

LIFE IS A GIFT AND A RESPONSIBILITY

Alice Howenstine

The 2017 Jonathan Plummer Lecture

Presented at
Illinois Yearly Meeting
of the
Religious Society of Friends
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Introduction

Note: Sarah Pavlovic was to give the introduction, but was not able to be at Annual Sessions for the lecture, so Bill Hownenstine provided the introduction at the lecture. Both introductions follow below, first Bill's and then Sarah's.

I have known today's Plummer lecturer a long time. While most of us here might think of her first as a "recycling expert," I think of her as a "recycling environmentalist." For her real purpose in recycling is to live in harmony with all things.

She was a Great Depression baby, whose parents instilled in her the values of hard work for the benefit of others. As a summer camper in a settlement house camp, she developed a commitment to children and outdoor living that led to directing summer camps and teaching in outdoor education programs for the rest of her life.

Bilingual at age of five, she has always had interest in different cultures and regions. Her life has led her to live and work in large metropolitan cities—Cleveland, Chicago, and Lima, Peru—and in small rural communities, such as a Kentucky mountain hollow and villages in Mexico and Peru.

Thoroughly Quaker, she has been a member of three monthly meetings, worked as a volunteer for the American Friends Service Committee, and was among the founders of the Friends Committee on Unity with Nature (now known as Quaker Earthcare Witness).

In all of this wonderful life she never left out her three children. She, and they, in multiple ways give testimony to peace, service, and integrity. Her love for all ripples throughout the universe.

It is my great pleasure to introduce to you Alice Vild Howenstine.

Bill Howenstine

Each year since 1961, Illinois Yearly Meeting has invited an ILYM Friend to present a Plummer Lecture, named after Jonathan Plummer, the first clerk of the yearly meeting.

I am sorry I am not here in person to introduce Alice Howenstine this morning and to hear firsthand what she has to say, but I am delighted that she will be sharing her thoughts with us today. Alice is one of those Illinois Yearly Meeting Friends who hardly needs introduction. It is likely that most of us here have sought out Alice regarding a question about recycling or other environmental concerns, have worked beside Alice, have been put to work by Alice, or have at some point learned something from her.

A long time member of Upper Fox Valley Quaker Meeting, Alice has served the yearly meeting over the years on the Environmental Concerns Committee and as a representative to Quaker Earthcare Witness.

Alice is a living demonstration of Khalil Gibran's declaration that "Work is love made visible." She is often found showing her love for the yearly meeting by managing the recyclable materials and compostable waste we generate at Annual Sessions, setting up systems to help us live mindfully while we are gathered here, and engaging others—particularly our younger Friends—in whatever she is doing.

In our family, we sometimes find ourselves asking "What would Alice do?" Usually this comes at a moment when we have to make a

decision between taking an easy or convenient way out (such as throwing away used items) or making the effort to minimize our environmental footprints (choosing not to purchase something, or finding ways to re-use items or recycle them, for instance).

In a broad sense, the answer to “What would Alice do?” might well include the following: first, she would undoubtedly make the necessary effort to lighten her impact on the earth; second, she would take the opportunity to educate anyone within earshot about whatever environmental issue was at hand; and most importantly, she would do these things with humor, encouragement, genuine caring, a brilliant smile, and a twinkle in her eye.

When the world seems to be all askew, Alice gives me hope that it is possible to live a life grounded in integrity, simplicity, generosity, and joy.

Alice will address us this morning out of the silence. After her remarks we will move directly into meeting for worship.

Sarah Pavlovic

LIFE IS A GIFT AND A RESPONSIBILITY

Alice Howenstine

Last September, when Pam Kuhns asked me to present the Plummer Lecture, she told me that the general guideline is for me to share with all of you some of the things in my life that developed me into the person I am. There are so many—you are going to know more about me than you ever wanted or needed to know!

First of all, I was born near the end of 1930. So, I will give you 5-10 seconds to do what you are likely already doing—figuring out my age—raise your hand when you get it. Now that that is taken care of, on to other things.

Both my parents were born in the United States in the Cleveland, Ohio area but came from a Czech background. According to some old records, both my Mom's and Dad's parents arrived in the U.S. in August 1900, traveling across the Atlantic Ocean on a steamship named the Columbia. Anna and Emanuel Klier, my maternal grandparents, had with them their 20 month old son, Max, and a small black trunk, 28"x 15"x 19". That trunk, by the way, became the "dress-up box" for Anna and Emanuel's great and great-great grandkids, Chuck, Debby, and Erick. I can see it whenever I sit at our computer. Anna, my grandmother, was 7 or 8 months pregnant at the time. A few weeks before the ship landed, she gave birth prematurely on board, and they named the little girl "Anna Columbia" (Anna for her mother and Columbia for the ship on which she was born.) Anna Columbia lived for just a few days, died, and was buried at sea.

My Dad's parents, Josefina and John Vild, came from Czechoslovakia on the same ship but the families did not know each other until about 15 years later, when an offspring of each

decided to marry each other, and they became my mom and dad. It is my mother's parents that I want to tell you more about, since they played a much bigger part in my life.

