

Quaker House Newsletter

Front-Line Peace Witness Since 1969

September 2004

Fayetteville, NC www.quakerhouse.org

Chuck Fager, Director

Quaker House 35th Anniversary: Interfaith Peace Seminar

To mark thirty-five years of work and witness – and as one step toward preparing for thirty-five more – we decided to skip a party, and convened an Interfaith Peace Seminar at Guilford College in Greensboro NC in June.

The thirty participants came from at least nine different churches, from Roman Catholic and Episcopal to Baptists, Assemblies of God, and Unitarian Universalist. All three of the so-called historic peace churches (Friends, Mennonite, and Brethren) were represented. Many had not been in any comparable ecumenical session before.

The group heard Stanley Hauerwas, the iconoclastic pacifist theologian from nearby Duke Divinity School, describe his theological journey. Ann Riggs, Director of the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches, talked about peace work in high-level ecumenical circles.

Most of the seminar was devoted to sharing among participants about their traditions' perspective on peace and peace work. We talked about experiences of working with other traditions in peace work, from the West Bank to pentecostal churches in Texas. The kinds of witness ranged from facing bullets to writing dissertations to raising peaceable kids.

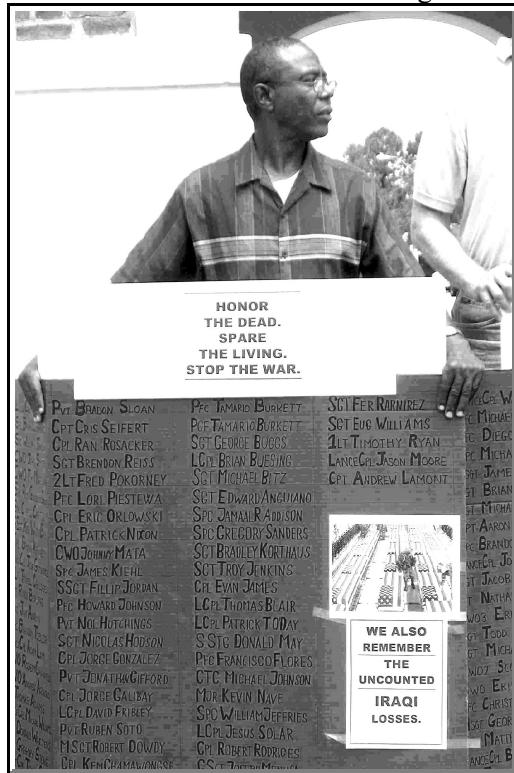
We didn't reach conclusions or write manifestoes; our focus was more on mutual encouragement and informal



QH Interfaith Peace Seminar attendees show off their Peace Parasols, made between sessions at Guilford College.

networking. But the experience was memorable, and we're thinking about how to repeat it, if way opens.

The seminar was made possible by generous support from the Chace Fund of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the Friends World Committee on Consultation, and Guilford College's Friends Center.



Andrew Bryant of Fayetteville stands vigil.

A Sad Landmark: Vigil 1000 – and Counting

We've been organizing and joining peace vigils in downtown Fayetteville since before the Iraq invasion began. And last May, as the US death toll passed the 800 mark, our friend Beth Pratt, whose husband recently returned from Iraq, proposed that we prepare a display bearing the names of all the US casualties, and memorials to the uncounted Iraqi dead.

With Beth leading the way and copying in most of the names, 25 of us mounted this visually dramatic display at our usual location in early June. The names filled ten display boards: the first two, in deep red, listed those killed up til the time we were told the "Mission" had been "accomplished." In June it took eight more green boards to list those killed since then.

By early September, we decided to update the display for a vigil on September 10, thinking it would be a fitting prelude to area 9-11 observances, and that the US toll would soon thereafter reach one thousand.

Unfortunately, this unhappy watershed came on in a rush of violence, and when we actually gathered, the thousand mark was already behind us. It now took 12 boards to list all the names.

When will it end?

Quaker House GI Hotline Report: Summer at a Glance Calls to the Hotline

	2001	2002	2003	2004
May	73	156	152	123
June	72	134	107	157
July	79	143	128	151
Aug	49	145	152	32*
Total	263	578	539	463*
Total: May-July	224	433	387	431

*Lower totals for August 2004 reflect office closing for 3 weeks maternity/paternity leave. (We had a daughter, Geneva Magdalena Yarger Woolford, July 30- 7lbs. 13oz.)

Comments:

Generally call volume remains high and continues to mirror the widespread deployments of the "war on terror." Calls reflect the mobilizations of National Guard members as the military continues to lean heavily on these soldiers in its troop rotations. A pattern emerges where NG units "push" members to ignore various problems in order to maintain readiness numbers. Often we are informing NG members and others about ways to document medical and family problems, despite discouragement by their commanders. Their commanders tell them that their situations will not merit separation or non-deployable status.

Many in the military still deal with their situations in the only way they know how—by leaving. Our most frequent calls are with AWOL/UA servicemembers and others contemplating such action regarding possible consequences and return scenarios remains the bulk of our work. Often these callers are frightened and intimidated by misinformation told to them to prevent their leaving.

