

UUUSE *In Depth*

Welcome to the second edition of UUUSE In Depth. In this publication we seek to produce a portrait of the many different people who make up our community by offering their thoughts and reflections expressed in prose and poetry.

We are especially grateful for the poems that Kendra kindly submitted just before the beginning of her sabbatical.

Enjoy!

The Bees and the Barrister

The honey bees found a gap
between some brick and board
and worked a Puritan summer.

But they lost their way,
crawled down the chimney,
landing
at the barrister's feet.

He couldn't sue them for illegal occupation
for the storage of one hundred pounds
of honey in his walls.

When the cleaning people came to sweep,
he watched, with one eye closed,
the dust pan,
full of tumbling bees
passing him by.

The next day,
he turned to see
fifty or more fuzzy brethren under his desk,
dancing, facing off,
looking -
in the mirror of another's
busy head, slowing body, woolly legs.

He took in
the way the honeybees felt
their brothers' faces
in tender touches
on the planks of his hardwood floor.

He blinked
and watched them dance, in turns,
as if paying their respects,
as if in final appearance,
of faint sounds-
searching to honor the nectar
in each.
And, one by one,
they became still.

When it was time to lock up,
he lingered
and found himself
pulling the dust pan off its hook
and sweeping up the still voices.
He carried them out the door
to the altar of the Linden tree
and felt their fullness and psalm.

The following day, he
rubbed his eyes hard,
pulled out a legal pad and a sharp pencil
and began to wonder
if bees really dance.

~ Sylvia Foster

The Hidden

(In June 2008, a plane flying over the remote Amazon photographed an un-contacted indigenous people living deep in the forest.)

It's a just a few pictures and then the plane went on,
leaving behind a story of itself: the roar, the metal in the sunlight.
They do not know that the plane recorded their faces, intent,
their bodies, painted yellow and red, black moving quickly through their village
suddenly gone strange.
They point their spears and longbows at the airplane.
And though they may be afraid of that noise in the sky
they meet it. They are splendid and fierce even at a distance.

What we know about them:
They are ready to defend themselves.
They know the pigments of the land
and cover themselves with them.
They live in shelters made of branches and leaves.
They do not have planes.
Contact with people who do have planes
will almost surely kill them, one way or another.

A year later, I return to the photos and find that although I remember their eyes
in the pictures their faces aren't clear
the distance from the plane to the ground smudges their lives.

It makes me lonely.
I don't want to be a threat to anyone.
I don't want to have to keep my distance.
I don't want the faces and the eyes to blur in the speed of this life.
I want something simple that is lost when you are of a people who build planes.
I want my body back, like the soil in the thawed garden.
I want to feel the trees and the rivers and the calling birds
on my skin and in my bones.
I want my mind to be free from my skull, ranging freely in the world.

Fearful, angry, they want no part
of this noisy shining demon in the sky.

These people may have retreated deep into the Amazonian forest when the Spanish invaded the first time. In any case, we have to prevent any further contact, as contact with the western world would likely kill them. It is impossible to tell for sure if they have ever had contact with the wider world. They have painted their bodies red and yellow, wear small pelts or fabric.

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I don't want to be so far away from the earth.

I am overcome by a loneliness for ourselves.

I don't want to see pictures of this planet from that height.

I don't want the reason for everything, the rows and the columns.

I want my body back, like the soil in the thawed garden.

I want to feel the trees and the rivers and the calling birds
on my skin and in my bones.

I want my words to be small and scattered

compared to my listening

and my mind, not locked inside this skull but ranging freely between the worlds.

~ Kendra Ford



Already today a hundred sweet and stunning
things have happened that I ought to
write a poem about. Yesterday,
none.

I think that may have more to do
with my mind
than the world bobbing along around me.

~ Kendra Ford

HOPE for HAITI

by Susan Gorman

I usually "read the paper" via internet over my breakfast, and this morning I saw an article speculating upon whether the subject of Carly Simon's "You're So Vain" is actually David Geffen. Really? Is this really what's important news right now? It upset me greatly. Now, I enjoy a good People magazine once in a while (although if you repeat that I'll deny it), however I am just baffled into the stratosphere of reasonability on this one. There are so many more important questions to be grappling with than that. How ironic that the vanity in question isn't our own for participating in that kind of mindlessness.

So here's my "rebuttal of the spirit" if you will: I'm assuming that media analysts will say that we focus on "Geffengates" and the like because it helps us escape from our current troubles, be they financial, emotional, economic, etc. etc. etc. But is that really the way we *want* to be?

I'd like to introduce a question better worth our time and energy. If the pain of the world is enormous, if struggle and suffering still exist on our earth walk, how do we proceed if we want to help but are afraid? How do we invest our time generously, charitably, without avoiding the pain we'll so obviously be exposed to? How do we face our fear of becoming overwhelmed by it?

I think firstly, we have to see being of service as its own reward. We set ourselves aside for another human being. And sometimes it requires effort. But ultimately, we are the ones who receive blessings worth far more to us than what we gave away.

We do what my friend Danielle's dad did. He is a practicing emergency room physician who volunteered a week of his time at a hospital in Haiti during the weeks just after the catastrophic earthquake there. What he did reminded me that facing what is hard, or what hurts, is an act of bravery. Hopefully I will always be able to step up, when, and if, I am called. I hope you are as affected and inspired by his journal as I was. Excerpts from this journal follow.

