

# Quaker House Newsletter

Front-Line Peace Witness Since 1969

Summer 2005

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

Chuck Fager, Director

## Target of Opportunity: Expanded Peace Vigil Greet White House Visit

Friday June 24 was already a busy day at Quaker House. I was feverishly at work on final preparations for the whirl of activity at the Gathering of Friends General Conference, or FGC. It's the largest annual Quaker assembly, and was due to open in Blacksburg, Virginia in barely a week.

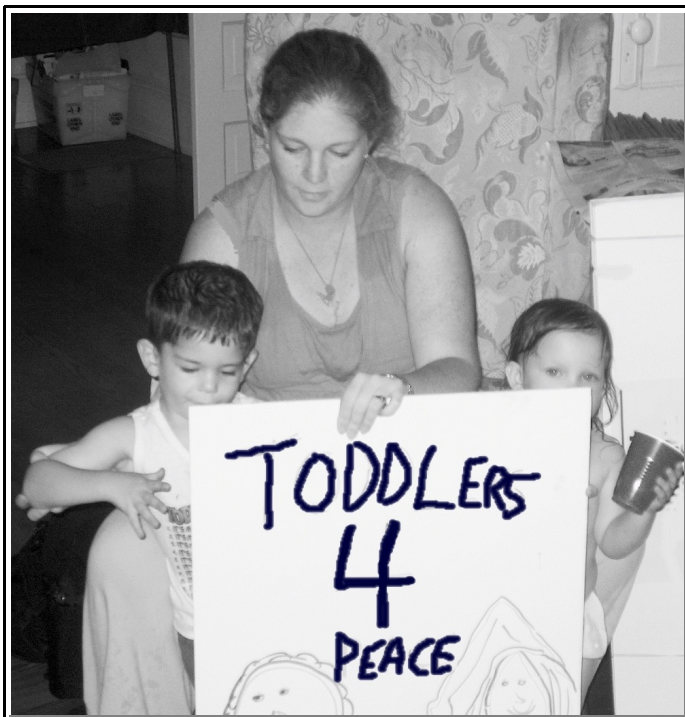
Then the phone rang. It was an area radio reporter: "The president is coming to Ft. Bragg next Tuesday to give a speech," she said. "He's going to try to regain public support for the Iraq war with this speech. What protests do you all have planned?"

I blinked. This visit was complete news to me. "Um, the truth is we don't have *any* plans," I admitted. "But, well – could you call back in a couple of hours?"

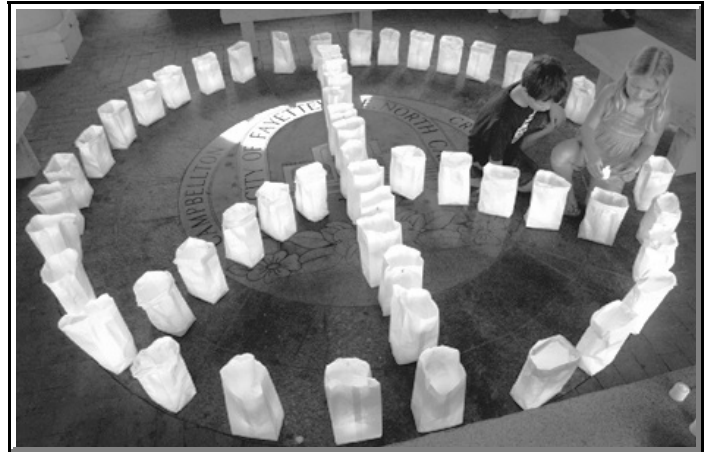
The reporter did, and by then, the answer was different.

FGC was forgotten for several days. All through the weekend, national media hyped the coming speech nonstop; it was the lead story in many reports. And by Tuesday, after three days of scrambling and frantic phone calls, Quaker House was ready to be the launching pad of nearly a whole day of local peace action in response:

All that afternoon, reporters and TV crews swarmed around the house, talking to gathering Iraq veterans and military family members. Their message was straightforward, and echoed that of the large banner we'd unfolded and tacked up along the porch: **Real Support for the Troops means "Bring Them Home Now!"**



Jessica Altemora joined us and brought a new generation of peace activists.



