

THE Mountain matters

Energizing people to work for positive change

THE MOUNTAIN RETREAT & LEARNING CENTERS, INC.

May 2003

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The Mountain Matters
published bimonthly by

THE MOUNTAIN
RETREAT & LEARNING CENTERS, INC.
P. O. Box 1299
Highlands, NC 28741
(828) 526-5838
fax (781) 846-1295
info@mountaincenters.org
www.mountaincenters.org

Tom Warth, President
Shelley Denham, Editor
Walita Olson, Production

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Reflections on the War and The Mountain

Listening to war news recently I was caught by a story in which a correspondent interviewed an Iraqi citizen in Baghdad. He said the previous day he heard Al-Jazeera news report that a plane had just left a base loaded with bombs and would be over Baghdad in 6 hours. "I asked myself, what do I do for 6 hours? Do I have cup of coffee and read the paper, do I try to hide, do I call family members, a friend? What do I do for 6 hours?"

"What do I do for six hours?"

At The Mountain we could say that any of the last 6 or 12, 24 hours or days or weeks were rewarding, with many people having positive experiences. Elderhostelers have said, "I felt so safe here; I learned so much; I was at peace with myself and with people I had never met before." On the first weekend of the war in Iraq, our Treehouse was filled with caring, laughing families of all ages. They went to their cabins under a clear night sky and knew with **absolute certainty** that there would be no bombs dropping on them. Since March 20, events like the Academy Awards and sports tournaments have gone on, the stock market swings with the war reports ... it's business as usual. Polls say 70% of Americans support the war and I wonder – what dilemmas, if any, do these 70%, or Elderhostelers, or families or stock brokers or Mountain staff have deciding how they'll spend their next 6 hours?

The war goes on and that Iraqi citizen, if he is still alive, may still be asking "what do I do for the next 6 hours?" I think of him and thousands of other innocents, and am conflicted, thankful, angry, helpless. **I ask myself, what is leadership in a time like this? And how do I make the next 6 hours matter?**

I believe answers to my questions may be in doing the best work we can do, become *actually* what is our *potential*. We can raise expectations – of ourselves, of each other, our guests, and of this place. We know we are doing good things – but we can do more – we can take actions, large or small. A few actions we're taking in the next "6 hours:"

- Look at our values, the way we use our time. Encourage staff and guests to think about the meaning of our lives, work, relationships. Continuously push open doors to understanding – listen to others' views, try to understand what we need to learn and accept to better embrace diversity. (See "What is the Purpose of Working," page 3.)

- Think the best and start with yes. It's an every day way to practice respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person. I try to do it myself, and ask it of the staff. It sounds easy ... yet I still catch myself judging harshly or saying no to myself and others.

The war goes on and that Iraqi citizen, if he is still alive, may still be asking "what do I do for the next 6 hours?" I think of him and thousands of other innocents, and am conflicted, thankful, angry, helpless. I ask myself, what is leadership in a time like this? And how do I make the next 6 hours matter?

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Mission Statement

"... to embrace the diversity of life, creating an environment to energize people to work for positive change."

About The Mountain

Located high in the Blue Ridge of the Southern Appalachian Mountains, The Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers is a place to expand your horizons—explore new ideas, meet new people and re-connect with yourself, community and the natural world.

Surrounded by the Nantahala National Forest, our home is Little Scaly Mountain—four miles southwest of Highlands, North Carolina. At 4200' elevation, perched atop striking granite cliffs and nestled in an ancient dwarf white oak wind forest, our site is spectacular.

Open year-round, The Mountain offers excellent programming for all ages. Inspiration mixes with renewal as you challenge yourself to grow and learn.

Board of Trustees: 2003

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Tony Stringer | Chair |
| John Blevins | Relationships |
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| Jean Findley | Financial Advisor |
| Hildegard Gray | Secretary/Planning |
| Janice Marie Johnson | Mission |
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| Bruce Parrish | Recording Secretary |
| R. K. Whitehead | Planning |
| Tom Warth | President |

RESOURCE NETWORK

| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Rosemary Bray McNatt | New York |
| Jeanne Shirly | Arizona |

Continued from page 1

■ Pay attention to environmental issues – we need to do more with less. Peter Drucker wrote, "every decision is a commitment of **present resources to the uncertainties of the future.**" With this war there are so many uncertainties. Among other disasters, it wreaks havoc upon the environment. So we will work here to save resources and educate each other in reducing dependency on wasteful consumption.