Imagine what it must have been like leaving Stracitse, their village in Bohemia, with all their possessions in a small trunk and perhaps a few hand sewn cloth bags, not knowing the language of the country where they were going, and yet hearing from others that a New World was waiting for them on the other side of that huge body of water. When I was a child and asked why they left Bohemia, I was told that the mayor of their village was a strong Catholic, and he insisted that all the people in his village follow his religion, so they and many others left.

Not even once in my childhood did we as a family go to church, anywhere. If someone asked my parents what religion we were they said Protestant, which in their mind was the opposite of Catholic. Even though we never attended a church service of any kind, I also never heard them talk down any religion. It was just never discussed.

My own religious contacts progressed like this: When I was in Jr. High a friend of mine told me about some of the things they were doing in the Lutheran church she attended. One thing led to another, and pretty soon I was attending church with her each Sunday and attending some classes she was taking. A few years later her family moved out of town, and I began going to the church of another friend, who was Presbyterian. I guess I went through the same routine, because one day someone came to our door and told my folks that it had come to their attention that their daughter, Alice Vild, was a member of the Lutheran church as well as of the Presbyterian church. I do not know just what happened, but I know I just stopped going to any church—that is until after I met Bill, and we began attending the Cleveland Quaker Meeting together.

Back to my grandparents: When the ship, Columbia, reached New York, my Gramma Klier was taken to a hospital to be checked after having had the miscarriage. We were told the story, when we were kids, that while our Gramma was lying in a hospital bed, an ice cream vender, ringing a very loud bell, walked down the street, which was three floors below them, pushing his ice cream cart. It just so happened that the loud bell sound was the same loud bell sound that was rung in my Gramma's little village

of Stracitse to warn everyone that a fire was out of control somewhere nearby. Gramma panicked and could not understand why no one else was in panic. She shouted, "*neco hori!*" (which means "something is burning," or something like that) and tried to get out of bed and to the window to try to escape.

There had been about 2,400 passengers on board the ship—about 200 in 1st class, 250 in 2nd class. The Kliers and Vilds, my grandparents, were part of the almost 2,000 passengers that were on board as 3rd class, or "steerage." They stayed in the bowels of the ship with the machinery that operated the steamship. The ship's manifest shows that their passage was paid for by my Grampa's brother, Pep, who had left Bohemia in 1892 and was already in Cleveland. The ship manifest also says that my grandfather had \$8 in cash with him. The ship landed in New York. Two days later they left for Cleveland, Ohio, which was the drawing point to where other Czechs from their village of Stracitse had moved. My dad's parents, Josefina and John Vild, were also a part of that large group that came over on the Columbia, but the Klier and Vild families did not get to know each other until fifteen or so years later.

That next generation was the generation that produced Bessie Klier and John Vild, my mom and dad, who married in 1925. They had three children, Richard was the first born, and, from the few photos I saw of him, was not a normal child. He appeared to have some mongoloid (Down's Syndrome) features although I never heard my parents use either of those terms. Richard died of pneumonia shortly before his second birthday, before I was born.

I was born in 1930, which was near the tailend of the Great Depression that followed World War I. My dad had been a wood pattern maker before and during the war. Now that the war was over, lots of men lost their jobs, and Dad had a hard time finding one. He looked for work elsewhere in addition to the Cleveland area and found a job in Buffalo, New York, for awhile, and later in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and then in Baltimore, Maryland. He sometimes came home on weekends. My mom got a job in a candy factory and would bring home a chocolate-covered candy for me each evening. What a treat that was. She also worked as a telephone operator. That was back when the first thing you heard when you picked up the phone (if you were lucky enough to have one) was the operator saying, "Number, please."

Of course, I was just a pipsqueak then and had to have someone take care of me while both parents were off working. The grandparents I told you about, Anna and Eman Klier, were then living in a house about four zig-zaggy blocks away from us, and I would stay with them during the week. They spoke nothing but Czech, so I learned Czech. On the weekends, I went home to be with my mom and dad where we spoke English. Nowadays, they call that being bilingual. I remember my mom telling me many years later that the neighbors' granddaughter (who was about my age) would visit her grandparents occasionally on weekends and would come next door to play with me in my sandbox. She told her grandmother, who told my mother, who told me years later, "I like going over to play in Alice's sandbox with her, but she sure talks funny. I can understand only a little bit of what she says."

My Dad did a lot of metal and wood-working and general repairing of things down in our basement and usually enjoyed sharing it with others. Years later, after Bill and I were married and when, Chuck, our first-born, was a little whippersnapper, we would visit my folks and dad would holler up the stairs, "Charley, come down here. I want to show you what I'm doing!" I do not know how much influence that had on him, but Chuck loves to work with his hands. When he was about two-and-half years old, someone made the comment "I think something's wrong with this rocking chair; it's making some funny noises." Charley dropped what he was doing and came running over saying "Me fix, me fix!" He dove underneath and in about 30 seconds he reached his hand out along his side from underneath the rocker and said, "Pai a piers, pease," which, if you do not understand two-and-a-half year old talk, means "Pair of pliers, please."

