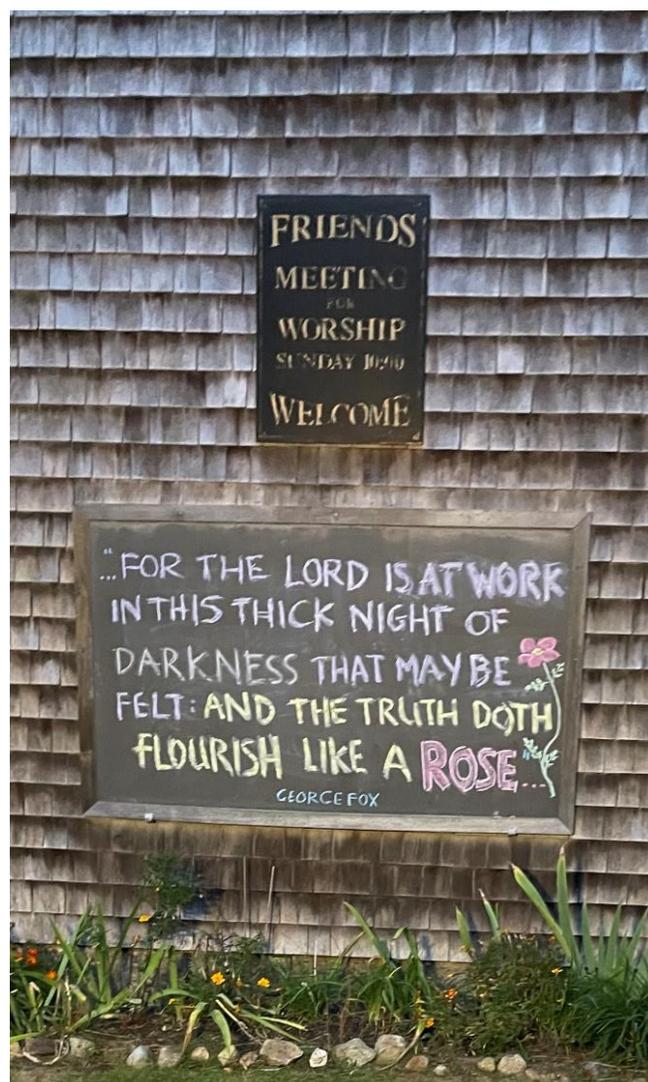


THE GAZETTE

"a news-sheet, a periodical publication giving an account of current events"

Sandwich Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

NOVEMBER 2024



Contents

Upcoming Events	2-6
Members Passing	7
Photos of Friends	8-9
Special Section on Gourds	10-11
Readers Write	12-25
What We're Reading . . .	26-28

Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

End of Life Drop-in Reflection Group -- Join other New England Friends for one or more sessions of an End of Life Interest Group. We seek to explore the spiritual, emotional, and practical aspects of facing our final days. Thursdays, **October 10, November 14, and December 12, 2024 and January 9, 2025**, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. via zoom. Learn more and register at <https://neym.org/events-calendar/2024/10/end-life-drop-reflection-group>.

Bible Half Hours from the 364th Annual Sessions – Some recordings are now available at <https://quakersofnewengland.buzzsprout.com/>.

International Meeting for Worship – Join Friends around the world for a one-hour international Meeting for Worship. Daily from noon to 1:00 p.m. Learn more at <https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Meeting%20Details.pdf>.

Sandwich Quarterly Meeting

Sandwich Quarterly Meeting for Business – Saturday, **January 25** at West Falmouth.

New Bedford – Work party after worship followed by lunch – Sunday, **November 10 and December 8** and every second Sunday.

Sandwich Monthly Meeting

SMM New Year's Eve Gathering will be held Tuesday, **December 31** at the East Sandwich Meetinghouse. Potluck dinner from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. Worship will follow from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Sandwich Monthly Meeting for Business will be Sunday, **December 1** at Yarmouth.

West Falmouth

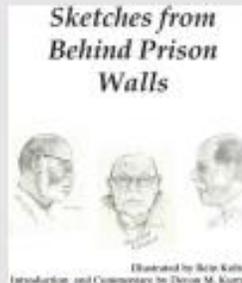
The next 2nd Sunday Forum, hosted by West Falmouth's Peace and Social Order Committee, will be on Sunday, **November 10** from 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. Devon Kurtz will discuss *The Faces of Mass Incarceration: A Quaker Approach*. See next page for further information and link to register.

American Friends Service Committee – See <https://afsc.org/>.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Peace in Palestine and Israel every **Thursday** 5:30 p.m. See <https://afsc.org/events/meeting-worship-attention-peace-palestine-israel>.

Action Hour for a Ceasefire Now -- Join ASFC staff every **Friday** at 12:00 p.m. to hear updates from Gaza. Then, take action with us as we contact our elected officials and call for an immediate cease-fire and humanitarian access to Gaza. Our elected officials need to keep hearing from us. See <https://afsc.org/events/action-hour-cease-fire-now>.

THE FACES of MASS INCARCERATION: A QUAKER APPROACH



DEVON KURTZ attends Quaker meetings in Hanover (VT), Salt Lake City (UT), and Jesus Lane Friends Meeting in Cambridge, UK. He is a Legacy Grantee (2023). Devon is a prison reform advocate and facilitator of Quaker worship and chaplaincy for men behind bars. He has worked with state legislators across America to reform criminal justice systems through his work as policy director at the Cicero Institute, a public policy think tank, and as public affairs advisor to Social Purpose Corrections, a non-profit that is disrupting the private prison industry. Outside of his professional roles, he is a committed restorative justice volunteer.

A tribute to the millions of Americans who are or have been imprisoned, *Sketches from Behind Prison Walls* (2024) is an intimate collection of drawings, poetry, and anecdotes that explore what it means to love, atone, and survive behind prison walls. Devon Kurtz, the co-author of the book alongside many incarcerated men who contributed to the project, will shine new light on America's system of mass punishment, offering a hopeful view rooted in the perseverance of the dozens of men incarcerated at Southern State Correctional Facility who worked together to create beauty out of despair.

ZOOM TALK: SUNDAY November 10, 2024 at 12:30 -1:30 pm ET

Question + Answer period follows.

