

Plummer Lecture Given to Illinois Yearly Meeting, Seventh Month 2003

Christopher R. Jocius

Introduction of Chris Jocius, by Sue Styer

Chris spent his early childhood in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago. When he was in junior high school, his family moved to suburban Chicago Heights. After high school, he attended Kalamazoo College where in his junior year he lived with a family in Munster, Germany for three months while studying Sociology and German. This was the first of several unusual international experiences that Chris would have.

After completing his Bachelor's degree, Chris started work on a Master's degree in Russian history at Northern Illinois University. He did not complete this degree, opting to leave school and apply for Conscientious Objector status, this being the time of the Vietnam War and before the national lottery. Had he stayed in school he would have had a student deferment.

As a conscientious objector Chris served with the Church of the Brethren "Volunteer in Service" program. He went to Poland for two years as an English language lecturer in the foreign language department of the Agricultural University of Warsaw. When he returned to the US, he started a new Master's degree program in Russian History at the University of Kansas, which he completed.

Although his primary interest was history, his love of information and connecting people with it was always evident. Chris formalized his life's work in information service while attending library school at the University of Illinois. After completing his Master's in Library Science, he began working in the Library Research Center where he was the manager of the Information Service program for several years. Chris also managed a one-year-long special project for the State Library with two other librarians, reviewing library services in the prisons of Illinois.

While at the University of Illinois, Chris became an active member of Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting, participating in various committees, eventually serving as clerk of the meeting. As an Illinois Yearly Meeting representative to Friends General Conference he was on the Publications Committee, and became clerk of that committee as well. Because of his work with prison libraries, he was a consultant to a national AFSC committee on prisons. Chris has also been a member of many committees for Illinois Yearly Meeting, including Coordinating, Environmental Concerns, Maintenance and Planning, Nomination, and Publications. He is currently the clerk of the Religious Education committee.

In 1989 Chris moved to Aurora, Illinois, to become the reference librarian at Illinois Math and Science Academy. During his 14 years in the Chicago area, he was a much-loved member of Downers Grove Friends Meeting, sharing his special gifts with committees such as Adult Religious Education and Worship and Ministry. He also enriched our perspectives with his interest in Scotland and British Quakers. Last month, Chris moved to Rolla, Missouri to become the head of the library reference department at the University of Missouri at Rolla.

Chris has been central to the success of the Adult Religious Education program at Downers Grove Meeting. This experience has led to a series of workshops for the past few years at the Illinois Yearly Meeting sessions. His sensitivity to the needs of others, and his quiet accomplishments, are testimony to his spiritual gifts.

Friends and Strangers: A Time of Gifts

Epigraph

Quakerism is a tightrope walker...But yes a balancing act. Taking its stand on the unknowability of the one beyond all names and creeds. Quakerism yet depends wholly on the guidance of that One. Insistent on our peculiar identity, Quakers yet insist upon the meaninglessness of all human boundaries; there is difference, we say, between peoples, but no essential superiority. Abhorring dogmatism, we yet assert (sometimes dogmatically?) the centrality of peace, of singleness of mind, heart and lifestyle which we call "simplicity" and of plain speech and plain dealing, all depending on an Inward Light potentially illuminating everyone.

We sail close to incoherence, even double standards, not infrequently evading thought about the implications of our words...Yet Quakerism tries to do something as straightforward as it is vital in our fragmented post modern world. It tries -- or so it seems to me -- to answer the call of humankind to let go our panic-ridden clutch upon the knowledge of the mind, trusting that the knowledge which is greater than our minds will guide us, through our hearts and intellect and intuition -- through that totality we call "spirit".

This means holding in endless tension certainty and uncertainty; the authority and emptiness of tradition, laws, and rules' group identity and formlessness. All knowledge is imperfect; no human institutions can claim ultimate allegiance. Yet we have to work with what we have. Trust takes the place of confidence.

...Loss of our shared commitment to that love of the

Nameless which alone unites us is liberal Quakerism's greatest danger...How to renew and renew again the living flame which holds without imprisoning is the question for our Society -- and for a multi-ethnic world.

-- Deborah Padfield, Editor, "The Friend", January 3, 1997

Introduction

I would like to thank the program planning committee, Judy Erickson, Ruth Marquez, and Bridget and Chip Rorem, for the invitation to give this year's Jonathan Plummer Lecture.

I want to share with you some thoughts and stories about parts of my life. There are four headings. First I will talk about what it was like to grow up in my family and introduce some key friends in my extended family over the years. Second I will describe the formative experience I had as a young adult deciding that I was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. Third I will talk about looking for my maternal grandfather. And fourth I will describe the leading I followed to work in adult religious education.

The Early Years

My parents, Victor and Isabel, were not members of the Society of Friends. When I was small, religion was a gray area for me. I was maybe seven years old when I saw a building in Chicago's loop that impressed me. My mother explained it was a church. She enrolled my brother Jim and me in Sunday School at the Presbyterian United Church of Hyde Park, but I felt uncertain what the adults did in church or how the Sunday School was connected with whatever it was they did. When I was in the seventh grade my family moved out of our Hyde Park apartment to a house in Chicago Heights, and that was the end of any connection with church for us. My sense of religion in those years was non-verbal and inarticulate. As a child I just felt that the "religion" in "religious people" had something to do with how you felt when you were with them, how they treated other people, and how they treated you.

