

# western north carolina woman

celebrating the strength, wisdom, & grace of women

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**Making peace  
is a matter of  
consciousness  
and creativity.**

**It is a matter of intention,  
of vigilance, of bold and  
rebellious originality.**

**We are the help we've  
been seeking.**

**Jan Phillips**



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## being peace

by marina raye

My two weeks alone had been a time of deep introspection and renewal. It was blissful to awaken each morning to no obligations, no schedule, nothing but peace in each moment. I could meditate any time, for as long as I wanted. I could control my energy and my space to be filled with peace. My husband, Charlie, was visiting family in Europe for the Christmas holidays. Our e-mails reminded me how much we missed each other. I was aware of how unconditionally loving and accepting we could be of each other when we were 3500 miles apart. Then he returned and our normal dance of relationship resumed. Our marriage is good, blessed with common passions and dreams. And like most marriages, it is spiced with differences.

I set my intention for the new year to practice being peace in each moment. In examining the times that I don't feel at peace, I notice that the energy of my heart feels blocked, like a door has slammed shut. Simple example: we have adopted a puppy, a very stubborn hound dog. We are trying to train Arjuna, and don't always agree on the best technique. When she snapped at our neighbor, Charlie said she was just trying to play. I argued that snapping is never appropriate behavior. I could feel the conflict in my body as the energy in my heart constricted. My breathing felt shallow. We cut short our time with Arjuna and each other, and Charlie went to the movies. I wanted to cry because my peace had flown away. Or had it?

Focusing on my breath, I remembered the profound practice of Tonglen, as taught by Buddhist teacher, Pema Chodron ([shambhala.org/teachers/pema/tonglen1.php](http://shambhala.org/teachers/pema/tonglen1.php)).

I took a moment to feel my vulnerability and the tenderness of my heart. I breathed in the feeling of conflict and breathed out compassion for myself and for Charlie. Then I continued to breathe into the blocked feeling. I breathed in the pain and confusion of our puppy who was resisting being formed into an acceptable, polite member of our family. I breathed out compassion for her, a warm hug and acceptance of her puppyhood. The practice of Tonglen then recommends working with the larger picture. I breathed in the suffering of the four legged ones who were abused, homeless, hungry. I breathed out comfort to them. After a few moments of this practice, my heart no longer felt blocked, and I could again be peace.

The world seems saturated with violence. How can I possibly change the world to be a place of peace? All I can do is change myself. We are not here to create peace. Peace has always been here although it is sleeping in some of our brothers and sisters. We are here to awaken

peace. Spiritual teacher Eckart Tolle (eckharttolle.com) has said, "It is inner stillness that will save and transform the world." My intention is to cultivate this inner stillness by being peace. I make choices that deliver a life of holistic balance: eating organic foods, walking gently on the Earth, doing my bliss as my life work, and daily meditation and spiritual practices.

My friend Kaye walks a deeply spiritual path and is the most present person I know. She recently told me that she finds her peace disturbed when she is surrounded by negative conversation, particularly about politics. She feels her energy constricting and wants to change the conversation or walk away. I shared with her the practice of Tonglen which can shift our response to any situation. It is particularly helpful in dealing with areas of resistance, as in my friend's reaction to what she perceives as negative conversation. The world of politics is both fascinating and maddening. It is a challenge to read the Internet news sources without getting pulled into a polarized position. Awareness of the games of polarity and of the enormous suffering in the world offers many opportunities for the practice of Tonglen.

Family conflicts provide ample opportunities for spiritual practice. Charlie's daughter is going through some tough times right now. Her life has been a challenge, both for her and for those who love her. She raises her children on junk food and television, and wonders why they are often sick and have disruptive behavior. In the past, I have had some strong opinions about how to fix the situation. My judgmental attitude did not bring me peace. Besides practicing Tonglen, I am working on surrendering my strong opinions; "I don't know" is a good place for me to be concerning our adult children. Focusing on being peace, I accept that it is not my role to give unsolicited advice.

Being peace requires being present. Anything that brings us to the present moment is our teacher: a bird singing, a beautiful sunset, a dog barking, a siren screaming. Buddhist Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh, (plumvillage.org) teaches a simple mindfulness exercise. "Breathing in I calm my body.

Breathing out I smile." This practice can be used as a sitting or walking meditation. I also like to use it throughout the day and while going to sleep.

A vital part of being peace is doing what we love. Playing my flutes is what I took birth for. It is my deepest bliss. Charlie and I support ourselves with our art forms. For me, that is music, and for him, it is hand crafting native flutes. We believe that we are here to serve and that we are giving a living rather than just making a living. It took many years to discover our gifts. We were both involved in offering leadership training programs before we left the corporate world. It took courage to let go of the steady pay check, but the predictable life had little to offer other than security. Through our life work we are being peace. That feels blissful!

Gratitude is vital to the process of being peace. A beautiful practice is to start and end each day giving thanks. Then take moments throughout the day to express gratitude. My friend's son recently began a two-year Peace Corps adventure in Ghana. His comments have centered on the joy and gratitude he notices from the native people who have few possessions. He contrasted their attitude to that of many Westerners who have so much and are so dissatisfied. In addition to giving thanks for abundant blessings in my life, I am expanding my practice of gratitude by giving thanks for peace. It is

important to be grateful in advance, believing before we see the evidence of peace. Sometimes the world seems too dark for peace to survive. Then I breathe in the darkness and breathe out lightness and peace. We must keep peace alive in our hearts by being peace.

Marina Raye is internationally known as the "Feminine Voice of the Native Flute." Her music is used by many to invoke inner peace and a sense of closeness to nature. Marina and her husband Charlie Oakwind live in Black Mountain where they are building a solar powered home. [ [marinaraye.com](http://marinaraye.com) ]



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## circle of peace

by julia gaunt of [A Spirit's Wings](#)

Not quite a year ago I was searching for answers. I was searching for something new and different that would grab me, inspire me and give me new direction. I asked the universe to give me a new kind of work. I am an artist but I sought to find another way of expressing myself other than my current medium of fabric. I found more than one way, I found a whole flock.

I answered an ad in a local paper that read "bird handler" and not far into our 20 minute conversation I knew this was my new direction. Closing my cell phone I yelled, "Yes!" Turns out it wasn't a job being offered but a business doing white dove releases. Now I had done a lot of releasing in my 52 years on this planet, but this kind of releasing had a different twist. But releasing is releasing after all. Open up, let it go, be detached. The difference however is that these birds come back, so letting go holds a different meaning. Sounded relatively easy to me. Right.

It's kind of like the boomerang effect, you just throw it out there and something in the velocity of the dynamics of the shape of the thing swings it back around again. With doves, specifically Rock Doves, it is believed that they may have the equivalent of a compass in their brains allowing them to sense magnetic fields that aid their sense of direction and locating capabilities. Another possibility is that these birds use subtle differences in polarized sunlight, various landmarks and, at night, star patterns and motions to calibrate their "compass". But typically, most homing doves do not fly at night, unless they are trained to do so. Anyway, with decent flying conditions and good training, homing doves home.

Needless to say, within two weeks I miraculously acquired enough money to get started. You know sometimes how you just know that you are supposed to do something but you are not at all sure how you are supposed to do it? Well, that was clearly the situation. I knew I had to go for it. Looking out my kitchen window, there was an old kid's playhouse we had thought about tearing down. Perfect. With a little help from my friend, my ex-husband that is, we managed to convert that old scrappy building into a decent loft. I think he figured it was in both our best interest that I find another livelihood. He was right about that.

By the third week, I had young doves settling into their new home. Along with the young birds, I acquired eight breeding pairs and set them up in small cages in the back room of my workshop. Keeping 'prisoners' as they are called was not my ideal of housing birds,

however, and before too long even the prisoners were given their freedom to fly—with training of course.

About a month into keeping the young doves in the loft who were to become the flyers, I began to let them do what is called routing. This is the term meaning to allow a homing dove to become familiar with its territory. They have already learned to trap, which is the name for the one way door that leads into their loft. Now at this point in their training, exploring the terrain in all directions of the loft is of utmost importance. After another couple weeks, the doves begin to fly together in a flock formation. To watch that coming together is a sight to behold. Around and around and around the circumference of the house and yard they fly—maybe 50 to 75 times with each outing.

Within several months I had my flock trained up to about ten miles. Since the birds tend to fly clockwise most of the time, I had to calculate drop points so that each time the birds were freed they would fly over a previously flown territory.

I really enjoyed releasing the doves spontaneously in shopping centers or at schools or just by the roadside. One time I was in a parking lot. I just drove up, parked, opened the back of my van and let them fly out. There was a spectacular 360 degree view and the doves waited until they were all together and then flew in a huge circle, not once but many times around way up in the sky. They appeared like diamonds in the rough, sparkling against the deep blue of the sky. When one bird flew astray, the others would circle back to gather that one into the flock before their journey home. A woman on break from her job was standing there watching. She approached me and said "Somehow I just feel uplifted from seeing those birds fly. Thank you."

I began to do these spontaneous releases on a regular basis to give the doves the training they need to go the distance that might one day be required. Another time I released them near the Airport at a hotel. I walked inside as I often do to see if anyone wanted to come and witness a white dove release. "A what?" they said. It was a group of elderly World War II veterans who were there for their yearly convention. "Dove release" was all I had to say, and their pigeon stories began. Apparently there was a homing pigeon named GI Joe who was credited with saving thousands of lives—racing 20 miles in 20 minutes to deliver a message calling off bombing raids of a town captured just hours before by allied troops. There was another story of a pigeon named Blackie Holligan who was released into a barrage of enemy fire. He showed up long overdue, bloody from shrapnel, but still holding on to his message. After sharing their bird stories, the men and their wives made their way out into the parking lot to witness the release. Some 25 folks stood in awe as the doves flew and then gathered together in the blue sky. When it was all over an old gent turned and said to me "That was the best thing happened here all weekend—thank you."

Once again, I was awestruck how a simple thing like letting some white birds fly can touch people and lift their spirits.

Throughout history, the White Dove has long been recognized as a symbol of peace and goodwill. The dove is a true hope for the future—a future of peace.

Doves have occupied a prominent and generally revered position in most cultures and religions. Today, the dove maintains its symbol of purity and innocence in most religions. The dove is also a bird of



prophecy and can help you see what you can create in your life. I'll vouch for that! The dove has also been associated with female sexuality and the goddesses Astarte and Isis. The dove not only symbolizes peace and purity, but because of their devotion to their mates, they are a symbol of chastity and unending love. Doves spend their days preening their mates, looking after each other, building their families and rearing their offspring. Doves are loyal to their mates until death. Their love for each other is neverending.

I didn't know that doves mated year round, continually loving and kissing their mate. I discovered that both male and female doves sit on the nest, alternating shifts and once the babies are hatched both feed them. Equality seems to come naturally to these loving and devoted birds.

