

interhelp



a networking newsletter

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Two Gatherings in 2004

We have made a mutually friendly break with Rowe Conference Center for our annual Gathering, and will have TWO gatherings: the March 5-7, 2004 ACTIVISTS NETWORKING WEEKEND at Friendly Crossways (near Boston, MA) and a three-day Summer Gathering (with camping opportunity!) July 23-26, 2004 at the Easton Mountain Retreat Center, not far from Albany, NY; the theme will be “**Unearthing our Courage in a Time of Fear.**”

News from the Council

Judy Conrad and Judy Waldman are both taking a break from the Council. New members Simon Abramson, Tony DaSilva, Carol Harley, Diane Reiner, and Jessica Zane have joined Rosalie Anders, Mary Gleason, Rick Gottesman, Eleanor Mathews, Kristina Orchard, Michael Rice, Emily Sack, Sondra Sprinkling, and Carl Todd on the Council.

A Note from the Editor

Once more our “quarterly” Newsletter has become an annual one, for your editor has not struck a balance between *being* an activist and *supporting* activists through the Newsletter. Some of the “Mailbag” contributions are a bit dated, but we regard them important. We are glad to bring you the twice-postponed review of *Nonviolent Communication*, some of the framework for the 2002 Gathering experiential exercises, and more.

(Continued on page 2.)

Found in the Free Library

And we were made afraid, and being afraid
we made him bigger than he was, a little man
and ignorant, wrapped like a vase of glass
in bubble wrap all his life, who never felt
a single lurch or bump, carried over
the rough surface of other lives like
the spoiled children of the sultans of old
in sedan chairs, on the backs of slaves,
the gold curtains on the chair
pulled shut against the dust and shit
of the road on which the people walked,
over whose heads, he rode, no more aware
than a wave that rattles pebbles on a beach.

And being afraid we forgot to notice
who pulled his golden strings, how
their banks overflowed while
the public coffers emptied, how
they stole our pensions, poured their smoke
into our lungs, how they beat our ploughshares
into swords, sold power to the lords of oil,
closed their fists to crush the children
of Iraq, took the future from our failing grasp
into their hoards, ignored our votes,
broke our treaties with the world,
and when our hungry children cried,
the doctors drugged them so they wouldn't fuss,
and prisons swelled enormously to hold
the desperate sons and daughters of the poor.
To us, they just said war, and war, and war.

For when they saw that we were afraid,
how knowingly they played on every fear –
so conned, we scarcely saw their scorn,
hardly noticed as they took our funds, our rights,
and tapped our phones, turned back our clocks,
and then, to quell dissent, they sent. . . .
(but here the document is torn)

— Eleanor Wilner

From *Poets Against the War*, edited by Sam Hamill

A Note from the Editor

(continued)

WHAT a year it has been! The leaders of our beloved country have taken us into an illegal war on wholly false premises. They have put into effect the imperial “Project for a New American Century,” whose authors have moved from far out “beyond the pale” into the centers of power. They have managed this using the politics of fear, generated by the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001 (the inquiry into which they are continuing to impede) and the subsequent anthrax terror (evidently of domestic origin, not seriously investigated, and no longer on the “radar screen” of public discourse).

Our best attended Gathering (and what a powerful one it was!) had to compete with the February 15 peace demonstration in New York, and throughout the world, that drew half a million to NYC and 10 million throughout the world. Your editor, and two other members of the Interhelp Council, attended the birthing on January 18, 2003, of a new local group, the Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace. Beginning in the home of one couple, BNP initiated a weekly vigil, monthly public forums, and attracted 350 people to a March 15, 2003 candle-light vigil and procession in Delmar, NY (suburban Albany). But it is more than numbers that are important here. The expressed experience of literally scores of BNP members is that, for the first time, we recognize that we are part of a concerned community of people – that we are not alone. I like to think that BNP is representative of hundreds of local peace initiatives throughout the world.

The Woman Who Became a Mountain

From Walking to Mercury by Starhawk

This is a story about the woman who became a mountain. The woman lived a long, long time ago, in a land where women were powerful and free. Men too, for that matter. And the people worshiped their Mother the Earth, and the Rain God and the Snake.... Snakes shed their skins. So they seem to be dead, but they come alive again. So they represent rebirth....