My parents cared for my brother and me with love, concern, and economic security. When I had questions about life or home my mom would try to answer them with reason. When I sought to have this or that happen with my childish ways to cajole her, I would hear her say "We'll see" or "Maybe?" This kept my will in check much to my benefit. At mealtime, mom would inquire what our food preferences were. If dad was present, he would exclaim "Don't give them a choice, just give it to them!" Some years later at home I recall hearing mom remark about my limited domestic mechanic skills: "I wouldn't ask Chris to change a fuse." My brother, like my dad, excelled with mechanical things around the house. When my brother or I misbehaved, mom would try to reason with us. Dad had a short temper. Often he would shout at us in anger or "speak with his hands."

My mother explained that he was tired from work -- he would often work overtime or double shifts for the sake of additional income. When people knocked on our apartment door, I would watch father retreat into a bedroom while mother went and answered. He never talked about himself and I grew up feeling I knew little about him.

Our family would visit dad's mother, brother, and sister on the far south side in the Kensington area of Chicago. While at grandma's my dad would speak with his family in Lithuanian. My mother and I would overhear their conversation without being able to understand anything. At home when my father mentioned something about his past he would talk so briefly and in such generalities that a sense of story was never developed. We never learned anything personal from my dad's mother either. She would show her affection during a visit for dinner by inquiring, "Have you had enough?" Otherwise our conversation with her was limited to our answering her questions about what my brother and I were doing in school.

Last month on a National Public Radio program interview with the author of the novel about Arab Americans, "Crescent" (2003), I heard Diana Abu-Jaber remark that immigrants give up a unified sense of self in their adopted country. She noted that in her novel parents asserted their love for each other in the dinner preparation and in eating the meal together. In my family the gentlest moments I can remember were like that -- that is, related to meal preparations. At dinner, the key moment came in the first taste of the food to see how the main dish turned out. Both parents cooked meals. Mom prepared basic dinners. Dad had a passion for cooking that he absorbed from his mother who thrived on her reputation for meals. He would watch the chef Francois Pope on TV one day and the next sometimes prepare the same meal for our family.

My father's family emigrated from Lithuania to America in 1913. My mother, after her father died when she was four, grew up in New Jersey and Connecticut with family relatives. Her mother was unable to care for her children and the four sisters were shared among different homes of relatives. So her family history, as well as my father's, was a mystery to me.

With this fragmentary emotional connection to my parents' families, I believe I looked for alternative connections for a sense of family identity. At the local grade school I responded to the classroom teachers, especially those in the early grades: Mrs. Schwartz, Mrs. Levinson, and Mrs. Karney. My appreciation of their contribution to my development came in reflection many years later. The structure and encouragement of these teachers gave me a sense of reason in learning and a challenge to my better sense of self. I felt included in the learning process -- in the group of students and in my inner sense of self.

In the summer, my brother and I would attend "Magic Carpet" field trips around the city with the local Hyde Park YMCA, as well as going to Jackson Park for the Y's group games for youth. The adult counselors would be assigned to various groups of children organized by age. A lasting memory is my attempts to attach myself to the group leader each summer for three days of going to the park each week. Also in the absence of generational emotional connection with my family, I found some feelings of connection in movies and books. In our neighborhood there were three cinemas. Two would show new Hollywood films. The third would show art films. When I visited our neighborhood Blackstone branch of the Chicago Public Library, I usually gravitated to the biography section in the children's room. I recall the stories of struggle and achievement in

reading the lives of Davy Crockett and Babe Ruth. In 1964 in Ralph Ellison's writing in the preface to a collection of essays "Shadow and Act" I read his idea that if you grow up and don't know who your relatives were, you identify with those you read about in literature and history -- and they become part of your family.

One time during a visit with grandmother, I recall her mentioning that as a young boy dad was known for bringing home stray dogs and cats, especially ones that had been injured. Over the years we had a succession of cats. Some were strays; others were adopted from people who had cats with kittens. My brother and I felt great affection for each one: Blacky, Esmeralda, Smarty Pants, Inky, and Purr. At home our parents had bought books from neighborhood bookstores. Many were in the Modern Library series, some were used. Enough to fill about 6 book cases. During my teen years I slowly began to buy used books. (In a symbolic way I would suggest that book collecting and sharing represented a form of caring for stray beings.) Some were titles I eagerly wanted to read. Others represented intellectual tools that had potential use sometime in the future. Some books I felt a need to share with mom. These books were ones I had heard about on the radio or in book reviews. One title I especially remember sharing with mom is "Tristram Tropic" by Claude Lévy Strauss, the French anthropologist. I developed a growing desire to match a subject interest of someone in my family with a book or article from the newspaper or magazine. Later in library school I learned the phrase "Selective Dissemination of Information" (SDI) to refer to this kind of activity.