Day One: *I just finished our evening meeting. We start at 7:30 and apparently finish at 10 PM. Busy the whole time.*

*It was emotionally crushing earlier today as we loaded children on to a jet. Big brown eyes which refused to cry but you knew they were in pain. The youngest was 2 the oldest 13
Tonight a chicken strolled though the paediatric tent---guess it's not unusual. More tomorrow, I have to get to bed*

Day Two: *Today we changed dressings. OMG! I have never in my life seen so much pus. I can't even begin to describe the smell.*

Later in the day after lunch (beans and rice) I made the mistake of going to the paediatrics ward. I'm so glad I wasn't assigned there. It is basically two big rooms just jam packed with patients and family. One little boy, about two, is an orphan because both his parents were killed; he was the only survivor. The parents of the other children take turns caring for this boy: feeding him, holding him, loving him. It drove me to physical tears and open sobbing-I had to leave. Then there was the 8-month old baby with the fractured skull and soft tissue injuries who was found under her dead mother! I am happy but tired; emotionally drained but full of hope.

(Continued on facing page)

Day Three: *Toughest physical day thus far. At least 95 degrees and then over 100 in the tents. We changed over thirty dressings today. It took us over 5 hours to get through the work and I still have to go back this afternoon to clean up some loose ends.*

Last night we lost a two-month old baby who was septic and really didn't have much of a chance here. The nurse caring for her cried and just kept asking what she should have done differently or better or faster. It was sad for all of us.

Just now, on the road back from the tents I ran into a mom and her newborn. Unbelievable - life goes on, no matter what. The baby was gorgeous and happy, such a contrast to the life around her.

Well, it's time to get back to work. I hope the new people get up to speed quickly because this pace is difficult to sustain. However, as our lead MD said, how can we complain of sore backs or tired feet when we are surrounded by people who have suffered so much and do so with grace and dignity. I guess I'll just go back to work.

Day Four: *Good day but more sadness. About 2 o'clock we heard that a school in Cap Haitian, a town near here, had collapsed and there were 150-170 victims. We all mobilized immediately and it was very impressive. Well, happily the rumours were only partially true. A slide (we've had rain) caused the collapse of a room at a school. Four children died but there were no other victims. This is both great and sad. We also went to a Haitian cemetery and this is another whole story.*

Apparently here you only stay buried 2 years after which they dig you up so they can reuse the space. Consequently you see all kinds of bones and skulls all over the graveyard. Many in decaying coffins! It was outrageous. But it is their custom, not right or wrong; it just is.

.....

Our earth home is getting much smaller. It will probably continue to be harder to buffer ourselves from events happening far away. There is a huge spiritual opportunity here: to let go of the desire to buffer ourselves. To open our hearts further and give what we can. Not to give until it hurts. But to face what hurts so we can give what we can. And I'm sure we'll find that we can give a lot more than we thought.

*Editor's Note: A father-son duo in our church, **Caleb Ewing III and IV**, are interviewing congregational elders and writing summaries of their lives, with Caleb-the-younger doing the actual writing. Here then, the second in our series, as we visit with*

GAIL BATES

by Caleb Ewing IV

The time was a snowy afternoon in April 2010; the place was Riverwoods of Exeter; the occasion was a two-hour conversation with Gail Bates, a cheerful and beloved member of FUUSE. The hours went quickly. Gail grew up in the agrarian age and lived through World War I, the Great Depression, the golden age of transport (her mother and sisters *almost* ticketed on the Titanic!), World War II, the post-war 50's and the Civil Rights Era of the 1960's. She is connected even deeper into the past through her grandfather who was a Civil War veteran and through a family employee whose father was a slave. The extent of her years and memories is such that she refers to anything that happened after WWII as "modern times". For me, listening to her stories of times and events more commonly found in history books was eye-opening and memorable.

Gail Oberlin Bates grew up Cleveland, Ohio. Her early memories are of simple freedoms, sunny fields and outdoor play. Her family kept a vegetable garden, in which she happily participated. Throughout her life she has maintained a deep love of the outdoors, becoming, in her later life, an accomplished mountaineer and adventurer.

People too, informed Gail. Her grandparents had a black helper named Anna. Despite the segregated times, Anna and Gail grew up as sisters. Outside her family she came to see racism as an unfortunate phenomenon. After traveling the world, which she did many times in the course of her life, she came to understand it as a particularly American phenomenon that she was glad to leave behind whenever she traveled abroad.

Gail attended Smith College and spent a year in Italy from 1937 to 1938. Her experience away informed her about the lives of people outside of the US and taught her the importance and value of travel. When she saw Hitler and Mussolini in a motorcade at an Italian political parade, it was clear to her that the forces shaping Europe in that pre-WW II time were far more complex than commonly understood. (The Italians, in fact, began the journey to Fascism, under Mussolini, with the simple desire to oppose the erosion of property rights). After college, Gail went to graduate school to become a social worker and then spent the summer at a work camp in Tennessee. That camp was a model and precursor of the southern social service camps of the 1960's. After this stint, Gail joined The American Red Cross Civilian Organization and went to England and Europe for the duration of WWII. She served throughout England and in Normandy after D-day.

After the war, Gail went hiking! She was always an avid adventurer and she now ventured forth into the rarified Alps. While thus engaged, she met and later married (in 1954) Bob Bates, the renowned mountaineer and teacher of English at Phillips Exeter Academy. It was a perfect match and they traveled together for fifty years, climbing from Austria to Nepal and back here to the US. Gail and Bob both took turns as officers of the American Alpine Club. Bob passed away in 2007.

Gail lives with the belief that life is a gift and that it ought never be dull. She encourages making the best of situations and of finding opportunities as they arise. She told me with conviction that even though we (humans) won't and don't always do the right thing, or make the right decisions, the lessons that can be learned from such actions are as important as the eventual correct actions. It was comforting and beautiful to have received from her this heartfelt wisdom.

To live through so much and still remember it all is simply remarkable. At age 92, Gail has experienced more than most of us will. She happily resides at Riverside at Exeter.