



Beacon Hill Friends House



Residents gathered at the Chestnut Hill Reservoir during the annual spring retreat in April.

Spring 2011 Newsletter

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What makes BHFH Quaker? part 3: Simplicity in community

By Holly Baldwin, Director

When I think about how we live the simplicity testimony at BHFH, I waver. Our life here doesn't feel simple to me – we eat very well, we have computers and video games, we live in an affluent neighborhood – what can we really say about simplicity?

But every so often I'm reminded about how our life here really is significantly simpler than the dominant culture. A reminder

came this week when a prospective resident asked if she could bring an air conditioner. The answer is no: that's something we don't do, because we're committed to keeping our energy use low. We take the old fashioned approach of fans, cold showers and lots and lots of ice cubes. We are less comfortable than our neighbors, but our carbon footprint and our electric bills are smaller.

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“Mind that which is eternal, which gathers your hearts together up to the Lord, and lets you see that ye are written in one another's heart.”

George Fox (1653)

Weed Lecture, June 12: Peggy Senger Parsons

Freedom Friends Church and the Remixing of Quakerism

Sunday, June 12, 1:00 pm

Peggy Senger Parsons will add to an ongoing convergent Quaker conversation, speaking from her experience as the pastor of Freedom Friends Church. Topics may include: post-modern and open source theology, participatory culture, consumer-producers, a 21st-century relationship with orthodoxy, embodied communities, a new way to look at our history and what have been labeled as schisms.

Peggy Senger Parsons is a motorcycling Quaker preacher, teacher, counselor and free-lance provocateur of grace. Pastor of Freedom Friends Church in Salem, Oregon, she has a deep passion for interpreting Quakerism to non-Quakers in the 21st century. She has done three tours of duty as a peacemaker in Central Africa. She has written or co-written four books on traveling ministry and post-modern theology.

The Weed Memorial Lecture is held in memory of Ernest and Esther Weed, longtime Directors of Beacon Hill Friends House and advocates of Quaker educational programs.



Staff changes: Farewell Fiona, Welcome Zach

By Holly Baldwin, Director

Fiona Campbell, our capable Kitchen Manager since June 2009, left BHFH in February. We miss her creative dishes, such as veggie burgers-from-last-night's-leftovers, watermelon relish, and amazing artisan pizzas. Fiona brought us more than her meals – we also miss her bouncy and thoughtful presence, her friendly conversation, and her squeals of delight.

Almost finished with her nutrition training, Fiona is starting a holistic health coaching practice through which she will help clients with their health goals like overcoming sugar addictions, emotional eating, and learning to enjoy vegetables more often. You can read more about her plans at www.mindbodytummy.com. Fiona is living in Somerville with her partner Jared, and their beloved cat, Blackberry.

Fiona's departure made way for a new person to find a home in our community and in our kitchen. Zach Alexander is our new Kitchen Manager. Zach has been part of the local Quaker community since attending North Shore Meeting as a student. Before he cooked for us, he cooked for Young Friends and Young Adult Friends retreats in New England.

He has pleased the hungry mouths of our community with an array of Middle Eastern and North African inspired dishes as we heard the news of the pro-democracy revolts in the regions. We continue to enjoy meals from many different countries as Zach tries out new recipes.

In addition to his gifts in the kitchen, Zach also brings experience with publishing, both web and print, and we are fortunate to benefit from his skills in this arena.



Recipe from Zach: Tofu Massaman Curry

By Zach Alexander, Kitchen Manager

I first got into Massaman Curry because my girlfriend would always get it when we went out for Thai food. Her enthusiasm was contagious, and the sights and smells – soft potatoes and roasted peanuts, spicy coconut milk, fresh cilantro – sealed the deal.

Here's how I make it at the House (scaled down to 4-6 servings). The key ingredient is Massaman curry paste, which I recommend you buy pre-made. If you're ambitious, you can try making it from scratch, but it's difficult to do well, and unless you're fortunate enough to have all the necessary fresh ingredients handy – some hard to find even in Boston – you're better off using a ready-to-use version. Maesri and Mae Ploy are two good brands; I use Maesri, which you can find online or at Asian markets.