One set of books stands out in my memory. The Russian writer Konstantin Paustovsky (1892-1968) wrote a memoir that appeared in a six volume translation in England in the 1960's entitled "Story of a Life". He has the reputation of being one of the finest stylists since Leo Tolstoy. The focus of his story was his memories of various people he met when growing up in southern Russia before and after the 1917 revolution. Like most of his readers I felt drawn into his family of friends and acquaintances. Since books and characters in literature and history had come to mean so much to me, I was startled to read in one of his volumes his belief that he had learned far more from people than from reading books.

A lasting memory of compassion is the care from our family doctor, Mandel Cohen. My mom mentioned that he befriended my dad with reading material, and I believe, with taking him to a service club at the local YMCA, possibly the Kiwanis. When I came down with a serious ear infection at about five years old, I underwent a few months of shots. As a gesture of kindness Dr. Cohen gave me his Irish setter, whom we named Ginger. At other times when mom would take me to see him for treatment, I recall hearing him talk with mom as a friendly counselor while I coped with my indignity of getting a shot. More influential was his advice to my parents to take their sons out into the country for fresh air as a means of overcoming frequent childhood illnesses. After some short camping visits to the Indiana Dunes State Park near Chesterton, mom, my brother and I would spend two whole summers at the camp grounds. Dad built a prefab enclosed kitchen next to our tent. He would visit us on selected weekends. My brother and I became healthier and we treasure our time spent hiking the dunes and swimming daily in Lake Michigan. Many years later I read Paul Cowan's account of his search for his father's family history in "An Orphan in History: Retrieving a Jewish Legacy" (1982). His father shared a strongly distorted picture of his family's recent past. The author learned accidentally of his family's orthodox Jewish ancestry after his parents' death. Another example is the change of the

spelling of his family name from C-o-h-e-n to C-o-w-a-n. Paul Cowan notes that one of his family's great uncles lived in Hyde Park, too. He was the same Dr. Mandel Cohen.

My brother joined a Boy Scout troop at the church across the street from 57th Meeting in Hyde Park. I found a path to join a small troop at St. Paul's church a block west of our Kenwood grade school. John Hawkinson, a self-taught naturalist and children's book author, served as scoutmaster. Like my brother's scout leaders, he had served in World War II. But his approach to leading his scouts was a more relaxed one that allowed us to do craft projects and go hiking and camping at his self-made cabin in the side of a dune near Bailey Town just west of the Indiana Dunes State Park. In retrospect this time with him and his strong sense of humor gave me a lasting sense of joy and of inner growth. When we scouts misbehaved he would call us Martians. This stood in contrast to what we were called at home, when my brother and I misbehaved. Several years later, when I waited for my CO case to be decided at the state level by Selective Service, John invited me to stay with his family at his home in Hyde Park for about five months.

As part of a sophomore year program at college, I spent the fall term of 1962 working as an assistant librarian for Patrick Bova at the National Opinion Research Center in Hyde Park. As part of my job I would be sent to retrieve books and articles for the sociologists from the University of Chicago libraries. By serving as a mentor, friend, and as an exemplary librarian, Pat allowed me to see a possibility of working as a librarian as a career. Over the years I would turn to Pat for friendship and assistance with my research needs as a graduate student at the University of Kansas and at the University of Illinois. Last summer when I visited him in Hyde Park he gave me his file of my correspondence with him. It was about four inches thick with cards and letters sent over the past 30 years. Embarrassingly I had forgotten how much I continued to share with him and receive in friendship from him over the years. (Last fall another friend shared a notebook of cards I had sent over the years.)

For example, in a letter to him from Warsaw in July 1970 I wrote about the office politics in the foreign language department. I mentioned also an AFSC project that I planned to do in a summer break. For an exchange program for the Vienna office of AFSC I would examine the summer camps for young teenagers in Yugoslavia run by the youth office of the Communist Party. The youth office would send a couple of teenagers to attend the summer AFSC international camp in Helsinki. Unknown to me at the time, when I went to Belgrade and other camps, I turned out to be the only representative who came. Other West European youth group representatives failed to show up. Thus at each camp I had to explain my presence and purpose to the camp director without the benefit of being part of a group of visitors exploring the nature of these summer camps that started after the war in the 1940's rebuilding highways.

In the summer of 1968 when I worked in Urbana-Champaign as a local community organizer for AFSC I became friends with James and Rebecca Ayars. Jim was the clerk of the peace committee in the Urbana-Champaign meeting. Both then, and over the years, the Ayarses shared their home and nurtured me. After a weekend visit I would be asked to sign their guest book. What I wrote down each time after the first couple of visits is that I felt like I was in heaven when I stayed with Jim and Becky. In 1980 when Becky gave her Plummer lecture "From Hardshell Baptist to Quaker", I was asked to bring them to IYM. My memory of their love for me continues to sustain me.