LINK to Register: https://bit.ly/MassIncarceration_DevonKurtz

BIO: A prison reform advocate and facilitator of Quaker worship and chaplaincy for men behind bars. A restorative justice volunteer, Devon professionally has worked to reform criminal justice systems as policy director at the Cicero Institute and as a public affairs advisor to Social Purpose Corrections, a non-profit that is disrupting the private prison industry. A Legacy Grantee (2023) to publish *Sketches from Behind Prison Walls* (2024) of artwork and writing from incarcerated men who attend Quaker worship services in a Vermont prison, and to organize and record a live memorial concert for the men in the prison. Devon holds a Bachelor of Arts in Classics from Dartmouth College, and he is currently pursuing a Master of Studies in Penology from Homerton College, University of Cambridge alongside a Certificate in Correctional Chaplaincy from Wheaton College.



2nd Sunday Zoom Forum – a Quaker Series

HOST: Peace + Social Order Committee of West Falmouth Preparative Meeting, MA (USA)

Pendle Hill– See <https://pendlehill.org/>.

Pendle Hill's Reading Group –Wednesday, **November 13** from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. How do we “seek that of God in everyone” when we are so deeply polarized? Join us for worship sharing on Bridget Moix's "Forging Beloved Community with Friends: A Journey Through the Refiner's Fire" (PHP #488). Register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/pendle-hills-reading-group-november-2024/>.

First Monday Lecture with **Alicia McBride** and **José Santos Moreno** of Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) – *Towards a Just Democracy: Spiritual Grounding and Principled Action*, **November 4**, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. On Election Day eve, join two Friends working at the intersection of Quaker faith and U.S. policy for a conversation on how to equip ourselves – spiritually, intellectually, and politically – for whatever comes in the days and weeks ahead. Recognizing where our country is, and the gap to where we want it to be, we will discuss opportunities to make our democracy more just and sustainable, and how to tend to our spiritual center while we do this necessary work. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/towards-a-just-democracy-spiritual-grounding-and-principled-action>.

First Monday Lecture with **Rachael Carter** and **Ruth Cutcher** of the Quaker Voluntary Service -- *Spirit-Led Community Building Across Generations*. **December 2**, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. <https://pendlehill.org/events/spirit-led-community-building-across-generations/>.

News from some other Quaker organizations can be found at the following links:

Quaker Earthcare Witness: <https://quakerearthcare.org/>

Friends Committee on National Legislation: <https://fcnl.org/>

Friends World Committee on Consultation: <https://www.fwccamericas.org>

Friends General Conference: <https://www.fgcquaker.org>

Quaker United Nations Organization: <https://quno.org/>.



Quaker Speak, a video project of *Friends Journal*, releases a new video every other Thursday. Barb Lambdin recommends this one about Benjamin Lay, early Quaker abolitionist, animal rights activist, and believer in gender equality and environmental protection. See <https://quakerspeak.com/video/benjamin-lay-the-radical-quaker-abolitionist-who-challenged-the-world/>.



Black Lives Matter: Falmouth Kneel at Noon

Silent vigil for 9 minutes 29 seconds in support of Black lives, weekly on **Sundays at noon** on the Falmouth Village Green.



Wampanoag Food Pantry Grocery Certificate Program

Sandwich Monthly Meeting is again collecting donations for the Wampanoag Food Pantry Grocery Certificate Program. Checks should be made out to your respective preparative meeting noting *SMM-Wampanoag Food Pantry* in the memo line. Checks must be received by your preparative meeting by Sunday, **November 24**.

2024 Educational Series – A Collaboration between the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth and Linking Indigenous & Non-Indigenous Knowledge, Inc. (L.I.N.K.)



11/2024
Wampanoag Art & Regalias
A month long exhibit at the Falmouth Art Center. Includes artisans demonstrating their art and an opportunity to purchase Native art.

11/30/24 – 1:00 - 3:00 PM
Gathering
Nitana Hicks Greendeer, PhD
Let's talk about what this Series brought up for you. All Series participants are welcome to attend.



Alternative Gift Market

The 2024 **Alternative Gift Market** is coming! Saturday, **November 9** and Sunday, **November 10** at Saint Barnabas Church in Falmouth and online **November 11 – 18**. Shop for family and friends, donate to a worthy cause! Learn more at <http://www.alternativegiftmarketcapecod>. West Falmouth Friends Meeting is a Supporting Congregation.



St. Barnabas Episcopal church in Falmouth invites all to attend a Celtic Vespers service on Sunday, **November 3** at 5:00 p.m. This candlelit service of music and prayer will feature Nancy Hurrell, harp, Deborah Gemma, organ and piano, and the Saint Barnabas Choir (see <http://www.stbfalmouth.org>).

Sunday Mornings at 8:30 a.m. at East Sandwich Meeting Community Hall

November 10 – *Friends in Conversation about Buddhism* led by Maggie Lowe and Paul Denoncourt.

November 17 – *Report of the Friendship Garden of Falmouth* led by Steve Gates and Alan Burt.

Dialogue Across Differences at Yarmouth Meeting Schoolhouse -- Saturday, **November 16** from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. Topics vary; among them are climate change, political differences, and family issues. The upcoming discussion will focus on water. Led by Tom Bidga Peyton.

West Falmouth Meetinghouse will be open on **November 5** for those seeking a place for quiet reflection.

Members Passing

Death of Catherine Armstrong Reznikoff

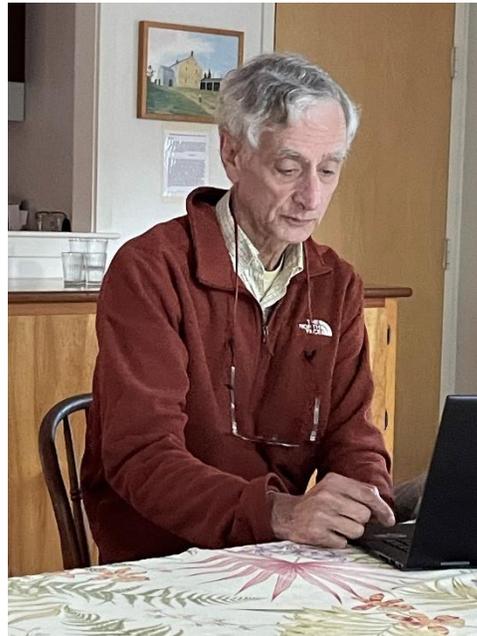
West Falmouth Friends were saddened by the passing of Cathy Reznikoff on September 18th. She was 85 years old. Cathy was an exemplar of women's achievement. Long before we knew her, she was the first woman to earn a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and went on to become a professor of cancer biology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She served as chairwoman of the Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program and earned international recognition for her innovative techniques used to define genetic changes in cancer cells. The Cathy West Falmouth Friends knew was a compassionate caregiver of infants and children. In Wisconsin and West Falmouth, she nurtured more than 50 foster children, welcoming them into her home, showing unconditional love, and maintaining relationships with them and their families for years. Her particular gift to our Meeting was the attention she gave to our First Day School children and their parents, and her kind and sensitive leadership of the Women's Group discussions. In retirement, Cathy and Bill left Cape Cod and moved to St Paul, Minnesota, where they lived closer to their children and grandchildren.