Ingredients

- 1 onion, or 3-4 shallots, chopped
- 2-3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tbsp. fresh grated ginger
- 3-4 tbsp. Massaman curry paste (use more if you like spicy food, less if not)
- 8-12 oz. coconut milk

- ½ cup roasted peanuts or cashews
- 1-2 Russett potatoes, cubed
- 1 carrot
- 1 package of firm tofu, diced
- 1 tbsp. tamarind juice (or lemon juice)
- 1 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ bunch chopped cilantro

Directions

1. Open the coconut milk. You should find that a thick "cream" has risen to the top; scoop this into a pot, over medium-high heat, without disturbing the more watery part below.

2. Sauté the onions or shallots in the coconut cream for a few minutes, then add the garlic and ginger. After a few more minutes, add the Massaman curry paste, stirring continually. Simmer (don't boil) until a layer of oil separates and rises to the top. (You don't have to do this, but it's considered appetizing in Thai cuisine.)

3. Add the rest of the coconut milk, slowly, to keep the temperature from dropping too quickly. Add the vegetables, nuts,

and tofu. Simmer about 20 minutes, until the potatoes and carrots are cooked.

4. Just before serving, add the tamarind (or lemon), sugar, and salt. Taste, and adjust salt and tamarind to your liking. Add cilantro just before serving.

Notes

- For a healthier version, make some homemade cashew milk (soak some raw cashews for a bit, then blend) and use instead of coconut milk. Cashews have a better ratio of saturated : polyunsaturated : monounsaturated fats.
- The tofu can be fried or baked ahead of time for a meatier texture. I usually bake it in some soy sauce, oil, and vinegar while I'm making the curry, and add at the very end.
- Tamarind pulp, juice, and/or concentrate can be found in Asian markets; strength varies, so it's hard to know exactly how much to use, but let your tastebuds be your guide.
- Other Thai curries (green, red, etc.) can be made in much the same way, just with slightly different ingredients.

New housies: Gayoung, Zach, Flossie, & Jared

Gayoung Kim

Where did you live before Beacon Hill Friends House?

I came to Boston 2 months ago and had lived with host family in Bedford for 1 month before I moved in.

What brought you here?

I was looking for a place to move in at that time, a teacher who is former resident recommended BHFH to me.

What do you like about it here?

A great location, Zach's exotic and healthy dishes, open-minded people

What's challenging?

Lots of duties to do like chore, dish crew or workday.

What fun things do you do outside the house?

Jogging. You might think that is not 'fun' at all but jogging is the best way to understand this city for me.

What do you do outside of the house (for work/recreation)?

I am studying English and trying to get a job in these days.

What do you like to do with other housies?

Having a tea time after dinner.

What's your most memorable moment here so far?

Sunlight and ice cream that we shared on the deck on workday.

Zach Alexander

Where did you live before Beacon Hill Friends House?

In Cambridge near Central Square, with two BHFH alums – Ben Guaraldi, who I met through Quaker friends, and Jess Gustin, who I knew through college.

What brought you here?

Well, the job, of course. Beyond that, I've considered moving here for years, but never could countenance having to share a



New housie Gayoung Kim, feeling accomplished at the end of her first workday at BHFH.

room with someone. So the fact that staff are guaranteed single rooms was sort of perfect.

What do you like about it here? What's challenging?

The location, the deck and courtyard, the view from my window, and living with a bunch of cool people.

I find the quiet mood of the house challenging when I feel like partying or listening to music.

What fun things do you do outside the house?

Sporadically attend tango or yoga classes, go to the gym, go on dates.

What do you do outside of the house (for work/recreation)?

I'm learning web programming. I also might be writing a book about some crazy experiences I had growing up and/or a road trip I took last summer.

What is your spiritual practice (if any)?

Quaker and humanist – I occasionally attend Quaker meetings, and am a member of the Cambridge one, and I'm also part of the humanist community based around the Harvard Humanist Chaplaincy.

What do you like to do with other housies?

Expose them to delicious things they've never heard of before.

What's your most memorable moment here so far?

Having lunch in the St. Francis courtyard the other day surrounded by magnolia petals.

