

Quaker House Newsletter

Front-Line Peace Witness Since 1969

Spring 2002

Fayetteville, NC www.quakerhouse.org

Chuck Fager, Director

Dear Friends,

A couple weeks back, the artillery out on Ft. Bragg was firing almost nonstop. Here at Quaker House, the barrage rattled our windows and vibrated the floor.

In one sense, this was nothing unusual. War games are played there frequently, and I wondered if this was their version of "March Madness." Long-time residents tell me they're used to the cannonades, don't even notice them.

But I noticed. They were a concrete and regular reminder of the feverish preparations for war underway here, and elsewhere. As I write, the news is full of reports about plans for a massive US military action against Iraq, within a few months. And then there's Israel/Palestine.

Friends aren't the only ones who are noticing these reports. Since my arrival at the first of this year, Quaker House has received close to one hundred calls per month from GIs seeking discharges. Only a small number of these are ready to claim conscientious objection; but their underlying anxiety is plain enough.

Most of those calls are taken by Lenore Yarger and Steve Woolford, a couple living in a Catholic Worker community near Silk Hope, NC. They're very experienced counselors, who did this work first as volunteers and more recently on a contract basis for much of the period when the Director's post was vacant.

As part of the effort to rethink and expand the Quaker House program to meet the needs of a post-9-11, wartime environment, we're going "back to the future." Reading in the Quaker House archives at Guilford College, I found many early documents specifying a two-track mission for Quaker House: GI counseling and peace education-action. In recent years, though, the counseling had properly taken center stage.

But times have changed; war is back, bigtime, and we're scrambling to respond. As we do, the "original" Quaker House mission seems the most serviceable. Further, it appears we may have backed into one of the best ways of continuing to counsel GIs seeking discharges, while gearing up to better serve Friends and other like-minded persons as a peace resource and action center.

To this end, the board has just agreed to continue our contract with Steve and Lenore through the end of the year. This frees me up to work with meetings and other

groups, and handle all the administrative tasks.

Even though this dual thrust is just beginning, it's generated plenty of work. I have already visited several meetings, joined in with a nascent local peace group, and am keeping in touch with the growing Quaker House constituency. We're getting many questions about the possible return of the draft; there are ideas for peace witness to weigh; the military situation needs monitoring; I do some GI counseling as needed, and have taken part in peace actions as well.

Looking ahead, there's a growing list of meeting visits, workshops and presentations on my calendar; and there are sure to be more peace actions here soon. Before long, we'll be hosting field trips by Friends and others here, giving them a closeup look at the social and cultural impact of militarism that's concentrated and visible here, but increasingly pervades our whole society.

The White House and Pentagon tell us to expect a long siege of war, and that's what Quaker House is working to respond to. Our expanded program will cost us up to \$25,000 more this year than we brought in last year. We think we can find these additional funds, if readers like you will help. Here are three things you can do:

– Ask your meeting or church to include Quaker House on its list of groups receiving annual donations. These institutional contributions can add up to a solid base of support.

– Make a personal donation to Quaker House. If you've already done that this year, we're grateful, and we hope you'll consider another gift. And

– Plan a visit to Quaker House/Fayetteville with your meeting or group.

Inside there are reports and reflections on our recent work. We hope you find them useful.

There goes the artillery again. Will you help us work toward the day they fall silent for good?

Peace,

Chuck Fager

HOMEFRONT: An Interview with Catherine Lutz

“Fayetteville’s story,” says Catherine Lutz, “is America’s story.”

Lutz should know. She’s an anthropology professor at the University of North Carolina, and author of *Homefront: A Military City and the American 20th Century* (Beacon Press), published last fall. She spent six years interviewing people on and off the post, searched through mostly forgotten historical records, and her book shows great empathy for the city, its people and its experience. (Here’s a mini-review: I strongly recommend *Homefront* to all who want to better understand the reality and cultural impact of American militarism. It’s humane, well-written, and it’s discounted at Amazon.com)

Even so, Lutz and her book are controversial here in Fayetteville. She’s been repeatedly denounced in the local paper as a left-wing ivory tower intellectual who hates the military, GIS, Ft. Bragg, and Fayetteville.

But if she is quick to admit she despises war, Lutz insists she likes Fayetteville, especially the people, and her book is not a hatchet job. When she spoke about it to a packed house in the Cumberland County Library auditorium here, her overall message was positive, and her reception was respectful, even welcoming.

