

# Quaker House Newsletter

Front-Line Peace Witness Since 1969

Early Autumn 2007

Fayetteville, NC [www.quakerhouse.org](http://www.quakerhouse.org)

Chuck Fager, Director

## Report From the Front Lines: Truth In Recruiting Comes to Wilkes County NC

### Key question: Is Sgt. Abe A Quaker??

Wilkes County is close to the mountains in North Carolina, and far from its centers of urban sophistication. But it is home to five high schools, in which military recruiters move frequently and freely.



### Wilkes County NC: Outside Input Not Welcome; But the Magic Words Opened Some Doors.

"When business is slow," says Sally Ferrell, "the military recruiters go into the cafeteria and sit down at the lunch tables with students, talk to them, flirt with the girls and try to get the boys to come over."

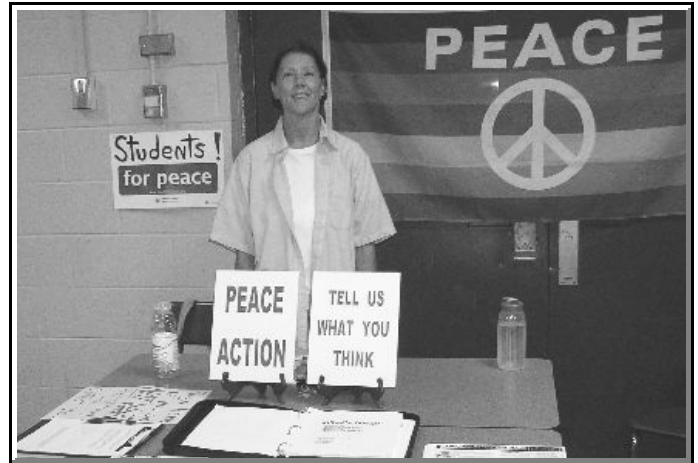
Sally Ferrell, moved to Wilkes County in the late 1970s, with her late husband. "We came for the rural life, beautiful mountain scenery and to build an extended family communal life," she says. Her parents had retired there from Iowa. And wouldn't you know, they were Quakers, who started Wilkes County Friends Meeting as soon as they settled in.

Being Quaker, Sally has been working as a mediator for a local nonprofit which helps out with cases for the local courts. And as the shadows of war lengthened over the nation and her home county, she began to feel a concern to bring news of Truth In Recruiting and alternatives to military service to the schools in her area.

Since the recruiters were in the schools regularly, she thought, surely the administrators would not object to students occasionally hearing another view. She helped start a group called "Alternatives to Military in the High Schools Project," and in the spring of 2005 asked the superintendent to let them set up tables in the schools from time to time.

No such luck. The school superintendent turned her down flat. "He said he thought we were being negative," Sally recalls, "and the students did not need any more information." Being a mediator, Sally figured that some Friendly Persuasion was called for. She met again with the superintendent, then spoke individually with all but one member of the county school board, and addressed them as a group at a public meeting.

The result? A litany of "Nos" in every case. One board member told Sally, with regard to the brochure "Do You Know Enough To Enlist", "We can't have our students asking themselves, 'Am I willing



Sally Ferrell & her table in a Wilkes County high school. THIS is what the front-line looks like.

to kill or be killed' because that's terrible and they are not (willing)".

Sally said she discovered that "the superintendent proved to be particularly resistant to outside input. There is a long tradition here of institutions operating without input from the community and particularly without input from anyone not born in Wilkes County.

"I was also surprised to find that the decision-making on the access question is very much recruiter-driven. If recruiters say they need more access they get it. As one board member said, if they don't have access how can they fill their quotas! The schools considered banning all recruiting on campus, but changed their minds after a recruiter complained."

