

# THE GAZETTE

Sandwich Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends  
AUGUST 2025



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## *Ode to the Onion*

You make us cry without hurting us.  
I have praised everything that exists,  
but to me, onion, you are  
more beautiful than a bird  
of dazzling feathers,  
heavenly globe, platinum goblet,  
unmoving dance  
of the snowy anemone  
and the fragrance of the earth lives  
in your crystalline nature.

Excerpted from Pablo Neruda,  
Spanish; trans. Stephen Mitchell,  
Full Woman, Fleshy Apple, Hot  
Moon: Selected Poems of Pablo  
Neruda by Neruda, HarperCollins,  
1999.



## **Special Section on Formative/Transformative Influences**

### ***Introduction***

*Rita O'Donnell*

After receiving Geoff Knowlton's poem last month (see next page), I was struck by how important and timely his contribution was. The universality of the theme prompted me to ask Friends to contribute to a special section of *The Gazette*. I suggested that 'In these troubled times, we might reflect on who has helped us to get to where we are now' and that 'Reading about who has formed/transformed us might help to raise our collective spirits.'

People took their time thinking about those who have influenced them. There was considerable reflection and a clear desire to get things right. One Friend wrote, "Working on something. Trying to get the right words in the right order. It's exhausting." I commiserated, "It *is* exhausting but, at the end, you *have* something."

A great definition of good writing: getting the right words in the right order. And, at the end, we *do* have something! There are so many wonderful contributions in this special section and they have the right words in the right order!

Working with all of you on this issue of *The Gazette* has lifted my spirits. I hope reading it will have the same effect on you. And thank you, writers and readers, present and previous, for your efforts and your enthusiasm.

## ***Spelunking: What My Father Taught Me About the Light***

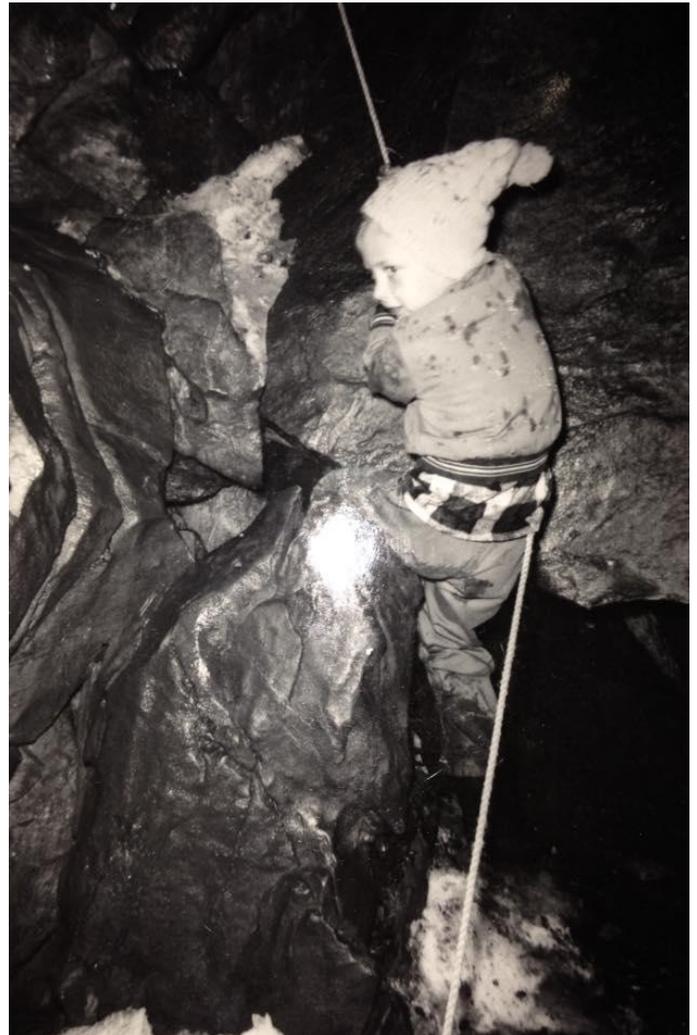
*Geoffrey Knowlton*

*For Christopher, July 1933–May 2019*

Your elegant fingers  
Glowing in the head lamp  
Were a welcome diversion from the dark  
that laid next to us.

It was like an open mouth,  
Ready to swallow anyone that dared to  
enter.  
But you showed no anxiety  
As with a single flourish you tied the knot  
And tested it.  
A pull wasn't necessary.  
You knew what you were doing  
But it reassured me all the same.

You showed me how to hold the rope for  
the descent  
And I asked, "does it have a bottom?"  
You responded by simply moving your  
head  
As you dangled over the edge  
Holding your position steady  
To reveal a rocky floor just below us.  
And with a calming voice said,  
"Sure, just look."



Geoff at age 7. Photo taken by Christopher Knowlton, sometime in 1962.

“I’ll go before you to show you the way and steady the rope.”

And so you descended and then  
Bid me to follow.

“You can do this.”

Encouraged by your voice,  
Comforted by your steady hand on the rope,  
I climbed into the light.

*A version of this poem was published in Friends journal, October 2019*

## ***Guardian Angels***

*Maggie Saab*

I was a 16-year-old high school student, clad in a black outfit, black socks and shoes, in mourning for my deceased parents. It was a little gathering of relatives, chitchatting and welcoming a relative visiting from Lebanon. We were her close relations in Aleppo, Syria. Her name was Siran.