This woman, in our story, was the daughter of Earth Mother and Rain God, and she was the leader of the people. She could run faster than anybody, and sing beautiful songs, and weave headdresses of feathers. Whenever people were unhappy, she had good advice for them. And everyone lived well.

Until the day War God was born. He leaped fully grown and armed from Earth Mother’s belly, after she’d accidentally swallowed some feathers. All the people thought he was so handsome, tall and strong and his spear was so shiny. He dazzled them. They followed him off to war and learned to kill other people and take their things, and Earth Mother’s Daughter was very sad.

She tried to talk to the people, and warn them, but they laughed at her and then they got mad at her. “Kill her! Kill her!” War God cried. And she ran away.

She ran and she ran and she ran, until she couldn’t run any farther. She was helped by Rain God’s son, Cloud, who was also unhappy with the new ways. He was a gentle soul, and he didn’t like to rumble and thunder and drop spears of lightning on people. He always said it gave him indigestion. No, he liked to rain a soft, gentle rain that soaked into the earth and fed the plants and the trees.

So he ran away with Earth Mother’s Daughter. Finally darkness fell. They were so tired, they lay down on the ground. Cloud wept and his tears soaked the earth and woke the spirit of Earth Mother herself. She listened to their sad tale, and finally she spoke.

“This is a bad time,” Earth Mother said. “The people have gone on a bad road. But until they come to the end of it, they won’t believe you when you tell them it leads nowhere good. They’ll only kill you, too. You must wait for them to reach the end of this road. You must wait for a change of heart.”

“How shall we wait?” Earth Mother’s Daughter asked. “They are hunting for us, and they’ll kill us.”

“Come into me,” said Earth Mother. “I’ll hide you and protect you, until the time comes when the people have a change of heart.”

And so they slept in the arms of Earth Mother, and when morning came, the woman had become a mountain, with her friend Cloud draped about her head. And so she waits until the people have a change of heart.

That’s a weird story,” Rachel said. “But I like it.”

“Me, too.”

“Will you tell me another story tomorrow?”

“Of course. I’ll tell you a story every day, as long as I stay here.”

“How long will you stay here?” Rachel asked.

“Until I do what I’ve come to do.”

“What’s that?”

“To waken Earth Mother’s Daughter,” Maya said.

Nonviolent Communication, a Language of Compassion, *by Marshall Rosenberg*

Reviewed by Craig Richards

This book describes how to apply despair and empowerment concepts to our everyday life. Whether it's a child that leaves the milk out of the refrigerator or how to deal with the anger we get from our government policies, this is the book to help us deal with our feelings and needs in a constructive manner. Actually, Marshall recommends that instead of looking at our anger as caused by forces outside of our control, we should look at our needs that are not being met. It is more constructive to focus on our needs and how they can be met than blaming others for our negative emotions.

At the recent Interhelp gathering, I attended a session on how we could be voices for peace in a world obsessed by war. At one point during the session someone brought up the "what about Hitler" argument that I'm sure many of us are familiar with. How would non-violent activists deal with someone like Hitler? How can we defend ourselves against someone who is inherently evil? Now there are actual factual arguments to deal with this kind of situation, but it is difficult if not impossible to keep track of all the arguments for all of the various situations people might refer to. Because I had read the *Nonviolent Communication* book, the thought struck me that what is really important is not the specific arguments that we can remember and use, but really the emotions that lie behind the question. What is the person feeling who compares Osama Bin Laden to Hitler? Are they scared? Angry? Do they want revenge? Or maybe a combination of emotions? By understanding their emotions and their causes, then a connection with this person can be made, even if we disagree with their response to the situation. It's a lot easier to understand that someone is afraid, upset and wants revenge, as we have all had these feelings at some point or another. In addition, we are more likely to have an impact on another if we are able to be vulnerable and refer to our feelings and needs when we talk rather than reverting to some intellectual argument. Instead of blaming, criticizing or judging, we can appeal to others by stating our feelings and the needs behind them. When human feelings and the needs behind them are expressed, there is less room for disagreement, and when one's feelings have been listened to and validated, then it is easier to listen to others. The heart of the book

is that we can relate on a level of feelings, that no one can disagree with the feelings experienced by another, and that we can connect with others through our feelings even when we disagree intellectually about an issue. Being human, we all share the same basic needs, and when we see another's actions and communications as trying to meet one or more of these basic needs, we will respect their actions even if we disagree with them. And at the heart of almost all action or communication is someone trying to meet one of their basic needs. This understanding may also lead to new ways of looking at a situation and perhaps even to better communication and understanding between parties who disagree.