A prominent Russian bibliographer, Nicholas Rubakin (1862-1946), developed a philosophy of books, reading and libraries that mirrors key ideas that I identify with. His personal library included 100 thousand volumes. He wrote fifteen thousand bibliographies, 280 books and brochures, and fifteen guides to self-education. Here are some of the core principles. Books and people are inseparable. He loved books for their content not their covers. For him books represented people, the authors, and their readers. A library served as a bridge between authors and readers. His huge library served as a resource for his writings and for sharing with his community of friends and correspondents. Many people sought his advice when he lived in Russia as well as when he lived in exile in Switzerland. He wrote many books on science for the general reader. He developed a reading program for self-education as well as through correspondence. My habit of sharing and advising about non-fiction titles and articles became reinforced by learning of his life and work on behalf of reading and sharing when I was in library school (1977-1978).

The Lithuanian-American mathematician, Benoit Mandelbroit, is known as the founder of the science of fractals. He coined the term fractal to describe the new class of irregular shapes that duplicate their irregularity when viewed at different scales and dimensions. In an hour-long filmed interview "Clouds Are Not Spheres: the life and work of a maverick mathematician" (2000) he states, "To have a name is to be." He notes that his analysis of patterns in nature would "bring the eye back into hard science." I identify with his way of connecting dispersed elements in science and mathematics and finding a picture of integration. In smaller ways I try to do this in bringing people and texts together especially in informal learning.

To conclude this portrait of adopted family friends I need to introduce you to the late Martha Weyl, daughter-in-law of the renowned mathematician Hermann Weyl. In the mid-eighties I sought a place to stay in New York for the annual library meeting. I came across her name in the "Friends Travel Directory". She was a widow living in a three-floor brownstone that had been redone by her architect daughter. She lived on the second floor and rented rooms out to students upstairs, in the basement, and in the carriage house in the back. The guest room I used had an attractive quilt like those of my mother. At the first visit she offered to give me a tour of parts of the city. Like many others I became part of her widely dispersed community of friends. We continued our friendship when she moved to Washington, DC and finally to Amherst, Massachusetts. One memorable time we went to hear the Russian poet Joseph Brodsky give a reading of his poems in Russian at the Library of Congress. Later she revealed in her book of essays for her family, "Episodes" (2000), that she found some of the books I gave her to be deeply significant in her thinking. After my mother died in 1989, I acquired her five-year diary she kept in the early 1930's. A few years ago I noted that the address for her mother in NYC was 365 West 20th Street. The address of Martha's home in New York was 331 West 20th Street. Martha was born in 1908 the same as my father.

The Road to Becoming a Peace Witness

As a young adult, my path to deciding to apply for CO status with my local draft board took various turns and stages, but the process may be characterized as one step at a time. Many years later I read an essay by the physicist Andrei Sakharov about his decision to work for peace and more recently the 10 essays by American men who as pacifists went to prison rather than serve

in the US military ("A Few Small Candles: War Resisters of World War II Tell Their Stories" 1999). Especially moving is the essay by my friend John H. Griffith of Penn Valley Meeting in Kansas City, Missouri. He begins by saying: "I felt a need to say as emphatically as I could that war is insane and that conscription is the first step in that insanity." The moral stand taken by these people evolved gradually. One's inner picture develops first and each step into the future is taken in consultation with others (either in person or in readings.) You sharply focus your reading and your listening to try to find help as one question leads to another that needs to be answered. The short title of a book by Soren Kierkegaard expresses this process of focus for me: "Purity of the Heart Is to Will One Thing" (translated by Douglas C. Steere, 1948).

In November of 1967 I came across the translated first volume of a two-volume Russian memoir by Eugenia Ginzburg entitled "Journey Into a Whirlwind." She spent ten years in solitary confinement in various prisons as a political prisoner. The story unfolds gradually and is modest in tone and vivid in describing the psychological drama she endured for her beliefs. Reading about her ordeal, I silently realized that here was a case study of extreme prison conditions. I reasoned to myself that this was as bad as an incarceration could become. If I applied for CO status and was denied, the maximum penalty would be five years in prison and a fine of ten thousand dollars.

The focus of the CO application concerned the applicant's answers to seven questions:

1. Do you believe in a Supreme Being?
2. Describe the nature of your belief which is the basis of your claim...and state whether or not your belief in a Supreme Being involves duties which to you are superior to those arising from any human relation.
3. Explain how, when, and from what source you received the training and acquired the belief which is the basis of your claim...
4. Give the name and present address of the individual upon whom you rely most for religious guidance.
5. Under what circumstance, if any, do you believe in the use of force?
6. Describe the actions and behavior in your life which in your opinion most conspicuously demonstrate the depth of your religious convictions.
7. Have you ever given public expression, written or oral, to the views herein expressed as the basis for your claim made...above? If so, specify when and where.

The law said you had to apply for CO status within 30 days of realizing that your beliefs required you to be a CO. But these seven questions seemed enormous. It seemed impossible to answer them in 30 days. Thus one needed to prepare answers before one requested a CO form to return to the local Selective Service office.

