



Beacon Hill Friends House



Residents gather in the dining room during Winter Storm Nemo.

Summer 2013 Newsletter

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Post-marathon bombings, getting back to 'OK'

By Bill Mitchell, incoming resident

The first speaker to break the Quaker Meeting silence at Beacon Hill Friends House on Sunday, April 21st described a scenario that most of us had experienced ourselves during Boston's painful past week. She had heard from friends all over the world, each of them asking, one way or another, "Are you OK?"

Although she had escaped physical injury during a week that included death and maiming by bombs and guns, she concluded: "I am not OK." In fact, she added, the week's events had prompted her to reeval-

ate just what is meant by the term 'OK.'

My wife, Carol, and I are planning to move to Boston in June, and Carol was among the spectators lining the route of the marathon along with our daughter, Kate, our son-in-law, Marton, and our 2-month-old granddaughter, Leila. I spent most of the week in Egypt, working on a project aimed at spreading the best social media practices of the Arab Spring, and discovering new ways of sustaining independent media.

I first heard of the bombing while answering email in my Cairo hotel room last

Monday night. I was startled by the subject line of a message from a friend in Dublin: "Everyone OK?" We were, thankfully, but perhaps no more so than the speaker at the Quaker Meeting.

A few days later, in a student and faculty session on the oasis-like campus of the American University of Cairo, I got a feel for some of the impact that 18 days of revolution had on the Egyptian community.

Hassan H. Mohamed, a social media activist and advertising specialist, told us that amid the chaos of the revolution, his sister

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A new face in the kitchen, a new alum in SF

By Holly Baldwin, Director

This spring, Zach Alexander, our Kitchen Manager of two and a half years, divested himself of worldly possessions, packed his bags and headed west to seek his fortune. He's gone to San Francisco to a prestigious intensive software development training program called App Academy. Zach has been tremendously helpful in the kitchen and in the office in his time at BHFH. His meals have been delicious, healthy and interesting. He is well regarded for accommodating a wide variety of dietary restrictions. We won't forget his

theme weeks, especially Pride Week when each meal was a different color. (www.cookingfor20.com/2012/06/03/menu-for-pride-week-2012) In the office, with Zach's leadership of our website we were able to launch a re-design and establish a new database. Around the house, we'll miss his puns, his dance parties, and his thoughtful contributions to house meetings. We're sure his careful, smart attention to the matter at hand will serve him well as he launches himself into a new career.

Zach's departure has made room for Myles Dakan to join our staff, as Resident

Chef - Kitchen Manager, and to call BHFH home. He is quickly learning the ropes in the kitchen and in the community. Myles brings a passion for food and for systems and organization, which should serve the community well. Outside of BHFH, Myles' other love is music. He joyfully participates in the folk music and dance communities. He has recently co-published a song book for shape-note singing called "Shenandoah Harmony." (www.shenandoahharmony.com). We're delighted to have Myles on board and look forward to the many good meals and good times ahead.

← MARATHON *from page 1*

plowed her car into a taxi. “It was all her fault,” he pointed out, “entirely her fault!” She braced herself for a verbal assault from one of Cairo’s legendarily aggressive cab drivers. Instead, Mohamed related, “The taxi driver told her it was OK, that we were all in this together, and that she should just go home and not worry about the damage to his cab.” Mohamed said, “For 18 days we had a spirit of unity.”

That spirit of generosity has not survived subsequent events in Egypt. An AUC teacher, Galal Zaki, said that must be addressed one Egyptian at a time, each encouraged to do something to restore the unity lost.

Driving around Boston on Saturday, I wondered what it would take for the spirit of the “We are one Boston” signs along the road to take permanent root in the region?

What would it take, in other words, for a transformative narrative to emerge from the Marathon bombings — actions and stories that help facilitate recovery from

trauma and inspire significant change for the better?

One answer came from another speaker at Beacon Hill Friends. Noting that she’d been spending a lot of time recently working in a Dorchester community garden, she encouraged us to think of what we can do with our hands.

That got me thinking about first-responders, and the lives they saved with their hands. It got me thinking of my visit to the makeshift memorial on Boylston Street that runners and others created with their hands. It got me thinking about some things I can do with my hands, if only on a keyboard.

