

# Quaker House Newsletter

Front-Line Peace Witness Since 1969

Early Autumn 2005

Fayetteville, NC [www.quakerhouse.org](http://www.quakerhouse.org)

Chuck Fager, Director

## A Star Is Born – Introducing Sgt Abe, and the Intern Who Created Him

John Stephens doesn't look like a serious threat to the military machine. But appearances are deceptive.

Normally, John lives quietly with his wife Anita and daughter Sophia in Triangle, Virginia, which is a bit south of Washington DC and close by US Marine headquarters at Quantico. By day he works at a natural foods supermarket; at night he's studying for a teacher's certificate. On Sunday mornings you'll find him at Alexandria VA Friends Meeting, teaching First Day School.

Nothing very ominous so far. But Alexandria Meeting has a singular distinction among Friends meetings: it's located on a military base, Fort Belvoir. How this happened is a long story, which turns on the fact that Alexandria Friends were there first. And it's a location which keeps the presence of militarism on John's mind.

Then there's John's "other life." It turns out he's also a comic book artist, working mainly on the web. Among his online "comics" (which you can see at <http://beardedbaby.net/comics.html>) is a summary of the "Hundred Year Lamb's War" concept developed by QH Director Chuck Fager.

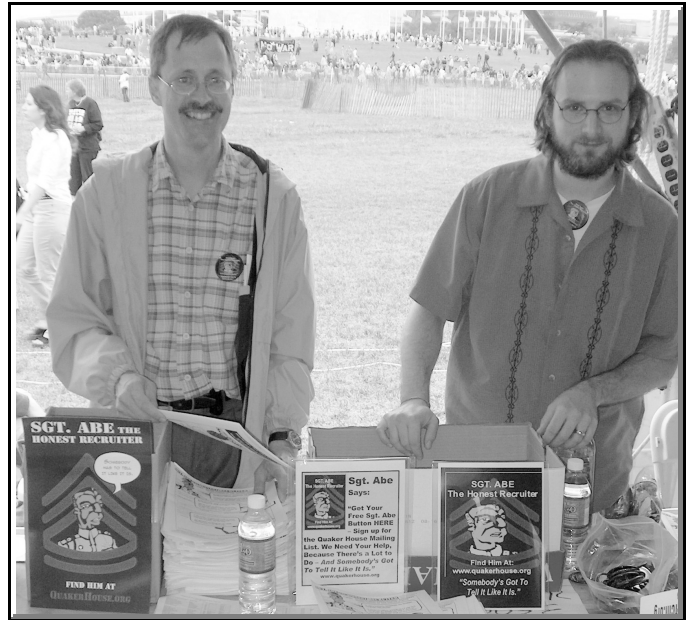
John heard about this idea at a summer religious education conference in 2004; his interest piqued, he arranged to spend much of his 2005 vacation time as an intern for us in Fayetteville.

He arrived in August, and we had hopes of showing him around the area, familiarizing him with Ft. Bragg and the military community and culture around it.

But it didn't work out that way. We also showed him a copy of the military enlistment agreement, on which Chuck Fager had made notes pointing out the document's many pitfalls and traps. These notes were scribbled in Chuck's notoriously bad handwriting; could John, we wondered, do better?

Yes, he could. After mulling over the document awhile, John had an idea – and Sgt. Abe, The Honest Recruiter, was born.

But when Sgt. Abe came into the house, all the plans for touring the area went out the window. Hour after hour, day after day, John sat chained to his Mac laptop, with Chuck hovering nearby, drawing and redrawing, refining



**SPREADING THE WORD: QH Board Member Marty Hubbe and Intern John Stephens, creator of Sgt. Abe, distribute Truth In Recruiting Flyers in Washington on Sept. 24.**

the images, honing the text in the voice balloons. In his spare time, John redesigned the Quaker House website (check it out at: [www.quakerhouse.org](http://www.quakerhouse.org) it's greatly improved!) **more on page 2 >>**

## Long Hot Summer For the GI Rights Hotline

Jan-Aug 2005 total: 4750

Jan-July 2004: 3913

Plus 183 Non-Hotline contacts in 2005: 4933

Counselors Steve Woolford & Lenore Yarger report that "Calls taken May through August of this year were significantly higher than in 2004 for all months except June (which is when we took some vacation this year). It has been the norm this summer to take over 200 calls a month, which averages roughly 10 calls each working day. We continue to take calls from people stationed at a wide range of bases across the southeast and overseas.

"Memorable calls this summer include one soldier who was considering not showing up for his deployment to Iraq. Mimicking Rumsfeld, he quipped, 'You go to war with the soldiers you have, not the soldiers you wish you had.' Another call reflected the brokenness of a soldier recently returned to Iraq for a second deployment. . . . Because he was two months late for his 18-month deployment, he won't be given leave to come home. Iraq is commonly referred to among soldiers as 'Mortaritaville.'"

Excerpts from GI emails are inside.