I would like to back up a little bit to the early 1940's, when I was 11 or so. It was then that my life began to change—little did I know it at the time. There was an inner-city settlement house in Cleveland, Ohio, called Hiram House that ran a summer camp. One of the camp's goals was to give inner city and outer city kids a chance to live and work together, and to know each other as individuals and not just someone from *that* part of town, or *that* racial group. A couple of my friends had attended one of Hiram House Camps' twelve-day sessions the year before, and they convinced me I should get my parents to let me go too. I did and it

was great. The staff was made up primarily of college students with an interest in sharing their love of the out-of-doors with kids. And that they did. I had lots of chances to sleep out under the stars, learn to build a fire with one match, cook a meal over it, and learn about the plants and trees that surrounded us.

One of the staff was the nature counselor, whom everyone called “Bugs.” I remember that his last name was so long that I could neither remember nor pronounce it. (Guess what his last name was.) The thing he remembers about that summer was that that little girl, Alice, did a good job identifying trees. I came back as a camper for the next couple of years, then paid my way to camp by being one of the dishwashers after each meal. Three of us gals washed and sterilized the dishes for over 100 people, three times a day. Then during the next two summers I worked as a “kitchen girl,” mostly making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for 100 hungry campers and staff. I am sure we did other things, but I do remember those PB&J sandwiches. You know, I probably would not have admitted it to anyone back then, but it was fun. I then became a junior counselor, taking over for a regular counselor on his or her day-off. The next summer, I was a full-fledged camp counselor and had just graduated from high school. I thoroughly enjoyed taking the kids out hiking and exploring. We would go on scavenger hunts, have a number of cookouts with our group of eight or nine kids, making and cooking things like Hunters Stew in a kettle made from a #10 tin can. We taught the kids how to build a fire with one match on which they could cook the Hunters’ Stew.

By the time I was a full fledged counselor it was 1948, and I had reached the ripe-old age of 17. That nature counselor I told you about earlier, told me later that he began to think “Hmm, that little Alice Vild has really grown up.” Bill and I began dating that fall when I started college at Hiram with a scholarship I received from Hiram House Camp.

In 1948, Bill was working year-round at Hiram House Camp. Three teachers from the Cleveland Heights School District brought their classes to Hiram House Camp for an experimental weeklong program of residential outdoor education. The next year the outdoor education program expanded and it moved to Red Raider Camp, which was a winterized facility. Bill “moved” with them and was hired by the Cleveland Heights Board of Education

as a permanent staff member of their innovative outdoor education program.

He would spend the week at school camp and then drive out to Hiram College, to see me for the weekend. (He was nicknamed “the weekend student,” and slept on a couch in the lounge of the boys dormitory.) Once, when Bill was not quite asleep, a faculty member walked by with one of the dorm supervisors and said, “Looks like there’s another one who didn’t quite make it his room last night!”

The Big Snow Storm

I want to tell you a quick story about how a big snow storm helped cement the relationship between Bill and my parents. It was around the middle of November in 1949 or 1950, and my folks had invited Bill to come to our house for Thanksgiving. It began snowing in the middle of the day, and it was a heavy, wet, and constant snow. By the time evening came and it was time for Bill to start back to camp in his 1929 Model A Ford, all the roads in the area were closed. This was before the days that a family might have owned a snow plow or snow blower. So, my parents invited Bill to sleep on the couch and try again in the morning. Surely, the city would have plowed out our street by morning. The snow continued through the night and absolutely no roads had been plowed out. If we looked hard we could see vague attempts at snow plowing at 116th Street, a main street about one-and-a-half blocks away, but no traffic was moving, anywhere. It continued like that for another day, when Bill decided, “This is too much of a good thing,” and got a snow shovel out of the garage and started shoveling out not just the driveway, but the street. My dad felt sorry for him and came out with another snow shovel and joined him. Within the next fifteen minutes other neighbors with their shovels came out and joined them and the group, working together, shoveled the road all the way to 116th Street—a perfect example of working together toward a common goal.

Bill spent more and more time at family events that included my Gramma and Grampa Klier. Once we were all out enjoying a walk in a forested area, and I made a point of running up toward my Gramma when she was in a spot where others would not be likely to hear our conversation and I asked her in Czech, “Well, Gramma, what do you think?” She answered, “*Ya von mam rada*

(I like him). *Ale Elishka, von neni Czech* (But Alice, he's not Czech)." Up until that time, everyone in our larger family circle had married another Czech. I passed on my grandmother's comment to Bill. He began to think about what he might do to make Gramma feel more comfortable about his officially becoming part of the family. He thought maybe if he could learn a Czech folk song that our family had sung off and on, it might help. Is the folk song called "Annie Went to the Cabbage Patch" familiar to any of you? Here is the first half of the English version: "Annie went to the cabbage patch, cabbage patch, cabbage patch; picking cabbage her intent, her intention. Little Peter came along, stamped her basket to the ground," etc. Well, in the Czech version, the line "Little Peter came along" is "*Prishel na ni Pepichek*." Bill could NOT pronounce that first word, "*prishel*" correctly; he would say "*pershel*" every time—and Gramma would break out laughing each time. Can YOU hear the difference? The literal translation of "*prishel na ni Pepichek*" is "little Peter came to her," but Bill would sing, "*pershel na ni Pepichek*," which is "little Peter rained on her." You can see why Gramma laughed.