Siran looked at me and, pointing to leave the group, she said, "Let's go out and talk." Once we were alone she said, "I am hearing about all the hardships you're going through. What do you want to do when you graduate high school?" I said that I didn't really know, that the relatives wanted to marry me off, or have me teach or this or that, and that I really didn't know what to do. Siran asked, "What would you *Maggie* want to do?" I said I would love to continue my education. Siran asked if I would be willing to travel to Lebanon and study nursing at the American University of Beirut. My response was to say I didn't have any money and was not smart enough to go there, the Harvard of the Middle East, but that,

yes, I would love to. Siran said she had a friend there who could help me. I said, “Yes, yes I will.” I thought anything is better than the misery I am going through and that even if I couldn’t do it, I will drown in the Mediterranean Sea.

My applications arrived the following week. That was the beginning of my hard work and success. I graduated in nursing, becoming head nurse, then supervisor and meeting the love of my life!

Siran lived to be 100 years old, passing away just last year. She put me on the correct path. She loved my mom who was her first cousin. I was only 12 when my mom died and I believe that what Siran made happen was what my mom would have wished. My guardian angel helped my other guardian angel, Aunt Siran, to help me.



Graduation from American University of Beirut Nursing School, 1965.

## ***Listening to the Younger Generation***

*Molly Cornell*

This past week my eldest grandchild celebrated a 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday. The occasion got me thinking deeply about this person whom I love more than words can say. Charlie (and my grandson and the many GenZ kids I've gotten to know through them) has changed my way of "seeing" a generation of young people who look a whole lot different from the peers I grew up with. I'm continually inspired by their example of unconditional acceptance and affirmation of peers who don't "fit the mold" that you might expect in traditional society. As Charlie once exclaimed, in the face of changed appearance: "I'm still me!" Yes, indeed, you are still "me."



Charlie (left) and brother Malcolm (right). Photo courtesy of Molly Cornell taken sometime in 2023 probably by Daron Barnard, their father.

## ***Strong Women***

*Ann Prentice*

It was not just one person I give credit for forming my early years, it was a group of strong women, mostly mothers of my friends. My own mother had many admirable qualities, none of them maternal. Her parenting method was to teach her children to dress and feed themselves, then go read a book. It produced self-reliant and resilient children, but I turned to other women to learn about life.

I grew up in a small town in central Pennsylvania near Penn State so the women were an assortment of academics, farm wives, and low-income workers. They were women who grew up during the Depression, then as young women they were wives and mothers during World War II. Their lives were not easy; some were raising children by themselves, all experienced poverty. During the 50s and into the 60s they had limited opportunities in education and work. Some dealt with rural isolation and untreated health problems.

From these women I learned sewing, gardening, and cooking. I was baking pies before I started 1st grade. I watched the women make sauerkraut, cook venison, scrapple, and dried corn. True Pennsylvania foods. I listened to their troubles and tales of their lives told with incredible humor.

There were two of these women whose homes became a haven. Their children were good friends of mine and I was always welcomed in their homes. I kept in infrequent contact with both women until they died.

My long-time best friend's mother, Sarah, grew up in a large Brethren farm family. After World War II she drove to Alaska with her four children to homestead with her husband. After several years he abandoned Sarah and the children, leaving them to survive on their own. Those were difficult years, but the stories: Hunting for moose with her teenage sons. Winters in a crowded freezing cabin. I got to know the family when they moved back to Pennsylvania. The move was for the children to go to schools larger than one-room and for

Sarah to go to college to achieve a long-time goal of becoming a teacher.

Rosemary was a brilliant, beautiful woman. She was raised in extreme poverty. Her husband was killed in an accident soon after her son was born. Through steely determination she went through college as a single mother. After years of hard work and battling the roadblocks that women were facing, she became a professor at Penn State. She married a wonderful man who would take all the local kids on long hikes through the mountains. From him we learned to never ever whine about being cold, tired, or hungry. When we returned to their house frozen, exhausted, and starving, we could whine to Rosemary as she gave us hot chocolate and sympathy. She was the kindest, most understanding person I have ever known. She was the person I turned to in my adolescent years when life got too complicated. After spending time with her, usually while cooking large meals together, I would come away feeling that I was smart and strong enough to handle almost anything.

From both Sarah and Rosemary and the other mothers with whom I spent many hours helping in their kitchens, barns, or gardens I got a solid start in life. These strong women often unknowingly gave me direction and confidence. Their grounded guidance was subtle. They set incredible examples of how to live with dignity and kindness even through hard times. From them I was given the gift of a strong inner self, plus some great pie recipes.

## ***Remembering Alta Mae***

*Nan Garrett-Logan*

In these troubled times I often think of Alta Mae Stevens. I had the pleasure of being her driver to and from meeting and to doctor appointments. And now I think of a brief interchange we had -- I don't remember what challenge the country was having at the time -- and I asked when we could just give in. She said, "Nan, you can never give up. You always have to keep going."



Alta Mae at West Falmouth Meetinghouse, January 13, 2019, shortly after her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Photo credit: R. O'Donnell.

In retirement, one of the constants of my life has been gardening. Finally, we have a house with a big, mostly sunny yard, after years of living in Connecticut with its extremely big, beautiful oak trees that, unfortunately, precluded anything except shade plants. It is truly a joy to be able to grow both ornamentals and vegetables in profusion.

Looking at my garden the other day, I got to thinking about how I started gardening. My parents weren't gardeners. But nonetheless, I started gardening quite early, probably in first grade, when my elementary school sent each student home with packets of seeds. I remember planting the seeds and, then, at the end of the season, counting how many seeds I harvested for the next year. I loved counting -- coins, stamps, green stamps, anything!

But what really got me started gardening was something completely accidental. In the days of my childhood, we were given free rein to go anywhere on our city block, as long as we were back by meal time. So, one day, I was riding my bike around the block and spotted a yard full of chestnuts on the lawn of a neighbor I hadn't met. I stopped to pick some up (and of course count them) when suddenly the front door of the house opened and out came Mrs. Goodman to say that it was OK to pick up the chestnuts and take them home.