Flossie Cox

Where did you live before Beacon Hill Friends House?

I lived on Cape Cod for a few months before moving to Boston, and New York City for 2 years before that.

What brought you here?

I had been thinking about relocating here for quite a while – the pace in Boston is more manageable than New York and I thought I'd be able to find work in my field.

What is your spiritual practice (if any)?

I was raised by a Quaker parent, but didn't self-identify as Quaker till I left home at 18. I'm most active in my yearly meeting and don't attend monthly very often anymore.

What do you like about it here? What's challenging?

I love living in the house. I like chatting with other night owls who are prowling for snacks during the early hours of the morning. The challenging part is tearing myself away to experience other parts of a city I'm not familiar with yet.

What's your most memorable moment here so far?

Workday was memorable – I think about it every time I climb the #8 side steps. They're so shiny!

I also liked candlepin bowling – even though I *hate* regular bowling. It's those types of experiences that make living in a new region fun and interesting. You all bowl weird! And you have awesome fake holidays too.

Jared Rubenstein

Where did you live before Beacon Hill Friends House?

In Inman Square on the Somerville side.

What brought you here?

I wanted to live in a place that had a real sense of community.

What do you like about it here? What's challenging?

I love having people around all the time,



New resident Jared Rubenstein, at home in the BHFH kitchen.

and having people to share food with when I make an Asian tuna salad or a batch of chocolate chip cookies.

What fun things do you do outside the house?

I like to watch random foreign films at the Harvard Film Archive.

What do you do outside of the house (for work/recreation)?

I work as an actuary, regulating insurance companies to keep the financial world safe for ordinary citizens.

What is your spiritual practice (if any)?

I am a reform Jew. I attend synagogue on Fridays and eat special foods for holidays.

What do you like to do with other housies?

I like trying to beat Sumner at board games. I haven't succeeded yet.

What's your most memorable moment here so far?

Walter and I got to rearrange the lamps in the library.

Our Board works to uphold the future of BHFH—and is ready for your participation!

By Holly Baldwin, Director

The BHFH Board has been busy this year! Our Clerk, Margaret Benefiel, has been leading us through meetings that are more joyful than we expected! We've been sharing our stories of the Friends House as we've known it, the legends we've heard, and the vision we share for our future.

The Finance Committee had a revolution – we've simplified our financial reporting to make it easier for all to understand. We're asking questions we haven't asked before about different funds, and we're learn-

ing a lot about the house in the process. We've hired a new bookkeeper, Lucy Meadows, who has been helping us greatly!

Several board members attended a workshop called Development as Ministry: Fundraising for Quaker Organizations and Meetings. We have a growing group of people who are interested in helping BHFH develop its capacity in this realm.

The Building Oversight Committee is exploring plans to repoint the rear façade.

The Program Committee is excited to bring Peggy Senger Parsons to deliver the

Weed Lecture in June (page 1). The Weed Lecture will be part of a weekend celebration at BHFH, with Board and Corporation Annual Meetings on Saturday, June 11, and the Weed Lecture on Sunday, June 12.

There are many ways to serve BHFH. All our committees could support more local volunteers. Our Corporation is comprised of Friends from New England Yearly Meeting and we have vacancies in most quarters.

Please contact Margaret Benefiel, Clerk of the Board, to learn more: mbenefiel@executivesoul.com.

Housies gather for spring workday & retreat



By Holly Baldwin, Director

BHFH housies and a few friends gathered on Saturday, April 9 for our annual spring workday. It was the first chance for many new housies to get to know each other and the house. Our teams cleaned and planted the courtyard & gardens; set the deck up for the summer; summer-ized our windows; cleaned out the basement... again; put a beautiful coat of polyurethane on the #8 stairs; installed some sound panels in the dining room as a test run for a possible solution for reducing the clamor at the dinner table. We worked hard, had fun, and finally enjoyed our first meal together on the deck – ice cream and cake after a long day's work.

We spent this year's retreat going on

adventures together outside the house. Friday evening we went on a mystery surprise trip – to a bowling alley for candlepin bowling, a New England specialty. Saturday was even more adventurous – we split into small groups and spread to four corners of the city. Our task was to navigate our way to a central location – Cleveland Circle in Brookline – using only a map.