These concepts are the basis for the book *Nonviolent Communication*. If you want to explore these ideas further, along with many specific examples and situations, I recommend this book. The book has a lot of great examples, as well as many reasons why our culture's dominant mode of thinking and communicating is not life-affirming. The book includes suggestions of more life-affirming ways of thinking about, responding and otherwise relating to situations and other people. I did find, however, that some of the examples and recommendations in the book seemed stilted and unnatural, and that it is difficult to apply them to my own life. However, by concentrating on the content and message of the book, without worrying about how it's applied, then the lessons learned can be applied to my own life.

Here are a few excerpts from the book to give a flavor of what nonviolent communication is about:

"One kind of life alienating communication is the use of moralistic judgments that imply wrongness or badness on the part of people who don't act in harmony with our values." (p. 15)

"As we've seen, all criticism, attack, insults, and judgments vanish when we focus attention on hearing the feelings and needs behind a message. The more we practice in this way, the more we realize a simple truth: behind all those messages we've allowed ourselves to be intimidated by are just individuals with unmet needs appealing to us to contribute to their well-being." (p. 107)

SNIPPETS FROM THE 2002 GATHERING

The Power of Our Grief

by Rick Gottesman

Our planet is in trouble – and we know it. We know about the devastation of our forests and our trees. We know about the poisons that are leaching into our soils and seas and air. We know about the spasms of extinction that are wiping out our fellow species at a rate never before chronicled. We know about the exponential rate at which the forces of destruction, set loose by our kind, are eroding our very life support systems. We know it in our bones. And we know this is a time of challenge we must face together if we are not to go under.

We know we must now learn new steps and strategies. How to live ecologically, how to live sanely and simply, how to organize effectively, how to start moving more and more toward a system that is sustainable, without which we can now see there is no life, no future. We know that by our intention, bold new forms can break through, burst forth – new institutional forms, new ways of confidence, new ways of justice, new ways of economics, new ways of farming, new ways of being together, new ways of being on Earth.

Where do we find the power for this, the power that can lead to the healing of the world? I think we find it in our pain, our pain for the world. We find it in the grief that comes over us as we see what is happening, the fear that overtakes us, the rage that swells up. Honor it. Do not think that this is a private craziness. Know that this is life itself crying through you. Let us be bold to acknowledge that our grief and our rage and our fear for all beings at this time, is our deepest health, our deepest sanity, the other face of love.

There is a gospel in our grief. It says we care. And that caring springs from our profound interconnectedness, an interconnectedness that weaves the web of life out of which we come, a web out of which we cannot fall. The power that is there for the healing of the world doesn't come from any one of us.

As we venture out the power is there. You see, we only need to let the amazing power of self-healing of our planet come through us. And where do we tap into this power? In our story, in the very journey that we have lived in our lifetime. In our lifetime as Gaia, the planet. This power comes as we drink from the deepest wells of the spirit and hear the song that has been sung through us since time began. The song that burst forth in the forming of the galaxies. The song that sucked biology out of the brimming rocks and that peopled our planet with the exuberance of life forms. That is what sings in us now. And we want to be rekindled, to hear it again stronger. Now that we, in our long planetary journey, have become graced with self-reflexive consciousness, we take glory in those roots and we can let the song sing through us.

A Discipline

Turn toward the holocaust, it approaches
on every side, there is no other place
to turn. Dawning in your veins
is the light of the blast
that will print your shadow on stone
in a last antic of despair
to survive you in the dark.

Man has put his history to sleep
in the engine of doom. It flies
over his dreams in the night,
a blazing cocoon. O gaze into the fire
and be consumed with man's despair,
and be still, and wait. And then see
the world go on with the patient work
of seasons, embroidering birdsong
upon itself as for a wedding, and feel
like a young traveler, arguing the world
from the kiss of a pretty girl.

