstream news and remain unvaccinated.

My friend Valerie has gotten me three jobs during the past 30 years and when she tried to convince me to sell Mary Kay, I conceded. If my non-profit work paid off, I probably would not do it at all, but it's extra money in the meantime and I have some wonderful customers who love our Mary Kay products.

There is a beautiful little woods within walking distance where I find peace. A small stream meanders alongside of the woods. A For-Sale sign says it could be divided into four building lots. I'm trying to find a way to save it with the help of the Brick Environmental Commission, where I was a member when I lived here 40 years ago.

My eco conscious is struggling to find locally-grown, organic food without plastic and the Brick Farmers' Market just opened for the season. I was thrilled to discover it; however, some vendors wrap their products in plastic and try to foist plastic bags on us if we don't bring our own.

To earn extra money, I boxed up lots of things I brought with me from Shade Gap but don't really want or need. I'll be setting up a table at a flea market next month to try selling some of it and also handing out my Mary Kay business cards.

I can't seem to retire from the financial rat race. My dream is that the Grassroots Coalition and *Groundswell News Journal* will provide all the money I need as I age. I'm healthy now but struggle to pay the bills and keep my car going. I tell people I want to live to be 102. I'm 75 and will do my environmental work as long as I'm able.

For now, I'm pushing ahead enthusiastically on all fronts into the future world I envision.

Acknowledgements #2: Five Years Later

My Family: There is no way I could have survived without the love and care from my family, including the Cutaivos, who offered me a beautiful apartment over their business, and Maryann, who is like family now.

Fr. Ted Cassidy, who sent \$500 to the Grassroots Coalition after John died.

Valerie Stanley, who encouraged me to publish my memoir.

Madalene Ransom, who urged me to have someone edit my book and think of a new title after I had changed it to *Becoming a Pacifist Activist: 50 Years in the Environmental Movement – On the Ground, In the Field, Over the Moon*.

David Hunter Bishop (a former journalist, Grassroots Coalition Board member, and nomad), who edited this work and then advised me not to publish it with excellent reasons, so this is all I have for now.

Avery Bacchues at BookBaby, who patiently provided guidance in walking me through the complicated publishing process when I thought I would have this published professionally.

My heartfelt gratitude and love for all the wonderful, compassionate grassroots activists in my Global Family who are working so hard to bring environmental and economic justice to our home planet Earth.

(The page below would have been the back cover if I had published this with BookBaby.)

Your book has many touching stories inside. It's not only a book, it's an inspirational body. You are absolutely unique and you have made a lot of sacrifices, and I still wonder why you did them.

Ekwe Chiwundu Charles, Nigeria

Happily, I got your book today. I started it tonight and can't put it down. I am enjoying your light-hearted writing style. Mostly I wanted to touch base and say I totally forgot your mom had MS as my mother did, and we both had more responsibility at a very early age. I was ironing my own clothes at 9 or 10. I also don't remember that you were a member of the DAR. My mother was, and I'm going to join. I've talked about it long enough, and you've put it front and center. So I'm doing it!! It's such an honor, even if it ends with Jackie — if she even wants to join. I finished it and thoroughly enjoyed it. I had no idea all the unique things you did as an activist and your amazing travels. Wow. I loved it and all the pictures. Best of luck with your book, and I'm sure many will find it as interesting as I do. Thank goodness there are people like you in this world!! Barbara B., New Jersey

I have been reading your memoir and enjoying it greatly. I loved the story about your solo novice canoe ride. Also, your solo bike ride through the Pine Barrens. The photos are wonderful. What a masterpiece — I admire your energy to put this together. I just read a bit every day but enjoy every page. Tyla Matteson, Virginia

I started reading your book last night and enjoying it. Your family history and struggle with weight gain is interesting and keeps me reading. I knew someone in school that gained a lot of weight too after her parents divorced and it became a lifelong challenge. The pictures are great! You and Joanie were so adorable and look very much alike. Gloria DeSousa, Vermont

Wow Iona, it is wonderful. I started reading it and read for over an hour! Anyway, your book is so good I could hardly put it down! I really liked the story of canoeing down the river!!! And the ocean — you had a wonderful out-of-body experience there with being one with the ocean. I even got up this morning and read a few more pages before work! I have to say — wow Iona, you have had such an interesting and fun-filled life!!!! I like how you always went on those adventures by yourself — oh my gosh that bike trip through the Pine Barrens. Your book has inspired me to look long and hard at my values — the ones I used to live by and have abandoned somewhat. Your book has made me think more about what I do, what I support, what I buy and why I do it — or why I shouldn't do it. I enjoyed reading about Andrew ("adopted son" in prison) in your book. How wonderful that he found his way to you. Linda Lowber, Idaho

I finished the book today: what a Labor of Love! I did enjoy *How on Earth*. It was a page-turner. I learned a lot about my friend. Carole Baker, Pennsylvania

I've been enjoying your book. So many of your growing-up experiences mirror mine! Your memoir is like a potpourri of your major life events. I am so enjoying your memoir and am vicariously hiking along with you through the magnificent landscapes of your many adventures which you so beautifully describe! I marvel at your many hiking/biking excursions. Dylan Weiss (author of *Sebastian's Tale*), Pennsylvania



Iona continues her activism through her online newspaper, *Groundswell News Journal* (which you can see at www.groundswellnews.org) and running the Grassroots Coalition's monthly, international Zoom meetings. Contact her at groundswellnews@pa.net. Her newspaper focuses on the climate emergency, Africa, social justice, ending inequality, and Earth regeneration. After John died, she moved back to New Jersey and is now close to her family and the ocean.