We wandered approximately seven miles, along the river, through parks, through diverse neighborhoods. We collected items for a scavenger hunt, and used them to illustrate tall tales of our adventures. We ventured home together, and gathered in the library to share our stories, cold, exhausted and hungry – but well satisfied by our time together.



Left: BHFH housies and friends at the end of a successful workday, April 2011.

Right (top to bottom): Will works with an ornery window on workday; Ian and Dan prepare the courtyard railing for repainting on workday; Dan, Annie, Holly, and Will exploring Boston during the house retreat.

A note from the Development Committee

The Beacon Hill Friends House Development Committee is pleased to report that charitable giving to the House has increased significantly in the past decade. It is clear that the House has many supporters: alumni, visitors, neighbors, and Quakers in New England and beyond.

The Development Committee looks forward to working with you (regardless of the category to which you belong) to fund the House, and to ensure that its dynamic community and venerable physical plant remain operative. The Committee is contemplating a number of community-building events,

including an alumni dinner this summer.

Thank you for your positive thoughts about the House, and please remember that we depend on your generosity.

Sincerely,

Clifford Putney

Clerk of the Development Committee

Alumni news: New Delhi to New Hampshire

John Bell ('80s)

My wife Judy Whisnant and I were house residents in the fall and winter of 1981 when she began law school at Northeastern. (We had dinner the night before she began at the Greek deli on Charles Street, and she couldn't eat because of butterflies in her stomach.) We irregularly attended BHFH meeting and house events for the ten years we lived in Boston.

We have lived in Chapel Hill, NC for the past 20 years where we raised our two children Nate (25) and Lucy (20), both of whom were born in Boston. Judy has been a solo family lawyer mostly representing women, and recently working more in mediation and collaborative law. I have raised money for many organizations and causes, for the past seven years for land and water conservation.

We welcome contact from other BHFH residents of our time, email Whisbell@bell-south.net.

To our delight, when we were staying in the house guest room seven years ago we met resident Bryson Greenwood, *né* Finklea, and his now wife Katie Greenwood, and convinced them to come south to attend the Univ. of North Carolina's Medical School.

Some of my fond memories of the BHFH are our large second floor rear bedroom on #6 Chestnut side with the elegant wardrobe (no doubt long gone) and the closets with such tall ceilings we had coat-hangers on six foot poles for the upper level rod; swapping outlandish tales with house co-director Jim Anthony (could anyone forget his laughter?), Meeting Clerk Howard Seegar and meeting attendee Dr. "Reb" McMichael – all us "ex-pat" Southerners; rolling over and sleeping in after the first big snow came, and learning the following day that people actually went to work in the snow.

And how House Director Anne Kreibel got indignant when someone affectionately characterized her as a woman who wears "sensible shoes"; a beautiful blonde music student from the Mid-west who wore a la-

pel button saying: "how Swede it is". But not least of all I remember (and belatedly apologize to) our petulant cook Kate from Oberlin College who could put up with a particular chatty breakfast table lounge for only so long.

One of my favorite memories was parking a dirty, dilapidated City of Boston station wagon I was assigned to for my job – complete with old racing sheets, Boston Globes, Dunkin' Donuts cups and bags all over the the floor – in front of the BHFH house for nearly a week... only to be uncerimonously called on the carpet by my boss because of a complaint from our next door neighbor – the deputy Mayor.

And finally, we often repeat to ourselves two notices written above the sink where dinner dishes were washed, one saying: "a sponge-us unwrung-us, means fungus among us" and the less poetic but more important: "no maid, no mom, just us".

Best,

John Bell

John Zahradnik ('60s)

I was a resident at BHFH while a Danforth Fellow and research assistant at MIT.

I am now residing in a retirement home in Salmon Arm, BC, an Emeritus Professor at the University of BC.

I have had several careers, the most significant 1951-1954 in Iran. Both Miriam and I learned to speak Farsi and lived in the Village of Mamazan in full view of the 20,000 ft snow covered Mt. Demavand. We worked for the Near East Foundation. Philip and Joseph were born there. I have worked as an instructor at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in Merritt BC. a native School. I play my violin in the local String Symphony and still ride my bike weather permitting.