All this took several months, and Sally was getting nowhere. Sally adds that she ran into Quaker House staff at a regional gathering during that time, and asked for my advice about how to proceed, wondering if it was proper for a Quaker to be more assertive, or even litigious, in such circumstances. **Go to page 3 >>>**

## GI RIGHTS HOTLINE CALLS KEEP REACHING NEW HIGHS

### Quaker House Hotline Statistics

2007 calls January - July = 6059  
Monthly average: 866 calls

2006 calls January - August = 5553  
Monthly average: 694 calls

And we have added new Hotline Phone Numbers:  
1-877-447-4487 or  
919-663-7122

## Domestic Violence At Ft. Bragg: A Long-Delayed Memorial

On October 1, several news shows in our part of North Carolina ran a story about a remarkable ceremony that was held in Fayetteville. It was a memorial for an army wife who was murdered by her husband.



**Christine Horne, left, remembers her mother, Beryl Mitchell, right, murdered here in 1974.**

Is such a case old news here? Well, yes – from 1974, in fact. But only in 2007, thirty-three years later, was a marker placed on the victim's grave, by her daughter.

The murder victim was Beryl Mitchell, killed by her Army

Green Beret husband on December 1, 1974: stabbed, strangled, and dumped nude in a wooded area of Ft. Bragg.

The daughter, Christine Horne, has worked for decades to overcome the impact of that trauma. As part of that process, Horne came to Fayetteville to organize a memorial for her mother and install a headstone; the fact that the ceremony took place at the beginning of Domestic Violence Awareness Month is entirely not coincidental.

The memorial was an impressive event; both the chief of police and the Cumberland County sheriff were in attendance – though the army did not respond to her invitation. The event climaxed in the release of thirty-three lavender balloons at the cemetery. A crowd of fifty-plus watched the balloons rise into the blue sky. Among them were many women, survivors of domestic violence, who showed up unannounced to be part of the witness.

And where does Quaker House fit into this story? Domestic violence is not one of our program priorities, though of course we hear about it in our counseling, and as part of the life of this community. But back in 2002, after a shocking series of seven military domestic murder-suicides here, I wrote an article in this newsletter about the aftermath of this outburst, and later placed it on our website. (It's at: <http://quakerhouse.org/DV-Military.htm>)

Which is where Christine Horne read it in mid-September, then picked up the phone and called us. She was seeking help with making the ceremony as visible as possible, particularly to help focus attention on this chronic social sickness.

And we did help her, particularly with media work, staying mainly in the background as we did so. I also enlisted the help of the Fayetteville chapter of NOW, which meets at Quaker House, and who are veteran activists on this issue.

This commemoration, while very personal, was not only about closure in Christine's life. Hardly a week goes by here now without someone voicing their apprehension about an expected increase in domestic abuse when the thousands of soldiers from Ft. Bragg, now in Iraq, return in the coming months. Is the army getting ready? Is the community? No one feels very confident.

Christine Horne has been effusive in her gratitude for our assistance. But for the past, and especially the future, I say it's the least we could do.

## GI Counseling Notebook

A soldier called on a recent Friday. Let's call him Art, though come to think of it he never did mention his name. He was back from Iraq, but only for a few days– returning there the next Monday.

He wasn't calling about the usual–how to get out of the army, or to avoid going back to a combat zone. Instead, he wanted to know how to make trouble there–trouble that was legal. How to complain about mistreatment by his superiors. Deadly mistreatment.

The basics were simple: he was a truck mechanic in a unit that was under persistent insurgent attack. His unit was also grossly under strength. So after working on trucks all day, he and his buddies were being told to pull nighttime guard duty on the roof of their decrepit, vulnerable "cot," sarcastic slang for the building.

Guard duty was not only a matter of staying awake and watching for RPGs. There were stacks of heavy sandbags to move around, depending on where the threats were coming from.

Even with all the work and watching, attacks and casualties continued. An RPG blasted through the wall one night a few months ago, and blew the legs off a valued friend. Others had been killed.

Art was exhausted. He felt his unit was being driven into the ground, and to destruction. He blamed indifferent officers, who, he said bitterly, "are only there to make rank." Most of his buddies felt the same way, he said. One of them had even drawn up a petition for relief, which was signed by half the unit—a daring step– but then ignored.