Photos of Friends



Janet Rodgers as Eleanor Roosevelt,
East Sandwich Meeting, October 15.



Paul Denoncourt speaks about his recently-
completed trek across the John Muir Trail,
East Sandwich Meeting, October 20.

Photos from October 9th celebratory dinner of Friendship Garden of Falmouth.
Photo credits: below and top of next page, Alan Burt; bottom next page, Ruth Zwirner.





Special Section on Gourds



We are all gourd's children.



Early Quaker meeting, Gourдите branch.



Gourds discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Hi! I'm gourdgeous George. I'm running for the GOAT award – Gourd of All Time. Be sure to vote!

Readers Write

Quaker Hiker on the John Muir Trail – Part 1

Paul Denoncourt

Hello Friends. I am back from the California High Sierra— literally the top of the continental United States. The hike was amazing: amazingly beautiful and amazingly difficult! With a nod to Charles Dickens, “It was the best of hikes, it was the worst of hikes.”

You may recall that, as a follow up to my through-hike of the Appalachian Trail (AT) of 2022, I set the intention of hiking the John Muir Trail (JMT), a 216-mile trek through the highest of the Sierra Nevada mountains in California between Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks. Why? Because it is described as the most beautiful trail in the continental U.S. This would be a very different kind of hike because of elevation (7,900 to 14,500 feet); weather extremes; difficult terrain (42,000 feet of ascent, 38,000 feet of descent); lack of shelters; few resupply options, therefore heavier pack weights; and lack of cell service in the event of need of rescue. In addition, the number of hikers is severely limited by a permit lottery system with low odds of your application being drawn.

I turned the permit problem over to Spirit and Spirit came through, as always. I was awarded a 2-person southbound permit to start on August 23, 2024, at Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite—one of only two access points in the park. Because of the risks involved, I chose not to hike alone. I invited a fellow AT hiker (trail name Pozzy) to join me (trail name Paladin) on this adventure.

Our plan was to depart from Logan four days before our start date, fly to Reno, NV via Atlanta, take a bus to Mammoth Lakes, CA (elevation 7880') where we would do 3 days of day-hikes to acclimatize to the altitude. Then, on the day we'd start our hike, we'd take a bus into Yosemite for the mandatory in-person permit pick-up and ranger orientation. For reasons never satisfactorily explained, our flight out of Boston was repeatedly delayed and, after six hours of delays, was cancelled. We eventually were rerouted onto three flights over three days, missing our connecting flight, our hotel reservations, the bus to Mammoth Lakes, and losing our three days to acclimatize. We did make our permit pick up.

Believing our problems were behind us, we commenced our hike under beautiful skies and with excitement in our hearts. Here is a photo of us at the trailhead (8600 feet), each with a backpack weighing approximately 35 lbs.

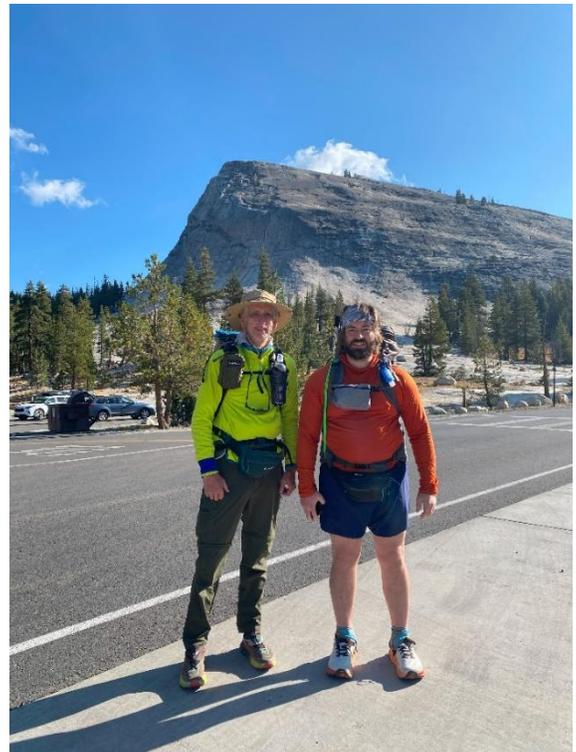


Photo credit: J. Gould, August 23, 2024.

Day 1 was relatively easy: only 9.5 miles along a valley floor ending with a 1,000-foot climb to our campsite. The scenery was awe inspiring.



But as we climbed to 9,600 feet, we began to feel shortness of breath and queasiness. Pozzy developed a hacking cough and felt lightheaded. These were signs of early Acute Mountain (Altitude) Sickness (AMS).

Over the rest of the hike, I kept an eye on Pozzy's cough to make sure he did not develop High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE).

That evening the sky clouded over, and it turned cold. That night an inch of snow fell.

Photos by author.

Donahue Pass 11,000'



Photo by author.

The JMT ascends a series of 9 mountain passes. After each it descends into a picturesque valley before ascending to the next pass. The ascents and descents can be three to four thousand feet! Our first pass would be Donahue Pass at 11,000 feet. This would be our first task on Day 2. Unlike the AT, a trail that is well marked with blazes of white paint on trees and boulders, the JMT is unmarked and has very little signage. Hikers need to read the ground looking for human footprints or dung from the pack animals used to bring supplies and tools to trail maintenance crews. With snow on the ground and still falling, scouting the trail became difficult. We managed to lose the trail once while ascending to the pass, but we soon found it again. We cleared the pass, and by doing so, exited Yosemite National Park and entered the Inyo National Forest.