After that I would often ride up the alley behind their house, and if she and Mr. Goodman were home, I would stop and be invited into their garden. Out would come the refreshments. We'd sit there and talk, often for a long time, usually about the wonderful rose garden they had in their backyard. Before long, I was hooked on the idea of growing roses, those finicky but incredibly beautiful plants. And the Goodmans introduced me to their rose-growing mentor,



Mrs. Kramer. It turned out that she was the president of the local rose society and had an even more wonderful rose garden.

Mrs. Kramer encouraged me in growing roses, which were also expensive for a 12-year-old, and suggested a way for me to get free roses. She had contacts at Armstrong Roses (now a wholesale nursery) and they named me a "rose tester" who got free plants each year to test.

I took the responsibility of testing very seriously, including of course, counting all the petals on each flower and measuring plant dimensions. My reports so impressed the folks at Armstrong that they contacted my town's paper about a possible story on "the world's youngest rose tester."

Fast forward a few years. When I went to college, I decided to major in physics, because it was the most difficult and most mathematical of the sciences, and somehow my busy high school schedule never gave me the time to take biology.

Physics was indeed difficult but, later, after teaching high school science for 3 years to avoid being drafted for the Vietnam War, I decided to go to graduate school. I wanted to somehow bring biology into my life and eventually decided to go for a Ph.D. in biochemistry, even though I had never had a biochemistry course. With no biology background, it was a challenge, but I picked a research topic that was perfect for a physics major turned biochemist, and off I went. Eventually, I taught biochemistry in a Midwest college for 8 years before

FORT WAYNE JOURNAL-GAZETTE Sunday, October 8, 1961

## Rose Tester At 13— Gets Real Bouquet From His Bosses!

By KENNETH B. KELLER  
Sunday Editor

Stephen Gates, 13, was mildly surprised the other day to learn that he very likely is the country's youngest rose tester.

His research on royalty of the rose gardens has proved almost as much comment at Armstrong Nurseries, Ontario, Calif., as the new hybrids under wraps there.

"Gosh," shrugged Stephen, "there are lots of rose testers—the nurseries have to have them, you know. They have to know how their plants grow in all kinds of climate and soil."

But Don DeManche of Armstrong was more specific. He put the Harrison Hill ninth grader in the ranks of the firm's most astute testers across the nation.

Mr. DeManche might not be surprised to learn that Steve is planning some very different tests—on his own. They will involve the effect of ultra-violet rays upon plant life.

At five, Mrs. Gates recalled, her first son exhibited an unusual interest in growing things. The carrots and greens of grandma, sweet potatoes delighted him and he was intrigued, as well, by carrot greens.

### He Manipulated The Tools Early

When he was able to manipulate the tools of the soil, Steve began growing things for himself. His scrap book is a jumble of ribbons and merit awards, including a coveted prize from the Men's Garden Club.

"It seems strange, because neither his father nor myself had any connection with gardening or farming. Both of us are engineers, but some of Stephen has rubbed off."

The Gates living room had rich touches of living green. Steve's rose garden at 3625 Indiana Ave. has felt the withering embrace of frost but even before that it probably didn't attract special attention in the neighborhood.

To begin with, the test roses are not pampered—they are just properly planted and cared for. And then the test garden often becomes a backdrop for summer football in the Gates' front yard. A brother Paul, 8, has begun to sport the talents of a quarterback.

The romping causes Steve only casual concern. He is interested in sports, too, though not an active participant.

Steve, a tall lad who smiles often and betrays both deep curiosity and respect in his movements, settled thoughtfully on the doveport—a little taken aback, perhaps by the attention he had merited so far away.

He slipped one of his reports from a manila envelope. It concerned Grandiflora Test Rose "Pink Parfait."

It was a disappointment, Steve confessed—at least the first year. The flowers were not full enough to suit him during the first test. The second year, he hastened on, the blooms improved. This indicated to him that the plant would develop satisfactorily.

Steve judged the hybrid on 17 points—more than is required of a tester. "But I thought the nursery would appreciate knowing more about their plants on test," he explained.

He began as an official tester two years ago, and since that time has prepared reports on five bushes covering three varieties. Before all this, Steve's approach to gardening attracted the attention of Mrs. Alford J. Kramer, a consultant for the American Rose Society and founder of adult and Junior societies in Fort Wayne. Young Gates is a charter member of the Junior Rose Society.

### Was Recommended By Local Expert

It was Mrs. Kramer who recommended Steve as a tester. His third year of research for the California nursery will start in December with formal notes of what he will be testing in '62. The test plants will come in late March or April and Steve will start gazing down through the peat moss topping of his test bed.

Out in the yard, the young tester made excuses for the frost. At that, one blossom stood out bravely and buds were scattered over a taller bush.

Before the inspection was over, the lone rose became a sacrifice to a photographer's whim. Steve cut the stem long with a pair of snippers and finally carried the casualty into the house with him.

By this time more of the scrapbook had spilled over the doveport and more interests than gardening were exposed.

Steve, it developed, had successfully participated in science fairs for the last four years. At the last fair he was outstanding with an ultra violet ray exhibit. The year before his interest was lukewarm.

The real rainy days turn Steve into a philatelist. He has gone overseas correspondence with fellow stamp collectors.

But that isn't all—Steve likes music, too. He started out with drums but his interest soon switched to the oboe which presents a challenge in study and technique.

Since Steve has an iris bed he likes to dabble in, it was just natural that a little color photography become necessary to preserve his harvest of colors. One of his iris blooms copied



PASSING JUDGMENT—Stephen Gates, 13, believed to be the country's youngest rose tester, also has been judged one of the most astute by a West Coast nursery. Here, he observes the result of a mixture of Jack Frost and Pink Parfait at his test garden.

switching to being a computer scientist. I was the only biochemist among 1500 computer scientists where I worked, and never again used my biochemistry.