It is the time's discipline to think
of the death of all living, and yet live.

— Wendell Berry

SNIPPETS FROM THE 2002 GATHERING

Sondra's Text for Saturday Afternoon exercise

(Based on an article by Catherine Browning in the Ecozoic Reader, Fall 2001.)

What if we think of ourselves – us humans – as the eyes, ears, touch, reflections, actions, celebrations and thoughts of the Universe? What if we lost that niche in the greater works by dulling our senses? What if we lost our ability to create, to contribute? Imagine that it is our task to listen. The universe speaks; we are merely the messengers. The universe speaks to us through deep states of relaxation, silence, daydreaming, meditation, prayer, imaging, ceremony, breathing, storytelling and music. The universe knows what words will work best on our paper or what color we could paint before our pen, our brush make a stroke. It is in learning to trust this wisdom, in consciously surrendering into its mysterious creativity, that we become our best selves and provide solutions to our most pressing problems. We are each called, by the universe, to be a worthy vessel, an effective messenger of life-changing discoveries in these precarious times.

Thomas Berry has named the next geo/biological era the Ecozoic – the most hopeful and positive of future imaginings, an era of mutually enhancing relationship of humans and the larger community of life systems. How can we begin to move ourselves toward that vision? If we carefully and sacredly let go of every piece of scrap paper, every piece of furniture, memento, distracting memory, cluttering thought, habit, acquaintance, chore, irrelevant detail of our lives that does not represent the Ecozoic, then we will create a huge abyss. Being in that abyss might be painful, we might be tempted to run away or clutter up our lives with immediate short-term fixes. But the rewards for snuggling up to the abyss, nurturing the abyss, will be great. As we sink into the stillness, our instinctual knowing, our gut hunches and our intuitive genius will inevitably reveal themselves. As we learn to really listen to the universe, we will find that something great will come out of nothing.

We have an opportunity now to dip into that listening and maybe even the abyss. For 45 minutes each of us will go outside into the winter land – walk,

or stay still, and open up all senses. Be as present as you can. There is death and life in the winter landscape: leaves, twigs, plants have died. Trees hardly look alive, but under the snow, under the frozen ground, the roots systems are alive, waiting. Seeds lie on the snow, looking dead, they too are waiting. It is active, expectant waiting, full of creative potential.

Be open to the death of winter and to the life force inside that death. Whatever comes in for you, honor this experience, bring it back inside and quietly circle up. You will be asked to work with your support group to create an expression, either together or as individuals within the group, of what your experience was. Remember your exquisite, rich and unique ability to imagine. What is your experience of your place in the present, and how you might be in the Ecozoic era?

[When people have returned to circle up:]

You have had a short time outside to be silent, to begin listening to the universe, to begin to sense the creative potential which is inherent in each of us. You may now play with an expression of that experience using poetry, song, music, dance, story telling, skits, ceremony, ritual, mime, painting, whatever you decide together.

A variety of materials are available here: scarves, cloth, mask making supplies, paints, paper, pencils. You will have until 5:15 to create an expression you can share with the larger group at 8 tonight. At 5:15 we will formally break and have an hour and a quarter till dinner at 6:30. That time can be used to work on your creations if you choose. Tonight, each group will have up to fifteen minutes to present to the rest of the participants. If your group chooses to do partly collective and partly individual pieces, divide up the time accordingly. You can also pass.



News From the Network

Eleanor Rae writes: The year 2002 has seen C:WED [The Center for Women, the Earth, the Divine, www.CWED.org] starting a new life in a different location. After 36 years spent in the woods in Ridgefield, CT, Eleanor and Giles and C:WED have re-located in a one-floor condo on City Island in the Bronx, NY. The move was necessitated by Giles' MS which has left him basically wheel chair bound. I plan to continue, with significant input from C:WED's Associates and friends, my work for the Earth and its many and varied inhabitants.

We continue to make use of our consultative status at the United Nations. Among some of the highlights: Eleanor founded and is co-chairing the Earth Values Caucus...

"Weaving the Connections" has achieved its 7th year of continuous seasonal publication and will enter its 8th with the spring issue under the continued editorship of Anne Andersson....