Once we were over the pass the snow stopped and, then, as we descended, melted. We had a second pass to ascend that day—Island Pass— which, at 10,000 feet has a beautiful lake at the top. The snow you see below remained from last winter.

Ruby Lake

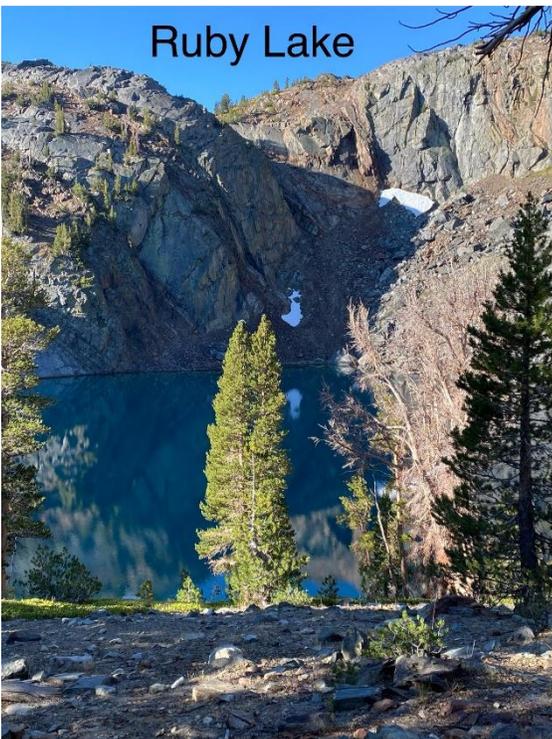


Photo by author.



Island Pass 10,000'. Photo by author.

The scenery continued to amaze me. I repeatedly whispered prayers of awe and thanksgiving to the Creator who “spoke” such beauty into existence and granted me the opportunity to experience it. That night we camped at Ruby Lake, one of the most beautiful campsites I have ever

seen. It got down to a frosty 20 degrees, but we both had wisely packed winter sleep systems, so we were not cold.

Our shortness of breath, queasiness—sometimes frank nausea—caused loss of appetite. Pozzy’s cough persisted and I began to have severe nasal congestion and nose bleeds. Our AMS was progressing. Unless our conditions became severe, however, we were determined to continue. The great Antarctic explorer Earnest Shackleton had a personal motto which I long ago adopted: Fortitudine Vincimus —By Endurance We Conquer. The considerably less classy AT version of this meme is: Embrace the Suck. It was time to embrace and endure.

Besides, on days 3 and 4 we would be at lower elevations with no mountain passes to climb, so, hopefully, our bodies would acclimatize, right?

They did not. To be continued . . .



Photo by D. (Pozzy) Posluzny.

Author’s note: I recently spoke at East Sandwich Meeting’s Sunday morning discussion series about my trek across the John Muir Trail. Several friends were unable to attend and I was asked to do the presentation a second time. It is scheduled for Saturday, **November 16** at 10:00 a.m. in the Community Building at East Sandwich. If you’re available, come by!

On the John Muir Trail – Part 2

Even though days 3 and 4 were spent at relatively lower elevations, our AMS symptoms persisted, but at least they were not worse. On day 5 we went over Silver Pass (10,740'). The timing was unfortunate as we had to do it in the late afternoon under a hot sun. We camped just below the pass at Silver Pass Lake—another spectacular site.

On the morning of day 6 we awoke at 4 a.m. and were on trail by 5:30 so we could hike 7.5 miles to the shore of Lake Edison to catch a 9:45 a.m. boat to Vermillion Valley Resort. VVR is a rustic off-trail facility—I would not call it a resort—where you can camp, shower, do laundry, eat in a restaurant, and most importantly, pick up a resupply box you mailed to yourself ahead of time.



Sunrise at Silver Pass Lake. Photo by author.

Up to now, the food we had eaten had been brought from Massachusetts—6 days' worth. We had hiked 66 miles, averaging 11 miles per day. The next section of the trail to our second resupply point would be 93 miles over a more rugged terrain. We had therefore mailed ourselves nine days of food. My pack weighed 40 lbs. when we left VVR on day 7. What a noticeable difference!



Vermillion Valley Resort Ferry at Lake Edison. This and photo to the right by D. Posluzny.



On day 8 we crested Seldon Pass and entered Kings' Canyon National Park.

While Pozzy continued to have coughing fits, lack of appetite, and difficulty falling asleep, he began to hike faster. Up to now I had been the faster climber, but he now surpassed me. I suspect he was beginning to acclimatize.



Me crossing the South Fork of the San Joaquin River. Photo by D. Posluzny.

I, on the other hand, was slowing down and feeling exhausted. I had had a series of 3 nights where, just as I was falling asleep, I would bolt upright feeling as though I were being suffocated. In a literal panic, I would tear open my sleeping bag and tent flaps and leap into the cold night air so I could breathe again. This happened repeatedly each night preventing any quality sleep. Those nights were terrible! As a result, I was exhausted. What I was experiencing is called Periodic Breathing, a type of sleep apnea induced by high altitude, another symptom of Acute Mountain Sickness. I had some medication to treat AMS which I took the second and third nights, but it did not help.

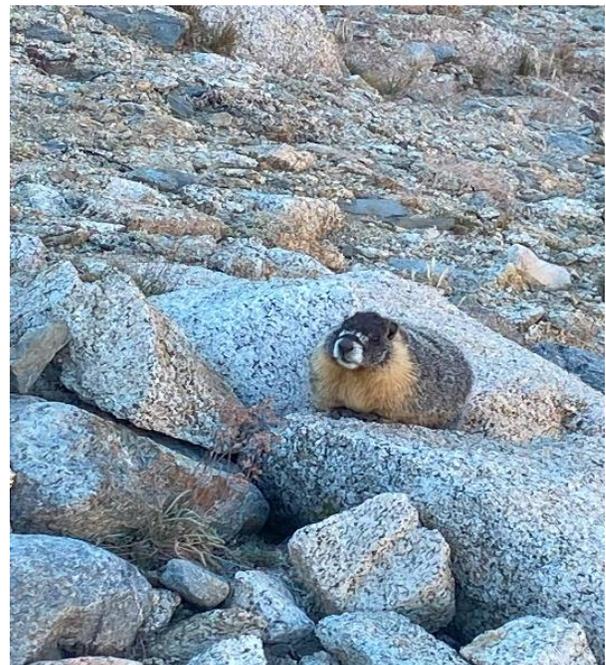
After three nights of this, I realized I could not finish the hike like this. What terrified me even more was that the next exit opportunity was several days (and nights) away. I spoke to Spirit, who had helped me on the AT and got me onto the JMT. I said, I (we) have this problem about which I can do nothing more. I need your help. Otherwise, I must abort this trek. I turn the problem over to you.