■ Think big picture – what is best for the organization? How do I contribute and support others? What can I do that will matter to someone in the world? One action we've taken is to buy and serve Fair Trade Coffee. In the "small" picture, it is more expensive. But in the big picture, it is the right thing to do to contribute to a just and equitable society. (See "Fair Trade Coffee," page 5.)

■ Make time in our routines to be mindful of the world and each other. On the day the bombs began to drop, staff and guests worshipped together. We shared fears, hopes, anger. A teenager tearfully lit a candle for her favorite teacher who had been sent to Iraq. A volunteer shared his prayers for the safe return of his grandson, also in the military and about to engage in combat. We had all spent time together on this mountain, but we didn't know each others' stories – we hadn't made the time. It's important to try to do so (see "MountainSong," page 4). By making time to be mindful, listening to each others' stories, we create a more spiritual community.

What is leadership in these times? For me, it is being the best we can be and making The Mountain the best it can be. It's thinking about "what do I do for the next 6 hours?" Whether this war "ends" soon – maybe even before this Mountain Matters is published – perhaps we can all keep considering what we "do for the next 6 hours ... to bring peace into our lives, our communities, our world." Unitarian Universalist minister Rosemary Bray McNatt wrote, "If there is no justice there will be no peace. We can ... think good and noble thoughts but if we cannot bring justice into the small circle of our own individual lives, we cannot bring justice to the world."

The Mountain – for the next 6 hours, months, years – will work to achieve its vision of being a "relevant institution for generations to come, actively participating in the creation of a transformed society." Please continue to be a part of this journey.

Tom

Job Openings

**Two Year Round Positions Available
for Qualified Candidates:**

Controller
Full Service Cook

For information, please contact
Tom Warth, President
828-526-5838, ext. 218
tom.warth@mountaincenters.org

**MountainCamp 2003
Wellness Coordinator**

Mountaincamp is looking for an individual who is a registered medical professional. For information, please contact Kim Ingram, Youth Programs Coordinator, 828-526-5838, ext. 234, kim.ingram@mountaincenters.org.

What is the Purpose of Working?

By Paul Meinersmann

What is the purpose of working? The Mountain's purpose of working is "to embrace the diversity of life, creating an environment to energize people to work for positive change."



Creating an artistic representation of the purpose of work.

During the month of January, 25 students from Kyungpook National University, Taegu, Republic of Korea, spent time in North Carolina trying to find out what other purposes there are for working. They spent three weeks in programming planned by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's Office of Intercultural Outreach Programs. Their final week in the U.S. was spent at The Mountain. Based on their interests, the students were assigned to one of four groups, each looking at "What is the Purpose of Working?" from a different perspective: financial stability and wealth creation; pursuit of natural skills and talents; making a difference in the world; or, personal enjoyment.

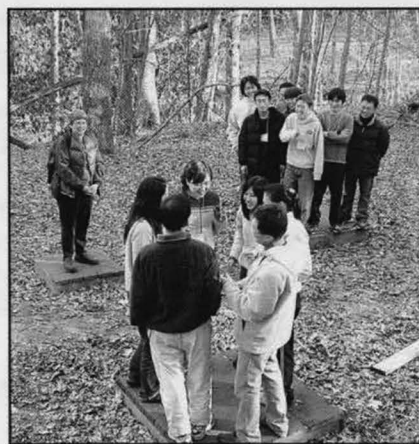
What a joy it was for Mountain staff to host and be engaged with these wonderful young adults! Throughout the week, staff members **Helen Bishop, Kim Ingram, Nancy Heath, Susan Smith** and I lived this program – every moment was spent learning and teaching and growing into a unique community with the Korean students. University faculty liaison, **Susan Lambert**, and program creator (and Mountain Vision Holder!) **Darwin Smith** worked with us as we offered the students classes in organizational development on team norms, life cycles and communication. We all participated in work projects, sessions on global issues, the low challenge course and an evening learning about labor music with **Lee Knight**. The students spent a great deal of time outside of class talking to staff and the occasional guest. The more questions they asked of us, the more we learned about them – and about how little we knew about their culture and lifestyle. It was both challenging and invigorating to turn what could have been barriers of communication and tradition into rich and rewarding lessons about embracing diversity.