Well, from then on, Bill was OK in her eyes, plus she thought he was pretty funny at times.

Singing

I sang a lot in those days, both in high school and college. I was part of various choir groups and sang a solo at some weddings. In my junior year in high school, I was chosen to sing a solo at our high school's traditional Thanksgiving program, which I did. In my sophomore year at Hiram College, they asked me to sing the role of Carmen in the next year's musical. However, I had been having problems with getting quite hoarse after a summer, or even a weekend, working at camp. The camp director, suggested I make an appointment with the ear, nose, and throat specialist he had been seeing. I did, and after a thorough exam the doctor told me that my vocal chords did not meet the way they should. As a result I had to push more air between them to get them to vibrate properly, causing me to get hoarse. Then he told me I had to make a choice—either stop working in an outdoor setting, such as a camp, where you are trying to make yourself heard above both natural and human noises most of the time or stop pursuing any singing ventures. I was heading to camp that

summer and was not about to give that up, so I gave up the musical role instead of the camp role, and I am very glad I made that choice. There now is another factor contributing to my poor singing voice—old age.

Bill and I decided to get married the summer following my junior year in college, 1951. We were married under the care of the Cleveland Monthly Meeting of Friends. It was an outdoor Quaker wedding in one of the prairie fields around the Hiram College campus where Bill and I had often hiked. We wanted the spot to be close enough to a road where people could park and walk in. We found one. The only problem was that the town dump was there too and would be visible to people walking in from the road. So, in addition to moving benches from the dining hall to the field for people to sit on during our wedding, we also wanted to hide the dump. Therefore, two days before our wedding, Bill and I were scurrying around with loppers cutting and hauling evergreen branches from some of the many trees in remote places on campus and putting them on any visible broken toys, old clothes, beds, mattresses and other things that end up in landfills. Our marriage clearness committee was made up of Sheldon and Lucy Clark and also Bill and Isabel Bliss, whom some of you older folks might remember from long ago wider Quaker circles.

That summer we took off working at camp and went traveling—a canoe trip (our “official” honeymoon) in Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada, and then a trip to Mexico with Bill’s mom and dad. That next school year we lived in a slab-sided cabin that served as the dispensary for Red Raider’s summer camp, but was empty the rest of the year. I commuted daily to Hiram College to finish up my senior year, did my practice teaching, and we continued to attend the Cleveland Friends Meeting, whenever possible.

During the summer of 1954, we were serving as co-program directors at Hiram House Camp. We were, by then, expecting our first child, and the timing was going to work out well. The baby was due one-and-a-half weeks after camp was over, however Chuck decided to arrive one-and-a-half weeks *before* camp was over. The daily practice at camp was that the entire camp would gather together before breakfast in front of a huge camp porch to hear announcements and raise the flag. That morning one of the other staff announced excitedly that Alice and Bill had delivered a

“5lb., 7 inch” boy a few hours earlier, and then the staff raised a diaper up the flag pole for the day.

Deb was born in 1956 and Erick at the end of 1957. We decided to raise our own playmates for the kids since we lived in the country and there were not too many others around for CDE to play with. Did you notice that we were now ABCDE? Someone told us once that E is also the first letter in the word “Enuf.” He also said that if we *were* to have another we should name him or her “FoPaw.” Or, instead, we could get a puppy and name it “FourPaws.”

CDE and I spent a lot of time exploring and visiting various parks, beaches, and museums. Part of the fun was anticipating going to one of these spots. I am sure you know that in addition to teaching our kids, we can learn a lot from them. Here is an example. We had planned for quite a few days to take a trip to Cedar Point, an amusement park on the shores of Lake Erie where it was also possible to go swimming. We were all set to leave early in the morning, but we awoke to a downpour and lightening and thunder all around. I was commiserating with the kids, mostly because I thought I knew how they must have felt, when little Erick looked up at me and said “Be happy whatcha got, Mommy”—and I was.

By 1961, Bill had finished his graduate work at the University of Michigan and was hired to teach at Chicago Teachers College—North, now known as Northeastern Illinois University. We bought a house about one mile from Northeastern and lived there for 8 years. Most of the year, Bill would ride his bicycle back and forth to school. Our son Erick, now also teaches at Northeastern and lives, along with his wife Nancy, in East Rogers Park. Erick also rides his bike to Northeastern, about 4 miles away, year-around, rain or shine or snow.