Some of the moral dilemmas brought back some memories of reading excerpts from the writings of major philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Spinoza in classes I had in college with the late Professor Lester J. Start. I recall being perplexed by what my answers would be to such questions. In my reading I identified with the pacifist A. J. Muste's statement "Either we believe our own words when we say that love, nonviolence, community form the basis on which all human association must be founded -- and in that case we must do our utmost to achieve such an

order, or we do not really believe what we say." At the time I was living at the Baptist Graduate Student Center in Kenwood just north of the University of Chicago. Most of the residents attended classes there, some in the Divinity School like my college roommate, Randy Huyck. I was taking a Russian course there and working on an MA in history at Northern Illinois University. When I would raise questions about the draft and the war in Vietnam with some of the residents, I would hear general answers but these issues were not paramount because they were focused on their degree programs.

One day I went into a phone booth and called the peace office of the AFSC downtown. I spoke with a staff person about my perplexity in trying to find answers to these questions. The person replied by stating how much harder it is for a black person who might try to answer such questions. With this non-sequitur our conversation ended.

In the midst of this anxious time I had an important experience. By then my family was living in Chicago Heights, a suburb south of Chicago, and I would be eager to take the commuter train into Hyde Park. One day I planned to visit a friend for lunch to talk about the ongoing Vietnam War and the possibility of the draft. What I remember was a luminous moment when I came up the stairs to the platform at the Homewood train station. In my mind I heard a voice from within stating that "You have a choice." I was free to accept or not accept the possibility of the draft. Either way I was able to make a decision and accept the consequences -- to follow the path to where it led. I felt a new sense of freedom within.

I completed my written application for CO status and mailed it in. My local draft board turned down my application. I then asked for a hearing with the board. A date was set and I went to the hearing with three character witnesses who planned to support me in front of the board. One was my friend Randy and one was my former scoutmaster and now friend John Hawkinson, a children's author and illustrator living in Hyde Park. The third was Keith Clifford, an assistant dean at the University of Chicago Divinity School who lived in the same house as Randy and other students.

In general, the board was supposed to take three criteria into account:

1. Was the person making the appeal opposed to war on religious grounds?
2. Was he opposed to violence in any form?
3. Was he sincere?

About a day before the actual hearings, I went one evening to the Chicago AFSC office for a mock draft board hearing. I met with the surrogate board members who decided after I answered their questions to turn me down for not being sincere (the third criterion).

I was not a member of any church, but I felt my beliefs had a religious basis, and E. Spencer Parsons, the Dean of the University of Chicago's Rockefeller Chapel, had counseled me that one could be a religious person without a formal membership. He said there was such a thing as the institutional church in history and also such a thing as the church of those who, to the best of their belief, tried to follow God's will. He also warned me that at board hearings the board members often busied themselves with paper work while a person was making his appeal,

seeming to pay little attention. These comments served me as a crucial guide during the appeal hearing.

Before the actual hearing began, the secretary at the office stated that the board would hear my witnesses after the board had met with me. During the hearing the board members were busy signing official forms. At the end of the hearing, without hearing my witnesses, and without any vote being taken, the board secretary announced that although I was sincere the board turned me down for CO status. I was then directed to go out into the office with a volunteer attorney. He began by asking me for name, address, etc. I asked him what the vote of the board was -- were there any votes in my favor? He did not reply and looked down at his legal pad and continued asking me questions so that he would write up a legal brief to submit on my behalf to the state appeal board at the state director's office in Springfield. I also submitted my own appeal letter as well.

During the period of waiting to hear from the state appeal board, I volunteered for community peace work at a summer program directed by Fred Batson of the Chicago AFSC office. After a few days of training with the other five volunteers at the home of George and Elizabeth Watson, I attended my first meeting for worship at the 57th Street meeting house in Hyde Park. Then I drove down with a University of Illinois professor to Urbana-Champaign to begin working on behalf of the Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting and the University of Illinois Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Vietnam.

The responsibility to organize in the community around the peace issue that summer challenged me to do outreach to strangers. Of the many clergy that I contacted two gave unconditional support. One was a campus minister. The other served as minister for the Twin City Bible Church. Later I heard he was asked to leave his church for his work on civil rights.

One Sunday after a peace program I was riding back to my house with a University of Illinois law professor. I shared my CO case in outline with him during the ride. He asked to see my file and later said he would willingly represent me with the federal government if I lost with the state draft board and entered into trial. He noted that I had a clean case -- in that I followed all the steps in the process of application and that I met all the criteria for CO status. I felt a vote of support in my quest and a vote of confidence in what I was trying to do within the Selective Service system.

My brother James, who was then serving in the Air Force after graduating from college and the local ROTC program, wrote a persuasive letter of support for my file with the draft board. Many friends had agreed to write one-page letters of support, too. Earlier my dad had given his assent to my decision to apply. My mother expressed her concern for me and that she had not given birth for me to die in a war.

That fall of 1968 my friend (and former scoutmaster) John Hawkinson invited me to stay in his home in Hyde Park with his family while I waited for the state appeal board's decision. I could go to the AFSC office and look through a notebook with job listings from various church organizations around the country. I would be near the University of Chicago campus where I had several friends attending graduate school.

In November the director of the state selective service office sent a letter that the state appeals board had turned down my case. But in his letter he also stated that he had reviewed my case and decided to send it back to the state appeals board for reconsideration.