The response, he said, was, "GIs are always going to complain, that just means you have to work them harder." Art added that some soldiers had re-enlisted, not for the bonus but simply for the promise of a transfer to another unit.

Although only in his twenties, Art had high blood pressure and was going through a divorce. He was sick of the war: "It's all a bunch of stupidity and we're all fed up with it."

But he was hardly a budding peacenik. He spoke bitterly of restrictive new "rules of engagement" which he said made it harder for GIs to defend themselves. There were even new security cameras around the unit now—not to protect them, Art was sure, but to gather evidence for court-martialing terrified soldiers who fired back too fast. For his part, "I wouldn't think twice before shooting Iraqis."

But as he got ready to return to duty, he asked if there was anything he could do to protect himself and his buddies? Legal ways to rock the boat? Did we have any ideas?

Yes, we had ideas. Three to be specific.

First, he could file a complaint against his superiors, under article 138 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Few GIs know this, but military law authorizes such formal grievances against superiors for abuse or violations of regulations. I suggested he consider writing up such a complaint right before he returned to Iraq.

Second, he could turn the complaint into a memo, and FAX it to the Inspector General of his division; we found the number. FAXes, I pointed out, get delivered faster than snailmail.

And third, he could rewrite the memo as a letter to his Members of Congress, and FAX it to them too, asking them to look into how his unit was being treated. We got him those numbers too.

He took these items down. I cautioned him that while all this was perfectly legal, the army had ways of retaliating against troublemakers. He knew that, he said, but he had had enough.

In fact, come to think of it, after five years in the army, much of it in Iraq, he was fed up with all of it. When he got home from this deployment, he said, he'd call us again for help with a discharge.

I said we'd be here.

But after hanging up, I was thoughtful. Yes, Quaker House would be ready. But he'd have to get back home first.

And what are the odds?

**Sally Ferrell, from page 1 >>** My memory of that conversation is hazy, but in similar ones I have urged people to learn and use two magic words. They are: "Lawyer," and "ACLU." In any event, this is what Sally did: she sought help from North Carolina Peace Action, in the urban Triangle region, and they in turn put her in touch with the NC ACLU.

Lo and behold, these incantations had an effect. The ACLU explained to the school superintendent that the law and various court decisions upheld the principle of equal access: if the Wilkes County schools let in military recruiters, they would sooner or later be obliged to let in those with different views about recruiting. They could do this with or without an expensive lawsuit; the choice was theirs.

That was the other magic word I meant to mention: lawsuit. It worked like a charm: a few days later, without court action, Sally's group was allowed access to the schools. After two years of work, they set up tables in all five county high schools in the spring of this year.



However, all has not been smooth sailing. The school board policy, among other provisions, prohibits "any educational and/or employment recruiter from engaging in any course of conduct which discourages students from entering a specific educational program, educational institution, career, or job opportunity by denigrating the educational program, educational institution, career, or job opportunity because of its nature or purpose." This section is legally dubious, but is still in place.

The first visits this fall went well. But at Wilkes Central High, Sally reports, "The students were very enthusiastic and several teachers and guidance staff stopped by to express agreement and thank us for providing another view-point and choices for the students. Some of the students took

their copies of Sgt. Abe and 'Ten Questions to Ask Recruiters' (from the American Friends Service Committee) over to the Marine recruiting table and asked the recruiter about the information in them.

"The recruiter looked annoyed and I believe (tho I can't prove) that he went to complain again to the superintendent about our presence. The following week the principal of Wilkes Central High emailed me to say, he objected to the literature from Quaker House and the AFSC because it discouraged the students from enlisting in the military and that Sgt Abe encouraged students not to keep their commitment to the DEP. [Delayed Enlistment Program]

"He added that my literature was 'religious' and therefore not acceptable for distribution in the schools. I offered to remove the materials he questioned until I appealed the matter to the school board."

Hmmmmm. AFSC's Youth & Militarism staffer emailed Sally in response to say that AFSC is not a religious organization, and its materials could not be banned as such. Quaker House, by contrast, is indeed a religious project, striving to manifest the Friends Peace Testimony rather than a secular or political agenda.