Funny how I came around to having birds in my life again. I asked that I might find an occupation where I may be of service. Through ceremony, doves aid us in letting our souls soar freely. Whether it be the blessed wedding of a couple about to embark on their journey together or a deceased soul's family benefitting by actually touching and releasing that symbolic soul into the sky, these birds offer a kind of unity and healing that astounds me.

"Oh that I had wings of a dove, for then I would fly away and be at rest". Psalms 55:6

We, as a whole, seek upliftment and by witnessing the doves in partnership, families, and communities, we too can learn from them ways of being in love and support with one another. Talk about no child left behind! Here we have no dove left behind. For when it's time to make that journey homeward, the doves wait for each other until they are all there and then they fly home.

I am grateful to have these winged creatures because they show me the circle of life, they teach me to trust, to have faith, to let go, to fly, to take risks, and to truly soar above it all. I feel a sense of peace when I watch them. I set them free and in turn they set me free. And when a dove does not come home, I grieve. And then I realize that to give a creature its freedom is to know that it may not return and I need let go of thinking I can protect them from all things.

Sometimes late at night when I go to count my doves and one or two are gone, a sadness comes over me and I say to myself, "Oh another bird is lost or eaten by a hawk, oh no!" And then another part of me—my wiser self—opens my eyes to see all these beautiful white birds I am blessed to have in my life and I say, "Is my loft half empty, or half full?" Thank you doves!

Julia Gaunt has lived in Asheville for 25 years as an artist/milliner/bird woman. Yes, she still makes some hats. And yes, they do come home!

[A Spirit's Wings](#) offers white dove releases for all kinds of special events. [ 828-582-9115; [aspiritswings@yahoo.com](mailto:aspiritswings@yahoo.com) ]





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## dispatches from the not-so-common-cold

by katey schultz

It feels like my back muscles have been filleted for beef jerky. At times they ache so blaringly I can feel them being dehydrated. The pain is concentrated at my joints, the base of my spine, and my neck. My tonsils have doubled in size, as if they were trying to high-five each other from opposite sides of my throat. I do not cheer them on; instead, I try to ease the swelling with Traditional Medicinals Throat Coat tea. Cup after cup after cup, they do not respond. In frenzy, I reach for my expired Zinc-Echinacea cough drops. After twenty minutes of sucking, the tablet is dissolved and I decide it is time for an examination.

My face only centimeters from the bathroom mirror, I curse the white splotches on my tonsils that will not go away. Desperate, I knock around the house for some natural healing book (I am house sitting for friends one mile down the road from my cabin, hence the helpful access to an indoor bathroom with knobs and handles that make water move). I find the Family Guide to Homeopathy and the accompanying drawer of pills the size of mouse turds. The book is arranged in some odd fashion, which I cannot decipher. For example, polycythemia precedes Raynaud's Disease (see also acrocyanosis) with nothing in between. What ever happened to good old-fashioned alphabetical order? I flip to another section of the book, randomly placing my finger on the first open page. This action reminds me of flipping through a phone book and, momentarily, I recall a brief prank phone call obsession I had with 4th grade friend Brittany Fulkerson. Looking for homeopathic treatment for my cold feels about as random as those phone calls.

"Excuse me, I'm looking for Cold Symptoms or Sore Throat?"

"Um, sorry lady, you're looking at Wisdom Teeth Problems, page 183."

"But, didn't I flip to the S section?"

"Sorry, there is no S section."

I give up and try directory assistance, the index, which refers me to page 347. There I learn that life is not as simple as just "the common cold." There are at least twenty different types of colds, all of which are found in the chapter titled "Noses." There are colds accompanied by chilly limbs or mucus like raw egg white. There are colds that involve burning, hot eyes and immeasurable cravings for water. There



are colds whose chief symptom is "streaming eyes." Another cold worsens when strangers walk in the room or when the sufferer makes the slightest movement. Still another cold is simply classified as: "person not at all thirsty but wants lots of attention and sympathy." I feel worse by the time I have read through all the descriptions, and cannot remember which one sounds most like mine.

"Hello, operator?"

"Go ahead."

"Um, I have a cold. I mean, a sore throat. I mean, it has something to do with my nose, I think."

"Pardon?"

"You see, it's like there's a racquetball game going on between my ears. And my back hurts. And I crave ice cream."

"Anything else?"

"And my tonsils are turning into Dalmatians. Like, reverse Dalmatians."

"I see."

I am referred to page 273, where I encounter Nasal Discharge, Cancer of the Breast, Bedwetting, Huntington's Chorea, Birthmarks, and Congenital Disorders. By now my head is spinning faster than the pages, which probably explains the poor decision I make next: to practice guitar since I have to lead 40 people singing around a campfire for a special ceremony in just two days. About the time I get to "West Virginia, Mountain Mama, take me hooo-ooome..." I realize my mistake, leave the guitar on the table, and dive into bed.

In my book of homeopathy, "Bed" would have its own chapter. There would be at least twenty different kinds of beds, and lots of ways to fall asleep in them. Tonight, I choose the big bed, with the vaulted ceiling and pale green walls and purple comforter. I choose a chiropractic pillow that boosts my head to avoid post-nasal drip. I choose no alarm clocks at-all-what-so-ever. And I choose clap-on clap-off lights.

Clap.

Katey Schultz is a freelance writer and tutor living in Celo, North Carolina. Her current project highlights the salient aspects of adolescence, combining her memoirs with informal research conducted in local schools.

[ [livejournal.com/users/kateyschultz](http://livejournal.com/users/kateyschultz); (updated daily) and post a comment. ]



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## honoring conflict as an opportunity for transformation

by kim wright

At the breakfast table one morning I was having a loud conversation with Marty, listing his every fault, when I heard our tenants moving around downstairs. I was immediately embarrassed and ashamed, hoping they hadn't heard. After all, we're peacemakers, known for our wonderful skills in resolving conflict, helping people talk out their problems, etc. And I was yelling like a banshee.

A few days later, a therapist friend confessed that she'd thrown something at her significant other. She too felt embarrassed and ashamed. We each thought we were more "enlightened" than that. Resolving conflict used to be easy. When I was a kid, I just beat my little brother into submission and gave my little sisters THE LOOK. They were quiet and we had no conflict, right?

In adulthood, I developed a pattern of avoiding conflict until I reached the point of exploding. Then I would revert to my old pattern of being the biggest or scariest one in the conflict as a way of dominating the conversation. It seemed that I had two channels: complete avoidance or explosion. In most cases, the explosions happened with the ones I was closest to: mostly husbands and children. Often, I scared myself, so I know I was effective in scaring the other.

Recognizing that the avoid-explode pattern wasn't workable, I began to learn more about conflict resolution. I read self-help books. I took personal development courses. I got counseling. I studied communication skills. I learned a lot about relationships. I went to law school and learned the rules of civilized argument. And I got really good at helping others resolve their conflicts. But, when triggered, I still found myself acting in ways that I'd rather not publish to the whole world.

Along the way, I realized that my father was good at exploding and my mother was the queen of conflict avoidance. Lucky me! I'd learned from both role models and had developed my own blend. Okay, not so lucky.

One of the problems with avoiding conflict is that you wrap yourself into a pretzel. There isn't much self expression. There's little room for taking a stand for what you believe. After a while, you lose yourself and become a reactive machine, doing whatever you can to stay away

from conflict. You forget what is important to you and who you are. Or so it appeared with my mother.

Of course, for my conflict-avoidant mother, my explosive father was the perfect partner. He gave her lots of evidence about why avoidance was her best course of action. But his way of addressing conflict didn't work well for him either. He didn't get to have a real or meaningful relationship with any of us. In our family, we didn't have much in the way of open communication. Even when he wasn't exploding, the rest of us walked around on eggshells, not knowing when the next blast was coming.

I've learned that if I want to break the patterns of dealing with conflict that were programmed in my family of origin—in other words, most of my patterns—I need someone from outside the family system to help me learn and develop healthier and more effective ways. So, lately, Marty and I have been in a class called Building Sustainable Relationships (with Barry & Janae Weinhold). We each have a support structure for our relationship. We're working on our conflicts in a more structured way, much like what we offer to other couples as they work through relationship issues in mediation or the collaborative divorce process. We're both learning a lot.

All that work on myself has also strengthened the foundation of being compassionate with the conflicts of others and has improved my skills in resolving divorce conflict. I know what it feels like to have my old programming take over and to say things I'd never say in my right mind. I'm more compassionate with myself and with Marty when we revert to old patterns. I understand that he's running his family's scripts about conflict too.

From exploring my reactions to conflict, I have learned a lot about myself and others. In conflict, I can try on new ideas and refine my own opinions through discussion. I can see how the patterns in my family have been passed down and I can work on breaking them. I have learned that my explosions have more to do with my hot-buttons than they have to do with Marty. When a conflict triggers my emotions, it gives me clues about where I have more work to do on myself to become that enlightened being that I want to be. Most of the time, I can catch myself avoiding conflict, and I talk about it before I get to that explosive stage. Rather than being ashamed and embarrassed by my learning curve, I can share what I'm learning with others. And it opens the space for them to share with me so we all grow.

Someday, I hope to actually reach that point of enlightenment where I welcome conflict as an opportunity for transformation.

**Kim Wright** practices law at the Healers of Conflicts Law & Conflict Resolution Center in Asheville. She is a national leader on bringing the healing paradigm to law practice and will soon launch a new magazine for lawyers on that topic.



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### Epidemic

I want to write a poem like SARS that infects  
All those exposed, compels experts to dissect it  
Into all its smaller parts. They'll hold it up to the map  
Granted by the Human Genome Project and nod.  
I want to build a poem of proteins found in DNA  
So that it hums humanity. I won't care you'll discover  
My poem's lowly birth festered in pig shit and  
Chicken shit before making the species jump.  
I want to write a poem that will skip from country to  
Country, ignore race, be traced, if it must, to a single  
Hotel in Hong Kong, be traced back to one woman.  
I want to write a poem that slips past gas-masks,  
Evades quarantines, spreads at a fevered rate.  
For one day, crown my poem Queen for her urbane efforts.  
I want to write a poem that eradicates civilian  
Death tolls, suffocates the air of fear from our  
Sanguine natures, and leaves us coughing, weak,  
Thus helpless to peace.

by Britt Kaufmann



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### funny, isn't it?

by jeanne charters

It is time for my annual "guilty pleasures" column...you know, the one when I admit that my tastes sometimes run to less than the gold standard in areas of media selection. I need to compose this right now because I am spending most of my writing time lately researching and writing a novel about the Irish Famine and its daughters. Kinda heavy stuff, but I'm mixing in lots of sex and drugs to keep myself interested. Too bad there was no rock & roll back in the middle of the 19th century or that would be there, too.

This is again the season when the television networks trot out their slimiest trash in hopes of piling up massive ratings which advertisers will flock to like flies to garbage dumps. The analogy is intended. They think we're dumb; and obviously, they're not far off in their assessment of American brain power because the car companies are falling all over each other to show their behemoths on television. Oh, that's right...American car sales are in the dumper. Hmmm.....

I can't afford to be a snob about this, though, because I have made my living on such stuff for lots of years. Also, I sometimes watch it, much as it pains me to admit it.