When I finally could garden again, it was such a joy to return to my early passion. I grow lots of roses and now vegetables, but I don't count the petals and seeds anymore. I did, however, plant 6702 vegetable seeds this season (approximately).

So, I have the Goodmans, now long-dead, to thank for my long scientific careers, and my hobbies. What a lot has grown from that small seed!



One of my gardens today. Photo: S. Gates, August 2025.

## *The Professor of Compassion*

*Paul Denoncourt*

Before I was a backpacker, before I was a Quaker, I was a physician, an orthopedic surgeon to be precise. I entered medical school not knowing what specialty I would pursue. The first two years of medical school were didactic years spent in the classroom (in my case, an auditorium) learning the "basic sciences." The second two years were clinical years spent in hospitals rotating through different specialties. I found each of the specialties to be interesting but none of them "reached out and grabbed me" until I came to Orthopedics. My preceptor for that rotation was John Monahan, M.D. Dr. Monahan hailed from Erie, PA, was Harvard-trained, and had practiced Pediatric Orthopedics and Sports Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital before moving over to my university as a full professor. I soon recognized that he was the ideal mentor. As a surgeon, his hands were gifted. As a teacher, he had a way of making the complicated understandable. As a scholar, he knew his anatomy; he could name every muscle and its neural innervation and its vascular supply, and he also had a command of the orthopedic literature. He was deeply religious. Most of all, he was kind and compassionate, not only to all his patients, but to his students as well. It was because of him that I chose orthopedics. I wanted to emulate him. So, after graduation, I entered the orthopedic residency program at his institution.

Surgical resident education in the 1980s and before was, frankly, abusive. We were worked to exhaustion (90+ hours per week) for 5 years and routinely humiliated. Our teachers would frequently ask us medical questions. If you knew the answer, they would ask more difficult questions until they found the limit of your knowledge, then ridicule you in front of your peers.

Dr. Monahan was one of the few I met who was different. When he discerned the limit of your knowledge on a subject, he would then teach you what else you

needed to know, not humiliate you. He cut you some slack when you had worked all night on call and were not 100% the next day. He took an interest in the life of his residents. I never heard him curse. Most importantly, he taught by example that the best surgeon is the one who is kind and compassionate on top of being academic and skilled, not the one with the most journal articles published or who performs the most surgeries or who generates the highest income.

Dr. Monahan had a chronic cardiac condition and died in his 60s, shortly after I finished residency. The world lost a great orthopedist that day. I am convinced that if sainthood is a real thing, Saint John Monahan is surely among that pantheon. I practiced for 34 years, and it was towards his star that I always aimed my ship. It is my hope that I at least came close to living up to his example.

## *It Took a Village*

*Erica H. Adams<sup>1</sup>*



*Left: 1955: Erica's Greenhouse Studio in Melrose, MA.*

*Center: 1987: Family at Erica's (1987) Reception for Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibit at SMFA at Tufts University, Medford, MA: stepmother, father, Erica, maternal grandmother and mother.*

*Right: 2024: Erica with her watercolors at reception for solo exhibit at Colo Colo Galle New Bedford, MA.*

It took a village: I've always worked independently, but it was always in a supportive environment that gave me the opportunity to enjoy new ideas, materials and cultures, solve problems and to create what I needed to experience and thrive.

Patterns began early. Before vaccines existed, in 1954, at age four, I contracted polio, a life-long disease. At an early age, family friend, biochemist, and faculty member at Marine Biological Lab and Harvard University, Dr. Robert Loftfield introduced me to his colleague, Jonas Salk. Salk apologized to me for 'not

<sup>1</sup> Website: [www.ericahadams.com](http://www.ericahadams.com). Recent work: [www.instagram.com/ericahadams/](https://www.instagram.com/ericahadams/).

developing his vaccine quick enough to help me, but soon would help millions of children like me by giving his vaccine free to the world.’ Months later, he did. My condition improved with a rigorous daily exercise regime that kept me at home until I was nine and mostly out of school before home schooling existed: I became self-sufficient, introspective, patient, and resilient.

We lived on the G.I. Bill outside Cambridge. I studied and painted in our living room, a greenhouse in a former mansion. My father (1925-94) read and wrote for his double PhD in International Relations and, because he “didn’t know it” - American History. First-generation American, his Swedish father and Hungarian-Jewish mother raised him in New York City. Post-War, his mother and German-Jewish 2<sup>nd</sup> husband, left the speak-easy life to create New Jersey’s most successful dairy farm ultimately a collective of family farms previously failing. My mother (1925-91) looked after us and staged her acting career at home with uproarious character studies of those we knew including the era’s luminaries. Her parents ran Eight Bells Inn sheltering the Provincetown Players, in the 1920s. Her mother grew up in East Boston, and was the 6th woman to graduate in 1921 from Boston University, earning her Master’s in history. Her father, a grocer who helped neighbors get through the Great Depression, collected Stickley furniture.

The McCarthy Era sharpened my parent’s progressive approach to everything. Bedtime stories were deconstructed from Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Tom Sawyer and Little Women to Grimm’s Fairy Tales. We discussed everything. My father asked me at seven what I wanted to be when I grew up -- archeologist, architect, artist – and advised me to ‘find something I loved to do and it would never feel like work.’ Sundays with my mother in Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts’ quiet spaces we discussed cultural artifacts, much from colonial exploits. The Gardner Museum, a copy of a Venetian villa and courtyard was cultural appropriation and its mélange of European artifacts had a non-linear sense of time. Not strange then, early 1980s on, as an artist my theme became America as a construction: my MFA thesis exhibition (1987) of photographs was a cultural critique of the rise of a polarized, puritan, and money-based economy now flowering. My photographs were constructed with what I appropriated from others and took myself. Television was interpreted and decoded in photographs exhibited at the

Institute of Contemporary Art, *Boston Now: Photography* (1985) and traveling exhibition *Acceptable Entertainment (1988-1990)*<sup>2</sup> circulated by Independent Curators International (NY) in the U.S. and Canada. Saturdays my father and I shopped in Boston's vibrant open-air markets, met artists at galleries, made photographs from nature, and skin-dived North of Boston, where we found a peaceful, colorful underwater world. During the pandemic, I returned to the transparency of watercolors, made as a meditation, abstractions with implicit narratives formed two solo exhibits (2023 and 2024) reviewed by *Art New England* and *Artscope*.