While in Chicago, Bill had been active on various American Friends Service Committee committees. In the spring of 1964, AFSC asked us if we would be willing to head up a six-week community service project with college students, in the small village of San Juan Totolac, in the state of Tlaxcala, Mexico. We decided to do it, and Bill took the summer off from teaching. All five of us, (CDE were nine, seven, and six years old at the time) packed up and took off. We met the eleven college students with whom we would be working, and we all gathered for a few days of orientation at the Casa de Los Amigos in Mexico City. One of the

things we learned during orientation was that we were to let the villagers decide how we could be of help to them and not come in with any preconceived ideas of the kind of help they needed. The college students were from all over the US, plus one fellow from Holland. We then traveled by bus to our village and were welcomed warmly by one of the village leaders. The village decided they would like us to 1) teach some English classes to the children, and 2) help the villagers continue work they had begun making new roads up the mountainside so expanding families would have places to build their houses. They said they would also appreciate having our help in landscaping their church and school grounds. It was a wonderful experience, and we all left feeling certain we had learned more than we had taught.

Our Spanish had improved and we felt so good about the experience that our family was considering volunteering for a similar project the next summer—when we received another call from the Philadelphia office of AFSC. This time they told us that AFSC had a five year project going on in the *barriadas*, or “shanty towns” (later called *pueblos jovenes* or “young towns”), outside of Lima, Peru. An AFSC family was there for the first two years. They wondered if our family would be willing to accept the next two-year assignment. There would be no salary, but the AFSC would cover the monthly mortgage we were paying on our home in Chicago, and also pay the transportation getting us to and from South America. Well, we talked about it for a few days. We did not think Chuck, Debby and Erick would be too keen on being gone that long, since we had just been gone for half of the preceding summer. We talked with them. Chuck said that he had read somewhere that when you are north of the equator water goes down drains and toilets counter-clockwise, but south of the equator it goes down clockwise, and he sure wanted to see that.

After some more family discussions, Bill checked with Northeastern, where he was teaching, and he decided to ask for a one year leave of absence, not two years. We were again getting ready to be on our way, this time to spend thirteen months of 1965-66 in Peru. We lived in the city of Lima in the house the family preceding us had occupied. Almost daily, Bill and I drove the seventeen miles to the desert area where Pamplona Alta had been built, one woven cane grass mat hut at a time, by families

who had come down from the Andes to settle closer to Lima and hopefully find work.

We enrolled Chuck, Deb, and Erick at Abraham Lincoln School, where the previous AFSC family's kids had attended. It was mid-semester in Lima, but it was the end of the school year in Chicago, so we had to either put the kids back half a year or ahead half a year. We decided to put them back half a year so that they could concentrate on the Spanish language. They finished out the school year, but when summer break came in December, they were *not* interested in going back when summer break was over. Fortunately, we had brought with us the text books from the Chicago school they had been attending, and we used those for a home schooling program and that worked out well.

A little aside story about Deb, who happened to have thirteen warts on her hands at that time. Deb was climbing a tree in the Bosque, a wooded park, in Lima. A woman came walking by reading some poetry aloud in English. She stopped next to Deb and said, "I see you have warts on your hands. My son used to have a lot of warts but he got rid of them. He stared them off"—and without another word the woman walked on continuing to read her poetry aloud. Deb did not tell us about this right away, not until after she had gotten rid of the first two warts. She told us that what she would do, at least daily, for about five minutes at a time, was to stare intently at one wart, and in her mind say to it, things like, "You stupid wart. I hate you," over and over again. She said it took her one or two weeks of staring at the same wart. She was able to watch it get smaller and smaller until it finally disappeared. Hard to believe, but they were gone. She stared off all thirteen of them. A month or so after we returned to the US, Deb showed us something that was on the bottom of her foot. It is known as a plantar's wart, and they are pretty painful when you walk. I called a foot doctor the same day and made an appointment for Deb. When I told her that we had an appointment, she shouted, "But Mom, you didn't even give me a chance to stare it off!" She, Bill, and I talked about it. Deb said she wanted a month to try to stare it off, and if it was not gone by then she would let us take her to the doctor. About three days before the time was up, Deb quietly walked into the room and showed us what she was holding in the palm of her hand. It was a shriveled

up plantar's wart that she had popped out of her foot that morning. While Deb was staring at warts in Peru, I was working daily with a women's sewing cooperative. Their biggest sales came from sewing items such as aprons and placemats on their treadle or crank operated sewing machines, using mantas.

If someone from Pamplona wanted to go to Lima, they would walk down to one of the paved roads and take a bus. Our car was the only vehicle that came to Pamplona on a regular basis, so we were able to provide transportation to the hospital or to doctors, which we did.

Complete absence of a water source was an issue not only in Pamplona but in most of the other young villages around Lima. A tank truck full of water did show up two times a week, and the women would quickly line up with their water containers to get them filled. Sometimes there were still a few people standing in line when the truck was empty. In the few cases when I remember that happening, families would either share their meager supply, or someone got on a bus and went somewhere else to get a few jugs filled.

Bill worked with a group of village men who would reclaim, repair, and resell old broken steel beds, ones we might call "camp cots" here. The men had a welding machine that we think had been provided by the AFSC during the period preceding ours. The men also made "ladrillos," which are concrete blocks made using some of the desert sand, which was very prevalent.