WNC Woman, however, is run by a couple of mighty classy chicks. Julie and Sandi do not watch television. Don't think they even have a set in their respective homes. Therefore, I must take it upon myself to report to you readers who do watch television my take on the latest crop of crap coming over the airwaves. Somebody has to do it!

DANCING WITH THE STARS: A mighty fun and harmless show where grade C celebrities team up with professional ballroom dancers and compete against each other for prizes. Actually, I respect a lot of these people for having the chutzpah to put on the rhinestones and high heels (the men's are higher) and trot their slightly saggy derrieres out onto a dance floor. I just wonder when they are going to run out of people who used to be somebody, or nearly used to be somebody, or wish they could be somebody, to feature in the show.

I fear that, if this program stays on the air long enough, we may all be asked to be part of it. I mean, if you ever won a spelling bee or sang in the chorus of your high school musical, or maybe passed out a pamphlet at Bele Chere, you could be approached. I have never in my life heard the name of the gorgeous blonde wrestler who is now making like a prima ballerina all over my television screen. Prediction: bet she wins it, though Nick Lachey's little brother, Drew, is looking mighty spritely with his partner, what's her name? Who're Nick and Drew Lachey? Pick up any copy of US Weekly and do your research, girl.

THE BACHELOR: By the time you read this, you may know who the gorgeous doctor from Nashville has chosen to be his one true love, but forgive my ponderings on this deep subject if he's already married someone. I think this guy is cuter and nicer than any of his predecessors. He dispatched the crazy oncologist in the first episode with as much class as any man who has ever publicly dumped a

psycho in recent memory.

The problem with *The Bachelor*, however, is that former bachelors have had such a lousy track record with their fiancées. None of the relationships have stuck, except for the little blonde bachelorette, Trista, who married the fireman from Colorado. Trista was also a participant in *Dancing with the Stars*, but a quick and teary loser, I fear. Fifteen minutes of fame indeed, especially with the baby boomers and their memories aging faster than the speed of sound.

**SKATING WITH THE STARS:** A blatant rip off of the dance show, but not nearly as much fun. However, I will say that judge Dorothy Hamill, looks as good as the day when she won the Gold! And she still has the haircut.

**BEAUTY AND THE GEEK:** I watched this show last season but haven't caught it yet this year. Produced by Ashton Kutcher who had the good sense to marry a woman w-a-a-a-y his senior, this program turned out to be a sweet little confection. The guys learned some social savvy from their beautiful partners, and the girls (who had no place to go but "up" in the brains department) learned some things about history, math and literature from their geeky guy pals. The concept appealed. There was absolutely no violence here; and though it was certainly a cream puff, it tasted like real sugar and not artificial flavoring to me.

**THE GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS:** At press time, the Oscars have not yet been handed out. I always like the Globes better anyway because, there, the people can drink and are unpredictable. My only complaint with the Golden Globes this year is that my personal favorite movie *Crash* was not nominated and *A History of Violence* was. I saw both and found nothing but violence in the latter mentioned movie. Oh, there was some gratuitous sex as well; but sex on a staircase has never appealed much to me. Think of the potential splinters. Though I disagreed with their choice of movie nominees, I watched the Globes anyway because the clothes are spectacular!

**BOSTON LEGAL:** Now, this program should NOT be on this list because it is really one of the few quality offerings on television. I am totally enamored of James Spader and have been for years. In *Boston Legal*, most of the time he comes across as a Cyborg until, once in a while, he again reveals the thinking woman's sex symbol whom I worship. Furthermore, William Shatner is an absolute hoot as an aging, slightly delusional lawyer who runs the show and takes no prisoners. Best of all, it's great to see Candace Bergen portraying a smart, savvy, grown-up woman who is not Botox frozen and does not wear a size 2.

It's been a relief to get all this off my chest, dear reader, and I just had a thought!

After I'm published, look for me on *Dancing with the Stars*. You won't be able to miss me. I'll be the one wearing the big hair, false eyelashes and green fringe around my midriff.

*Jeanne Charters is a former V.P. of Marketing for Viacom Television. She started her own award-winning broadcast advertising agency in 1990. Jeanne lives in Fairview with her husband, Matt Restivo. [ [charmkt@juno.com](mailto:charmkt@juno.com); 828-628-0023 ]*

**Western North Carolina Woman**



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### Snowballs

We crouched under the elevated boardwalk  
Flinching from snow-encrusted rocks  
Thrown by Yupik schoolmates.

Bruises well under layers of winter clothing  
Which fails to warm us. My sister and I crawl over  
Ice on our hands and knees, hoping no  
One else will see our rout home from school.

Alessa E. Leming

I saw Jesus in a cloudbank  
I saw Jesus in a cloudbank  
when I was seven years old.  
Flying high above Canada,  
his hands spread in a benediction  
over the earth.

Did those brave souls on  
flight 93 feel the same sense of peace  
when they decided the better part  
of valor lay in an isolated field in Pennsylvania,  
offering their lives in a mad rush to the cockpit  
so that other sacrificial lambs would survive?  
Alessa E. Leming

Alessa E. Leming is a massage therapist in Spruce Pine. She also  
dabbles in karate, B&W photography and writing.



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## little boy battles

by tori gallagher

When our youngest sons were younger still and still liked Dr. Seuss, one of my favorite bedtime books was Fox in Socks. It's always been one of my personal favorites, and they loved all the tongue-twisting sound effects, the rhyming, alliteration, and general silliness. Like this passage:

"When tweetle beetles fight, it's called a tweetle beetle battle. And when they battle in a puddle, it's a tweetle beetle puddle battle. AND when tweetle beetles battle with paddles in a puddle, they call it a tweetle beetle puddle paddle battle AND..."

You have to read that last part aloud. Fast. Come on. It's fun stuff. It sure tickled the little guys. And the more I stumbled, the more they loved it.

Little did I know then, however, that Fox in Socks was more than just fun with language. It was insightful child psychology. It was prophecy. I've come to a realization. I am raising tweetle beetles.

Here's just one example. One day last summer my boys got bored. So they did what little boys seem to do when they're bored - they did battle. With pillows, thankfully, but George (who is nine) didn't bank on the fact that his little brother, Ben (seven), was stronger than he looked. I guess Ben walloped him good with that pillow and to George's surprise and shock, it hurt.

I was in the kitchen when I heard his cry of outrage. I dashed to the den and made it just in time to snag George just as he dropped his own pillow and was about to pound his little brother with one small, balled up fist. Fortunately, I caught him from behind because he kept swinging for a moment until he realized that Ben was out of reach and that I was holding him back. When I thought it was safe, I marched him into the other room telling him along the way that hitting his little brother was not okay. "But I missed!" he cried. I decided not to tackle that for the moment.

I let him sit and cool off while I went to check on Ben. "It was his idea!" Ben cried as I walked into the room, emphatically asserting over and over that the pillow fight was George's idea. I reminded him that he shouldn't always do what his big brother told him to and we had a rule about not hitting, even with pillows. "But it was his idea!" he cried again. I decided not to argue with that and returned to George.

His face was fading from bright rage-red to normal so I attempted to

explain to him, as I had many times before, that it was okay to get angry. Everybody gets angry, but we have to learn to control our actions when we're angry and it's never okay to hit. "But I missed!" he cried. I tried again. It doesn't matter that you missed I told him. You could have really hurt your brother. I tried to be kind but firm, assertive but unemotional. I tried every trick of assertive communication I have read about to get my point across without shaming him, to help him learn healthy, safe boundaries. "But I missed!" he cried again.

"George," I finally snapped. "It's not fair to attack your brother for hitting you with a pillow when you TOLD him to."

"Oh," he said in a small voice. I rubbed my eyes in frustration.

What really amazes me is how young this impulse to do battle starts and how drawn they are to toy weapons. (And yes I think that's an oxymoron but my boys don't agree.) When they were very young, three and five I think, someone gave them enormous light sabers for Christmas. Ben was still a tiny little toddler so the thing was almost twice as big as he was but still he loved it. It lit up and made noises and this tickled him no end. George, who was obsessed with Star Wars at the time, thought he had died and gone to heaven and immediately began playing out scenes from the movies by using his little brother as a prop (i.e. whacking him repeatedly because Ben wasn't quick enough with his enormous light saber to block effectively. But he did learn to hit back.)

So I sat them down and explained that hitting hurts the other person. I explained that the people in the movie were pretending and they weren't really hitting each other. It didn't work. I ended up banishing the light sabers to the basement until some theoretical future time when they could exercise a little self control and not pummel each other.

A few months later, one of them talked me into buying them plastic pirate swords they saw in Walmart and couldn't live without. I thought, okay, pirate games are cool. And the swords are smaller and lighter than the light sabers. We'll give it a try. And I quickly found out that smaller and lighter just means they could hit each other harder. The pirate swords joined the light sabers in the basement. No more weapons, I asserted. There are plenty of ways to play that don't involve doing battle.

I told a friend of ours this. She had been a teacher for many years and had raised sons of her own. She just smiled at me and said "Good luck with that." I found out what she meant soon enough. When they have no weapons they'll make their own. We had a big back yard with lots of trees. So they picked up sticks and brandished them at each other. Try and ban sticks with a yard full of shedding hardwoods. I gave in and found some foam rubber swords. Those seemed to satisfy them somewhat and didn't deal nearly as much damage. Then I learned to blow bubbles so they had something to attack. Two ridiculously happy little boys battling the hoards of bubble monsters. We went through quarts of bubble juice that summer.

Gradually as they grew older and pestered me incessantly, they reacquired light sabers and all manner of toy swords until we had quite a plastic armory on the back porch. But we firmly established rules: 1) They were never allowed to battle each other. Even once they

developed the coordination to have enough physical control over the weapon to avoid accidentally striking a brother, they still have not developed the emotional control not to use the toy sword in their hands to exact retribution in case the brother had some how angered him. 2) They could battle trees, imaginary creatures, their teenage brother (who was old enough to defend himself and who after a couple of years of intensive training, learned to play gently with his little brothers), certain other inanimate objects to be specified by me, and bubbles. Nothing else.

At long last we made progress on the physical aspect of conflict and the little guys graduated to heated arguments. The youngest grew older and learned to assert himself, no longer willing to play whatever George suggested.

George remained perplexed by this development and continued to act as if it never happened, stubbornly directing his little brother as if he were an animate toy. They have always played long, complex make-believe games and they began to emphatically disagree about the plot, setting, characters and every other aspect. They discovered the concept of possession (they had always shared all their toys) and began claiming toys as their own.

And eventually, inevitably, they began to argue about their room. We are a family of five with modest means. So the little guys share a room. For a long time this wasn't a problem but now they've staked out their beds. One is not allowed to sit on the other's without permission. I figure it's only a matter of time before they draw a line down the middle. Our oldest son is about to graduate high school and go off to college, and as much as I am truly sad that he will be leaving us, and I'm sure that his little brothers are too, they've already started arguing about who will get his room.