My father's first job (1957) as a "think tank" analyst for every branch of government --at MITRE then RAND and Stanford Research Institute --was to improve public policy and decision making through research and analysis. He remained a Eurocentric progressive, e.g., in 1967, how to get women off welfare? Answer: pay for women to study whatever they wanted just like the GI Bill, e.g., medical school. Government response? Technical training. I learned critical thinking as we discussed solutions to his think tank projects which overlapped with his faculty position (1966 -1990) in the Graduate School of Public Affairs, at SUNYA-State University of New York, Albany. He taught public policy, systems analysis, defense research and statistics. While in Albany High School (1966-68) I volunteered at Operation Head Start and at a storefront my father opened with colleagues to help people apply for benefits of the 'Great Society' envisioned by Kennedy but passed into law by Johnson. When we won abortion rights in 1973, my father said 'the other side thinks they're right and will figure out what they did wrong then come back stronger'; they did 50 years later. We continue.

<sup>2</sup> *Acceptable Entertainment* traveling exhibition <https://curatorsintl.org/exhibitions/8660-acceptable-entertainment>.



*Left: 2000: SMFA at Tufts University. Faculty and CPP grants funded my workshop in México for Maya in the Chiapas Photography Project/CPP.*

*Founder-director Carlota Duarte and Maya lower panel.*

*Center: 2018: Legacy Grant funded CPP Respeto/Respect exhibition and panel at Brookline Library: Curator, Erica H. Adams with Dr. Rabasa Gamboa, México.*

Quakers may know me as clerk of WFPM Peace and Social Order Committee (2021 -) who initiated 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Forum<sup>3</sup> on Zoom or from public speaking events or art exhibits.<sup>4</sup> But few know every job, grant, or opportunity to teach, curate and write, give talks, or serve on committees was a direct result of being asked by someone who knew my work: Two NEYM Legacy Grants (2017 + 2019) resulted when Larry Jordan who knew my work with the Chiapas Photography Project in México, asked to me apply for a 2017 grant. Eric Edwards said he liked my grant work then supported a 2019 grant. Both grants promoted dialogues

<sup>3</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Forum: <https://www.youtube.com/@westfalmouthquakers>.

<sup>4</sup> Eg: *Wampanoags Speak* (2020)

panel(<https://www.westfalmouthlibrary.org/events/event/wampanoags-speak-history-and-heritage/>) by and about Wampanoags and Quakers at West Falmouth Library or annual presentations on current events and arts at Quaker Institute for the Future (2019 -2025) and Sessions (2018 + 2019) about my two NEYM Legacy Grants (2017 + 2019).

about Quaker values of peace, inclusiveness, coexistence, and the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, values shared by Maya women photographers' traveling exhibition *Respecto/Respect*<sup>5</sup> (2013 -) that I co-curated with Carlota Duarte, founder-director of the Chiapas Photography Project, México. Exhibitions featured my curator's talks and panels with Quakers, a Wampanoag historian, and the Mexican Embassy consul in Boston for venues at Mashpee and Brookline libraries in 2018 then, in 2019, at Friends Meeting at Cambridge and a private school in Florida. During the pandemic in 2021, Larry Jordan asked me to take his position as Clerk of Peace and Social Order Committee (2021 -) when we still met on Zoom. Immediately, I initiated 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Forum on Zoom (2021 -) to connect Quakers and the public across borders each month by presenting topical issues by speakers.

Some know me as an artist whose solo exhibits (2023 and 2024) many Quakers attended, or as an art school faculty member of SMFA at Tufts University (1988 - 2015), a curator (2007-2023), and a writer for quarterlies based in the Netherlands (1997-2019) who's worked with the Chiapas Photography Project/CPP with Maya in México and the U.S. from 2000 to the present.

With Quaker activities and studio work, I've integrated my life. And it's taken a village.

<sup>5</sup> Review of *Respeto/Respect* exhibition: <https://artsfuse.org/179986/visual-arts-review-respeto-respect-a-conversation-after-centuries-of-silence/>.

## ***Healed by the Loving Light of a Stranger***

*Alan Burt*

I experienced a lot of traumas early on in my life but was moving forward. Then, one night after I dropped off my girlfriend at the end of a date, she was hit and killed by a speeding car. I was hurt and devastated and became very angry at the world and at life. I became a problem to myself and to everyone else. One month into my 11<sup>th</sup> grade, I was expelled because I had been arrested on possession of marijuana. As I was walking out of the school, one of the school counselors positioned himself so that I would have to walk past him. As I approached, he said, "Son, please don't give up. I see something very good inside of you." Whereas I was in such an angry state, I told him to f--- off and slammed the door on my way out.

Six months later, I decided to kill myself. I climbed the Santuit water tower and tied a rope on the side rails and climbed down the rope and then hung on with one arm with the goal of becoming so weak I wouldn't be able to climb back up. To my mind, life was too difficult and painful and, at this point in my life, I had burned bridges with my family and friends. No one liked me and there was no one that I liked. Suicide simply seemed my best option at the young age of 17.