But is Sgt. Abe therefore "religious"? Not overtly. Certainly these materials do not try to convert anyone to Quakerism.

What happens now? Will Sgt. Abe be banned from Wilkes County Schools? Will Sally Ferrell be prevented from distributing literature from any source which describes the possible drawbacks and hazards of military service? Will Truth In Recruiting really take root in the Carolina foothills?

Stay tuned. In the meantime, we salute Sally Ferrell and her dogged efforts to bring Friendly Persuasion to Wilkes County NC.

**Boston Globe October 7, 2007**

### **Military sees big decline in black enlistees Iraq war cited in 58% drop since 2000**

WASHINGTON - African-Americans, whose longstanding relationship with the US military helped them prove their abilities and offered a way to get ahead, have turned away from the armed forces in record numbers since 2000, a period covering the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the start of the Iraq war.

Defense Department statistics show the number of young black enlistees has fallen by more than 58 percent since fiscal year 2000. The Army in particular has been hit hard: In fiscal year 2000, according to the Pentagon statistics, more than 42,000 black men and women applied to enlist; in fiscal year 2005, the most recent for which a racial breakdown is available, just over 17,000 signed up.

The unpopular Iraq war is the biggest reason, according to military analysts, Pentagon surveys, and interviews with young African-Americans.

**Washington Post October 11, 2007**

### **Army Offers Big Cash To Keep Key Officers**

The Army is offering cash bonuses of up to \$35,000 to retain young officers serving in key specialties -- including military intelligence, infantry and aviation -- in an unprecedented bid to forestall a critical shortage of officer ranks that have been hit hard by frequent deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Army officials said that lengthy and repeated war-zone tours -- the top reason younger officers leave the service -- plus the need for thousands of new officers as the Army moves forward with expansion plans have contributed to a projected shortfall of about 3,000 captains and majors for every year through 2013.

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**A Friendly Reminder:  
The work of Quaker House depends  
entirely on your contributions. Thanks  
again for your support.**

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The logo for Quaker House, featuring a stylized quaker figure above the text "Quaker HOUSE".

*Front-Line Peace Witness Since 1969*

Please Send your  
Tax-Deductible Donations to:  
Quaker House  
223 Hillside Ave.  
Fayetteville NC 28301

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## Early Autumn 2007

*Inside:*

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- > US Troops In Iraq Being Driven Into the Ground
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## Quaker Chuckles

### Don't Bug Me, or Thee

A British Friend passed along this report from a meeting in Bristol: one of the families in the Meeting brought a friend of their son's to Meeting – he was about ten. The lad sat quietly with the family for the first fifteen minutes.

Then the father of the family, who was taking children's Meeting that day, stood up and beckoned quietly to all the children to come out.

The visiting youth stood up and looked round, and asked out loud: "What do all the others do?"

"Sshh!" whispered the father, "they stay here."

"Poor buggers," said the boy, and went out.

### A Hot Time At Meeting

Historian H. Larry Ingle is looking into Richard Nixon's Quaker heritage. He discovered the following in Edward Hoyt's *The Nixons: An American Family*, published in 1972.

Hoyt includes this story from 18th century New Garden

meeting in Chester County, PA., to illustrate a meeting for worship where Friends began to doze off. "And then some ardent person, like old John Salkeld of Chester, might take action, as Old John did one day when he spotted several of this neighbors drowsing through the message.

"He jumped to his feet.

"'Fire! Fire,' he shouted, and immediately the sleepy ones awakened.

"'Where? Where?,' they demanded.

"'In Hell,' responded Old John sternly, 'to burn up the drowsy and unconcerned.'"

### The Right Prescription?

A strict and abstemious elder Quakeress decided to try the first glass of beer in her entire life.

After sipping it for a moment, she looked up with a puzzled expression.

"That's odd," she murmured. "This tastes just like the medicine my husband has been taking for the last twenty-five years."

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