Each group of students was required to create a final presentation to articulate their perspective on the purpose of working. Every night during their week here, they worked on the presentations. On the last night, each group offered a unique and engaging performance – they managed to include dance, drama, panel discussions and singing. Their ability to explain their perspective in English, and also make it entertaining, was remarkable.

A major component of their stay at The Mountain was a work project. Each group was literally given a door from the Craft Barn and asked to paint it with their perspective on working and global issues in mind. Staff and students alike were astounded at what turned into "story doors" – practical and beautiful applications of their learning, and also moving testimonials to symbolic opening of "doors" of understanding and caring between them and The Mountain community.

At week's end each student was asked to share one thing he or she would do differently as a result of this experience. Some of the responses: "I will look at things from other people's perspective before I make decisions;" "I learned my weak points and strengths to contribute to society;" "I would like to participate in many more programs like this one;" and "I learned that the result is much more than the sum of its parts." I would add that this program helped me learn that The Mountain is living its purpose of working – to embrace the diversity of life, energizing people to work for positive change.

It was both challenging and invigorating to turn what could have been barriers of communication and tradition into rich and rewarding lessons about embracing diversity.



Team building on the challenge course.

There is something magical about The Mountain ... and for over 24 years, members, friends, staff and trustees have been sharing that magic through

storytelling, poetry, songs, photographs, paintings and sketches. Such artistic expressions of experiences here allow us to revel in our memories. But they also help articulate The Mountain's culture and purpose, and they inspire us to reflect on spirituality, nature, justice and community.

We are therefore creating "MountainSong." For years, we've been envisioning a journal that artistically reflects the "songs" that The Mountain "sings" in us – and it seems that the 25th Anniversary (2004) is a wonderful time to launch this journal. We're beginning our collection/

Mountain

*Sharing our
"Songs"*



selection process now, and will offer a glimpse of MountainSong in some or all **Mountain Matters** editions.

We invite you to submit

your own reflections – tell us a story, send a poem or photo or drawing or song. We can't promise they'll be published – but we guarantee they'll be treasured!

Please send your ideas and/or submissions to:

Shelley Jackson Denham
The Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers, Inc.
P. O. Box 1299, Highlands, NC 28741
shelley.denham@mountaincenters.org
Fax: 781-846-1295

We know you've experienced the magic – we hope you'll share it in "MountainSong"!

Sunsets at The Mountain

Dear Tom:

Greetings! I wanted to share a story with you that came my way via Rev. John DeTaeye of Washington, DC. If he has already told it to you himself, better that you hear it twice than not at all.

John told me that he was at the bus stop one day when he saw a young man whom he recognized as a former youth that he had worked with years ago. He had, among other things, taken the young man in a group of inner city youth to The Mountain. John said that many of the youth he traveled with had never been out of Washington, DC, and had absolutely no idea that places like The Mountain even existed! When John asked this teenager-grown-to-manhood how life was going, the young man answered that he had just served several years in prison.

John asked him how he had survived spiritually during those years. The young man replied that, in the longest nights of his soul, he had soothed himself by calling up to memory of what sunsets looked like at The Mountain.

If you ever doubt that the work you are doing makes a difference, I hope that this story will sustain you through your own long nights. Thanks for all the work all of you do.

Peace, Meg

*Letter received from Meg Riley,
Director, Washington Office of the UUA.*

"Children Who Do Not Understand"

I write this poem for the children who
do not understand,
And for the adults who do, but only feel sorrow.
This war makes everyone wonder what horror
is going to take place tomorrow
and forever on, after that,
until anyone knows when this terror will end.
With all the suffering that people will endure,
This is one that we must end.
We all need to do our part, and take a stand
Against this war that is at hand.

My heart bleeds as I watch my friends and
fellow human beings
Cry out for loved ones stuck in this war.
I cry out for the fact that we have to live in a world
That is so torn.
Why can't we live in peace across the land?
Until I know how to answer myself, I guess
that makes me one of the children
who do not understand.