That was the last night I had the problem.

The next day I met another hiker. We chatted about the trail, and I mentioned my breathing issue. He asked if I was carrying Nyquil in my first aid kit. I was. He said to use it that night. To me, a physician, it did not make medical sense, but I was desperate. I took it and I slept that night and every subsequent night; and I had just enough Nyquil to get me to our next resupply! Spirit came through, using another hiker, just in time. Amazing! Thank you, Spirit!



Mather Pass 12,000'. Photo by S. Tan.



A marmot. Photo by author.

Even though I could now sleep, Pozzy remained the stronger hiker. I suspect our age difference—he is 40, I am 69—is the reason I was not as resilient. I was just glad not to have had to quit the hike.

The next several days were routine: up early, ascend another pass, descend into another incredible valley, make camp. We saw little wildlife: several marmots at elevation, a dozen or so mule deer in the valleys, and one coyote. Even though the rangers had hyped the danger of black bears, we saw none, only claw marks on a tree.



A coyote. Photo by D. Posluzny.



Bear claw marks. Photo by author.

On Day 14, one day ahead of schedule, we exited the trail to resupply again. We went over the very steep Kearsarge Pass, then descended 4000' over 7.5 miles to the town of Independence, CA to which we had mailed resupply boxes containing food for the last leg of six days. I also bought more Nyquil! It was a sultry 100 degrees in Independence that day. We stayed in a motel to shower and eat, then, the next day, reascended the same 4000' to get back on trail. We experienced our one and only thunderstorm that afternoon, but we were over Kearsarge Pass and camped in a low valley when it hit, so we were fine.



Photo by D. Posluzny.



View from Forester Pass 13,200'. This and photo below by author.

On day 16, both of us still nauseated and unable to eat much, and Pozy still having paroxysms of coughing, we faced the highest pass of the trail: Forester Pass at 13,200', our highest altitude yet by more than 1,000'. It was 8 miles and a 3600' climb from our campsite. It took us most of the day as shortness of breath and exhaustion slowed us to a crawl. Fortunately, the sky was overcast so we were protected from the midday sun. We made it up and over, entering Sequoia National Park, then descended 4 more miles to a campsite where we were rewarded with a beautiful sunset.

The next day we had a 500' descent followed by a 1500' climb to Hemlock Tarn. Despite the name, it is way above the tree line. It also is the last campsite before Mt. Whitney, the southern terminus of the JMT and the highest peak in the U.S. outside of Alaska — 1300' higher than Forester Pass! Despite our conditions, we decided to go for it.

To be continued . . . Part 3, in the upcoming January 2025 issue, will cover the finish and my reflections, both secular and spiritual. During the trip, other than being awed by the scenery, I felt so poorly that I could do little reflecting on trail.



Sunset.

For Linda

Oh Linda

I grow weary of writing encomia
and you deserve such, nay demand
another in what has become
a long succession of deaths
in and outside our Meeting

We knew ourselves in decline
met first outside the Rehab entry
each needing assistance
you on a walker
mine some other orthopedic malady
and slowly easily organically
we became friends outside Friends Meeting
became close outside formal context
little bits at a time over months over years
well into our ends
then yours delivered you your cancer
with mine still an open issue
closing in on multiple fronts

Our last years marked by
the loveliest conversations
true conversations
not the ping pong of percussive discussion
rather the rhyme & rhythm
give and take and give some more
that was you give some more
all with Zach the Cat rolling on the floor
me rolling with him
you preparing tea

Oh how I miss you already
tearing up each time
I drive past Old Exit 5 your exit
Goodbye Good Friend

Good bye

Bill Holcombe

2024

Author's note: Thank you to Carolyn Hoehn, also a dear friend of Linda Holton's,
who encouraged me to write this poem.



Proposing an Afterthoughts Column for The Gazette

Alan Burt

One of the things I love most from reading Faith and Practice are the afterthoughts of Quakers sharing what brought them into the Quaker Faith or has kept them there. I've wished there were more examples of this, as there is so much to gain from the sharing and reading of Quaker stories of faith. I am therefore suggesting the idea of a column of afterthoughts in our *Gazette*. I will start this column right now with 3 of my recent afterthoughts.

Seekers Day Afterthoughts -- On October 12, 2024, a number of Quakers from the three preparative meetings met at East Sandwich Meetinghouse to attend a Seeker's Day. Along with a few readings, we engaged in worship sharing based on three queries: How are you a Quaker in today's world? How are your relations with others an expression of your faith? How do you express your faith in action in your daily life? We ended our meeting by asking a fourth question: What has come to you this morning that you want to take with you into the coming week?

Words are not adequate to fully express my gratitude to those who spoke about their faith that day. Not only did I leave feeling deeply inspired, I left with a richer understanding of the faith of my Quaker Friends as well as a better understanding of my own faith and practice. We were all blessed that day.

I shared my intention to more often remind myself of who I am as a Quaker and of how my faith needs to be more active in my daily thoughts and action. I acknowledged that I sometimes forget to do this very important thing instead allowing myself to be drawn into reactivity or conflicts with others, or to be distracted by stressful situations near and far. But when I catch myself being a bit off course from what my faith is asking of me, I'm more able to lovingly improve my thoughts, feelings, and actions which makes things better for me and for others.

For example, the directive "to see that of God in everyone" is a powerful reminder for me to return to this sacred experience, helping me to respond with unconditional acceptance, love, and care.

Garden Club Afterthoughts -- On October 9th, I attended the end-of-year celebration of the Friendship Garden group at the West Falmouth Meetinghouse. Here, Steve Gates invited each of us to share our thoughts about the times we've eaten, shared, and worked together harvesting our crops for the Falmouth Service Center. I listened and came to better understand and appreciate my own experiences in our times together.