The city seal of Fayetteville was transformed into a glowing peace symbol on the evening of June 28.

Inside, military moms made posters, surrounded by toddlers with crayons. Display boards bearing the names of US soldiers killed in Iraq were hurriedly updated (250 names had to be added, the sad tally since the boards were last displayed in March). Then, as we gathered our motley forces to head downtown to the Market House and an expanded version of our peace vigil, it began to rain. Hard.

We were undeterred. There's an open plaza under the Market House, and we gathered there, where we could stay relatively dry. With the display boards in a large irregular circle, the vigil started on time, at 5 PM, and we began reading the names of the dead aloud.

**More >>**

## Heavy Traffic: GI Rights Hotline Call Total Tops 3100 by May

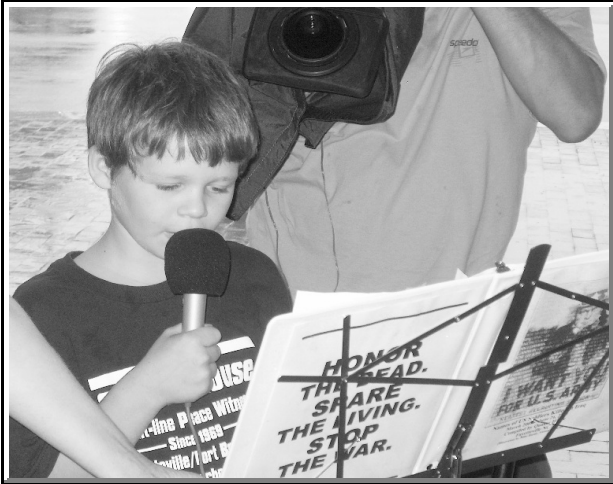
January 2005 calls:	722	January 2004:	819
February 2005 calls:	568	February 2004:	441
March 2005 calls:	598	March 2004:	508
April 2005 calls:	477	April 2004:	463
May 2005 calls:	640	May 2004:	451

**Jan-May 2005 total: 3005**      **Jan-May 2004: 2682**  
Plus 144 Non-Hotline contacts in 2005: 3149

Calls to the Quaker House GI Rights Hotline have continued at a heavy pace through the spring of 2005, with volume well ahead of last year's at the same time. Counselors Steve Woolford and Lenore Yarger report that recent calls "represented soldiers at 25 bases. National Guard calls came from 10 different states. We received calls regarding soldiers overseas in Kuwait, Qatar, and Iraq, Germany, and Korea."

## Vigil, cont.

The reading continued until 9 PM, during and after the presidential



Jacob Liebers of Fayetteville reads some of the 1700-plus names of US soldiers killed in Iraq thus far. Names were also read by Iraq and other veterans, family members, old and young, black and white.

speech at Ft. Bragg.

Despite our dampened, somewhat bedraggled appearance, there is a natural solemnity to such a memorial ceremony, which was evident to all present. Reporters and cameras circled around us throughout the four-hour proceeding. Besides many US media, crews from the Netherlands and Belgium were there as well.

More than fifty people took part. As the world counts such things, this was a small turnout. But among us were many who had a personal stake in the cost of the war, and their voices and images were spread far and wide.



Speaking from our front steps, Iraq Vet Charlie Anderson tells an NPR reporter that the war is wrong.

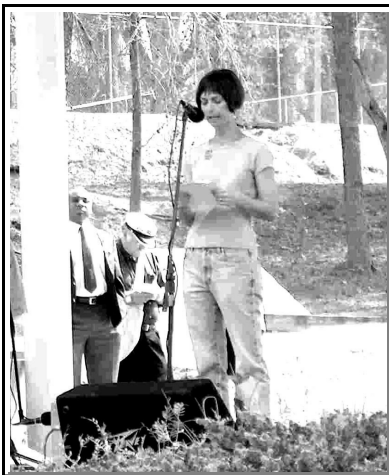
The next day it was back to work, getting ready for FGC. The banner came down from the porch; the names display boards were folded and stowed, to await their next sad round of updating.