I have fond memories of BHFH residents coming out to Pelham, near Amherst to cut firewood for the huge fireplace in the Meeting Room. I have enjoyed reading "The Story of Beacon Hill Friends House" and am reminded of Ester Weeds good nature and humour. The Weeds introduced

me and my family to Deer Isle Maine. I will be visiting my family, many still residing on the old farm on Harkness Road in Pelham. BHFH was a most significant experience and I wish the best for a very long continued existence.

With love,

John W. Zahradnik

Ginny Kristl ('90s)

About a year or two after leaving my position as Assistant Director at Friends House, I moved to Maine. I lived there for about 18 years and had various jobs including my dream job was as a product manager for Johnny's Selected Seeds. It allowed me to travel abroad and extensively in the U.S.

In 2002 I decided to take a new direction and the following year began an intensive three-year program at the University of Southern Maine. I am now a board-certified family nurse practitioner and live in Dover, NH, which also allows me to be closer to my mother who will be 80 this year. I recently took a position providing healthcare to the homeless in several NH Seacoast towns, usually working out of a mobile van. It is challenging but satisfying work. I attend Meeting for Worship at Dover Friends Meeting. Theirs is the second oldest meetinghouse in New England (Cambridge being the oldest).

I'm still single and still NOT a grandmother (oh, well)! My daughter, whom many house residents met during my time there, married a wonderful man and three years ago they moved to San Diego which makes for a great midwinter visit for me each year. My son lives in Northampton, MA. Some may also remember my good friend Doug. He's still very much in my life after surviving cancer.

Hope all are well. Peace and light,

Ginny

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Rowan Van Ness ('10s)

I'm currently living in and on the board for the Lucy Stone Cooperative, a Unitarian Universalist housing cooperative in Boston that was inspired in part by the Beacon Hill Friends House. I am so grateful for the supportive community the Friends House provided me as we were preparing to buy and move into our new home. Learning about the Friends' philosophies and practices continues to inspire some of our own practices.

Peace,
Rowan Van Ness

Jessica Gustin ('00s)

I was a resident from August 2003 to August 2005 (give or take, I'm sure).

I live in Cambridge now, close to other BHFH alums and am finishing up law school this fall at Northeastern. Currently, I am on coop (Northeastern lingo for an internship) at the Human Rights Law Network in New Delhi, India working in their reproductive rights unit. It's phenomenal. I'm blogging about my experience at snowandsweat.wordpress.com and hope to do my next coop at Patagonia (Inc. not South America though that would be cool too). If anyone knows anyone in Ventura, please be in touch!

Thanks and in peace,
Jessica

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Nancy Rasch (Salamon) ('60s)

I was an Antioch freshman when I worked at BHFH during the winter of 1969. Earnest and Esther Weed were the directors. I arrived not knowing how to cook, but figured that if one could both read and multiply... how hard could it be? Aside from gaining 25 pounds, it was a wonderful experience. I can picture many of the faces of residents but am fuzzy on some names. Some names I do remember are Kenny, Chuck, Gretchen, another Nancy.... and a German guy who would only eat boneless chicken and nothing with bones as it reminded him of dead birds... Did Chuck marry his adorable French girlfriend? Did he publish more poetry?

I remember making cream puffs for dessert one night and using every pan in the kitchen, which left a mess for the clean up crew. I was upstairs reading in the library when two guys came in, picked me up,

and carried me downstairs and tossed me in a snowbank. I was careful to not leave the kitchen in such disarray after that. It did make me question the whole notion of Quakers and non-violence. (But they were darn good cream puffs.)

When I left, the residents all chipped in and bought me a beautiful book of silk-screens by Sister Coretta.

I am a studio potter and sell my work to stores and museum shops across the USA. I live outside of Philadelphia and can be found at www.claybornpottery.com. It would be fun to hear from anyone from the "olden days".