I shared this with my draft counselor Linda Quint at the Chicago AFSC office. She gave me some guidance for my reply to the director. In December she asked me to assist her and her colleague Rick Boardman and some others in giving a workshop on draft counseling at the campus YMCA in Champaign. During the workshop we were staying with Ken and Janet Southwood, of the Urbana-Champaign Meeting. One night my friend Randy Huyck called me to say that he had opened my mail from the draft board and read that, upon reconsideration, my request for CO status had been granted by the state appeal board.

The next phase concerned looking for meaningful alternative service work that would meet the standards of my local draft board. In general I was told by AFSC peace staff that if the board assigned a job to me, then I would be obliged to accept. But if I found a position and sent in my request before they made a decision, then they would usually grant the applicant's choice.

In general I sought some work in the peace sector. But such a listing was not to be found in the places I looked. Attending the 57th Street meeting I witnessed some birthright Friends announce that they were rejecting a favored status with a peace church and refusing to be drafted. They would accept a prison sentence for their peace witness. Such moral testimony pulsed through my mind and heart. Within myself I wondered if I should follow suit or whether I should join the underground movement of going to Canada? I decided that I wanted to follow my leading to become a CO.

Feeling a sense of anxiousness I recall going down to look through the notebook of jobs at the AFSC office. I came across a listing with the Church of the Brethren whose main office is in Elgin, Illinois. I decided to apply for an exchange program with a scientific institute in Poland, even though I lacked a degree in science, was not a member of the Church of the Brethren, and I did not speak Polish. Lacking those qualifications felt like the proverbial three strikes against me. I went out to Elgin for an interview with Dr. Harold Row. He directed international programs for the church, and he had organized the exchange program with Poland. My application was accepted and I went to the 3-month training program for Brethren volunteers outside of Westminster, Maryland at the Church World Service clothing distribution center.

In June of 1968 I went with two other Brethren volunteers, Dale Beaver and Harold Furr, to West Germany where we waited for an invitation from the Polish director of the Exchange Program at the Martin Niemoller Peace Center outside of Hanover. After a couple of weeks the invitation came from the director of the fruit farm research center outside of Warsaw. That fall I began teaching English in the foreign language department of the Agricultural University of Warsaw for two years.

Partly because my father came from Lithuania, I had a strong interest in Russia and Eastern Europe. Years later it occurred to me that my childhood experience at home was a sort of training for living in an authoritarian country like Poland. The parallel experience was that of having no power in oneself while all power was above oneself. Everyone in Poland knew how to

read between the lines of whatever the government said. People could be coy, skeptical, and know when to break the rules. As a guest in Poland, I didn't want to break any rules. Also, my feelings about the U.S. were very mixed at that time, of course.

The Agricultural University in Warsaw is split into two campuses, one in the central part of the city and one at the edge of the city. The foreign language department is located in the center campus. There were about 6,000 students. The first year I spent about a third of my time co-teaching an intensive conversational English class for faculty. The rest of the time I joined other English language teachers to give their students practice speaking with me in the classroom.

During my stay I became friends with various science researchers connected to the university or to the pomology research institute outside Warsaw. My Polish speaking skills became passable after the first year. The most dramatic time, before the Solidarity trade union movement began in the 1980's, took place in December of 1970 and lasted for a few months. In the middle of that month shipyard workers in Gdansk and adjacent ports protested the dramatic price rises and food shortages. The government used force to suppress the protest. Travel between cities was cancelled, as was phone service. The government claimed a small number of deaths among the workers. Other sources claim the number in the hundreds. The head of the Communist Party of Poland, who was the country's leader, changed hands in the re-grouping of the government.

For me I learned that the normal sources of information that one uses for daily navigation in living became unreliable. At first the government controlled newspapers printed accurate stories but within a few days the usual propaganda focus resumed. Rumors became the primary source of information about these events and the process of change. Formal news channels became as uncertain as the information shared among colleagues at work. Soviet troop ships anchored off the coast from the shipyards. After the restrictions on travel and phone service were lifted fellow Poles compared notes about what happened in their towns and cities. Little did I imagine that the changes would come a decade later with the rise of the Solidarity labor movement. At that time I chased after news of events in Poland to follow the dramatic story of social change before the government imposed military rule.

On Looking for My Maternal Grandfather

After completing my alternative service in Poland, I studied Russian history at the University of Kansas. It was there that I first began attending Friends meetings regularly. Because of my love of books and because of a lack of jobs teaching Russian history, after completing a master's degree in Russian history I decided to become a librarian. In 1977 I began library school at the University of Illinois in Urbana, and after graduation worked several years in the Library Research Center there. The combination of those library resources and support from Friends I met in Illinois led me to surprising discoveries about my family.

While I was working at the University of Illinois library school Library Research Center, I followed up on an inkling I had about my maternal grandfather, James Fyffe Wilson, who lived from 1870 to 1918. The only information mom shared about him was that he grew up in Illinois, went to Stanford University and had been captain of the football team, lived in New Jersey and

taught history at a high school in New York City. She only knew he was buried somewhere near Peoria. She had visited the grave with her mother and sisters when she was about ten years old.