So now we've now disarmed them, rearmed them with rules and (hopefully some empathy), tried to teach them the power of meaningful communication and eventually, will provide them with separate spaces. The physical battles are now few and far between, thank goodness. The verbal ones are another story. I'm gauging our overall success by the length of time between battles. I think the record so far is eleven hours (if you count the nine of it that they spent sleeping that night). Okay, honestly I think we've gone a couple of days before and I think it's a completely reasonable proposition to try and top that this year. But I don't know. Maybe once a tweetle beetle, always a tweetle beetle. Wish us luck.

Tori Gallagher lives in West Asheville with the aforementioned tweetle beetle boys, their mom and their teenage brother (who is about to abandon us for college). Any comments or suggestions about fraternal peace-teaching are welcomed at [torigallagher@yahoo.com](mailto:torigallagher@yahoo.com).







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## Working for Peace, for Life: a conversation with three matriarchs

by **sandi tomlin-sutker**  
photos by **Julie Parker**

They've traveled for peace to South Africa and Japan and demonstrated at Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

They have given most of their adult lives in support of peace and justice and anti-nuclear issues. All three were, for more than 20 years, active members of the Asheville chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (see sidebar pg 37). And they each still have a vibrant, energetic desire to create peace in their lifetimes.

We were privileged to talk recently with these powerful, inspiring women: Kitty Boniske, Leah Karpen and Lettie Polite. After a few minutes of getting to know each other, Julie asked: "Can we mention your ages? Do you mind telling us?" They all laughed and spoke, almost in unison. "Of course, we're proud of that!" Lettie is, as Kitty noted "the youngest of the group" at age 76. Kitty revealed her age as 80, and Leah proudly declared, "I'm 85, and a half!"

I wondered how this life-long activism started and Kitty responded first. "For me it was the Vietnam War, that's when I first got heavily into the peace issues. I'd been working on social justice issues and things like that, probably since college. I was at school at Chapel Hill when the Civil Rights thing came to the fore; after that I was busy having babies.

Then the war came along and I thought it was so wrong. I lived then off Sweeten Creek Road and when I drove across every day to take my children to school I saw this little country church with all the white crosses, and I thought of all the parents who were losing their children."

**Leah adds:** "I didn't understand the Vietnam War until my brother explained it to me. He was quite a Peacenik; he was in the Navy in WWII and was very strongly influenced by that experience. I've always been opposed to war, even though I worked for the Navy in WWII. During Vietnam, I encouraged my boys not to get into the military: one was 4F, Joe was a Conscientious Objector, and his twin's number was never called.

When my children were very little I wasn't active in organizations except the League of Women Voters. I got involved in peace issues when I volunteered at Friends' World College on Long Island. Their motto was 'the world is our campus' and their purpose was to bring about peace through people knowing one another. I didn't get active in WILPF until I came to Asheville. The local chapter had gone downhill and Mary Kay Laird and I reorganized it."

**Kitty interjects:** "You gave it life!"

Lettie tells us that "I had a friend who was in WILPF and she invited me, it was in the 1980's, to a meeting at Leah's house just to see what it was about. Everything I heard, I was interested in. All the women were very nice and they were movers, all out for the same thing, so I joined and I've been hanging in there ever since."

She further explains: "When I became an adult and thought about all the things I had to endure as a child, when I attended Stephens Lee High School (then segregated, of course) and the typewriter I had to learn to type on was an old Underwood that was handed down to us, I said 'There's something wrong with this picture'. So every time I could stick my nose into something where I was the only black, I thought my voice might not be heard too much, but maybe a little. My mother was not too fond of that. When someone would ask where I was she'd say I was hanging out with those white women!"

I asked if she felt she was in danger during those times. "You'd hear of someone being hanged...my mother just knew someday someone would tell her I was gone. But I didn't think about that, I just went; someone had to say something about things that might be for the betterment of the whole."

I imagined that they each had a number of memorable times in their activism.

Kitty tells us, "I think the most life-changing thing for me—I think it was 1981—was meeting Dr. Alice Stewart, a doctor who worked on nuclear issues who was doing a study on the workers at the Savannah River nuclear plant. At the same time, I got an invitation to go to Japan from an organization called Mobilization for Survival. There were many delegates from around the country but they didn't have anyone from the southeast...and a Buddhist group in Japan would pay our expenses there if we could come up with the money to get there, so I jumped at the chance! I was middle-aged at that point; thank goodness I wasn't an old lady because it was pretty intense. We lived in the Buddhist temple the whole time, slept on the floor with the nuns, just lived the Buddhist way. It really opened me up to so many things, the way these people lived their beliefs. We all marched and marched through the streets of Tokyo, then Hiroshima, then Nagasaki and did the same thing, mile after mile."

"For me," says Lettie, "it was my trip to Durban, South Africa to attend the WILPF world conference and the World Conference on Racism. It was an awakening call to me. I learned so much, developed such feelings for the people there. I saw the wealth of some and the poverty of others, extreme poverty. What disturbed me most was the health care problems there. I went to a Zulu tribal village and saw how much was needed and how little was actually being done. I met one Zulu woman who worked for an English woman in Durban. She made \$6 per week. She told me how one day she was on her way home with some food she'd just bought and the little bit of money left over and was mugged—they took it all."

"Then on my way back (a 22 hour flight) I would have had a long layover in Atlanta, but the airlines got me onto a direct flight to Asheville that morning. I didn't know what had just happened until I got home, but that was September 11. I was so thankful to be home and safe."

Leah mentioned a recent event: "Maybe four years ago, I went to the demonstration against building bombs at Oak Ridge, TN. It was really a wonderful experience. It was so hot that day I couldn't do anything except sit, but towards the end of the day we all marched up to this artificial line they had made on the road, and said 'you can't pass this line, if you do, you'll go to jail'. But we stood there and sang songs and there was such a feeling of solidarity that you knew you were part of something bigger than yourself. I went again last year but that first year was the most impressive. One year we made a lot of those paper peace cranes and put them on the fence. I said to one of the officers: 'do you realize what you're defending here?'"

**Leah continues:** "People just don't understand what nuclear bombs can do. If they did we could stop all this, but they have no conception. After the bombing of Japan the US government would not allow any pictures to be taken or anything to be published in the US about Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Now we do have all that information and there are films about it, but people don't get the message, they don't understand. It's a horrible thing to think about. It's almost an obsession with me, that we've got to get rid of these bombs."

Julie mentions that her mother worked on the Manhattan Project but didn't know what that was until after the war; they weren't informed of what they were doing.

**Kitty:** "Like the people over at Oak Ridge...that was called the Secret City...nobody knew what they were working on, everybody had a little piece."

**Leah:** "A niece of mine made a film called Building Bombs; it's so powerful, because people don't know what they're doing. I wrote

**Kitty:** "Yes, I think she was something like 88 then. She lived into her 90's and died just a few years ago. Leah's niece and my daughter were working on a film about her, but we've never been able to get the funding to finish it. It's still in storage and I still have hopes we'll get it done someday. Maybe that's why I'm still on the planet!"

**a paper about Dr. Alice Stewart;** The government wouldn't give her the information she needed to prove the dangers of radiation, but the latest quote is that 'There is no safe level of radiation'.

**Kitty:** "Alice Stewart sued the government and finally got the records."

**Leah:** "It took a long time."

### "peace

"I'd like to shift the focus a bit here and ask you all what connection you see between peace issues and social justice issues."

**Lettie jumped in:** "My focus on social justice, in fact a statement I make all the time, is that I firmly believe we all, everybody, have to learn one another before we can get things straightened out. I can't continue with my own ideas, or my own conceptions, say of Hispanic people. We're all the same, we just have different customs and traits and things.

"One thing we did in WILPF was have people from different cultures come to talk. People get conceptions about one African-American person and think 'all of us are just like that' and that's not true. All white people aren't the same, not good or bad. There was an East Indian pharmacist who came and I realized I had so many misconceptions. When a group of us went to South Africa she was my roommate; she told me about her life and I got a completely different idea about her."

"That's one of the reasons we started the Sister Cities chapter," Kitty tells us, "because back then it was 'the bad old Soviet Union' and we decided to have a Russian City. My idea was that we could sort of do an end-run around our two governments and get some people-to-people things happening."

We talk about programs we've heard of to bring Northern Ireland Catholic and Protestant kids together in summer camps, and about similar programs for Palestinian and Israeli children.

Kitty remembers. "I read about a Palestinian child who was scared because she'd been told all these awful things about the Israeli's and she was afraid to go to sleep because they might do something to her in the night. It really is that old

thing in the Bible: 'Love casteth out fear.' I mean fear is what it's all about and once you get over that hurdle..."

Leah asked Lettie, "Do you think Building Bridges contributes to peace?"

**Lettie:** "Well, I enjoyed meeting people I probably wouldn't have met, but I still have this little opinion, this question: When are we going to build some bridges that we're actually going to cross? Because when we leave there, building bridges is gone if we don't."

**Kitty:** "That's how I feel about any of these interracial things we do, it has to be done on an ongoing basis. One thing I miss from WILPF is the Sisterhood Dinners we had. We invited people from different backgrounds to come together and have dinner and talk. We might have a speaker, but mainly we brought food and shared each other's plates and we were friends."

**Leah:** "We had it at different people's homes, because if you've never invited a person to your home, you've never gotten to know them."

**Lettie:** "That was fun. We didn't talk about anything negative; it was men and women sometimes. We'd discuss things but it was all friendly."

Julie was busy taking pictures, but paused to ask: "How do you see the connection between inner peace and your role as peace activist, or what impact does inner peace have on outer peace?"

Kitty answers first that "I think it has a tremendous impact. If more people had inner peace we wouldn't be in the fix we're in. I think about Martin Luther King, Jr; people didn't really hear him, they didn't hear the part about inner peace being what it was all about. I have my own private theory that one of the reasons he was killed was that he was beginning to speak out against the war in addition to talking about civil rights for his own people. He was talking about non-violence across the board—that was what Jesus was about, what all great religious teachers were about and I think the powers that be just couldn't bear that."

As we all continued to talk, we came around to how these women, with their years of activism, see the future of the peace movement and why they think the Asheville chapter of WILPF is no longer active.

Leah felt it was because "A lot of new organizations sprang up at the time of the Iraq war, and even before that over the political situation in the country. So people were joining these new organizations. And it became hard to find people to do the organizational work."

Kitty agreed and also said, "I think everybody has gotten drained by this political situation in the country. I don't think it's ever been this bad in my lifetime."

Lettie commented that "younger African-American women, most of them say they work, have families and don't have time for a lot of meetings. They're not really interested in some of the things older women might be doing, even though some of these things—like nuclear issues—they need to know about; they don't think 'my children might be harmed by something that's passing through town' and they don't come out to learn and yet education is the key to everything."

Kitty expressed her concern that: "I feel we have very little time to turn things around on the planet."

**Leah:** "I don't have much time!"

**Kitty:** "We don't know how much time we have on this planet as individuals. But

I'm just talking about if we can't wake up a few more people in the next few years, I really do sometimes get very discouraged about our future and about our children and grandchildren; what kind of world are they going to grow up in...if they grow up."