“I think the city has gotten a terrible rap,” she told a local reporter. “It’s been dealt a bad hand of cards, and it’s tried to do the best it can with the cards it has.”

Paradoxes and Contrasts

This effort has produced paradoxes and extreme contrasts. “Fayetteville is both a city of cosmopolitan substance and humane striving,” she wrote, “and the dumping ground for the problems of the American century of war and empire, the corner of the American house where the wounds of war have pierced most deeply and are most visible.”

It’s the visibility that may make the toughest problems for Fayetteville’s boosters. The official monuments to the military presence here, above all the shiny Airborne and Special Operations Museum just a few blocks from Quaker House, present a carefully sanitized picture.

As *Homefront* puts it, “To make a tourist attraction of war requires some heavy lifting and thick screening. . . . The history inside is clean and beautiful and even fun. . . . They are wars of sacrifice without killing” There are no casualty figures listed with the displays, and especially no mention of civilian deaths.

But dig below the surface, as Lutz did carefully, and the picture of the military’s impact on this host community is very different: a mix of lucrative retail businesses and a large middle class, cheek-by-jowl with widespread poverty, often poor schools, a persistently high crime rate, and an urban landscape in which the seedy side of military culture can be pushed to the margins, but not concealed.

This legacy should not really be surprising: the military, after all, is not a productive enterprise; its business is

breaking things and killing people.

Moreover, as *Homefront* points out, Ft. Bragg is home to the Special Forces. The John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School here is a far more important cog in the American military machinery than the notorious (and now renamed) School of the Americas at Ft. Benning, Georgia.

The list of wars, large and small, overt and, more often, covert that its troops have been sent to is long, in the dozens. In a passage that seems surreal now, Lutz reports that in 1963, the Special forces here put on a special war games show for – the king of Afghanistan.

Paying Dues, Keeping Going

Since the new war began after this past September, Lutz has been active on the UNC campus, speaking at teach-ins, and aiding the nascent peace groups there and across the state. She recently met with our small peace group here in Fayetteville.

This activist role has its downside, however: her name was on a list of dissenting academics published last fall by a conservative group calling itself the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA). The group’s report charged that those, like Lutz, who spoke against the war were, “Failing America,” in its work of “Defending Civilization.”

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Expanded Military Recruiting in Schools — An Alert from Bonnie Parsons, QH Board Clerk:

Bonnie, who works with public schools, passed on this gloomy news: The new “No Child Left Behind Act” contains several items in addition to significant assessment, accountability, and educator quality requirements. One of the most disturbing has to do with military recruiting.

While ROTC and military recruiters seem to have always been with us, participation in programs has been voluntary and schools were under no obligation to provide contact information to military recruiters.

Because of the new regulations in the law, parents need to be made aware that **basic student contact information (names, addresses, and telephone numbers) can be given to military recruiters upon request unless parents have notified the school by prior written permission that this information should not be shared.**

This means that parents need to be pro-active about writing the schools at the beginning of each school year to let them know that they, the parents, do not wish their child’s contact information be shared with military recruiters.

For more information:

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/esea/progsum/title9.html>

Lutz, continued –

Inclusion on the list earned Lutz a spate of hate mail; but the outcry against the list's authors was so swift and loud that they revised the report and deleted all the offenders' names. When I asked her about it, Lutz shrugged off the criticism; it's clear it has not deterred her.

Lutz features Quaker House in *Homefront*, particularly in a gripping chapter about the intense struggle over the Vietnam war which raged here during those years, involving GIs and activists from near and far.

But her links to Quaker activism are older than the book. In the early 1990s, she helped prepare an analysis of Junior ROTC programs for the American Friends Service committee. The results of this analysis were devastating, showing that the JROTC, curriculum taught a version of U.S. history which was highly inaccurate and riddled with racist stereotypes. Her research also showed that while JROTC was sold to local school boards as a financial boon, in reality it was a drain on their budgets.

Despite the hate mail, the ACTA witchhunt and the angry op-ed pieces against *Homefront*, Catherine Lutz is optimistic about the prospects for a peace movement. "People are still living with a fantasy of war," she told me. "The only way you can sell a war to the American people is to conceal its reality from them. I think when that changes, the support you now see in the polls will start to evaporate."

Let's hope she's right.

GI Rights Casework —

One Wednesday afternoon at Quaker House, I was digging into the pile of papers on my desk, when the doorbell rang, and a young man was on the porch. His name was Thomas Mayfield.