As I enjoyed yet another wonderful meal with my Quaker Friends, I thought to myself that in addition to our harvesting crops for the poor, we raised a community of friendships working lovingly and faithfully in the Gospel Ministry of Matthew 25. "We have fed the poor."

As I now look at the barren earth of the harvested garden, behind the West Falmouth Meetinghouse, I cannot help but smile in anticipation of the joy in next year's crop through the loving community of Friends in Faith and Practice.

Closing Afterthoughts -- In closing, I am hopeful that others will share their afterthoughts in future editions of *The Gazette*. Stories of our faith in action are so important to share and read about. Not only for us,

today, but I'm imagining the joy and inspiration from Quakers in the years and centuries to come as they read about us, the Quakers of Sandwich Monthly Meeting.

Through our stories of faith, they will come to know who we were, how we thought, felt, and acted in our lives as Quakers. In a real sense, our *Gazette* is a publication of our Sandwich Monthly Meeting Faith and Practice in action. I am so grateful for the time and commitment of Rita O'Donnell and Steve Gates who collect and insert our pictures, thoughts, and life stories into such an informative and inspirational publication. I'm likewise, so grateful to all who submit their stories. And I very much look forward to reading the stories of others from our Sandwich Monthly Meeting Community of Faith and Practice.

Mea Culpa: The Importance of an Apology

Lewis M. Randa

For some time now, Quakers Gail Melix (Herring Pond Wampanoag), Paula Parker, and Andrew Grant have been delivering enlightening, though disturbing, presentations on the topic of Quaker Indigenous boarding schools. Each talk is driven by a sincere desire for reconciliation and healing, rooted in the all-important empathy that must accompany an apology for it to be worthy of acknowledgment of past wrongs.

While we Quakers do not choose anonymity via the confessional booth (as is the custom for Catholics), we typically instead go public to confess our wrongdoings, a different sort of chest pounding, yet never the less a mea culpa. From admitting we owned slaves to acknowledging operating indigenous schools, we know the importance of the admission of guilt. No plea deals for Quakers.

Recently, President Biden has joined in this important acknowledgment, alongside Debra Anne Haaland, Secretary of the Interior and member of the Laguna Pueblo tribe, for the historical injustices faced by indigenous children in boarding schools. Acknowledging this, and other painful chapters in our nation's history, is a must. And there is no shortage of historical injustices that warrant apologies: Reagan offered regret for Roosevelt's internment camps, Johnson hinted at an apology for the My Lai Massacre in Vietnam, and Clinton extended an apology for the 40-year Tuskegee Syphilis Study. An American president has yet to offer a direct apology for the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima or Nagasaki, although the Peace Abbey's 375 mile Stonewalk commemorating unknown civilians killed in war on the 60th anniversary of this crime against humanity, paved the way for a future mea culpa.

It is notable that these dedicated Quaker friends, Melix, Palmer, and Grant, were actively addressing the regrettable legacy of Quaker boarding schools before Pope Francis got around to issuing his apology. The pontiff did admit to the indigenous peoples of Canada the Church's role in systemic abuse and enforced cultural assimilation at residential parochial schools.

These examples of admitting wrongdoing highlight a growing collective recognition of past wrongs and the importance of seeking healing together as a faith community.

It is only fitting to turn this reflection inward and ask ourselves: What do each of us need to apologize for? The longer we allow unacknowledged wrongs to linger, the greater the necessity for reconciliation. This is not merely about seeking forgiveness. *It is an invitation to take meaningful action to rectify our mistakes and*

make amends. By embracing this responsibility, we collectively contribute to a culture of healing and understanding, fostering a more compassionate and reconciled world.

Each sincere “*mea culpa*” can spark a transformative journey, both for ourselves and those we may have affected.



Report on Quaker Earthcare Witness Meeting

Rod and Ruth Zwirner

Rod and Ruth Zwirner, attendees at West Falmouth, recently participated via zoom in the annual QEW steering committee meeting held this year in Albuquerque. Following are some reflections and thoughts from the gathering.

The theme for Quaker Earthcare Witness’ fall gathering, held from October 3 – 6, was “Water is Life.” About 50 folks attended. Each yearly meeting is allowed two representatives on the steering committee and several other individuals are additionally approved to be on the steering committee. The vision and witness statement follows.

WE ARE CALLED to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God.

WE WORK to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God’s Creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right, and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth’s ecological integrity.

WE PROMOTE these Truths by being patterns and examples, by communicating our message, and by providing spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship to the earth.

The keynote speaker this year was Dr. Lyla June Johnston, an Indigenous musician, scholar, and community organizer of Diné (Navajo), Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne), and European lineages. Her insightful message and songs focused on Indigenous rights, supporting youth, and traditional land stewardship practices. (See www.lylajune.com).

Sarah Namaste, AFSC New Mexico Program director, followed, sharing on *Faith in Action: Climate Justice Stories*. We also welcomed Clara Simms of Interfaith Power and Light sharing powerful reflections on advocacy and adaptation in New Mexico: *(Re)becoming People of Place*.

Keith Runyon, QEW general secretary, brings youthful energy to the organization. His home meeting is in California and he had been associated with the Meeting property which has been recently returned to the Nisenan tribe. He, his partner, and baby were traveling this summer visiting yearly meetings across the U.S., FGC, as well as addressing the Friends World Committee on Consultation (WFCC) gathering in South Africa. Miche McCall, based in New York City, heads up the organization's communication and with Keith shares gratitude for the opportunity to work with QEW. Miche and Keith both talked about various peace building programs offered during the year: Peacemaking and Earthcare; Warheads to Windmills; Growing Universalism; and Bolivia and Food Security. Miche participated with the Summer of Heat activities, including getting arrested with Earth Quaker Action Team.

At the FWCC gathering Keith approached climate issues as a tapestry with themes of weaving Ubuntu, caring for creation and healing injustice, past and present, into a visible action plan. In New Mexico it was agreed QEW would work with FWCC whose previous gatherings produced the Kabarak Call(2012] and the Pisac Minute(2016).