One afternoon I examined the printed indexes to the "New York Times" in the reference section of the U of I library. I came across a listing for J. Wilson for an obituary notice. I went and set up the microfilm for 1918 and I printed out a short notice about his life. At the time he headed the history department at the Boy's High School in Brooklyn. He had graduated from Illinois State Normal University, Stanford University, and from the New York University Law School.

Then I came across the collection of college catalogues for Stanford in the stacks. I went through the ones from 1901 to 1910 but I did not find his name listed among enrolled students. That evening I called mom and suggested that her father might have attended Stanford but dropped out. No, she said, he graduated. The next day I went back to the catalogs and went through the volumes from 1892 forward. And there he was. He was listed as having his home in Mt. Palatine, Illinois. In the school yearbook there is this quotation by his photo in his senior year: "I like full well to pull upon the wire, and have my different irons in the fire." He graduated in the class of 1894. In the class behind him Herbert Hoover, from West Branch, Iowa, had organized the athletic program to be in the black for the first time. My aunt Margaret Wilson Jones later wrote my mother that my grandfather and Hoover were friends at Stanford.

In 1986 at an IYM session I was standing next to Anna Mary Wilson, a member of the Clear Creek meeting. We were chatting and she recalled having known my great grandfather, Mason Wilson, at the meeting house in 1910. She noted that her family of Wilson's was not related to my family of Wilson according to her family history with extensive genealogy tables.

Next I explored where he might be buried. My mother's sister Margaret in Washington State claimed to mom that he was a Friend and was buried in the Friends Cemetery in McNabb. So a friend and I drove over to McNabb and looked at the plat map and found a listing for a grave for his younger brother Harry, who had been a physician in Peoria. A few weeks later Grayce Haworth (Mesner) went to lunch with a friend in a restaurant in McNabb. Grayce overheard some men at another table talking about grave digging. She inquired about whether they had come across a grave for a James Wilson. Yes, they said, he was buried just south of McNabb in the Magnolia Cemetery. Grayce went over and found the gravesite. She called with the information and I came over and took some photos of the family headstone in January, 1986. Last week Grayce reminded me how proud I was when I discovered Grandfather Wilson's connection to the meeting here.

Grayce later introduced to me to my second cousin, Joyce Troyan who lives with her husband Leslie on the same family farm next to Helen Jean Nelson of Clear Creek just down the road from here. Joyce mentioned that she too was seeking to learn about her family's past generations. She noted most of the historical photos were of family and friends but that nobody living knew who was whom. She did have some photos of Mason, which she shared and I made copies of for my family.

In "150 Years in Review: Clear Creek Families & Friends, Putnam County" (1991) Helen Jean Nelson of McNabb notes that the Wilsons, my mother's family, moved to Mt. Palatine (now

know as McNabb) from Kentucky (by way of Scotland and England). My great grandfather Mason was the son of Bud and Sarah Sharpless Wilson.

Adult Religious Education

In the 1960's I had not wanted to use membership in the Society of Friends as a means of convenience to apply for CO status, and I did not join in those years. Since the 1968 summer work for AFSC, I considered myself a Friend. After I came back from alternative service I began to attend meeting regularly. In Urbana out of a kind of modesty, I guess, I still didn't put myself forward for membership. I admired some of the members of the meeting so much that I didn't feel I could put myself on a level with them. Eventually, when they asked me to serve as clerk, I became a formal member.

Through all those years, and now in the community of Friends, I came to have a compelling interest in developing and promoting opportunities for informal learning -- for learning outside the classroom, both from texts and from talking with people. This interest began when I was very young, and it influences my life today as a librarian and in my work with Adult Religious Education.

At home my parents would share articles from newspapers and magazines. At school I would bring in articles to share. At college I would bring books and articles to the attention of my friends. In the mid-eighties I served on the publication committee of FGC, eventually serving as clerk.

During that time I took to listening, several times usually at night, to a tape of a Pendle Hill talk given by the former director of AFSC Colin W. Bell in 1977. Entitled "Inner Search and Worldly Wisdom" he points out the need for conversation among Friends about their beliefs and experience in order to develop a common language. I realized that this need applied to me as well as to many people in the Urbana meeting. I had always wished for more of this kind of conversation when I stayed with Friends during my travels to committee meetings in IYM and in FGC. To develop a means to realize this conversation appeared to me as a paradox. In large groups Friends are disinclined to share specific inner beliefs and or experiences. This conversation does take place in some small groups among Friends.

At the Downers Grove meeting Adult Religious Education we found another way to resolve this paradox. We tried to identify and select meaningful texts, share the reading, and cultivate personal sharing and probing for meanings. Trust within the group grew, ideas were reviewed, learning about and by Friends and history increased within the group, and many participants felt centered when sitting down for meeting after our discussion.

It is hard to convey how important our readings, discussions, and sharing have become to us. Promoting meaningful conversations among Friends has become what I care about most. A statement from the 1995 British Yearly Meeting's "Quaker Faith and Practice" gives expression to this sharing in small groups:

As Friends, we know that the quality of our unprogrammed worship is enhanced, and our care of one another is more effective, the better we come to know and understand one another.