Continued success in your good work.

Uli Dettling writes: The last Newsletter was a true inspiration. Thank you!

I burst into tears this morning reading Rosalie's article [in Issue 23, November 2002] on Lesson in Effective Political Action. I was deeply touched and indeed encouraged and heartened by Rosalie's sharing of her experience. Thank you, Rosalie.

Denis and I have been involved in local peace activities, a local coalition group called Arlington Justice with Peace in particular, going to many of their weekly Monday night vigils, holding up signs and giving out pamphlets on the street corner in Arlington Center during rush hour. Denis has also been going to the bi-monthly meetings of the group. We handed out flyers at the polls before the elections for the write-in peace candidates, were inspired by the big demonstration in Boston on November 3, and then crushed and disappointed after the elections. We realized that what we need is a good ol' D&E workshop to help us deal with the myriad of feelings we've been holding since 9/11, all the cumulative trauma since then, to help us keep going and take actions from a place of compassion. At first, we thought, we want to offer this to our local peace coalition. Then, roping Joanne Sunshower

into the process over Thanksgiving, we decided to have this workshop first for ourselves, meaning us old Interhelpers in the Boston area and then offer it to our local peace coalition(s)...

I liked your quote from Havel about Hope. What has kept me going is Mother Theresa's saying: "You don't have to be successful, just faithful" as quoted in the book "Visionaries" by Utne. Same idea.

Also, please send us 10 or so copies of the newsletter and any Interhelp brochures you have for our local peace coalition to introduce them to the idea of D&E work and Interhelp.

Wishing you all a peaceful world and holiday season and a great gathering. Thanks to the Council for all the good work you are doing.

Joanna Macy writes: ... gratitude for the October days we shared and the fine new *Interhelp Newsletter*. Michael, your response to Mary Gleason speaks to me strongly.

Maria Leafdancer Termini writes: I got your newsletter today and am so glad because it is a much needed ray of hope. Thank you so much!

I have been struggling for 2 years to prevent the destruction of the 12-acre forest across from my house. This land is currently part of the campus of Andover Newton Theological School and they are planning to sell it to a developer who will clear cut it to build 48 units of luxury housing which is an economic injustice because it will make housing for poor people more and more impossible here and it is also an environmental injustice because it will destroy 1000's of trees, destroy so much wild life and their habitat. It is painful to have this happen. Many of my neighbors do not want to see this happen. But the developer has a permit to do this and could afford expensive lawyers. So it seems like it might happen. In this Requiem, the meeting I am referring to is a meeting of a committee of neighbors and developers set up to help the destruction go smoothly. It is especially painful that a theological school wants to destroy its forest. I hope you can print all or some of this. Thank you very much. [See *Requiem for a Forest*, page 7.]

Requiem for the Forest

by Maria Termini

The minutes of the meeting [of a committee of neighbors and the developers, set up to help the destruction go smoothly] go like this. We met at 7 PM [in Spring 2002] to discuss the execution of the forest.

I had just walked through the forest at dusk so aware of the glowing sun touching the new tiny green leaves emerging from the buds. I had so enjoyed the song of a cardinal on a high branch so near the sky, its red color glowing brightly by the last rays of the sun.

I know this forest is scheduled for execution. Tonight we are meeting together civilly to discuss the details. Plan its death. Talk politely to each other. I cannot do this any more. I want to scream. The horror is too great.

The trees, living creatures of power and majesty, about six hundred and fifty in number will all be cut, or as the developer says, "taken down." A monster of a machine called a "chipper" will grind the once proud branches into insignificant bits. Another machine will pulverize the stumps and roots and delicate fibers through which once flowed the water and nutrients out of the soil to feed the tree beings.

The execution of this forest is being planned so the land can be cleared so the developers can build monstrous big houses for the very rich. To me the forest is a place of spirit and beauty. To the developers it is just a piece of expensive real estate.

The land will be exploded with continuous dynamite charges. It will be a war zone. The pudding stone rock outcroppings and the shape of the hill will be blasted and gone forever. This is the last drumlin in the city and it is going to be destroyed.