One immediate task for collaboration between FWCC and QEW is a Climate Action Mapping project. FWCC has an advanced computer program for refining their list of Meetings worldwide. It is hoped all Meetings can describe projects they are working on in this effort, the experiences can be shared in order to increase efficiency as we work and learn from one another. At climatemapping.org there is a beginning list of possible ways to connect. It is hoped the resulting web of connections will lead to spiritual growth as we approach unprecedented planetary challenges. QEW has taken on this challenge and will need to raise money from individuals and meetings to further this project.

For example, if the Friendship Gardening project that came out of the West Falmouth meeting can connect with the community in its effort to increase food security, our experiences can be shared widely, especially in areas where over 90% of food is imported.

As various dimensions of peace building come together, a highly differentiated world has a better chance to live into the spirit of Ubuntu or however we choose to name it.

For questions about programs from the two gatherings contact us at 508-728-3788 or 37zrod@comcast.net.



New woodburning stove, East Sandwich.

“Art thou in the Darkness? Mind it not, for if thou dost it will fill thee more, but stand still and act not, and wait in patience till Light arises out of Darkness to lead thee.” -- James Nayler.
[https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/21-65/.](https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/21-65/)

We had our final meeting of the year for the Friendship Garden project on October 9, honoring all the people who participated by having a dinner in the West Falmouth Meetinghouse (see photos, pp. 8-9 in this issue). What a joy! The garden was (almost) all put to bed for the winter, so we didn't have to work. The food was great, and the conversation amongst friends was just plain fun.

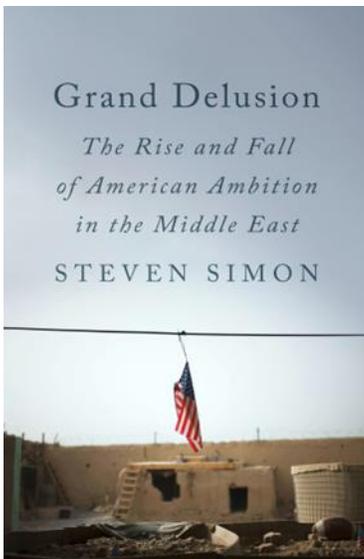
So what have we learned? I can think of several gleanings from our first year:

- Having a **potluck dinner** first, followed by work, was perfect. We all just really enjoyed the chance to talk together. Once the initial planting was done, the workload dropped a bit, so we had more time to talk.
- It really worked well to have a **weekly list** of what needed to be done. Somehow, magically, everyone picked something from the list that they wanted to do, and it all got done.
- We achieved our goal of making it possible for a **group consisting mostly of retirees to garden**. It was key to hire a landscaper to do the heavy lifting, to have an automated watering system to make sure we had to do very little hand watering, and to aerate our compost pile with a drill and auger bit rather than having to use a pitch fork to toss it.
- We harvested a wide range of crops, some of which did quite well. Our efforts with the **cabbage family** (cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, kale) were less successful because of insects. As organic gardeners, we don't use insecticides, so we'll probably not grow these crops next year. Or, alternatively, we could choose to use row covers for the entire season.
- I've already started planning for next year. The biggest change is that I've started using my garden planning software to ensure that every time we harvest something, a new plant (and some compost) is ready to go in the same space ("**succession planting**"). This will enable us to harvest more crops in the same space.
- Our pathways were where most of the **weeds** arose (other areas had compost mulch to suppress weeds). Where we left the pathways bare the weeds were even more aggressive. It'd be great to have brick pathways, but that's pretty expensive. We did need to lightly weed the various beds, but that was mostly during the early part of the season.
- We successfully **delivered a lot of food to the Falmouth Service Center**. They really appreciated the fresh, organic produce.
- But most of all, I just think about **the amazing the group of people who volunteered** in the garden! I so much appreciated everyone's enthusiasm.

We are still planning to do our pilot test of the ways to help Falmouth Service Center clients grow their own food, but that part of the project has been delayed a bit because of construction at the Service Center. We hope to roll that pilot test starting in December or January.

What We're Reading

John Davidson: *Grand Delusion: The Rise and Fall of American Ambition in the Middle East*
by Steven Simon.



In his book *Grand Delusion*, longtime American foreign policy insider Steven Simon offers a penetrating reckoning with his country's involvement in the Middle East. The events of the last year threw into sharp relief the United States' rapidly diminishing role in that region. The government has offered only token verbal resistance to Israel's assaults on heavily populated areas in Gaza and more recently into Lebanon. The Biden Administration has levied sanctions on certain violent settlers who attacked Palestinians on the West Bank, and the U.S. along with its allies Germany and the United Kingdom stopped selling certain 2,000 pound bombs to Israel. But overall, the U.S. has given Israel essentially a free hand, purportedly because of Joe Biden's fears regarding the upcoming election. Although Simon published his book before the Gaza war, his discussion of delusions remains relevant as an attempted explanation for forty years of failed policy.

Over the course of his analysis, Simon draws stark lessons: Washington's Middle East strategy has been, as his title suggests, fabricated in the continual superimposition of grand ideas by policymakers convinced of their own virtuous intentions toward a region about which they knew little and cared less. He writes that in their view "facts don't matter, just intentions" (p. xvi). I agree with the author that it is a tale of gross misunderstandings, appalling errors, and death and destruction on an epochal scale. But can Washington learn from these catastrophic blunders to craft a more constructive approach in an era of waning U.S. influence? Honesty about past biases and confusions would be a good start.

Despite his role as a State Department insider and National Security Council advisor, Simon finds little reason to applaud the policies he helped shape. In fact, he now believes that, during his decades in Washington, American efforts in the Middle East have often been a fool's errand. More often than not, ambitious plans to secure stability, promote democracy, and thwart terrorism resulted instead in strengthening autocracy, aggravating economic misery, and inciting violence.

Grand Delusion tells the story of eight successive U.S. presidential administrations, which gives the narrative a chronological clarity even if it obscures broader historical trends. The book begins with President Jimmy Carter's negotiation of the Camp David accords, the historic 1979 peace agreement between Israel and Egypt (Carter's foreign policy is described on pp. 13-30). According to Simon, U.S. involvement in the Middle East up to that point had been relatively modest. That decisively changed after Camp David and, in his view, it is really after 1979 that we see America militarizing its Middle East policy. Simon notes that the consequences of this shift can be seen in everything from the Reagan administration's botched intervention in the Lebanese civil war in the early 1980s (Reagan's foreign policy is described on pp. 31-101) to Obama's self-described "shit show" in Libya, the disorderly U.S.-led NATO campaign that followed the 2011 uprising against the Libyan dictator Muammar al-Qaddafi.