As I was beginning to lose my grip, I remembered the words of that stranger, Jim Buck, the school counselor, who 6 months earlier had said to me, "Son, please don't give up. I see something very good inside of you." Suddenly, I felt a jolt of energy, strength, and determination to climb back up that rope. It was as though the kind and loving words of a total stranger had healed me and had transformed me.

As the years went by, I continued to remember that powerful and healing experience and how it felt climbing back up that rope. And I became fixed on becoming just like that stranger and to likewise help others who have given up to not give up and to find that something good inside of them. Six years later I

became a social worker to do just that. Even now as I write this, I can sense the smile of Jim Buck who has long passed away, as the love of his Light continues to shine in me. Mine is but one story of the healing power of love, and there are so many others. As scripture tells us, "The Light will overcome the Darkness."

The New Testament offers each of us a myriad of scriptures which if we seek, can come alive for us as a healing and guiding force changing and directing our lives forevermore. My favorite scripture, a saying of Jesus, which I have paraphrased, internalized, and shared many times in my life is this: "Be a lantern of God's loving light, on a hillside shining out into the darkness in the world to help those who are lost in the darkness to find their way safely back home." Now that I have written this, I feel a great sense of joy and gratitude having been saved by a stranger's Light of Love 55 years ago. The powerful words of Jim Buck continue to resonate in me, to heal me, and to help me to heal and help others. I have been so very blessed. And just like Jim Buck and so many others, each of us has the blessing and the opportunity to help and heal others with the power of Love.

***Lament for my Sparrows***

Today I learned  
they've begun cutbacks  
to our Meals on Wheels schedule

"Just" Tuesdays starting next month  
then Thursdays at some point  
to be determined by someone  
far beyond my old guy  
volunteer non-pay grade  
this the beginning  
of the beginning  
of the end  
which most of us saw coming  
as death to a loved one  
with Stage 4 cancer  
not a shock  
yet a dreaded blow to the gut  
to so many of us  
many of us surprised it took this long

Mary our intrepid Manager told me  
yesterday eMail message missed  
we'd lacked time to cry with  
prep deliveries nowhere near usual

Given the carnage the direct cruelty  
dealt by evil vengeful toads  
in Washington our program small beer  
beside innocents in shackles  
the sick denied medical care  
scientists in vital fields fired fired fired  
and on it goes  
new indignities every day  
news I cannot abide

My mad basketball coach 30 years gone  
called that of little import  
“Sparrows pissing in the ocean”  
such our daily deliveries of  
so so nutrition our brief greetings  
longer visits to those wanting needing more  
our checks to certain the old the isolated  
have not fallen have not died in their chair  
calls to authorities who may or may not still  
be there to respond

So beyond our old our weak our sick  
the world will go on its way  
some good relationships will be lost  
families may or may not be there  
may or may not step in

And

I mourn already for my little pond  
for my little sparrows  
who though dying anyway  
aren't we all dying anyway  
still count as human beings to me anyway  
for the end of something good  
something immeasurable by dollars

This loss this grief these indignities  
multiplied how many millions of times  
across a once at least partially decent  
body politic however imperfect  
now brings a cost beyond actuarial calculations

Out here in our neighborhoods we weep  
we hold one another  
while back in DC  
power brokers sneer  
while their enablers cower  
in well-appointed cloak rooms.

***Bill Holcombe***  
***July 2025***

## *Luck?*

*Steve Gates*

It was lucky that

I was gardening in my front yard.

My neighborhood is very quiet.

I could hear an extremely faint, repetitive but irregular noise. A voice?

I went to investigate.

My elderly neighbor has a very loud voice and kept calling.

I found him. He was lying in the woods on his back, unable to get up.

He had walked only a short distance into the woods before falling.

He had only been there a short time.

My son arrived home just as I went to get help lifting him.

We were able (barely) to pull up my neighbor and help him back to his house.

Although he was badly scratched, he was otherwise unhurt.

He lives alone, but most of my neighbors walk their dogs right by his house on a daily basis, so he would probably have been heard eventually. But what if we hadn't been so blessed?



Our fortunes a week after the above incident.

DOVER-SHERBORN

# Hometown Weekly

*Delivering your  
Hometown News for  
over 28 years.*

May 22, 2025  
Vol. 28 No. 21

## *Letters to the Editor*

### To the Editor,

I am writing to share my concerns following the recent proceedings at Natick District Court regarding the Peace Chain demonstration on Inauguration Day. As one of the participants, and as someone whose life is guided by a commitment to nonviolent action, I was disappointed that our case was dismissed without an opportunity for a trial or to explain the motivations behind our peaceful protest.

For many, including myself as a Quaker, nonviolence is not just a

principle but a way of life. Our demonstration was conducted openly, with advance notice to authorities, and was intended to draw attention to issues we believe are vital to our democracy. Yet, the court's decision to dismiss our case without hearing our voices left us feeling that peaceful dissent had been deemed unworthy of consideration.

I respectfully urge our community and its institutions to reflect on the broader implications of such decisions. When peaceful protest is not given a fair hearing, it risks sending the message

that nonviolent action is ineffective or irrelevant. This not only discourages civic engagement but may inadvertently suggest that only more disruptive forms of protest will be noticed.

Peaceful dissent has historically played a crucial role in advancing justice and positive change. I hope our courts and public officials will continue to honor this tradition by ensuring that nonviolent voices are heard and respected.

*Sincerely,*

*Lewis Randa*

*Like the Cicada*

*Alan Burt*

Like  
the Cicada,  
most of us have  
spent years in darkness,  
and then in finding the Light,  
are transformed forevermore.  
And like the Cicada, we burst out in song  
sharing with the world, the peace & joy found.