One day I was driving one of the village women, Annabella, to the doctor. At one point she turned sideways in her seat, looked me straight in the eye and said, in Spanish, "Dona Alicia, you and I are about the same age, 35. Why do you have 3 children, and I have 8 with another one right here?" as she gently tapped her belly. I told her that there are things a husband and wife can do to help put more space between their children, which is what Bill and I had done, and that it is called "family planning." I told her I would try to get some information for her. After a few days of making phone calls and other arrangements, I told Annabella that I had talked with Dr. Gilberto Cabello, a Peruvian doctor who had done pro bono medical work for a few Pamplona Alta residents the year before. I called Dr. Cabello, told him what had happened, and he said he could come out to Pamplona the next Wednesday afternoon and talk with any of the women that were interested in

putting more space between their children. I asked Don Jose and his wife, who owned and operated a 3 room cane-grass mat hut as a local store in Pamplona, if we could use one of their rooms when Dr. Cabello came. I asked Annabella to let her friends know that Dr. Cabello was coming on Wednesday afternoon and to meet at Don Jose's. As the doctor arrived he could hardly get in. It was shoulder-to-shoulder, wall-to-wall people (granted the rooms were only 3 meters by 3 meters square, (which is about 10 ft. by 10 ft.) They were crowded into the doorway and around the outside wall where they could likely hear most of what was being said inside. Dr. Cabello talked mostly about the rhythm method, about contraceptive pills, and about IUDs. Bill and I can remember no men attending the session, but also no negative comments or objections to the fact that their wives were going. Dr. Cabello told them he would not recommend the pills, because the women would have no safe place to leave them out of reach of their children. Instead he recommended the women be fitted with IUD's and that he would be willing to come back once a week to help anyone interested. Don Jose and his wife said Dr. Cabello could use that same estera mat room as his "clinica," or clinic, if he wanted to. We do not know how long Dr. Cabello continued to go back to Pamplona. But I do know that when we returned 10 years later and made a visit to Pamplona, a couple of the young women we had known and had worked with in the sewing cooperative, who were now in their thirties, were very proud to introduce their two, three, or four children to us.

After our year in Peru, our Spanish was pretty good. I began volunteering one day a week at Cook County Hospital with the family planning program there, and I also volunteered to be on call as a translator for the City of McHenry Police Department. Those occasional calls from the police department that would come at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. were a little hard to get used to. Before long, though, there was a bilingual police office on each shift throughout each day, which was great.

We had moved back to Chicago, and Bill went back to Northeastern as Dean of Students. At that time the university was part of a group of innovative colleges and universities, called the "Union for Research and Experimentation in Higher Education" (UREHE). This consortium started a group of regional field study centers which would permit students to live and study in a unique

environment. So in 1968 we moved again, this time to Pikeville, Kentucky, in the heart of Appalachia, where such a program was being carried on in collaboration with Pikeville College. Bill directed the UREHE field studies program and taught half-time at Pikeville College. We lived on the Pikeville College Farm, on Johns' Creek, seventeen miles outside of Pikeville. About ten UREHE students lived on the farm in small cabins. I became the "support system."

CDE attended Johns Creek Elementary School. It was like another world. The strong southern mountain accent and vocabulary used in the area was like learning and listening to another new language. Our daughter Deb picks up accents very quickly. Chuck and Erick would say, "You should hear Debby on the bus. She gets on the bus talking like we do at home, and by the time we get to school we can hardly understand her."

"Now hain't that agrafrettin," was a phrase that joined our family collection of one-liners. We lived up a hollow from John's Creek on the Pikeville College Farm, where only one other family lived up beyond us. Even if they owned a car, which they did not, they could not have driven to their house. They would be in or crossing water for about the last 150 feet. Another family we met and came to know quite well was the Claude and Goldie Johnson family. Bill met them when Claude and one of his sons were in the creek that ran through the hollow down below our house. They were digging pieces of coal with their hands from a small coal seam at the bottom of the stream to take home for heating and cooking. Goldie told me once that her dream was to someday be able to have a water pump close to the back door and pump water from a well and not have to haul it from the creek.

One of the requirements of the students' participation in the program was that they get a job, paid or volunteer, working and communicating with the people in the community. Every day the students gathered around our kitchen table for "classes."

After spending a year in that beautiful mountain hollow we felt the urge to get back into the country again, where our earlier years of married life had been spent. It was then that we bought the farm where we are now living in McHenry, Illinois. On New Year's Eve of 1970, we were returning from a Christmas vacation trip. Bill suggested we stop by at the farm we had recently purchased to see if the previous tenants had moved out yet. They had, so we took our sleeping bags in and slept on the floor. "Moving in" came later.

Recycling

Recycling and reusing had always been a part of my life, as I am sure it is in yours. However, the impetus to recycle during my early days, the 1930's and 1940's, was not to save our natural resources, as it is now, but to provide steel for the war effort. Tin cans, broken bed frames, old steel tools, etc., were put out at the curb on a designated day, and they would get picked up. Another collector that would go by occasionally was the "Paypa Rex" man. In my early youth, he would be on a wagon, pulled by a horse, shouting, "Paypa rex," as loudly as he could. He would accept paper and rags (and other things) you wanted to give to him. When cars and trucks became more common, he would drive slowly down the street with a helper, still shouting, "Paypa rex."