In Simon's telling, the September 11, 2001, attacks by al Qaeda on the United States brought the militarization of U.S. policy in the Middle East to a climax (W. Bush administration policy is discussed on pp.

217-284). Moreover, in the aftermath, the Bush team twisted the nature of the jihadist threat, using 9/11 to justify a Captain Ahab–like quest for revenge overseen by neoconservative and hawkish officials recycled from the Reagan and first Bush administrations. Rather than al Qaeda’s leader, Osama bin Laden, the principal target soon became Saddam Hussein despite counterterrorism officials’ conclusion that the Iraqi dictator had no meaningful links to the terrorist group. The result was the invasion and occupation of Iraq, during which an even more radically anti-American terrorist group -- the Islamic State, also known as ISIS -- was incubated. Amid this costly conflict and the parallel one unfolding in Afghanistan, little progress was made in securing U.S. interests or in making the Middle East better off. Simon’s verdict on these years is devastating, and I am in agreement with his critique of both wars.

The Obama administration came into office wanting to quit the Middle East to pivot toward Asia, only to find itself dragged back in by the rise of ISIS, which foiled the president’s efforts to withdraw from Iraq, and by the unexpected Arab uprisings of 2010–11 (Obama administration policy is discussed on pp. 285-354). In the wake of Obama’s well-received 2009 speech in Cairo promising a new beginning in U.S. policy in the region, the administration’s equivocating responses to the popular revolts against U.S.-allied regimes left democrats and autocrats alike feeling betrayed. For Simon, it is a bitter irony that Obama’s single significant strategic accomplishment, the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, was almost immediately repudiated by Trump.

The Trump administration instead embarked on a vengeful but ineffective pressure campaign against the Islamic Republic while embracing autocratic regimes on which Washington had long if anxiously relied, including President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi’s Egypt and, especially, the Saudi government being reshaped by Prince Mohammed (Trump administration policy is discussed on pp. 355-390). The administration also dropped the pretense of American support for the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian peace process, choosing instead to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem and to engineer the Abraham Accords. That agreement brought together Israel and, eventually, four Arab states—Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates—that seemed to share Israel’s concerns about Iran, were eager for Israeli business, and no longer even feigned much interest in the fate of the Palestinians.

Simon argues that with these steps Trump’s transactional deal-making exacerbated the chaotic nature of U.S. Middle East policy, which had vacillated between pieties about democracy promotion and realist visions of strategic dominance. Trump did much to accelerate the erosion of U.S. influence, sharing with Obama what Simon calls a declining sense of the utility, purpose, and effectiveness of American engagement, and especially of military intervention, in the Middle East. By the time Biden reached office in 2021, U.S. strategy was self-defeating, and neither friends nor foes among the region’s leading states had much regard for the United States or its policy.

Given the extraordinary scale of American involvement in the Middle East over the past four and a half decades, why have U.S. policies been so consistently inept as well as ham-handed? Simon offers several answers. First and most colorful is his assessment of the people responsible for creating them. Carter’s inner circle was, in his view, dysfunctional. The Reagan administration was peopled by what he terms thin-skinned, devious, recalcitrant antagonists. George H.W. Bush’s team was blinded by the glare of U.S. power and comforts of wishful thinking. Clinton’s Middle East advisers were hobbled by an attraction to faulty doctrines. George W. Bush was demonstrably narrow-minded, incurious, and impulsive, with a crude approach to foreign policy dilemmas. Obama’s trouble in Libya reflected no malign intent, only incompetence. And then there was Trump, who assigned the Middle East portfolio to his son-in-law Jared Kushner in pursuit of self-dealing crony capitalism. After reading this catalog, it is hard to resist the

conclusion that U.S. tax dollars have been paying the salaries of an astonishing collection of vain incompetents.

Equally important for Simon is a deeply flawed policy process. Rather than common sense or strategic insight, U.S. policymaking in the region has invariably been shaped by political imperatives, ideological fixations, emotional impulses, and a coordination process that necessitates some sort of interagency consensus on the part of cabinet members whose priorities are often incompatible. Even the most gifted analysts, he suggests, would have trouble getting good ideas implemented.

Yet there are other explanations for the United States' Middle East failures that Simon neglects. He never makes mention of what is termed the Israel lobby, as he would probably tend to see such an explanation as simplistic or wrong. He also would not accept the economic determinism of those who see the interests of the "military industrial complex" as the explanation for American wars and support for Israeli wars.

By organizing *Grand Delusion* around successive administrations, he is compelled to foreground the political cycles that shape short-term policy choices rather than focus on broader national inclinations and global developments. American triumphalism has inhibited the sort of soul-searching in Washington that might have produced more serious deliberation about the consequences of U.S. policies and what, exactly, U.S. interests in the Middle East should be. Over the last twenty-five years, under the tutelage and extravagant backing of the United States, both Israel and Saudi Arabia have grown into regional powerhouses that were increasingly ready to challenge Washington when their interests diverged. Although such nurturing of vulnerable countries into powerful players (and frequent irritants) counts as success according to Simon, I would emphasize the costs. That is a crucial consideration: the United States and the region have both paid a high price for U.S. patronage of Israel, as can be seen by the growing isolation of the U.S. in the U.N., where it has been the sole remaining major protector of Israel in a series of General Assembly votes over the past year.

Overall, I would recommend this book to any Quaker as a good review of several decades of history. Whatever one concludes about his explanatory framework, his damning conclusions are difficult to rebut. As an explanation for America's foreign policy failures in the Middle East it is also useful if incomplete.

Simon, S. *Grand Delusion: The Rise and Fall of American Ambition in the Middle East*. London, England: Penguin Press, 2023.



The changing of the gourd.

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Additional Credits: Front cover, George Fox quotation, WF Meetinghouse, beautifully rendered by Helen Mangelsdorf, October 2024. Photo of butternut squash, p. 24 by Gail Melix, Fall 2020.

Back cover photo: Friendship Garden of Falmouth, by Erica H. Adams, September 11, 2024. Erica had this to say about her photo, "Rebecca beautifully expressed the joy and ease in our work. It was as if she were walking on air!"

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