As for the speech, we didn't listen; but the verdict of the polls and national reports seems unanimous: after all the buildup, it failed to turn public opinion back in support of the war.

Did our hastily-organized vigil help blunt its impact?

Who knows? But we did our best.

## So Long, Beth & Luigi!



Beth Pratt, speaking at the March 20, 2004 peace rally in Fayetteville, while her husband Luigi was in Iraq.

Beth Pratt was brave enough to speak out against the war in March 2004, while her husband Luigi was dodging bombs as an army truck driver in Iraq.

A few months later, Beth assembled the display boards with the names of all the US soldiers killed there that we use in our peace vigils. She copied hundreds of names, and helped update the list as the months passed and the death toll mounted.

It felt incongruous that on June 28 Beth was not with us at the vigil. But there was a very particular reason

why: early that same morning, she, and Luigi, back safely from Iraq, and their new baby daughter Kirra, left Fayetteville, headed to a new home in Florida.

Luigi was discharged from the Army the day before, capping a struggle over his future that had continued since his return from deployment. Luigi told us that the things he saw in Iraq – abuse and killings of civilians, and the falsity of the explanations of the invasion and occupation, made him ashamed to wear the battle “awards” he had earned there. After more struggles, including 12 days in the brig, he was finally discharged under honorable conditions. The Pratts immediately headed for Florida, and a new life together as a civilian family.

We'll miss you folks – keep the faith!



The Pratts, free at last.

# Two Important Peace Conferences Coming Soon – Mark Your Calendars Now!

Quaker House has been active in the planning for two upcoming conferences, which some readers may want to be part of.

**A Church Peace Conference for North Carolina**, hosted by the First Baptist Church Fayetteville, on November 4 & 5. It is co-sponsored by Quaker House and the North Carolina Council of Churches. Its theme, from Psalm 34, is **“Seek Peace and Pursue It.”**



**“Seek Peace & Pursue It” – Logo for the Fayetteville Church Peace Conference, November 4 & 5, 2005. More information at: <http://www.nccouncilofchurches.org>**

of workshops at each session, describing not only what we do, but also our perspective on religious peace witness generally. We hope many of you will want to attend one or the other of these unique events.

A similar sentiment, “Seeking Peace,” will guide the other gathering, a conference to be drawn from the three “peace churches,” Mennonites, Brethren and Friends. The conference will be held in Indianapolis, IN, on Sept. 8-11. More information is below; complete details are at:

**[www.plowsharesproject.org](http://www.plowsharesproject.org)**

Quaker House will be organizing and presenting a number

## Counseling Notebook:

### An Email Exchange with an AWOL GI – June 2005

Freddy--

*Thanks for getting back in touch; I've been wondering and worrying about you.*

<< Chuck, thank you for the info on my situation. It was really encouraging to talk with you as well. I know that I'm not alone and some crazy person with these feelings and ideas.>>

*Definitely not, on either score: you're not crazy, and you're not alone.*

<< It's been a while since we talked, I spoke with my command about options on getting out and they presented me with one: being a CO. But after looking at the regulations that cover that option and looking over the criteria I felt that it wasn't for me. >>

*I'm not surprised, or dismayed by this. There are plenty of people who don't have CO convictions who nonetheless are deeply opposed to the Iraq war and all that goes with it. No matter what the regs say, their consciences (and yours) are as authentic and worthy of respect as anyone else's.*

<< I know this is different than what you believe, and I respect your stance and especially the support you offer soldiers coming back and dealing with these things, but I felt that I didn't fall into that category. In my heart, after praying and getting in the Word, I felt that God justifies the taking of life in certain situations. Even in certain conflicts (ie. WWI/WWII etc.), but definitely not this one. >>

*Maybe sometime when this is over with we can talk about all this. meantime, just stay safe and know there's no judgment on this end.*

<< I do, however, feel that my feelings and stance is completely valid and legitimate. >>

Yep.