Turns out he was a former QH client: he had a QH Newsletter from March 2000, and he was pictured there, with a shaved head and a broad smile, shortly after being discharged as a CO from the army at Ft. Bragg. He was looking for my predecessor, who worked with him for the 10 months his CO process took, doubtless to catch up.

Seems he's on something of a spiritual journey, or maybe just wandering, having spent time in an ashram in Florida. (He also has much more hair now!)

We settled on the front porch and watched the warm rain come down, and before long he had retrieved his CO file, which he carries with him, and I had an idea. There's a soldier now at Ft. Bragg, I'll call him Alex, with whom I've been working, who's moving toward filing his own CO claim; and it occurred to me that Tom had experience which might be useful.

So a phone call and an hour later, Tom and Alex were sitting on the couch, looking over Tom's paperwork and talking in abbreviations ("MOS", "FSB," etc.) which "TOC" ("This Old Civilian") had to struggle to keep up with. We all talked about our various experiences with CO forms and procedures, and I think Alex both learned a good deal, and gained some encouragement from this. One suspicion I think we all had, but

only talked about a little bit, was that the army might not be as accommodating to Alex's claim as it was to Tom's (if 10 months and several cases of "lost paperwork" can be called accommodating).

At one point, Alex looked over at me and said, "I suppose we're keeping you from your work, sitting here."

I just grinned at him. Yes, the paperwork was still waiting, and probably quietly reproducing the way it seems to do. But this conversation was "work" too, indeed part of the original work of Quaker House.

Soon they were on their way. Tom Mayfield may or may not drop back by, as the spirit moves, before he heads further north and west. But I'm confident I'll be hearing more from Alex, one way or another. And I'm back among the paperwork, until the next such "disruption" occurs.

From Steve & Lenore:

In February, out of 98 cases, "we worked on six conscientious objector cases. Notable among these was one conscientious objector who initially submitted to us a very confusing and incomplete application draft. We worked with him through several drafts with the final result being one of the strongest CO applications we have seen. he was cooperative and grateful and it was wonderful to see what a difference our counseling made in increasing the likelihood of his being recognized for CO status.

"Another conscientious objector, who was a journalism major prior to entering and thus had ent us a much stronger initial draft, worked with us every other day for two weeks before deciding to seek discharge by going AWOL (a much faster discharge with considerably less time spent under military control). The morning after he let, his commanding officer called our hotline, saying that the AWOL soldier had called us the night before on another soldier's cell phone. He wanted to know who we are and if we had encouraged the AWOL. Lenore explained that we could not give out confidential information about any one of our callers, but that it would be illegal for us to encourage anyone to go AWOL."

New on the Quaker House Website:

<http://www.quakerhouse.org>

- "Feeling a Draft?" A discussion of HR 3598, a bill to create a new military draft.
- Our Financial report for 2000-2001
- A report on peace witness at the site of the original Quaker House.
- Background on Chuck Fager, QH's new Director.
- Excerpts from this newsletter

Quaker Chuckles

In times like these, humor is not a luxury; it's a necessity, a survival tool. In this space, we'll do what we can to help meet the need.

Friendly Non-Persuasion

There was a World War II Quaker CO who had been, we are told, a professional wrestler (Pre-WWF!). Once when he and some other inmates of the Coshocton, Ohio camp for COs made a trip into a nearby town, they were taunted about their pacifism by some local youths, who insisted that only force could change the enemy Germans' views and behavior.

In response, the ex-wrestler took off his coat, challenged one of the local boys to a match, and promptly threw the townie across the room. He then asked the youth, "Now do you believe that force won't change people's views?"

"Heck no!" the local boy hollered back.

"That's exactly my point," said the CO, who put on his coat and left.

Sticking To the Testimony

In North Carolina, where there are more Quakers than in Philadelphia (yea, verily!), a rumor is circulating that a new bumpersticker is soon to be appearing on Tar Heel Quakers' automobiles, carrying the message: "*Friends Don't Let Methodists Drive Drunk Either!*"

Always On the Sunny Side

There was a weighty Quaker elder of earlier days, who often observed solemnly that, "There is nothing but trouble this side of the grave."

One day at a Friend's funeral, he stood to speak by the freshly dug mound, just as a curious sailor poked his head into the cemetery to see what was afoot. The weighty elder gazed down into the hollow below and said, characteristically, "Friends, there is nothing but trouble this side of the grave."

"Well in that case," called the sailor helpfully, "come on over to this side – there's no trouble over here!"

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Address Correction Requested

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