All the dirt and rock, about 30,000 cubic yards will be carted off somewhere else by order of the almighty dollar. They tell me all this, the execution, will be done quickly, neatly, cleanly with little mess. The forest I love, which is across the street from my home, will be raped and brutalized. Gone forever. The creatures of the forest will have no home. Where will they go? How many of them will be killed as the roaring bulldozers

boldly and blindly crash into the forest with heavy metal tracks? The nests of the birds and squirrels will topple and crash to the ground as the trees are cut. The burrows of the skunks and rabbits crushed.

Can the execution be stayed? Is there any way this foul deed could be done with mercy? I will be an unwilling witness to the execution of the forest and I will feel the pain of its destruction. But I live here. My home is across the street. I have nowhere else to go. It will be torture to hear the chain saws and the blasting will echo in the heart of my own body.

Is this right? Can there be no reprieve? Is this what it come down to – making lots of money with too big houses while so many are homeless? We don't talk about this at the meeting. The project is going to happen. The execution is inevitable. It is progress. It is development. For me it is unbearable pain.

The developer says that the blasting will be done with all precautions and will be a learning experience for the children in the adjacent school. Is he for real? Is blowing up a forest the kind of learning experience that is good for children? Yes – they will see, maybe not now, but many years later, how greed has destroyed their environment and more and more we are forced to live away from the comfort and beauty of the natural world in a world of sterile, lifeless concrete and plastic. Is dynamiting a forest a

behavior to be condoned and encouraged for the school children? Or for any of us?

This forest is precious and necessary. I just want to cherish it. I wish the execution of the forest could be stopped. What is the crime of the living thing that is this forest?

We sit in the meeting and talk of the execution continues and my outrage stirs to anxious pain. Can there be no reprieve? I am alone. Everyone else leaves in a hurry, not wanting to linger and really think about this. I walk into the night and into the forest and look up to the stars in the tree branches darkly scratching the silver night and pray. I am so afraid.

News From the Network

Carol Harley wrote: I am so grateful that you sent out a copy of Interhelp newsletter. I read it word for word the same day it came! Blessings to you.

Barbara Earth writes: I am here [at the Asian Institute of Technology in Thailand] and it is wonderful to hear from you. I have no time. I will just attach my most recent writing – two days old. We had Amartya Sen here and I wrote this for the Commission on Human Security.

Note: Dr. Earth includes an elegant paper titled Freedom from Fear: Technology Development for Human Security, which concludes:

We have discussed technological development as it relates to human security. It is important to locate the principles driving technology development because so much of humanity's intellectual resources are invested in the pursuit of innovation. In the current paradigm, massive private capital determines the direction of development. For technology to be socially driven, a radical "change of mind" is required to focus development and resources onto areas of human indignity, alienation and fear. "Excluded" people and the integrity of the ecosystem would be central to our consciousness and efforts.

Socially driven technology works in partnership with capable, informed civil societies and enlightened governance systems to create the conditions for human security. All spheres of society – families, schools, communities, the media, indeed the power structures themselves, are called on to contribute to the transformation.

And now we have yet another message from Barbara with a superb, exhaustive paper on Globalization and Human Rights: Case of Phoenix Pulp Mill, Khon Kaen Province, Thailand. I can forward it to you from interhelp@earthlink.net or you can write to Barbara at barbarac@ait.ac.th. Dr. Earth is certainly a productive scholar.

John Terrell writes: I was puzzled about a line on the front page of your recent newsletter, "Challenging Times." You express concern about the "untimely

death (assassination?) of Paul Wellstone." Why do you mention assassination? What information do you have that even hints at such a suggestion? If you have none, you have done all of us a disservice, i.e., spreading rumors. If you have unnamed sources which support or suggest foul play in the Senator's death, then please name them.

Editor's response: I am glad that at least one person read the article closely enough to be upset at that provocative query, whether the downing of the plane that carried the Wellstones to their tragic deaths along with both pilots might have been deliberate. I neither know, nor suggest, that it was; but like *many* others, I thought of "assassination" as an obvious QUESTION. Given the very high political stakes, any investigation of the crash should proceed from the assumption that it *might* have been an assassination, and the prompt appearance of the FBI (beyond the role of the NTSB) suggested that the possibility of foul play had not been ruled out.