## 2025 Friendship Gardens Project Report

Steve Gates

*Summary: We used the combined funding from the Susan B. Kirby fund of the Sandwich Quarter, Quaker Earthcare Witness, and generous Friends to run a very successful pilot test that served clients of the Falmouth Center and the shelter in Mashpee that houses formerly homeless Wampanoags.*

Last July, the Sandwich Quarterly Meeting agreed to dedicate \$1,000 from the Susan B. Kirby fund for the Friendship Gardens project. The requirement of this fund was simple: our project must support gospel ministry in the Quarter. Gospel ministry has been defined by the Meeting with this call from Mathew 25: 40: *'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'*

Our original proposal for the Kirby grant was a “pilot test” of our ideas for helping the clients in a nutrition group of the Falmouth Service Center (our local food pantry) with the following:

- a) *Plants (e.g., tomatoes).*
- b) *LED lights mounted in a small pre-owned bookcase to grow low-light vegetables (e.g., lettuce, kale, bok choy, Swiss chard, parsley, basil).*
- c) *One or two 4' x 4' x 10.5" raised beds made from 1 x 4 cedar at the client's residence.*



*Kale under LED*

We planned to pilot the raised beds and the LED light initiative beginning the fall of 2024, and the plants in pots or grow bags in the spring of 2025.

Four important things happened after the Kirby grant was awarded that enabled us to expand well beyond what we had originally proposed. First, we got a mini-grant of \$1000 from Quaker Earthcare Witness for further aspects of this project. Second, a Friend was able to give us matching funds for this work. Third, the E. Sandwich Preparative Meeting funded a related project to serve individuals at the shelter in Mashpee, MA for homeless Wampanoag tribal members (and others).



*Cedar raised beds.*

And finally, Kerin Delaney, the executive director of FSC, suggested we partner with them for the pilot.

In addition to expanding our scope, we needed to change our plans because of a year-long construction project to expand Falmouth Service Center. The FSC staff asked us to delay our start date until spring and work with their general clientele, since they were not able to offer a nutrition group during the construction.

Thus, what we accomplished was the following:

- 1) We partnered with the Falmouth Service Center and, at their suggestion, picked one of the 4 days they deliver food to clients to work with a much larger group of clients than we had originally anticipated (100 to 120 clients each Friday, instead of 10 to 12 people in the nutrition class).
- 2) Several Friends went to FSC from 9:30-noon each Friday between April 25 and June 20 (except for one day when heavy rain was forecast). On each of these 8 days we stood at a table outside FSC handing out food, food-growing supplies and information, and, very importantly, interacting with the clients.
- 3) We tried to make our offerings to the clients appealing. An important way of encouraging the clients to come to our table was the fresh, organic vegetables we handed out. This food, primarily lettuce, spinach, kale, collards, and radishes, was started indoors in LED greenhouses beginning February 1 and planted outside at the West Falmouth Preparative Meeting's garden or Steve Gates's garden beginning in early April.
- 4) We harvested the ripe produce and delivered it in coolers to ensure the food was at its peak. We typically gave away food to 70 or more people each week.



*Free plants were really a big hit!*

- 5) Almost every week, we had an activity designed to be fun, and when the weather warmed up, activities that would encourage the clients to grow their own food. Some specific activities we had were:
- Fresh lettuce and multi-colored radishes to take home.
  - Kits for growing microgreens, including trays, a soilless mix, seeds, and instructions.
  - “Lettuce Celebrate” which involved giving each client who was interested a paper plate with some lettuce leaves on it, with a sample of a vinaigrette they could easily and cheaply make themselves (involving sunflower seed oil, apple cider vinegar and a clove of garlic).
  - A distribution of free plants, in which we gave away more than 300 plants of lettuce, kale, bok choy, and Swiss chard.
  - “Tomato Fest” in which we handed out close to 200 tomato plants. We also had a homemade gazpacho at three different levels of spiciness that they could taste-test.
  - Another distribution of plants, focused on potted plants for those without



*Gazpacho for the Tomato Fest.*

gardens. This included potatoes and cucumbers in pots (about 20 of each), along with more tomatoes.

- g. A “Compost Clinic” in which we gave away free bags of compost or compost starter, and instructions on how to start a compost pile.
- h. On our last day, we had a drawing to hand out 3 custom-built poplar etageres, each kit containing 2 LED lights, along with seeds, containers and soil.



*Etagere kit.*

- 6) In addition, we built 13 raised beds. These were built with 2-inch cedar lumber, which we decided was the way to get the longest-lasting and sturdiest beds. Each bed was 4' x 4', with 10.5" height. Originally, our plan had been to hand these to Service Center clients, but when the East Sandwich meeting started its Friendship Garden project (Spring '25), led by Trish and Alan (with mentoring from Steve) we decided to also offer beds for their project. This enabled the meeting to install 8 raised beds on their site, with the goal of raising food for the homeless shelter in Mashpee for Wampanoags. After we had placed the beds, however, a new opportunity presented itself: we met with several of the residents of the shelter, and they expressed a strong interest in having a garden on the property of the homeless shelter. So ESPM decided to give two of its beds to the shelter, and Friendship Gardens contributed two more, so that they had 4 beds. ESPM provided the high-quality soil for all 10 of the resulting beds; one of the clients at the shelter



*Raised beds being installed at the Wampanoag shelter by a resident.*

said it was the best soil he had ever seen. We gave away 1 bed to a client at the Service Center. We are in the process of giving away the 2 remaining beds.