An image from Sgt. Abe's Letter to Parents About Recruiting. The melancholy parade of such flag-draped coffins, bearing American sons and daughters, will soon total 2000. The total number of coffins carrying Iraqi civilians remains uncounted.

**Honor the Dead.  
Spare the Living.  
Stop the War.**

## COMING ALL-TOO SOON: TWO THOUSAND TOO MANY!

As this was written, another sad landmark of the Iraq war is about to arrive: the 2000th US casualty there. Quaker House will be taking part in local actions to mark this occasion, and make it a cry to **Bring the Troops Home Now**, and put an end to the occupation, and an end to the rising death toll.

There will be a call for local groups to observe this event in their own appropriate ways, peaceably, but visibly and articulately. We hope you'll join in where you live.

We will also take note of how many more "Two Thousands" of victims are being repeatedly produced by the "blowback" of the war, and its diversion of resources from better purposes. It took two and a half years for the US casualty total in Iraq to reach two thousand. But consider:

-Iraqi civilian casualties: depending on your source, it takes only a few months to a few weeks to reach another 2000.

- In New Orleans, it took only a day for many times 2000 persons to lose everything to a hurricane and flood, damage which could and should have been greatly reduced.

- In Africa, 2000 untreated AIDS die approximately every ten hours.

<< Intern, from front page

Finally, John's "vacation" was over, and the first Sgt. Abe brochures were ready. We put them on the web, where they could be downloaded, and started spreading the word.

It seems fair to say that nothing in John's previous work as an artist has received the wide circulation that Sgt. Abe has just in the first several weeks of the character's "career" as an advocate of Truth In Recruiting. We gave away stacks of the enlistment brochure to the Washington DC peace rally on Sept. 24, and had some remarkable feedback.

There was praise from Bill Galvin, from the Center on Conscience and War, and one of the most experienced GI and draft counselors in the "business." He took a whole armful of the brochures to give out in his sessions.

The most striking comment came from Connie Norgren of Brooklyn, New York. She came up to the table, picked up the brochure, then squealed and pumped John's hand, talking excitedly of how a friend's son had been on the brink of signing up, when a copy of Sgt. Abe's guide to the enlistment agreement's traps arrived in the mail. After reading it over, the shocked youth changed his mind and said NO to the recruiter.

I expect to hear more such stories in the near future. Already we have heard of Sgt. Abe showing up in truth in recruiting work in Chicago, Texas, Michigan and Oregon; and a Puerto Rican activist plans to produce a version in Spanish.

With his internship at Quaker House, John Stephens has launched a real phenomenon in the work of bringing speaking truth to recruiting. And such truth can be a real counter to the massive recruiting propaganda machinery.

And on your next visit, John, we really will get out and see Ft. Bragg and the town. Honest.

## Counseling Notebook: An Email Exchange

(Note: Name and address changed)

September 25  
A Message from Fred@awolmail.com  
Subject: Hey Chuck

Hey Chuck,

The CO plan was not going well at all, I couldn't get anyone to support my beliefs in the army, the 1SG [First Sergeant] ripped up my claim in front of my face and called me a "piece of shit", I did my job well and never let anyone down, sustaining permanent injury to my knees because of the training. I don't understand how they could let me down like that as I never intended to let them down. I simply felt as though I could not do my job without feeling like I was committing a crime against humanity,

and what would the point of "fighting for freedom" (term used loosely) if I were contributing to the increasing decline in morality that the entire world is facing? I will not do it.

That said, I got out and am currently AWOL, I am not certain what I am going to do. I know I will not be able to get a job, and having a fiancee with me makes it even harder. Soon I will have many more problems with lodging and food I know. It is very hard for me to take, but the end result will be worth it. I haven't the slightest idea where to do from here, but I'm not sacrificing myself for something I don't believe is right and moral.

Thanks for talking to me about everything and I hope to support this cause once everything is ironed out and over with.

"Fred"

more >>

From: CHUCKFAGER@aol.com  
To: Fred@awolmail.com  
Subject: Re: Hey Chuck  
Date: Mon, 26 Sep 2005

Hi "Fred",

Good to hear from you, though I wish the situation was better.

At this point, there are a number of options I can see for you, and first I suggest you call our GI Hotline and talk to a counselor at 1-800-394-9544. Our Quaker House counselors (Steve & Lenore) are very good. The call is private, you don't have to tell them your location or even your name, and we don't report to any military or government agency.

The first choice you'll need to make is whether to return to the military or not. If you do, there will likely be some military discipline imposed.

If you were finished with basic and AIT [Advanced Infantry Training], that will most likely come from your original unit commander. It could include some brig time.

If you don't return to military control you'll be choosing to become a deserter. After 30 days or so the military issues a warrant for your arrest, which can be enforced anywhere in the US. That makes for an underground life which has many limitations.