I am not claiming that Paul Wellstone's death was murder, but I am waiting to be shown that it clearly was NOT. The violence of U.S. society in general and of elements of the "right to life" faction in particular – they have not only torched Planned Parenthood offices but specifically assassinated several medical personnel involved with abortion – makes it enough of a concern that I would expect the investigation to seek to rule out murder. ("Taking out" Wellstone would – will – make it easier for Bush to appoint Supreme Court judges to overrule *Roe v. Wade*.) The record of Attorney General Ashcroft's rhetorical support of the "right-to-life" movement, his active regulatory opposition to ANY kind of gun control, and the general political stance of the Ashcroft-Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld axis give me little confidence that they would not have closed their eyes to a violent attack on Paul Wellstone. It is hard for me to trust that an administration that stonewalls the bipartisan commission investigating the terrorism of 9-11-2001, has been unable to track down the domestic anthrax terrorists, and can't identify the White House operative who illegally "outed" the wife of Ambassador Wilson as a CIA operative will permit a thorough investigation into the death of its primary foe in the 2002 Senatorial election.

News From the Network

Caito Mathis writes: Finally got around to reading the Newsletter [Issue 23]; it was SO good. I don't know what it is about the Interhelp folks, it really does feel like family. I wish I could come to the Rowe conference center meeting in February ... but I've had to spend too much money. Had to move again to be downtown because where I was there was no transportation after 6 pm (I don't drive.) I am going to Washington on the 18th for the demonstration with a bunch of other Ashevilleians. I bet Interhelp people will be there too – too bad it is unlikely we'll meet up. We are staying in a Presbyterian Church somewhere overnight.

Barbara Knox writes: I was so glad to receive and read the November issue of Interhelp. Is it time for me to renew? I don't remember. Even though I don't know any of the people, I still feel a warm connectedness. I wish Rowe weren't so far away. I have thought of coming, but just at that time I may need to help my pregnant granddaughter move into a new house in Atlantic City while her husband is in Mississippi training for his new Coast Guard assignment. Anyway, I want to tell you what's been going on with me, so I am copying a bit from the Yule letter I sent out last week:

My health is still pretty good for a 78-year-old. I planted my garden again this year and have a full pantry and freezer in spite of very dry weather. But our reforestation plantings were hurt by the drought. We won't be sure how much until things leaf out in spring. I went on my first canoe trip in May on a branch of the Juniata River, five days, camping overnight. Rain poured, the river rose, it turned cold and tents had frost on them. But I had a wonderful time! The people were great and my canoe partner was excellent. Despite my lack of experience, we were not among the dozen who capsized on the fast, cold river. In January I was elected a delegate to the Green Party's national committee, which means a lot of computer work as well as attending the national conventions. This year's was conveniently held this past summer in Philadelphia.

I still love my hybrid car (which I call Spook; she is so quiet). I built her a garage which includes a nice workshop area.

I am enjoying writing poetry and have found a good teacher. Often my beautiful valley provides inspiration. Here is a sample:

Silver Fretwork

Brittle twigs form networks
against the winter sky.
Like decoding wrinkles on an aging face,
in twigs I read the diary of the past.

Fat, black cankers ring cherry boughs;
blight-damage scars elm branches;
tent worm bags swath walnut limbs.
Left by hungry chickadees,
a few drought-scarce berries
cling to dogwood twigs.

I walk around a curve.
Sun back-lights bare branches.
What alchemy! Smooth bark reflecting
brilliant trceries of light, transmuting
winter twigs to polished silver fretwork.

And what of wrinkles? Back lit with laughter?

Interhelp is an international network of people who share a deep concern for world conditions that threaten human life and the earth. We support each other in moving from feelings of hopelessness and isolation to empowerment and action. Through community gatherings with shared experiences, group exercises, and opportunities for reflection, we integrate deep social concerns, personal psychological growth, awareness of our spiritual core, and intimate connectedness to this living planetary system. We help each other strengthen our personal support systems and renew our commitment to the earth, peace, and social justice.

Michael Rice, *editor*
Kimberley Debus, *layout editor*
Please send editorial matter to: Michael Rice
Interhelp
P.O. Box 61
Delmar, NY 12054

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