## **What we learned from the pilot**

The goal of this pilot was for us to learn what works and doesn't work for the clients we serve. And we did learn an amazing amount from the pilot. Here are some of our key conclusions:

- Partnering with the Falmouth Service Center was absolutely key. They not only gave us access to their clients but also actively supported us throughout the entire pilot. Because their building was undergoing a major addition, each week was somewhat different, and they helped us adjust our process each week to whatever the new conditions required. We especially appreciate all the help we got from Christine Sullivan, Deputy Director, and Brian Dugan, Warehouse & Operations Manager.
- Working directly with clients (as opposed to merely delivering food to the Service Center as we did last year) was especially rewarding. We got to meet all the clients that came through their process and talk about food and gardening with all who were interested. We also enjoyed interacting with the many FSC volunteers and shared with them any produce or taste tests that remained after the clients left.
- We needed to actively engage with the clients (i.e., just standing at a table with free stuff isn't enough) by approaching them and telling them what we had to give away that week. But by the end of the pilot, many of them were actively seeking us out, and several told us at the end how much they had enjoyed what we did.
- What really worked well for everyone was anything that was fun. Clients typically have to wait a few minutes between the time they turn in their food request and the time a cart containing their food is rolled out to them, so that waiting time was our key opportunity to interact with them.
- The biggest single hit with the clients was the free plants we handed out, especially the tomatoes. Many of the clients came back to report to us how well their plants were doing.

- The microgreen kits were popular but we got very little feedback on how the kits were doing once in the clients' homes.
- Everyone seemed to like the taste tests (gazpacho, lettuce with salad dressing), and many took home recipes so they could try them on their own.
- The etageres were very popular with some clients, and not at all with others. Those who said they weren't interested usually said they had no place to put the etagere.
- The raised beds were an important part of what we offered, with some caveats. The one individual at the Service Center who received one owned her own home, which is not typical of Service Center clients. Also, the process of transporting the bed and, especially, the soil was a complicated one for both us and the client. Our original plan had been to deliver these to client homes, but that is difficult to do without a pickup truck and involves some issues around privacy that may be important for many clients. Hence, we decided not to give out further raised beds to individuals.
- However, the raised beds did play a very important role when used in institutional settings (the homeless shelter and a Quaker meeting that wanted to give food to the Wampanoags), where multiple beds were placed, and where commitment was high amongst the individuals caring for the beds. In these settings, it makes more sense to have soil professionally delivered, given that the transportation costs are relatively constant regardless of the amount of soil delivered. We also found, incidentally, an outstanding source of composted soil (from Black Earth Compost) which performed noticeably better (and cost noticeably more) than other soils we have purchased in the past. Given the high unit cost of beds, especially when soil is included, it is very important to have a clear understanding of who will benefit from the beds and who will commit to



Lettuce on April 26.

taking care of them. It is also important to have a person who will serve as a contact for the group receiving the beds, and to have an on-going relationship between the group and our group. Going forward, we expect to focus this part of the project on helping institutional, rather than individual, users. Possible institutions for raised beds might be prisons, senior centers/residences, community gardens, etc.

- One key lesson from the pilot had to do with planning for growing the produce. Most of the planning was done in December, before we had a firm start date for delivering the produce. We nonetheless made a decision to focus on maximizing the production of spring crops, rather than summer crops, in large part because Farming Falmouth typically begins delivering large quantities of produce to the Service Center in mid to late June. We therefore designed the schedule to have plants in the ground outside as early as possible, well before the expected last frost date. We used row covers to provide some protection for the young plants. This strategy worked extremely well; only at the last date (June 20) of our pilot did we see large quantities of produce being offered to clients beyond what we delivered. That being said, having our own produce there from an early date was key to having an ongoing interaction with the clients.

### **Questions for a future version of this project:**

For next year, there needs to be consideration of several other factors:

- 1) What scale would make the most sense? It is important to note that funding of food banks by federal government seems to be dropping sharply, so the need will probably be sharply higher next year.
- 2) Where will the funding come from?
- 3) How many volunteers will it take to offer such a program?
- 4) How would we scale up the production of seedlings? Currently, seedlings are grown in a spare bedroom at Steve's home that is filled with LED lights in bookshelves. For this project, we grew about 1000 seedlings for the Service Center, 2000 seedlings for the garden at W. Falmouth, and 150 seedlings for ESPM, as well as perhaps another 1000 seedlings in Steve's gardens that were donated as produce to the Service Center. The current system for growing seedlings will need to expand if we move beyond the scale of the pilot project.

- 5) Which institutions would we like to donate raised beds and etageres to?  
How would we provide on-going support (e.g., plants, expert advice) to the recipients?

### **Acknowledgements**

I want to close by thanking everyone for their strong support of this project. This includes:

- Paula Blumental, John Gates, and John Davidson, who regularly volunteered with me at FSC, and Alan Burt and Trish Garland for their project supporting the Wampanoags in Mashpee.
- A large group of West Falmouth Friends, averaging about 12 each week, who grew the produce. Growing materials for the West Falmouth garden were funded by a gift from the West Falmouth Meeting and by generous individual Friends.
- Sandwich Quarterly Meeting and QEW for their grants for this project.
- The Friend who gave matching money to the project.
- Lewis Randa for giving the project a home in The Peace Abbey.
- Robyn Sweeting and several residents at the Wampanoag shelter for their support of the project there.
- And especially the team at FSC who gave such amazing support to the pilot test.



**Photos from Friendship Gardens July 24 (above) and July 31 (below).**  
All by Erica H. Adams.



***Clerks\****

***Sandwich Monthly Meeting*** Francis Lightsom  
***Sandwich Monthly Meeting Ministry and Counsel***  
Alan Burt

***East Sandwich Preparative Meeting***  
Gail Melix and Barbara Goodman

***West Falmouth Preparative Meeting***  
Molly Cornell

***Yarmouth Preparative Meeting***  
Pat Harvey

*\*Contact information can be found in the Sandwich  
Monthly Meeting Directory.*



Photo credits - - front cover, E.H. Adams; back cover, S. Gates, both of the Friendship Garden at West Falmouth, July, 2025.

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