Nancy Rasch (Salamon)

Gabirella Santoro ('00s)

Dear Friends at BHFH,

I lived at the Beacon Hill Friends House the spring of 2004. I've spent the past couple of years living in Jerusalem and studying Creative Writing at Bar-Ilan University. On a personal note, I am marrying Steven Lapkoff of Rockville, Maryland on August 14th in Jerusalem.

My time living and learning Quaker principles had a serious impact on how I am in the world. I made many friends that have enriched my life, for which I am grateful.

Gabriella Santoro

Simplicity in community (continued from p. 1)

Living in a large community like ours, we simplify by matter of course in several ways – we buy in bulk, we *live* in bulk – we have one kitchen, two vacuum cleaners, one TV, one microwave, one blender, one food processor – for 21 people. Living at this scale, we minimize our own personal share of the world's resources. This speaks to the stewardship aspect of simplicity.

Beyond our concerns for stewardship, the long-standing Quaker emphasis on simplicity is about making space in our life for that which is eternal. In some ways, BHFH takes up *more* space in our lives, not less – residents have many obligations to the community – chores, dishcrews, com-

munity dinner, committee work, house meetings... On the other hand, with so many people (and staff!) to share the work of the household, we also benefit from a high quality of life for the amount of time we put in to maintain that life. Most of our time commitments to the community are about being together or working together. Take our dinners as an example. One Kitchen Manager, and three residents on dish-crew, use their time to feed the community. That frees the rest of us to eat freely, engaging in the conversations that are the backbone of our community. Coming together, listening to each other's stories and breaking bread (or passing the water pitcher) is a

simple ritual that nourishes our individual hearts, and the heart of our community. The friendships that are built and strengthened make our community strong.

That is what we are about at BHFH – we may not have air conditioning, our dishes and furnishing may be somewhat plain, but what we have in abundance is time together – time to listen, to be; to work together and play together; to reflect on our community, our lives and how we fit into the world, and to work together to make this house and this world closer to the vision we share for it. These opportunities for reflection and friendship are our way of making space for that which is eternal.

United Friends: the Lucy Stone Cooperative and the Beacon Hill Friends House

By Christy Little, Residency Manager

The first Movie and Mending Monday Madness, heretofore known as MMMM, kicked off at the Beacon Hill Friends house this April. Fingers poking and pulling at mending, eyes flicking up to the film projected on the wall, about fifteen people from the Lucy Stone Cooperative, Beacon Hill Friends House, Seedpod Co-op, and our friends sat in the BHFH Meeting room watching "Briars in the Cotton Patch: the Story of Koinonia Farm." Rowan Van Ness (LSC founding member, and a recent BHFH alum) and I invited area co-ops and friends to watch this movie that we felt touched on issues our communities care about: racial equality and spiritual community living. We stuck around afterwards to share our reactions to the film.

This joint move night is just one example of the connection between Beacon Hill Friends House and the Lucy Stone Cooperative.

Matt Meyer, another founding member and resident of the Lucy Stone Cooperative, has this to say about its history:

"The Lucy Stone Cooperative is a newly-formed housing co-op based on Unitarian Universalist values. We recently bought a house in Dudley Sq. and twelve housemates moved in on February 1. Lucy Stone is meant to be both an intentional community and a center for social justice that focuses on our core values of Sustainability, Spiritual Practice, and Social Change.

The faith-based internal community of the Lucy Stone Cooperative was very much inspired by the Beacon Hill Friends House,

whose residents seek ways to live out their spiritual values on a daily basis, and whose values are built into the structure of the community. The Beacon Hill Friends House has hosted the Lucy Stone Co-op for movie nights, fundraising dinners, and numerous conversations to discuss the intersection of spiritual community and cooperative housing."

The Lucy Stone Cooperative supports many of the Beacon Hill Friends House's values, and it's encouraging to have another community like ours, to share ideas with, collaborate with, and expand the spiritual co-op community. Now there's one more place in Boston where people can live with other spiritual seekers. We won't be surprised to see more cross-pollination, with people moving between these two fantastic communities.

The mission of
Beacon Hill Friends House
is to embody the Quaker
principles of faith,
simplicity, integrity,
community, and social
responsibility in order
to nurture and call forth the
light in all of us.

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