And that brought me to the question of what direction, as a country, we need to go.

Before speaking they all three rolled their eyes and groaned.

**Leah:** "A complete change in our foreign policy. But this isn't just recent, if you've read what's been going on in Haiti and Colombia and before in Iraq--this isn't the first time we've messed up Iraq. Our policy towards all of them is so misbegotten. We need to shake up the Congress, take back Congress like we took back City Council."

**Kitty:** "I think this loss of civil liberties right now is terrible. If we can't speak out--that's what we're all about--you can't be an activist in a fascist society...and live. And we need to call things by their real names. We shouldn't call people lobbyists who are really a bunch of bribers!"

**Lettie:** "Somebody jokingly, the other day, sent me an email that said 'Oprah Winfrey and Condoleeza Rice should be running for president.' I said, you know, I thoroughly believe that if a woman was president we wouldn't be in the situation we're in now. So let 'em run, I say!"

**Kitty:** "I'd love to see a good, strong, honest woman run for president."

**Leah:** "The problem is that women can't raise the kind of money it takes to run for president so the whole system is at fault. It's not going to be easy to change that."

**Kitty:** " I do get in despair sometimes, but I get on the Web a lot and find websites and see that all over the world there's this 'under the surface' thing...I think women are rising to the surface. I mean look at the woman who just got elected in Liberia; we have a new woman president in Chile (and when you think about Pinochet, what a change that is.)"

Finally, I wonder what sustains these three women to keep going even as their ages (and sometimes their doctors) demand they slow down a bit.

Leah put it beautifully and seemed to speak for all of them when she said, "You know, war begins in the minds of men--forget about Margaret Thatcher. War is considered the way to settle political disputes and it's so wrong. I don't think I can take any credit for bringing about peace, but I keep trying anyway. If you oppose the war and it happens anyway, what can you do. You may not know what to do, but it's not hard to keep the faith. You just keep going."

Then they all laughed when Kitty said, "There's some reason we're still on the planet!" Yes, they all still feel they have work to do. As do we all. Remember Richard Bach's quote: "Here is the test to find whether your mission on earth is finished. If you're alive, it isn't."

### **A letter from UNCA professor and peace activist Dot Sulock:**

What will it take to move us toward more peaceful solutions to international problems? Education!

I guess it is my special role to point out the importance of teaching the problems connected with our militarized world in high school and college. Our curriculum ordinarily glorifies war, as do other parts of our

culture. These days our weapons are so diabolical and expensive that they will likely be our demise. The Roman idea "If you want peace, prepare for war" is no longer relevant.

People need to be able to understand that \$120 billion in 2006 for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan means over \$300 million a day that can't be spent on education, health care, environmental remediation, helping the starving and those without water or medical care in other countries, etc.

People have to understand that invading and occupying Iraq is creating terrorists who will indeed explode terrorist nuclear weapons soon. Nuclear weapons make small groups of dedicated people able to inflict damage that previously only states could accomplish.

They also need to know that nuclear war between the US and Russia could still destroy our civilization in a half-hour if someone makes a mistake. And people make mistakes. There is no sense in the US current deployment of 5-6000 nuclear warheads, each at least 20 times as powerful as the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

So in addition to mediation, conflict resolution, reliance on multilateral institutions, etc., people need to look at the weapons we have made and deploy. If people understand the situation, they will want to draw back from the brink of unimaginable horror.

Fear of our weapons which are out-of-control should replace fear of humans unlike us. Peace, Dot Sulock

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## **a soldier's sacrifice MEMORIAL DAY 2003**

So far from the home I love  
I pray to the one above  
I've made the right choice  
To leave family  
And friends  
Behind  
To travel to a foreign land  
I raised my right hand  
And I swore to defend  
The Constitution  
And I have to trust  
The institution  
That sent me here  
That if I have to take a  
Bullet or bow to a bomb  
My life will be worth it  
My will to preserve it  
My country of democracy  
My country built on freedom  
Not hypocrisy  
I hope my life will  
Keep their lives  
My friends  
My family  
My Husband  
My Wife  
My children  
Safe and Free  
And not too lonely  
Not like me here  
In a strange country  
Wondering if  
I did the right thing  
Trusting that I did  
That my life is worth it  
That they'll believe  
Like I did  
And if it isn't true  
They'll know I  
Fought the honest fight  
And they'll make it right  
By caring  
By finding out  
The Truth  
By finding  
A better way

Kamala Parker, now a resident of east Asheville, traveled to Asia and Europe while serving in the U.S. Military. She is currently a senior at UNCA finishing a Literature and Language degree. She writes poetry and screenplays while making a living as a Personal Fitness Trainer. [ [truthteam@bellsouth.net](mailto:truthteam@bellsouth.net) ]



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## peace narrative

by katey schultz

I remember the rush of the moist Pacific Northwest winds across my forearms.

It was October 1992, and my parents and I were protesting at Pioneer Courthouse Square. That time of year, a tell-tale evergreen dampness settles over the top of Portland like a ghost-blanket. Even at age twelve I knew this meant home, fall; in my city of gray and wet and peace and love, all of this felt juuust right under my bare feet that pitter-pattered across the brick courthouse square.

We were there to protest one of the most famous ballot measures in Oregon's history: Measure Nine, sponsored by the Oregon Citizen's Alliance (OCA). If passed, the ballot would have amended the Oregon Constitution, adding the following: "All governments in Oregon may not use their monies or properties to promote, encourage or facilitate homosexuality, pedophilia, sadism or masochism. All levels of government, including public education systems, must assist in setting a standard for Oregon's youth which recognizes that these behaviors are abnormal, wrong, unnatural and perverse and they are to be discouraged and avoided."

I remember carrying signs with a red X across Bill Sizemore and Lon Mabon's faces, the two conservative leaders of the OCA who would continue to fund watered-down versions of Measure Nine for years. Men whose names I still remember and seethe at more than ten years later. I was shorter than the mostly adult crowd and the sign brought relevance to my shouting. Towering high above my head, it made me feel like my message was still out there, reaching all the eyes and cameras that scanned the massive crowd.

I remember holding hands with strangers, lifting our chain-linked bodies in unison all the way around the half moon of the courthouse square as we sang, "We are all one people. We are all one people." I remember almost crying, and not understanding why, but just knowing that tingling feeling under my skin, that jitteriness in my belly, that excitement over doing something right in the world.

I remember getting home after a day of shouting and speeches and rallies and saying, "Wow Mom, we sure saw some cool hair-dos," and then dashing down the stairs, 1, 2, 3, counting them in my head, 4, 5, 6, preparing to jump off the last one, 7, 8, 9, skip, skip, 13! Then into my room, straight for the mirror to tie my hair back so I could see what it might look like if I shaved it all off.

I remember closing my eyes for days after the protest and seeing a barrage of colors and faces, extraordinary piercings, women kissing

women, men embracing men, leather pants, motorcycles, and yes, yes, yes, plain old simple as can be men and women and who could tell the difference because we were all there for the same cause, believed in the same universe, wanted peace for the same people. There were moms and daughters and dogs and kids and dads and chubby-cheeked toddlers on big man shoulders and oh the rainbow flags were everywhere.

And then, weeks later, I remember watching the evening news with Mom and Dad, chomping on Round Table Pizza (our favorite) and waiting, waiting, waiting until all the votes were cast. "No on 9, No on 9" we chanted in our living room. And finally, the measure was defeated on November 3, 1992 in the general election with 828,290 votes against Measure Nine, to outnumber 638,527 votes in favor.

Fourteen years later and three thousand miles across the country, I find myself settling into Appalachia almost as if it had been my home all along. There are good people here. The mountains are ancient and towering, and what they lack in elevation is made up by the fact that I get to live right at the base of them. This home feels like some eco-spine of my soul.

But the Bible-belt culture is another thing entirely. I cannot tell yet where I may offend. There is no map for me to follow indicating what tradition means what, or where I can shout my liberal Buddhist voice with a crowd of like-minded people. It took some digging around and screwing up to find my niche, but I'm glad I did. Besides, how would an Oregonian ever know that you're not supposed to dance to bluegrass gospel, that south of Virginia it's Appalaahchia not Appalaychia, and that sayin' "bless her heart" is actually more like offerin' up pity than it is givin' a compliment.

All of this matters because I recently spent some time with the high school class of 2006. Listening in on their speeches about the nature of love, I was both impressed and proud. These kids have a lot going for them, I thought to myself. Never mind the fact that until visiting this high school, I had never in my entire life heard the Bible quoted in a public school, ever. Never mind the fact that these kids knew more about the Gospels than I know about my own right arm.

What struck me was their candid advice and mature perspectives. "One beautiful thing about love is that it mends problems almost as soon as they arise," said one young woman.

"You have to know that in love there will always be forgiveness," said another.

Still another confessed: "I'm not really sure what true love is. I've been around it with my parents, but I've never experienced it myself." And then the tables turned.

"It is not God's will to put a man and a man or a woman and a woman together. If you're a man and you think you love a man, you just don't and that's just messed up and you've got somethin' wrong with you," said one of the male students. I recognized his last name and took mental note not to shop at his daddy's plumbing store anymore. The class laughed along nervously as he finished his speech. Not a single objection was uttered.

"Marriage is between a man and woman. Always has been, always will be. Don't even go thinkin' about women marrying women or men

marrying men 'cause that ain't right," said the next. I recognized his last name too. His dad repairs my car.

They went on. And on and on and on. And I melted into my seat and bit my tongue and scribbled one thousand curses in my notebook and thought about Mendy and wondered what she would do. Right there, in the classroom, under fire and under pressure, my brain was seized with emotion and disgust and outrage. I found myself longing for the crowd of No on 9 protesters I stood with so many years ago. But all of this, every single ounce of it, had to be kept inside. I was there to write an article. If I spoke, the story could be ruined. If I debated, I could change the entire tone of the classroom. If I lost my temper, I could forget the whole damn thing.

At the end of the class, the teacher asked if I would offer feedback to the students in front of the entire class. I was pleased to do so and made a point to say something genuine and positive about each speaker. I even complimented the two homophobic male students on aspects of their speeches that were praiseworthy. Then I remembered something Sweet Girl told me a few months ago with a sort of lustful twinkle in her eye, "One in ten," she had said. "One in ten." I looked at the two boys firmly and said, with as much patience and calm as I could muster: "You should know that statistically speaking, at least two people in this classroom are gay. When you're writing a persuasive essay, it's not in your best interest to alienate your audience. When you do that, you reveal more about your own ignorance than you do about any actual facts that can be backed up."

Peace comes in all kinds of packages. It can come in the form of a protest. It can come in the form of silence. Speaking in that classroom, for me, peace came in the form of patience. In rugby they always say, "Shit begets shit," meaning that a bad pass can only lead to a fumble or another bad pass. I feel the same way about life. I could have thrown my shit right back at those boys, could have humiliated them and gotten all worked up and regretted it later, could have enticed them to hold fast to their homophobic views because they had nothing else to cling to. Instead I was able to call on the strength and wisdom of this group, our group, Eve's group—and for that, I am eternally grateful.