When we moved to McHenry County in 1970, there was no organized recycling going on at all in the county. However, when we asked around, we were told that there was an environmental group just starting up. They are now known as the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County. I went to a committee meeting of theirs a few days later. There were about six of us in someone's living room. I remember coming home that evening and telling Bill, "and they didn't do any chit-chatting, but talked about recycling the whole time. It's a good bunch of people." Before long we had made arrangements with a fellow who did car repairs and also owned a dozen old semi-trailers, which he basically used for storage. He felt they were sturdy enough to pull from town to town on occasion, which is just what we needed to be able to hold recycling collections in various towns around the county. In a few years, we were scheduling drives on a regular basis in eight different communities. People came in droves to bring in their bundles of newspapers, glass bottles, and tin cans. If they wanted us to, we would weigh what they brought in and pay them 2 cents per pound for newspaper and 1 cent per pound for glass and tin cans. Many people just donated their materials, knowing they were doing something good by keeping those items out of the waste stream. Siting a new landfill was not easy, as many waste hauling companies, like Waste Management, had found out when they tried. Soon, various haulers were providing the majority of the trucks we needed. By this time, curbside recycling ordinances were being put into place in many Illinois communities around the state. The three largest towns in our county (Woodstock,

Crystal Lake, and McHenry) soon followed suite. Before long the unincorporated areas also had curbside recycling available. This was great. However, there still are items that should not go into landfills, but are not included in what can be put out into a curbside recycling bin, such as fluorescent tubes, styrofoam, TVs, computers, monitors, and batteries. To this day, the Environmental Defenders continue to hold recycling collections for those items and see that they get to the proper “next step” toward being dismantled and the reusable parts again put to use. I am no longer actively involved in the drives, but other younger enthusiastic souls have continued. In fact, the woman who fills a major role at the recycling drives in McHenry County by rounding up volunteers and seeing that the literature to pass out is ready, and who is one of the people who greets the cars as they come in is a member of our Upper Fox Valley Quaker Meeting, Barbara Day. Some of you know her, I think.

Pioneer Farm and Activities There

There are some among you who have been to our farm for the Quaker Corn Roasts that we have been hosting since 2006. Or perhaps you were there as campers, when you were kids. Some of the Quaker youth that came to be with us for 12 day camp sessions, during the summers of 1970 through 1974, were from the Evanston Meeting, since our family was attending that meeting pretty regularly at that time. Let’s see, if you recognize any of these family names. Some of our Quaker campers were: Laurie Laughlin, Lucy and Cathy Buscombe, George and Katie Keeney, Terry and Sally Fitzgerald, Sarah Williams and Mark Baker were among those that were either campers or staff. Sarah Williams, Kale and Helen Williams’ daughter, was attending Scattergood Friends School in West Branch, Iowa the year before she came out to our farm as a camper. Her Chicago friend, Nancy Randleman, was also attending Scattergood. Sarah convinced Nancy to come out to our farm as a camper along with Sarah the next summer. It was while Nancy was with us at camp that she met our son, Erick, who was a junior counselor at the time. During the next few years one thing led to another, and Nancy is now our daughter-in-law.

Mark Baker, Clyde and Jeannette’s son, was one of our younger campers. I have to share a story about him with you all.

Before our group would leave on “an adventure” we always counted noses to make sure we were all there. One day, we were all loaded onto the hay wagon, ready to take off for the “back 20.” Before I started the tractor I began counting those aboard. There were nineteen and there should have been twenty. I started to do a recount when I looked beyond the hay wagon toward the two outhouses and saw that the boy’s outhouse was shaking. I quickly pointed it out to the campers, and two of the older boys jumped off the wagon and ran over to the outhouse to see what was happening. Mark Baker was stuck inside and trying unsuccessfully to get the hook to unlatch. Some of the other boys also went quickly over to help. Then from inside came this plaintive voice saying, “It’s---of---no---use.” The boys leaned against the outsides of the outhouse on either side of the door and encouraged Mark to keep trying to lift the latch, and it finally worked. Mark came out and was greeted by applause and cheers from the boys and also from those campers still on the wagon. Mark’s phrase, “It’s of no use!” has become part of our family’s standard “one-liners” ever since. Needless to say, the outhouse was soon rebalanced and stabilized on the 4 x 8’s on which it stood.

We continued to run the summer camp for three or four years. Meanwhile, during the school year, we received calls from Girl Scout leaders asking if they could bring a group out for a weekend, and from teachers asking if their class could come out for a day trip. This worked out well during the fall and spring. Meanwhile, I was getting more and more involved in helping get some recycling started in the county, so we ended our summer camp programs, continuing for a few more years with the weekend and day trip groups.

When we had first moved to the farm, all of the tillable land was either in corn or soybeans. Rows of field corn were growing within 20 feet of our back door. We had neither the equipment nor knowledge to continue planting and caring for corn and soybeans, but we did know how to use the land and the outdoors with kids, which is what we did and some of which I have told you about today.