We grow closer to one another as a worshipping community develops through regular attendance at meetings for worship, through working together physically or mentally, and in meeting with one another informally. Meeting together in small groups may have its part to play in this process, and may be valuable in helping us to explore and share our spiritual experience. Study and discussion groups provide well-tried opportunities, as do more informal gatherings.

(Section 12:20)

Among my papers I recently came across the initial letter I wrote the clerk, Andrea Anderson, of Downers Grove on May 8, 1991. With Betty Clegg I proposed facilitating a discussion group in June and July:

Betty Clegg and I will organize an Adult RE discussion group...The theme will be Experience and Words. (We realize that we try to describe our experience with words that do not always convey the spirit or texture of what we experienced.) Short selected writings by Quakers and others will be copied and made available before each session. We will discuss the selections in relation to our experience of the subjects.

Betty and I were conscious that with a text to read for discussion, some people would read the text before coming to Adult RE and others, for whatever reasons, would not. The resulting unequal preparedness might cause problems in the discussion, we thought, and might lead to a weakening of commitment among people to attend the discussion group. We decided on a reading aloud format. In a circle we would begin with one person and go around. If people had a question about a word or idea in the section of the text, they would ask about it when we came to a pause between readers. Or if a person had an experience connected with the subject being read aloud, then that person would share at the pause between readers. The process of completing a text would be methodical but inclusive. Reading aloud gave everyone a shared focus and time together. A sense of trust among attenders gave people freedom to share more personal stories.

As a form of litmus test I would give a copy of each candidate text to two other leaders of the group to read for quality and meaning. In a practice of scanning many things and reading some I found I would come across articles from newspapers, magazines, and journals and would make photocopies to share as supplementary material for the core readings. If they both agreed with the sample text, then I would order copies for Adult RE.

We especially sought readings by and about Friends in materials from Pendle Hill, FGC, British Yearly Meeting publications, the annual Swarthmore lectures, and also the Plummer lectures. On two occasions we first read the Plummer lecture, "Loving the Universe" (1992) by Bill Howenstine and "Awakening to the Life Within" (1994) by Pat Wixom and then later we had a conversation with each one.

One year we sampled spiritual writings by Friends, such as "Broken for Life" (1989) by the astrophysicist Jocelyn Bell Burnell. We also practiced writing short five-minute spontaneous essays about various topics, nature, family memory, solitude, etc. We found ourselves surprised in our ability to write down meaningful snapshots of our experiences.

History became alive for us during our discussions. Books by Margaret Hope Bacon played an important role, especially her "Mothers of Feminism: the Story of Quaker Women in America" (1986). We were amazed to read how active women had been in following leadings to minister around the country and in England in the 1700's. In reading "Love Is the Hardest Lesson: a Memoir" (1999) about Bacon's World War II experience working in a mental hospital with her husband who was serving there for alternative service, Betty Winker shared her similar WW II experiences with her husband in Washington state. Christine Bruder often would share her experiences of growing up in Pennsylvania. One time she recalled hearing when she was seven her father saying one day in 1920: "Well, your mother will be able to vote" with passage of the 19th amendment. We explored themes on science, genetics, and Friends who have worked in these areas. We read the Swarthmore lectures by Arthur S. Eddington ("Science and the Unseen World" 1929) Kathleen Lonsdale ("Removing the Causes of War" 1953) and Jackie Leach Scully ("Playing in the Presence: Genetics, Ethics, & Spirituality" 2002). Our hearts absorbed life lessons described by participants. Meaningful links to past and present grew within our spirits.

In 1983 Richard Roundtree in a talk at the London Yearly Meeting stated "Of one thing we can be certain, that real growth will only come through the commitment and witness of our meetings for worship...[W]e need to face what is the most critical issue of all -- whether we have sufficient confidence -- faith if you will -- in our meetings for worship to prompt us to believe that they do encapsulate something of direct relevance to the needs of our neighbors. Surely there is a Quaker contribution to the present day search for meaning in life?" ("Friends Quarterly", Fall, 1983)

Before I close with a poem, I would like to thank you for sharing this time together and I would like to thank Illinois Yearly Meeting for being part of my life and community since I began coming twenty-five years ago. The poet William Stafford wrote about his pacifist experience in civilian work camps in a book of stories, entitled "Down in My Heart" (1946) that has meant much to me since I first read them after I returned from Poland. A poem to share with you is entitled "For My Friends":

For My Friends

Once in a cave a little bar of light
Fell into my hand. The walls leaned over me.
I carried it outside to let the stars look;
They peered in my hand. Stars are like that.

Do not be afraid -- I no longer carry it.
But in a friend's face now, splinters of that light
Fall and won't go out, no matter how faint
The buried star shines back there in the cave.

It is in the earth wherever I walk.
It is in the earth wherever I walk.

-- William Stafford

Acknowledgement

This lecture is dedicated in memory of my parents, Victor and Isabel Jocius, and to my mentor and friend, Linda C. Smith.

* * * *

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