Katey Schultz is a freelance writer and tutor living in Celo, North Carolina. Her current project highlights the salient aspects of adolescence, combining her memoirs with informal research conducted in local schools.

[ Visit [livejournal.com/users/kateyschultz](http://livejournal.com/users/kateyschultz) (updated daily) and post a comment. ]



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## japanese peace cranes

Breezes push peace cranes,  
from twisted weeping willow.  
Center stage garden.  
Couple enters from left,  
Lacy white bride and dress blues.  
Military groom.  
Photo director holds script,  
camera clicks with crisp smiles.  
He snaps photos, commands.  
"Walk now, Relax, Kiss,  
familiar role, take orders.  
Sun just right now, "Shoot".  
Bright paper cranes fly.  
In the crook of the willow,  
soldier's mother rests.  
A peace crane lies still  
having flown free of the tree.  
This prayer in her hands.  
Beneath the willow,  
hopes of peace radiate out,  
trail after this pair.  
Anne Maren-Hogan

Anne Maren-Hogan is a gardener at Camp Celo in the shadow of Mt. Mitchell. She is devoted to putting her experiences into poetry and sharing them thru the Eve's Night Out format.



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## peace logic

If I could choose an audience  
If the young would listen  
If the young would learn from our mistakes  
If we would admit them  
If we would expect them to change  
If the young want a different world  
If peace is as appealing as war  
If war was cast aside  
If we give the young that chance  
If the broken can't be repaired  
If the dead can't be resurrected  
If all we have is each other  
If all we are is one  
If one of us rises to the occasion  
If everyone else would hear  
If we held our breath  
If the sky turned red  
If we would look  
If we would acknowledge  
If war ran naked in the streets  
If war screamed the truth  
If truth could find a home  
If the doors were open  
If the windows were clean  
If we could see with our own eyes  
If we could realize the lies  
If we could embrace life  
If we could release fear  
If we could choose an audience  
If that audience were us  
If peace would speak  
If the sun set on a warm night  
If the people remembered the promise  
If the promise wasn't so long ago  
If He comes  
If He can  
If we welcome  
If we want  
If we don't make it up  
If we don't reject it  
If we have a chance  
If we think  
If we think for ourselves  
If we think at all  
If we think we can

If we can shield the babies from the bombs  
If our bodies are those shields  
If our courage was enough  
If we could pray on broken knees  
If we would respect all living things  
If the People could share this vision  
If the world believes War could end, then Peace would begin.

Kamala Parker



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## peace midwife for Mendy Knott

by janice willis barnett

I first heard peace activist and poet, Mendy Knott, read her work in Johnson City, Tennessee. When she mentioned the women's open mic reading she helped host in Spruce Pine, North Carolina, I knew I had to be part of it. But it took me several months to work up the nerve to go. I was afraid that Mendy and the other Lesbian women in the group wouldn't accept me because I was straight. Thank goodness, I finally had sense enough to confront that silly fear.

Mendy became my mentor, a believing mirror for my emerging artist self. I will always think of her as a midwife helping bring to birth the writer within me. I know that many of the other women artists, Lesbian, straight, and in-between, whose lives she has touched feel the same way. She has helped us "come out" as creative human beings regardless of our sexual orientation. In this world where homophobia is being promoted for the sake of political control, I say that is peace in action.

When the women of the Blue Moon  
come together  
in the world's oldest mountains,  
we speak out.

Red-headed Sweetgirl takes the floor  
singing about change.  
Time was when our sister Mendy  
helped us give birth to ourselves.  
Now she's gone,  
done told us to carry on -

hopped in her white pick-up with a butch swagger  
and headed south to help pull  
other women wedged sideways, feet foremost, butt first on out.

Come sisters.

She's passed the torch to us.  
Take the floor, speak your truth.  
Witness your life in the box, out of the box, on the hump.

Be a super hero, a courageous coward, one still, small voice.  
Travel your darkness and find your light.  
Go where the wild things are.  
Mothers, daughters, grandmothers  
keep coming,  
keep speaking at the Blue Moon

of rage, hate, hurt, prejudice, injustice,  
joy, love, lust  
–women loving women,  
women loving men,  
nurturing,  
sacrificing for your children.

Keep standing your ground,  
honoring your you  
coming on through.  
Butch, fem, straight, crooked,  
young, old, in the middle.  
let's all come out

together.

Janice Willis Barnett has published short stories, essays, and articles in various publications. Her essay, "My Soldier" is part of Mendy Knott's "Peacework" CD. Janice's roots go back to the early 1800's in Yancey County, NC, but she currently resides across the mountain in Unicoi, TN.

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## peacework

by kamala parker

On September 11th, 2001, I stood in a middle school band class of over one hundred sixth-graders who were as astonished as I was to have the teacher turn on the television and exclaim that something incredible was happening in New York City.

These children, the teacher and I watched as the second plane hit the South Tower. A handful of these precious ones came to me and asked me to explain what they were seeing. "My uncle lives in New York, is he OK?" "Who is doing this?" "Are we going to die?"

Part of me answered calmly that New York is a big place, that right now no one probably knows who would fly airplanes into a building, and that we were safe here in the mountains of North Carolina away from big cities like New York. Inside, my heart cried out with the same questions, and my military instincts heightened, as I wondered why Air Force fighters had not intercepted the hijacked planes.

Days later, all of the world still in a daze, I remember vividly the sound of my mother's voice over the telephone, "Are you going back in the Marine Corps?"

Yes, re-enlisting had already crossed my mind. I had served 11 years in the United States military, four as a Marine and seven as a Coast Guard search and rescue flight mechanic. The saying goes: "Once a Marine, always a Marine," and I am no exception.

Women and men in the Marines are zealously convinced to die for their country without hesitation. This is NOT an exaggeration. However, my seven years of service in the Coast Guard and the last six years I had spent as a civilian helping raise stepsons had given me reason to pause.

I answered my mother, "I don't know."

Close friends asked me to consider carefully a decision to return to service. I immediately began researching the 9/11 event and the information that the mass media fed to the public.

As sisters, daughters and mothers, we surely all remember the call to war that occurred within just a few days after the Sept. 11th attack. Surely, we all consider the potential cost of war to any of us: our siblings, children, and parents. At the same time, I also believe that Americans never hesitate to serve when the cause is great, despite any price.

The conflict for a veteran occurs when something is happening that the

public really doesn't know or is incapable of understanding out of context. My military experience had taught me to accept authority, but to question the press and what official information the public receives.

Within days I had discovered information on the attacks that I personally interpreted as severe contradictions regarding the identity of the perpetrators and a conflict of interest in what their motivations were. Describing the details of my investigation are not as important as relaying the impact of my heartbreak.

I realized something is profoundly wrong with the war machine we now live with every day—a war machine I felt a part of.

Every American soldier or sailor raises their right hand and swears to defend the United States Constitution from enemies foreign and domestic. I had never before questioned the motives of a system much larger than myself: our government, our corporations, our national and international organizations. I didn't pretend to grasp the implications of things I hardly understood, and I still felt compelled to keep my oath as a soldier.

I struggled with what to do as I watched us declare war on Afghanistan and quickly subdue its government. Some part of me justified this action. But when the war drums began to beat against Iraq, my earlier and ongoing research intensified both my aversion to a war promoted to the public with false information, and my commitment to defend our most precious possession, our Constitution.

Despite my sense of urgency, I felt helpless. What is one woman in a world full of socio-political complexity going to do to alert people that what they are buying may NOT be what's being sold? As a patriot who absolutely loves my country, and is still willing to die to defend its Constitution and its citizens, I chose to enter the peace movement.

I traveled to Washington D.C. for the Jan. 18th, 2003 peace march. That day people all over the world asked our government to not go to war with Iraq. In the crowds I discovered many veterans who also opposed this call to war. They helped me to understand the mechanisms I had never closely considered.

This historic event led me to deepen my friendship with local western North Carolina veterans who were also struggling with the question of what to do as the momentum for war against the Iraqi people roared towards a feverish pitch. We all know our leaders chose to ignore the request for peace.

Mendy Knott, a local poet who has also honorably served her country as a member of the U.S. Air Force, opposed going to war under the questionable circumstances constructed by the current administration. When the war with Iraq began, she made a commitment to writing a peace poem every month for the duration of the war.

At the same time, my resolve to be part of the peace movement as a way to serve my country had not resulted in any peace for myself. The deeper I dug into the circumstances of 9/11, the angrier I became, and the more powerless I felt.

Fortunately, as a writer and poet myself, I continued to attend Mendy Knott's monthly poetry forum, Eve's Night Out, at the Blue Moon Bookstore in Spruce Pine. Mendy's commitment to express her views

regarding peace encouraged other women poets to write about their own concerns about war and peace. I experienced the full emotional spectrum of many different perspectives that sang out from the small wooden podium to an intimate crowd of mountain and Asheville city women.

However, I struggled with my own voice. Frustration permeated the questions I couldn't answer, and I felt myself on a downward emotional spiral as I attempted to justify or rectify the reasons for war. Fury permeated the poems I attempted to write about the destruction and devastation caused by my country's Department of Defense on another country's citizens.

As a mentor to many, and close friend of mine, Mendy Knott continued to lead a way to peace through her monthly expression of her own anger and deep disappointment with the conduct of our government. Through Mendy's efforts, something incredible happened for me. I began to see an evolution in the peace work being done by this tender poet. Her intense emotions began to give way to a realization that peace is a pursuit accomplished first on a personal level.

Through her words, I began to understand that my inner turmoil would not lead to world peace any more than a chainsaw can plant a tree.

I wept when she read the poem Peace is Personal for the first time to us. This confessional piece painstakingly painted the picture of inner conflict I had been experiencing for months. Her poem mirrored my disagreement with others over the war, my anger over my own sense of powerlessness, and my own inner warfare. This poem became a roadmap for me to follow. Simple words painted the picture of a profound revelation: No matter our circumstances, if war is happening on a global scale or with a family member or a boss, peace starts on the inside with a personal commitment to finding a different way to live, a peaceful way to live.

According to Mendy's poem, the only help we can expect is from a higher power (even if we're not sure what that entity's name is.) Mendy's words literally rescued me. I would, for the first time in many months, find my voice to write about my own dreams, hopes and fears.

This personal transformation resulted in a poignant poem titled Peace Logic (read it on page 33), a poem reflecting the "what if" of war and peace. After reading it at Eve's Night Out, Mendy invited me to participate in a peace project she had initiated with her monthly poems. Peace Logic is now part of a spoken word compact disc, Peacework: Poems in Wartime. This audio recording of Mendy's peace poem collection, co-produced by G. Leigh Wilkerson, Knott and the Herwords writing group of Asheville, depicts the transformation many patriots have experienced during the last four years we've been at war.