<< A few Sundays ago, during worship, I was praying about things and felt a real peace about leaving. So, last week I packed my stuff up and left leaving a note that explained my feelings and that I wouldn't manipulate my emotions to categorize myself into qualifying for CO. >>

*Okay. I'll certainly stand behind your choice.*

<< I have contacted GI Rights Hotline and they are helping me, but please pray for guidance and protection if you would. Only time will tell what will happen, but I wanted to thank you and let you know your help is definitely appreciated. God bless and stay real. >>

*I'll do my best.*

*If you haven't already, let me recommend you google the piece "AWOL in America" which was recently published in Harpers. Here's a link: <http://www.harpers.org/AWOLInAmerica.html>*

*It tells of several GIs who have been through inner conflicts much like yours. It would be valuable reading.*

*If you need to talk, give me a call anytime (tho I'll be away a lot in July). Just be careful about where you're calling from, as we assume that somebody else (other than God) could be listening.*

*Let me know how your situation resolves itself.*

*Seeking Peace:  
The Courage to Be Nonviolent*

### Sept. 8-11, 2005 — Indianapolis, Indiana

Members and friends of the Church of the Brethren, Mennonite Church USA and The Society of Friends are warmly invited to take part in an energizing, multi-faceted, intergenerational gathering, designed to provide opportunities to build mentoring relationships and explore practical and intellectual approaches to peace and peacemaking.

#### Conference goals:

- To feed the soul of the peacemaker by providing practical resources.
- To energize the peacemaker through workshops and dynamic, biblical worship
- To build up the communities of peacemakers by providing a place to share stories and to create networks
- To help us better understand the current powers and principalities and build affinity networks in the struggle to change them
- To address issues of peace and justice and how to maintain a healthy peace witness and community

#### Topics and themes:

- Thoughts and preparation for long-term work
- History of the Peace Churches and Peace movements
- Alliances, long term assets and energy
- Healthy peacemaking communities based in knowledge, connections and relationships
- New realities and perspectives
- The work of principalities and powers
- Consumerism
- Media

Information about the conference is available online at:  
**[www.plowsharesproject.org/HistoricPeaceChurchConference](http://www.plowsharesproject.org/HistoricPeaceChurchConference)**

Contributing organizations include the Plowshares Peace Studies Collaborative of Earlham, Goshon and Manchester Colleges, Every Church a Peace Church, Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes, Mennonite Church USA Peace Advocate, On Earth Peace Assembly, Quaker House-Fayetteville/Ft. Bragg, N.C., and Christian Peacemaker Teams



**INSIDE:** Larry Syverson's son already spent 15 months in Iraq. Find out why he drove from Richmond Virginia to join our special peace vigil on June 28. & More.

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223 Hillside Avenue, Fayetteville NC 28301

[www.quakerhouse.org](http://www.quakerhouse.org)

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## Quaker Chuckles

### *Putting A President In His Place*

The story goes that Herbert Hoover could be rather gruff in manner when he felt irritated. At one private White House dinner he became piqued when one of his guests, a Quaker minister, responded to his request for a blessing by praying in a very low tone.

The exasperated president finally interrupted the prayer with a curt, "Louder, Fred – I can't hear!"

Without looking up, the minister paused, then said, distinctly: "Herbert Hoover, I was not talking to thee."

### *A Friend In the Archipelago*

A Quaker managed to get permission to visit the Guantanamo prison. But halfway through the visit he developed laryngitis and completely lost his voice. Looking for a doctor's office, he took a wrong turn in a long hallway and found himself in a guardroom.

Challenged by a sentry at the door, the Quaker wrote on a pad of paper: "Friend, I have lost my voice. Can thee help me?"

"Don't worry," said the guard. "We have ways to *make* you talk."

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