*By Ellie Dekle – Ft. Myers, FL
Youth Week at The Mountain
March 20, 2003*

Fair Trade Coffee

By Nancy Heath

Coffee is second only to petroleum in the world's commodity markets. The Mountain, as part of our mission "to energize people to work for positive change," now serves fair-trade coffee – it's a matter of environmental and economic justice.

My first awareness of fair-trade coffee came through environmental interests, particularly my concern for migrating birds' need of the rainforests of Central and South America. Coffee trees grown in the shade of taller rainforest trees provide housing and food for over 150 species of birds. Full sun plantations support only 6-8 species. While sun plantations produce more coffee beans when the land is first clear-cut, they need chemical nutrients/fertilizers to maintain soil quality. Shade plantations maintain quality naturally – and retain the natural rainforests.

I've also learned about the plight of small farmers who are unable to sell their coffee for a fair price. This often leads to the break up of rural social structures: farmers move to

Shade grown, chemical free, fair trade coffee supports the interdependent web, contributes to economic and social justice, and reinforces the growth of the democratic process.

corporate farms – working for low wages – or to cities where they may find no work at all. So small farmers created democratically run cooperatives, working together to manage their business. Cooperatives allow farmers to support their families, and provide better access to investment loans for their members' education, health care, and agricultural improvements.

Our coffee is purchased through Equal Exchange, a company that buys coffee, tea, and cocoa at fair prices directly from democratic farming cooperatives in Asia, Africa, and Central and South America. Equal Exchange makes a contribution to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee for each case

of coffee we purchase. There are several companies now specializing in fair trade coffee. Searching the web will provide many choices. The Equal Exchange web site is www.equalexchange.com.

Come to The Mountain – enjoy a cup of coffee that helps build our community and promotes justice!



Poster designed by Mountain staffer Denise Carlin.

Upcoming Programs

Last Chance to Register for May 23-25th Programs
Call The Mountain Today!!!

MountainScape Climbing & Rappelling Weekend
The Retreat You Don't Have to Plan III

Memorial Day Weekend — including the Annual Meeting. Don't miss these special events. For details on these 3 programs, see our website.

MountainScape Flyfishing Weekend
June 13-15, 2003

Spend a weekend learning or refining flyfishing skills with avid fly fisher **Carl Hammond-Beyer**. Topics include fishing strategies, casting skills, reading the streams, fly selection and catching fish.

Old Fashioned Family Fourth
July 3-6, 2003

Join us for an unforgettable family festival. We'll have a little July 4th parade, enjoy a mountain-style picnic, and our own mini-fireworks and a good ol' fashioned campfire with s'mores and songs. Plus **Lee Knight** and more!

Family MountainCamp
July 13-18, 2003

Designed for families with children 1-11 years old, your family will experience all your favorite camp activities. The **Rev. Lori Bernard Staubitz** will lead a workshop for parents on faith development.

Mountain School for Congregational Leadership
July 20-26, 2003

Don't miss this opportunity to become a more effective leader. For information, see The Mountain's website or contact **Robert E. Smith**, 828-526-5838, ext. 0, roberte.smith@mountaincenters.org. Congregations must sponsor participants.

Leadership School for Religious Educators
August 3-9, 2003

Continue your education and spiritual journey all in one unique program. This year's school will take place at Walnut Creek, CA. For information, see our website or contact **Susan Smith**, Registrar, 828-526-5838, ext. 225, susan.smith@mountain.centers.org.

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GIVING

GIFTS SINCE LAST ISSUE

Our profound thanks to . . .

Frasier Magnolia Vision Holders (\$50,000 - \$74,999)

Darwin & Myra Smith, Dallas, TX

Life Members (\$2,000 - \$2,500)

Peter Helwig & Suzanne Harris, Lakeland, FL

Bruce Hollingsworth, Chattanooga, TN

Hilary Hamlin, Bristol, RI

W. Reid Moody, Atlanta, GA

Memorial Memberships (\$1,500)

Adina L. Smith (1968-1969)

Special Gifts/Gifts-In-Kind/General Fund (Gifts of \$250+)

(Note: All gifts of \$1,000+ shown with **)

Clint Betz, Ft. Myers, FL

Franklin, NC UU Fellowship

The First UU of Nashville, TN-UU Mens Group

(In honor of Joe and Joan Moore)

Georgeanne Hoegerman, Ft. Myers, FL

Myrtle Lockwood, Stuart, FL **

UUA Trustees

(In memory of Dorrie Senghas)

Trudy & Bob Wendt, West Brandywine, PA

New or Renewed Short-Term Loans or Promissory Notes

Charlie Stehman & Joan Willey, Wilmington, NC

In Memoriam

Lee Leiserson (March 2003)

Bob Clabeaux (April 2003)

Estate Planning and Charitable Giving in Challenging Times

Workshop to be presented Saturday, May 24

The last three years have been some of the most challenging we've seen economically. The stock market has been down, the job market tight and international events volatile. What does this situation mean for estate planning? Is now a good time for charitable and planned giving?