We also dealt with a number of Conscientious Objectors including assisting with preparation of their written applications which is the most intensive part of our CO work. Steve was able to meet in person with a Marine from Camp Lejeune who is submitting a CO application. Soon we should be hearing results from these applications in progress.

Our three week maternity leave went well and our normal calls were redirected to three other network offices. It took three extra days for the calls to be transferred back but the system is now working and Steve is answering calls again (sometimes while wearing his new daughter in a sling). With Paul and Eric continuing to volunteer, our live coverage remains at 45 hours per week.

Stories:

Jim* called having heard rumors of the "one-in-a-million" discharge in which a soldier who "comes into money" or is "offered a really great job is allowed an early separation. Jim hoped his recently acquired trust fund would qualify him for release of his military obligation. We informed Jim that unfortunately we have never been able to find any such discharge in the regulations. But after talking awhile we discovered Jim has a strong case for discharge for an unfulfilled enlistment. He got off the phone ready to begin that process. Jim's case shows how often members of the military are victim to widespread rumors. (Callers often falsely believe for instance that any discharge characterization is automatically upgraded to honorable after six months.)

Molly* called after having already begun the process of

seeking separation from the Navy for Conscientious Objection. Her command had recommended against approval of her application and she had heard that we could help. We worked with Molly on a careful rebuttal which demonstrated that her command's decision conflicted with the regulations. We are still waiting to hear the military's final decision but are confident she will succeed. Molly's case showed how easily servicemembers can be denied their rights without access to good information like we provide through the hotline.

A Letter to Quaker House

May 5, 2004

Please drop Edward Hill Friends Meeting from your mailing list. We do not agree with your organization, your radical activities, and are ashamed you call your organization "Quaker."

You are a disgrace to all the Quakers who died to win you freedom to disgrace their sacrifice for your freedom.

**L. Allen Bullard, Pastor
Edward Hill Friends Meeting
Bonlee N.C.**

A Response from Quaker House

Dear Edward Hill Friends,

Your note was received with regret, and your name has been removed from our mailing list.

Something in the letter which puzzles me, however, is the statement that you are ashamed we call ourselves "Quaker."

Our work here is, as far as we can see, fully in harmony with the *Faith & Practice* of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (FUM), of which Edward Hill is listed as a member. In particular, we resonate to the declaration on page 47 that,

"Friends feel that nonparticipation in military training and war is the only action which follows the message and example of Jesus; therefore, nonparticipation is the only way to maintain full witness to Christ's way of love." On the same page it says that *"Statements against war have been issued by Friends during practically every military crisis since the earliest days of their history."*

Given that there are various ways to interpret this Quaker Christian faith and practice, please consider this letter a request to pay a visit to Edward Hill. I hope we can "reason together" to see how you view this 300-plus year, historic stance of Quakers in North Carolina, and if we can find a basis for mutual understanding in our walks of faith.

Sincerely,

Chuck Fager, Director

**Don't Forget To Vote November 2.
And don't forget that the war will continue after
November 2.
Thank you for your continued support.**

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223 Hillside Avenue, Fayetteville NC 28301

www.quakerhouse.org

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September 2004 – INSIDE:

- ▶ **Interfaith Peace Seminar
Marks QH 35th birthday**
- ▶ **Fayetteville Peace Vigil 1000
Names Names**
- ▶ **SPECIAL: How to Prepare
For the Draft's Return**
- ▶ **Summer Hotline Report**

Quaker Chuckles

Keeping His Word

A few days before an election, a certain politician was out canvassing for votes. "I hope I'll have your support," he said to a farmer in a broadbrimmed hat.

"I'm afraid thee won't, Friend," said the farmer.

"I've already promised my support to thy opponent."

The politician grinned and said, "Well, my friend, in politics, promising and doing are two different things."

"Well, in that case Friend," said the farmer, "I'll be happy to give thee such a political promise."

Another Quaker Confronts Politics

Samuel Emlen, a plain and sober Philadelphia Quaker elder, once challenged a non-Quaker politician named Tom about his fashionable coat, made of fine blue cloth cut in a double-breasted style and set off with large gilt buttons. "Tom," Samuel asked, "why dost thou not wear a plain coat, in place of that gaudy one?"

"Why should I do that, Mr. Emlen?" Tom said.

"To mortify thyself," the elder answered.

"Well, Mr. Emlen," Tom replied, "If you will wear my coat, I'll wear yours, and then, I think, we shall both be mortified."

A Note from the Clerk of the Quaker House Property Committee

It seems like only yesterday when I joined the Quaker House Property Committee but it has been almost a year and a busy one. Our new furnace had just come on line then and we had narrowly escaped burning down the house when old, neglected wiring caught fire in the attic. We're moving with all Quaker deliberateness to address the maintenance issues that the fire and our inspections have brought to the fore. We have repaired the wiring just enough to be safe, have fixed the bathroom ceiling and the garage roof. Next we need a new house roof, and there's lots more. Given the expected high cost, the Property Committee talked about selling the house, but found A) we'd have to do most of the work anyway before we could and B) it's serving our purposes to perfection. So we're going to stay and figure this out. We'll have more to say about this in the next few months. Thanks for your continued support!

— Wendy Michener, Clerk, Quaker House Property Committee

Have you considered including Quaker House in your estate planning?