Making Maple Syrup

Our interest in tapping maple trees and making syrup developed while we lived on the hill back at Red Raider Camp in the late 50’s. Each spring, from our kitchen window at the camp we could see the farm crew, traveling on a horse drawn wagon,

drilling holes, pounding in spiles and hanging buckets on the trees right behind our house. We could also see the sugar barn where they boiled the sap. A few days after the buckets had been hung, Chuck (whom we called “Charley” at the time) called from the kitchen, “Days boilin’, mommy, lez go!” We would bundle up, hike the 500 or so feet to the sugar barn, watch the process, and best of all, get to taste a few samples of the syrup at various stages of its journey from sap to the final product.

Once we moved to Pioneer Farm, where we now live, each spring we would tap the maples and boil the sap into syrup. Chuck has now taken over that project. This last year he put in 168 taps and made about 14 gallons of syrup. Just in case you are interested, it takes about 50 gallons of sap, boiled down, to make 1 gallon of syrup. No wonder pure maple syrup is so expensive.

I would like to close on a more serious note. What I am going to read to you, “The Still Quiet Voice of God,” happened on March 8, 2009. I wrote this about a week later and shared it with my neighbor, Anne, and now I want to share it with you.

The Still, Quiet Voice of God

Anne and Gene O’Donnell had lived in the subdivision across the street from us since 1990. Before they even moved into our area, Gene had had two heart bypass surgeries and was suffering more and more from dementia. By the end of February 2009, Gene’s family was told he probably would not live much longer. Throughout his illness, neighbors brought food and stopped by to visit, if it was appropriate. We took a casserole dish once and went to visit, but others were much more involved than we were.

On Sunday, March 8, 2009, Bill and I were at the Upper Fox Valley Meeting for Worship at the Montessori School where we were meeting in those days. I was sitting there in our Quaker circle, with my eyes closed, when I heard someone speak. It was a female voice, and she said four words, slowly, and after a second or two repeated them, still in a very calm voice. The words were, “He is dying now. He is dying now.” That was all.

Startled, I opened my eyes and looked at my watch. It was 10:30. At the close of meeting I told Bill what had happened and that I wanted to get home as soon as possible and follow up on that strange message. When we got home I decided to call a couple of other neighbors who were more involved and would possibly have

some current information regarding Gene. Neither one of them had seen nor talked with Anne or Gene since the previous day. They did say that Anne and Gene's daughter had arrived from out-of-town and that Anne was probably busy with her.

So, I went home, fixed up a few slices of banana bread and some left over casserole from the night before, went to their door and knocked. The daughter came to the door first, with Anne just a few steps behind. I told them I had brought over some goodies for them. They thanked me. I then asked how Gene was doing, and they said "He died this morning." After expressing my condolences I asked them when he died. They said, "at 10:30."

I do not know how or why I was the one to have received the message I had received in meeting that morning. The only thing Gene and I had in common was that our birthdays were both on the same day, although two years apart. I know I heard that voice, and to this day, I do not understand it.

THE JONATHAN W. PLUMMER LECTURE

Beginning with the 1961 sessions, Illinois Yearly Meeting of Friends proposed to annually honor its first clerk by designating the principal or keynote address, the Jonathan W. Plummer Lecture.

Jonathan Wright Plummer, acknowledged by Quaker Torch Bearers, as the father of Friends General Conference, was born in 1835 at Richmond, Indiana. He died in 1918 at 83 years of age and lies interred at Graceland Cemetery in Chicago.

When he was 39, he moved to Chicago, where he was first with E. R. Burnham & Son, wholesale druggists. Later, this was the Morrison-Plummer Company, wholesale druggists, and is now known as McKesson & Robbins.

He introduced profit-sharing in his business and he practiced tithing, giving one-tenth of his private income and one-tenth of the income from his drug business. He also loaned money freely to people in need. He advocated prison reform.

“He did go to Meeting, headed committees of action, and notably in 1878 wrote letters which were albatrosses about the neck of pious epistolary correspondence. Illinois Yearly Meeting, which he helped to create in 1875, was housed in the country near McNabb, Illinois. Here he came once a year by train to meet with Friends from 10 neighborhoods of Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana, as well as with spiritual leaders from other Yearly Meetings.

“In 1878 he came with a project as clear as a blueprint. Its framework was a conference and its aim to co-ordinate widely scattered activities.... Jonathan Plummer desired a conference that would consider all the social testimonies of Friends. As a result, minute 52 of Illinois Yearly Meeting’s proceedings in 1878 set him at liberty to prepare an address of invitation to the several Yearly Meetings for holding a general conference once in five years or oftener.”

He gave the opening address at the World’s Parliament of Religions (held during the ‘93 Fair), expressing hope for greater helpfulness and for co-operation among all faiths.

“He was not a pronounced religious mystic, as were many earlier Quakers. He listened to the ‘still, small voice,’ and this prompted both charity and vocal ministry.

“He measured up to the test of greatness set by Goethe in that he expressed clearly what others felt but were unable to express. He lived in the midst of what shall not pass away. Whoever is the messenger of its truth brings surprises to mankind. Such was Jonathan W. Plummer.”