Our presenter will help you see the current picture more clearly and could help you make some of the right moves!

Hal Reed is the Chair of The Mountain Endowment Fund, Inc., and Assistant Vice President and Director of Planned Giving at the University of Central Florida. He is formerly a practicing attorney and served as a trust manager for 18 years.

Charter Members of President's Society to be Honored

Included in our 2003 Memorial Day weekend festivities will be a special reception for Charter Members of the President's Society – people who have made a direct gift to The Mountain Endowment Fund (estab. 1996) or who have included the Fund or the Mountain in their estate planning. The reception will be held before dinner on Saturday, May 24 in the home of **Tom and Jane Warth**. Attendees will receive a gold pin especially crafted for members of the President's Society.

Listed below are those individuals who, according to our records, currently qualify for membership in the President's Society:

Sybil & Tom Ackerman

Emily Adler

Neal Andreae

Elinor Artman

Marty Beech

Jonathan Black

Dan & Sue Boyce

Ron Brooks

Virginia Carver & Hank Raichle

Paul & Sandra Clipp

Jim Colby

Beverly Cree & Charlie West

Ann & Joe Creech

Ian & Shelley Denham

Harry & Rene Donavon

Susan Fraysse

Arnold & Marjorie Gelbin

Hildegard Gray & John Vacher

Hilary Hamlin

Mike Harris

Jake Haun, Jr.

Bob Hornberger

Char & David Jackson

Maureen Killoran and Peter Hyatt

Marion Leiserson

Carole Light & Alex Redmountain

Margaret Ann Link

Myrtle Lockwood

Larry & Juana Mae Long

Elizabeth McMaster

Margrit Nash

Don & Jan Osgood

Bruce Parrish

Walt Pirie

Juanita Polk

Bill & Lucia Pulgram

Helga Reaves

Hal Reed

Agnes Sanborn

June Cravens Sholin

Robert E. & Susan Smith

Anne Staley

Linda & Phil Sterner

Melanie Morel Sullivan

Dan Teslow & Mary Spivey Teslow

Lewis Walker

Jane & Tom Warth

Larry Wheeler & Nancy Heath

Bob & Sue Whitney

Jerri & John Wood

If you have included us in your estate plans, but your name is not shown above, please notify **Larry Wheeler** so he can add your name to the list – and invite you to the reception! He can be reached by phone at 828-526-5838, ext. 230, or by e-mail at larry.wheeler@mountaincenters.org.

Tell your friends about The Mountain

- ☐ Please send information about The Mountain to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State, zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

- ☐ And tell them I recommended The Mountain to them!

Name _____

- ☐ I would like to receive occasional information via email.

My email address _____

- ☐ I would like more information on how to bring a group to The Mountain.

Help Staff The Mountain's Exhibit at GA

Are you going to the UUA General Assembly this year? If so, please consider helping staff our exhibit. This will be the largest GA ever and we know we'll need extra help. It's a great way to meet folks and support YOUR Mountain! If you're willing, please contact **Larry Wheeler** after you receive your GA program and give him some times in one-hour increments when you think you can assist at the exhibit. See you at GA!

larry.wheeler@mountaincenters.org

or 828-526-5838, ext. 230

Upcoming Programs - Continued from page 5

UU Week at The Mountain

August 17-23, 2003

What do UUs believe? Come during the cool August weather and consider this 'hot' topic of conversation led by **The Rev. Elinor Artman**. You'll have a chance to explore your own spirituality, worship with other UUs, relax, and participate in arts & crafts, walks and hikes.

See The Mountain's website **www.mountaincenters.org** for more details, rates and how to register, or call 828-526-5838.

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