About fifteen US soldiers in similar situations have gone to Canada, where they are seeking to stay. Their prospects are uncertain there, but some observers feel the long-term chances are good that US military exiles can stay. More information about this is at:

<http://www.peacehost.net/ssn/>

The next choices to make have to do with what to do after you opt to return to military control. Whether or not you are disciplined, you can still seek discharge based on at least two issues: your medical condition (especially the knee injuries), AND your CO application. The fact that the 1SGt tore it up doesn't mean you had no basis for it, and you can re-submit it in a way that the 1SGt can't stop it.

Medical: If you have civilian documentation of your injuries, get that paperwork together and take it with you when you return from AWOL. If you DON'T have civilian documentation of your condition and injuries, GET IT -- ASAP!

CO Application: You can re-submit a CO application, especially if it was not officially acted on by the army. You can go around the 1SGT by sending copies of it by FedEx or certified mail to your unit commander -- be sure to get a receipt confirming delivery. And if it gets "lost" or is torn up again, there are official complaints you can file against the 1SGT or commander who fails to deal with it fairly.

I know your situation is difficult, but these are some things that you can consider as you make your decisions. Again, call our counselors to talk over any specific questions, and keep me posted on what happens.

Peace,  
Chuck Fager, Director  
Quaker House

September 29:

From: "Fred@awolmail.com"

Subject: re: Hey Chuck

Thus far I can tell you I won't be returning to the control of the military any time soon. If I could get a flight out of here, I would, but I wouldn't even try it at the moment. Canada is an option,

though I don't really like the cold!

I have started using something I didn't use while I was in the military -- my brain. I've done very well so far in computer programming, pretty much odd jobs but my weekly gross is 800-1000 which is much better than the military. I do it all online so I don't have to worry about getting pulled over by the police on my way to work.

I'm still deciding what to do long-term. I have many good friends overseas in English-speaking countries that would be more than happy to help me if I make it there. However, the fighting side of me says to go back and show the 1SG that he is not in control and cannot force me to do immoral things just because he has more rank.

Either way I guess I will decide all that eventually, tis a pity it turned out this way but I didn't expect it to be easy. By the way, whoever re-designed <http://www.quakerhouse.org/>, they did a very good job.

I will keep in contact with you regarding this situation as it develops, if I can be of any assistance to you in any way (within my current limitations), just let me know.

"Fred"

### **Why Are the Churches Silent About The War? That Will Change in NC On November 4 & 5**

In a powerful online commentary, former CIA analyst Ray McGovern asks, "Where do American religious leaders stand on torture? Their deafening silence evokes memories of the unconscionable behavior of German church leaders in the 1930s and early 1940s." (Read the full article at: [http://www.truthout.org/docs\\_2005/0927051.shtml](http://www.truthout.org/docs_2005/0927051.shtml) )

Despite statements by some church leaders, the silence of most churches in the "red state" American South, not only on torture but on the whole Iraq war, has indeed been deafening, and their compliance with the "official story" essentially total. Yet we are confident that there are many faithful women and men in the pews who do NOT accept the war -- but they have no voice, and feel isolated.



On November 4 & 5 here in Fayetteville, Quaker House and the NC Council of Churches will undertake to break this isolation, with a **Church Peace Conference, on the theme: Seek Peace & Pursue It.** If you are in the region and want to find other church

folk ready to speak and work from their faith for peace, **please join us.** Complete details and online registration is at the NC Council website: <http://www.nccouncilofchurches.org/>



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**INSIDE: Meet Our Newest "Staff Member" – Sgt. Abe, the Honest Recruiter. He'll be visiting YOUR neighborhood soon. Plus lots more.**

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## Quaker Chuckles

### *Wise as A Serpent*

During the most intense persecution of early Friends in England, the story is told of a Quaker named Brown who was haled before Lord Hargrave, a particularly repressive London magistrate, determined to stamp out this "accursed sect." Brown knew he would face a stacked deck in his courtroom.

"You Quakers claim to be guided by God's spirit," Hargrave told Brown, "so we will leave your fate to God. I have put two slips of paper in this box, one marked 'Guilty,' the other 'Innocent.' Draw."

Hargrave was lying, of course: both slips read "Guilty." Brown closed his eyes for a moment, then reached into the box, drew a piece of paper, and quickly swallowed it.

"What have you done?" the judge demanded. "How will we know –"

"Simple," said Brown. "Look at the slip in the box. If it says 'Innocent,' then the slip I swallowed must have said 'Guilty.' But if it reads 'Guilty,' then the other one must have read 'Innocent'."

The judge roared his rage, but Brown walked out a free man.

### *The Scoop on Moses*

Returning from First Day School one morning, a Quaker lad was asked by his mother, "What did thee learn in class today, son?"

"The teacher told us about Moses crossing the Red Sea with the Children of Israel when the Egyptian army was after them."

"How did Moses do that?"

"Well, he built a bridge and had the Israelites cross it. Then he put dynamite in all the pillars, and when the Egyptian soldiers got on the bridge, he blew it up."

Horrified, his mother demanded, "Is *that* what the teacher told thee?"

"Not really," the boy admitted, "but if I told thee the teacher's crazy story, thee'd never believe a word of it."

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