The poems inspire and encourage as they affirm the process of acknowledging one's inner conflicts and struggle for peace. During the recording session at a rural studio in Marion, the sound technician, an older country gentleman said, "She knows what she's talking about, doesn't she?"

"Yes, she certainly does," I answered, and 'Thank God!' I thought to myself.

Today, I still swing sometimes into those emotional extremes of anger or disappointment with the state of our huge neighborhood Earth.



Peacework on my compact disc player reminds me that those swings are OK, I'm human; Peace is a journey not a location. I listen, and I write my own peace.

Everyday I thank the Higher Power that Mendy's words are part of my life. I am grateful I found my own voice, and even more thankful that I found my own self-forgiveness. I may be powerless to act on a global level, but Mendy Knott demonstrated that we are never powerless to do what we can do. Though Mendy has recently relocated to Arkansas to be closer to her family, the women of Eve's Night Out continue to produce a peace poem every month.

I have committed to holding on to my own happiness as I endeavor to empathize with all people experiencing the chaos of war. I also support my brothers and sisters serving in the military, and pray they come home soon. I encourage every woman to embark on her own journey towards peace. I hope each one will realize that the peace we are all searching for may be a peace we can only find within.

Kamala Parker, now a resident of east Asheville, traveled to Asia and Europe while serving in the U.S. Military. She is currently a senior at UNCA finishing a Literature and Language degree. She writes poetry and screenplays while making a living as a Personal Fitness Trainer.

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## peacework

Peace by piece  
patch by ragged patch  
we put this quilt together.  
Everybody has a story to contribute:  
a tale of undeserved forgiveness  
a time of unexpected generosity  
a gift of grace and gratitude.  
In every color of the rainbow  
we stitch and sew  
trying our best to hold our quilt together.  
Even though we'd like to forget  
we know we must include  
every hard-won peace,  
all the patches we used to cover up the holes  
we made rubbing each other the wrong way  
until the whole cloth thinned  
and finally gave way beneath the strain.  
These, too, we must bring to the table  
to negotiate our peace,  
as we piece our crazy quilt together.  
All that humility-toughened cotton  
makes good thread  
that won't come undone over time or under stress,  
that can't be torn apart by malice.  
We need every "I'm sorry"  
"I was thoughtless"  
"Please forgive me"  
all the "Thank you's" we can muster  
as over and over and over and under  
we repeat these phrases  
which serve as stitches  
for the weak places in our love.  
Over and over we doublestitch  
our mantras until we think we've become too tired  
too jaded  
or that finally we've learned our lesson and can quit,  
but knowing deep down the quilt is everything  
we continue sowing peace:  
red for anger  
blue for hurt  
green for envy  
black for every hidden curse.  
And next to these:  
red for passion  
blue for joy

green for healing  
pink for love  
black for all the magic we will need  
to hold this thing together.  
Peace by piece  
we leave out nothing—  
not the torn t-shirt from the march on Washington  
or the sweat-stained blouse from the Peace Corps volunteer;  
not the faded head rag worn by a civil rights grandmother  
or the flowered bell-bottoms left over from the '60's;  
not even the olive drabs and cammies from the backs of our dead  
soldiers  
or the torn corner of a flag they carried.  
We use them all—  
the bloody rags fresh from the fists  
of our perceived differences  
the white sheet of surrender  
the misplaced blanket of our apathy  
the ticking of the cloth when we forgot  
we couldn't stop  
that there is always peacework left to do.  
Here we are rag pickers all  
until we've pieced together one story  
not his story  
or her story  
but our story  
this story  
of how we put the pieces back together  
into a quilt for the hope chests of our children  
and our children's children.

Mendy Knott Nov 2003



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## cosmicomedy

by lavinia plonka

### Living Large

Well I can rub and scrub'til this house shines just like a dime. Feed the baby, grease the car, Powder my nose at the same time. You know I can get all dressed up, Go out swinging with the M-A-N, Jump in bed at five, sleep 'til 6, And start all over again. 'Cause I'm a woman...W-O-M-A-N. Let me tell ya again. I'm a woman...W-O-M-A-N.

Bette Midler

My phone rings. It's a conference call for a publication I edit. As I chat with the publisher and her staff, I try not to grunt or to lose the phone in the dirt. I'm sure they wouldn't understand that today is also a good day for planting garlic.....

When I call my sister Liz, she never asks, "How are you doing?" but "What are you doing?" She knows there is nothing more relaxing for me than talking to her on the phone as I clean the bathroom, bake a pie, or print a manuscript, sometimes all three simultaneously.

I admit it – my favorite Gods are the Hindu gods with multiple arms. Shiva with his weapons, conch shell and empty hand in blessing, Saraswati with her book, rosary and musical instrument—I call them the gods of multi-tasking. Their very existence inspires me. After all, if my time here is limited, why waste it doing only one thing at a time?

I was an early devotee of the Church of multi-tasking. My first memory was while practicing my accordion as a child. My teacher was one who stressed repetition over innovation. Both Mr. Chernofsky and my Dad preferred a well-executed version of My Blue Heaven or Beyond the Sea (irresistible on the accordion) to an original composition by a 10 year old. Therefore, I would quickly learn the song, then let my fingers play it over and over while I voraciously devoured the latest Nancy Drew mysteries which were placed on my music stand in front of Bobby Darin.

I practiced ballet while doing dishes or vacuuming. I memorized my multiplication tables while doing my paper route. (It made a nice rhythm as I pedaled;  $1 \times 2 = 2$ , ugh,  $2 \times 2 = 4$ , ugh: preparing me for the Conga lines I danced in years later.....)

My husband Ron, who can spend an hour staring at a praying mantis, used to lecture me. "How can you enjoy what you're doing if you're doing two things at once?" Then one day, I was walking by the bathroom and heard his voice. Fearing that he had either gone mad or was hiding an alien, I opened the door. I found him in the tub, wearing a headset and....talking on the phone. I use the image of Ron,

his scrubbie, his rubber duckie, and the phone whenever he accuses me of being unfocused.

The early 20th century philosopher A.R. Orage described life as a necklace with events like pearls on the strand. He suggested that instead of trying to squeeze more pearls, events, onto the strand, why not just add another strand? After all, the body is perfectly capable of driving a car without the interference of the mind—in fact, if your mind tried to drive, you'd spend a half hour every day trying to figure out how to back out of the driveway. And certainly, most Americans have already discovered that they can talk on the phone and jog, walk, feed the baby, even drive. The challenge is how to do both things well.

Once, a young devotee came to visit a venerable Buddhist monk while the monk was doing a teaching tour in the US. He was shocked to see the monk sitting at a table, drinking coffee, reading the paper and jotting some notes. "But Sensei, you always tell us to do one thing at a time!" The monk smiled and said, "I am doing one thing. I'm having breakfast."

Many spiritual traditions stress that the way to enlightenment is to unite mind, body and emotions. Herewith are the commandments for multi-tasking as the path to inner peace:

1) Pay attention. Multi tasking is useless if you do a half-assed job. The Wall Street Journal recently reported on the hazardous increase of eating at the desk, including more vermin in cubicles and ruined keyboards. A new line of office chairs features tray tables like on airline seats to make eating at your desk easier. I say, rise to the challenge! I once managed to consume cold sesame noodles with chopsticks while driving down Rte 80 in NJ on my way to a gig. I can still recall the adrenaline rush I experienced as I passed someone and waved with my chopsticks.

Which brings me to:

2) Don't multi-task if it's life threatening. Using a chain saw while trying to remember Liza Minnelli's choreography in Cabaret is not a good use of your attention.

Leading us to:

3) Choose the right combination for the right time. Dying your hair and checking your email works, as long as you are not also baking chocolate chip cookies or running to answer the phone across a white carpet as the dye drips down your neck.

4) Find a way to make your multiple activities have a single name: Jogging and telephoning = working out. Cooking and talking to Liz = bonding with my sister. Dying your hair, writing in your journal, eating brownies = personal time.

5) Avoid activities that are too similar. Once while washing dishes and making coffee. I ground the coffee and then poured it into the dishpan instead of the coffee maker. Another time while feeding the cat and sautéing mushrooms, I ....well never mind, Ron never knew the difference.

6) This goes for mental activity as well. Once I was trying a new Indian recipe with many complicated ingredients and forgot that I had a radio interview. When the station called, I was sure I could do both—until the DJ asked me to describe the nature of fear and I said 1 teaspoon of cumin.....

7) Keep your mind active. You can compose an article while driving. Or balance your checkbook as you meander through Ingles. (This has the side benefit of keeping me from impulse spending.) Replay conversations that went bad and re-imagine them going your way as you bicycle. Visualize world peace as you dust your shelves.

8) Don't use multi tasking as a way to escape from yourself. There is a Zen story of two young monks. One wondered if it was OK to smoke while he was praying. His friend shrugged and suggested he ask the abbot. The abbot, upon hearing the young monk's request was outraged. "How dare you! When you pray, you concentrate on your prayers, nothing else! You need to learn to attend to yourself!" A few days later, the young monk was surprised to see his friend sitting in meditation posture, smoking. "What are you doing? You're going to get in trouble!" he admonished. "It's OK," the other replied, "I asked the abbot."

"But wait," said his confused friend, "he told me I couldn't."

"What did you ask him?"

"I asked if I could smoke while I prayed."

"Ah. I asked if I could pray while I smoked."

Of course, there's something to be said for just sitting, watching the mind, body and emotions while doing absolutely nothing. There are as many paths to enlightenment as there are pearls on a necklace. Sitting there over 40 years ago playing Beyond the Sea over and over, singing the lyrics to myself may well have awakened the longing that propelled me on my search for meaning in the first place. "Somewhere, beyond the sea, somewhere, waiting for me...." What would have happened if instead it had been Mack the Knife?

When not doing 3 things at once, Lavinia teaches the Feldenkrais Method®, where you do one thing: movement—as you observe your sensations, emotions and thoughts. Feldenkrais always said, "If you know what you are doing, you can do what you want."

[ [ashevilmovementcenter.com](http://ashevilmovementcenter.com); [laviniaplanka.com](http://laviniaplanka.com) ]



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Celebrating the Spirit of Place in Western North Carolina

## Western North Carolina Woman



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PREFACE: As Howard Zinn points out in *Artists in Times of War*, nothing brings out class division as clearly as military service and war. Military rank is basically a caste system in which the wealthiest never serve and the poorest have— no choice. They are drafted, or join in war or peace, for the same reasons I did. They need a job and money. They want to learn a trade. They need that G.I. bill in order to get the education they can't otherwise afford. It's my feeling that the current administration, most of whom inherited their considerable wealth and have never served their country in active duty, have little understanding or compassion for the common enlisted soldier or their families.

### Subtraction

George Bush can't count in single digits.

If he could he would know that, at the rate of two per day

we are losing 14 soldiers every week

that's 56 lives a month

672 men and women a year.

More than twenty-two hundred sons and daughters have already died.

But George can only count in millions and billions.

Numbers in the hundreds, even thousands, are lost on him.

He and his administration deal in multiple gains, not losses.

They have never learned to subtract.

Here is a math lesson for you, Mr. Bush:

A nineteen year old boy sits with his small unit  
in an armored car on the edge of an Iraqi village,  
on the edge of his seat, on edge period

because last night Iraqi rebels blew up his buddy's group  
where they guarded boundaries with night goggles, M-16's,  
and hand grenades none of which did them any good.

This is occupied Iraqi territory, nothing like North Carolina,  
and he remembers that old joke picture called  
"Indians in the Desert" where nothing  
is visible but cactus, sand and rock.

His buddy is dead, along with two others.

Just last week the two of them

drank beers and half-drunk played volleyball in the sand.

The sweat pops out on his forehead to think  
he might be next.

Night after night he waits and he wonders  
who will die tonight?

He wants to go home now.

But his tour is young yet—he has 10 more months  
to wait and wonder.

Three hundred nights

to become a single-digit statistic

in a war that's supposed to be over

in a land where he was told he'd fight for freedom.



But nobody here, not even he, seems free to him.  
At home in the hills his mother waits and wonders  
if her fair-haired son will make it home  
to eat the corn she shucks to freeze for winter,  
the tomatoes and green beans she's grown and canned.  
She likes to think of him tanned and tow-headed  
picking tobacco from the back of his daddy's tractor.  
Was that just last year?  
She lays awake all night  
keeping the watch with her only son, forgetful  
that the time is not the same there;  
she only knows the dark is dangerous.  
She stares at the glowing green hands of the bedside clock  
as they tick off one, two, three minutes—  
she knows this is how many Americans die in Iraq daily.  
Even she can count how many that will be in ten months  
to a year. She knows the number one is all it takes to lose  
and ruin more lives—hers, his father's, his two sisters',  
his grandfather's.  
When she voted for Mr. Bush  
she believed he could add and subtract.  
She thought he could count  
but she is bitter to realize he's limited to dollars  
not cents, and now her son's life  
ain't worth a plug nickel up in Washington.  
She, however, can subtract, has had to cut some losses,  
but this is more than the sum of all of them  
and she knows enough to be afraid.  
She wants her son home to eat her cooking,  
swim in the South Toe River  
court the country girl who loves him  
lie safe in his own bed dreaming  
the dreams of peaceful sleepers—  
not watching, waiting, wondering if the night  
will demand his one and only life.

Mendy Knott July 2003

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## profile: tekla

by arlene winkler

Even though I've never set foot in a blacksmith shop, I suspect that this one, with its light and high ceilings is probably not typical of the genre. As a survivor of the construction wars, I am unimpressed with the omnipresent black grime that is apparently part and parcel of metal work. What gets my attention is the clear presence of control and order. There are neatly hung drawings, work in progress and well-maintained tools designed for lifting, holding, grinding and hammering heavy stuff. In addition, there are two welding machines; the old one Tekla has used for years and the Miller, a newer, better machine: a gift from her husband Dan that at this point is a still-to-be-acquired taste. In the interim, she has named it "Thanks & Gratitude."

Along one wall, there are bins of scrap and cutoffs, neatly arranged by size and gauge.

"Nothing is discarded," she explains cheerfully, "Especially cutoffs. When the Albert Paley sculpture was installed in front of the Federal Building, Dan and I were so exited. The minute we saw it, we could see how he used the cutoffs—with some of them, I could see where in the body of the sculpture they had come from."

The breadth of her knowledge is only one of the reasons I wanted to interview Tekla, the other is the two sides of her skill. She is one of the few artists I know of who practices both art and craft and knows the difference. Now, watching her heft the heavy cuttings, I feel compelled to ask if there are many women in her field.

"Not too many," she responds, "But I got an early start. My grandfather was a metal worker, and between the ages of 5 to 10 I used to play in his workshop with scraps of sheet metal. It never seemed to bother anybody. When I got to college I studied sculpture and took classes at Winthrop. Since I was married to a mechanic then, I used his welder to do stick welding with the found materials and scraps I made into models and brought into class. When I first met Dan, he was shoeing horses. I was amazed the first time I saw him pour. . . I was so excited I married him!"

She points to a massive black hammering machine, "When he taught me to forge he showed me how to use the hammer. But he's much stronger than I am, and it took me forever. I had to start taking classes from women to gain some finesse. I learned a new way to lift, how to stand, how to hold a hammer. My first teacher was a shaman and a blacksmith from Georgia. The next one was Roberta Elliott at the Campbell Folk School. I was able to do this on scholarship from the Artists Blacksmiths of America. The one thing I didn't anticipate was

that it would be so difficult, so socially unacceptable to be a woman who worked in metal. I had such anger then.

I nod. I know about that Anger.

"People would come into our shop and say they wanted to "talk to the man who makes all the metal stuff." And it just infuriated me. At first I made a joke of it. I would put on a pair of Groucho Marx glasses, and say, "May I help you?" Now, I don't have to use them. It's wonderful when you can examine the old anger your heart is so full of. Now that I have a clear picture, I can release it. I know it's nobody's fault."

"Is that how you changed from Theresa to Tekla?"

She laughs. "I needed a name because I was signing my work Howachin, the same as Dan and people assumed all the work was his. So my father-in-law gave me a Ukrainian name. Even so, at my first show in Black Mountain, I still had my married name on all my cards and flyers. When the gallery owner asked me why, it was like an epiphany. I finally realized, "I can be anybody I want to be!"

And that's how you manage between craft and art?

"On the craft side, when someone comes into the shop and has a specific need—like a table or a light fixture—I feel like a gift has just walked in the door. That person has vision and needs me to co-create in that vision. The wonderful thing with these projects, because they're always one of a kind, is that there is so much learning in the process. It takes me to the next level.

"It's wonderful to work with someone else. They don't even have to be able to draw. If they have the words, I can draw it. And with the feedback they give me, the drawing gets more and more accurate—until we arrive at what they really want. It's very enjoyable."

I can see she means it, but as one who deals on a daily basis with people who want me to guess what they want, "enjoyable" is not the word I would use to describe the experience.

"But it's more fun when you're creating, and you know that it's a gift, that it will help the harmony of the family and raise the level of vibrations."

"And I suppose you do that?" I grumble. "Raise the vibrations?"

"If you've truly asked for help and applied your sacred geometry you are creating something that will raise the vibration level.

"Sacred geometry? As in the square root of two, and the golden mean? "

She smiles. "I also studied bio-geometry—for design."

All I know about bio-geometry is that it got a lot of play in the '80s when there was a hot trend for pyramids. "It deals with the energy of shapes that bring balance into energy fields," she explains. "These forms produce a type of penetrating carrier-wave (and lest I think it's a bit fanciful) that was discovered by two scientists; Chaumery and De Belizal.

"And I studied at the Vesica Institute, " she continues, pointing out an eye shaped opening in several of her art pieces. I recognize the Vesica pisces, created by the perfect intersection of two circles. You can see it in all her work, both craft and sculpture.

"Dan and I collaborate on craft, and we worked together with Tucker Cook on Shopping Daze, the urban trail sculpture in front of Malaprops Book Store. But the fine art pieces are my own. "

Her spiritual/scientific pursuits are present in all her work. Brigid's Fire for instance, is an ancient goddess form surrounded by flames, with circles representing the chakra system. Brigid was a traditional patroness of healing, poetry, and smith craft.

A series of shield wall sculptures are works on feminine survival in patriarchal world. Shield for Athena is a gift for the modern Athena, a warrior in a rebar-reinforced paternal world. She is presented with tools for empowering the sacred feminine which include embellishment of ancient symbology. Four circles represent our Mother's four moons and thirteen incised marks symbolize its thirteen cycles in a year.

Two Worlds Intersticed is a continuation of a shield like form, with a more three dimensional image. It represents a blending of the physical with the spiritual, the swirling Earth with spears of ancient wisdom piercing its core giving way to a brighter unknown. This sculpture is illustrated in The Contemporary Blacksmith by Dona Meilach.

"Reversing Reversals" was inspired by her studies with Lisa Sarasohn, The Belly Queen, who developed a program of daily exercises derived from Kripalu yoga, tai chi and other ancient healing arts. The name refers to the beginning, a place where anything is possible, where we are the creators of that which will be. The negative space represents the feminine form, flanked by two fetal shapes with a continual circle feeding the embryos. The center twisted rod is the kundalini rising.

My personal favorite is a piece she calls Brother Sun. Made of forged mild steel, it stands solid on the Earth and celebrates light in our world and existence on this planet. The top part of the sculpture resembles sun rays emanating from a sun-like shape with a void in the center, once again suggesting concentrated energy.

I am frankly amazed by the apparent contradictions in this amazing woman.

"All my life I have been an air person, " she explains. "I fly airplanes, I love being airborne. Metal helps ground me to the earth. When I can bring all this to the things I create and actually sell it to make a living, I can be happy.

Tekla and her husband Dan are co-owners of Black Mountain Iron Works, 120 Broadway, Black Mountain, North Carolina 28711.

[ [teklasculptor@earthlink.net](mailto:teklasculptor@earthlink.net);  
[Blackmountainiron.com](http://Blackmountainiron.com) ]

She is the recipient of numerous grants, fellowships and awards and her work has been exhibited throughout the area, including:

Asheville Area Arts Council, The North Carolina Arboretum, City of Hickory Invitational Exhibits, Moore College of Art & Design, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Outdoor Tri-State Sculptors Exhibit, Crossing the Line, and Blue Spiral Gallery of Art.

Arlene Winkler is a freelance financial writer, who is passionate about art. A former ad agency president and

enthusiastic participant of life on the New York fast track, she moved to Asheville in 2002 with her sculptor husband, Robert Winkler. A mother of three, a grandmother of four, and the author of three screenplays, she is dealing with her culture shock by writing for WNC Woman.



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## women weaving webs

by julie parker

*Each month our Women Weaving Webs section will highlight websites for women, usually related to the month's theme.*

### **Women Building Peace: From the Village Council to the Negotiating Table**

[womenaction.org/global/peacebuilding.html](http://womenaction.org/global/peacebuilding.html)

### **Women's International League for Peace and Freedom** [peacewomen.org](http://peacewomen.org) (see pg. 37)

**women for international peace** and [arbitrationwipa.org](http://arbitrationwipa.org) is organized to channel the rising public sentiment for peaceful settlement of international disputes.

[codepink4peace.org](http://codepink4peace.org) is a women-initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement working to end the war in Iraq, stop new wars, and redirect our resources into healthcare, education and other life-affirming activities.

[womensaynotowar.org](http://womensaynotowar.org) - this site, affiliated with Code Pink, has launched a petition worldwide against the war in Iraq and others.

**Women Peacemakers Program** [ifor.org/WPP](http://ifor.org/WPP) believes that programs that specifically empower women peacemakers, and encourage women and girls to become involved in peacebuilding and civil society building, are essential for development.

**gold star families for peace** [gsfp.org](http://gsfp.org) - We as families of soldiers who have died as a result of war are organizing to be a positive force in our world to bring our country's sons and daughters home...



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