For all the social media witch hunts and other abuses in the aftermath of the bombings, the opportunity to create media that heals rather than hates has never been greater. A new culture of “crowdcaring” appears to be taking hold, with social media activists and journalists alike developing apps and compassionate ideas to ease people’s pain and, well, act as if we really are all

in this together.

In the hours immediately following the bombings, for example, Google made its People-Finder available to help those unable to connect with loved ones. Throughout the region people volunteered help on a Google Doc titled “I have a place to offer” linked from the Boston Globe’s website.

Although the specific need for those sites has passed, other needs remain. Will someone crowdcare those? Will I?

Shortly after touching down at Logan from Cairo Friday afternoon, I was on the phone with our son, Matt, who lives in California. “How does it feel,” he asked, “to



Bill Mitchell

fly home from the Middle East to a war zone?”

I didn’t have a good answer for Matt on Friday. But I think I’m getting closer to being able to tell him: “It feels OK.”

British abolition and its meaning today

By Ben Lawent, resident

The story of British Abolition is very inspiring. It’s about a small group of dedicated people, many of them Quakers, who brought about positive social change in the world. This article will briefly tell the story of British Abolition and then consider its meaning for today.

In the 1780s, Britain maintained a worldwide colonial empire, and its most lucrative colonies were in the West Indies, where slave-grown sugar was produced. To give you a sense of how lucrative these Caribbean slave colonies were, note that on the eve of the Revolutionary War, the value of British imports from Jamaica alone was five times the value of imports from the thirteen mainland colonies combined.

Slavery was accepted by most British people as normal. It was not the subject of significant mainstream public debate. Only a single small religious denomination had come out against slavery, the Quakers. Quakers believed that the “Inner Light” of God’s revelation shone equally on human beings of any race or class. Their history as

a persecuted minority sect also disposed them against slavery. In both England and America, Quakers who did not free slaves they owned were expelled from the church. Some Quakers who owned slaves not only freed them but also paid their former slaves compensation, a step more far-reaching than anything before or since.

Quakers were experienced activists with a strong national network and a tradition of supporting their beliefs with generous donations. However, an obstacle for them was that they were a marginalized religious sect that lacked political power. Eventually, they formed strategic alliances with Anglicans like Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce to further the abolitionist cause. In 1787, they formed an Abolition Committee consisting of both Quakers and Anglicans.

Today we take for granted the practice of forming a committee to agitate for a humanitarian cause, but at the time it was uncommon. The Abolition Committee forged many important tools of citizen’s movements in democratic countries today, including investigative reporting,

boycotts, petitions, and legislator report cards. Thanks to the efforts of the Abolition Committee, the issue of slavery was transformed in Britain from a fringe issue to a mainstream issue in the span of just a few years. The Quakers and their allies ultimately succeeded in abolishing the British slave trade in 1807, and slavery itself ended throughout the British Empire in 1838.

For me, this story serves as both an inspiration and a call to action. In 2013, there remain many problems of enormous magnitude, including poverty, climate change, and violence. I very much believe that the progressive ethical views of Quakers and their allies are as valuable and powerful today as in the days of the Abolition movement, and that our actions have as much potential to change the world.

Note: My source for the information in this article is Adam Hochschild’s splendid and highly-readable book *Bury the Chains*, which was a finalist for the prestigious National Book Award in 2005. I would heartily recommend this book to everyone’s reading list.

Snowdays and workdays at BHFH



Scenes of spring workday and Winter Storm Nemo at Beacon Hill Friends House, counterclockwise from the top right:

Lynne Terzis & Anne Boyd doing house repairs.

The St. Francis courtyard during the blizzard in February.

Lucas Braun repairing windows.

Kevin Boyd shoveling to the tunnel in the kitchen courtyard.

Fernando Herrero washing windows on workday.



Launch of spiritual seeking programming

By Katherine Fisher '08

This winter, the program committee at Beacon Hill Friends House began hosting a series of monthly Wednesday evening talks. The first series of four talks was called "Where Our Passion Meets Our Mission". In these four talks, house residents spoke about things they are passionate about that also happen to be connected with the mission of the house. Our mission 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. We had discussions about an educational videogame about global economics, a book about the abolitionist movement in England, an interactive work-

shop about the spectrum of gender identity, and a talk about a nearby Jewish community center called Vilna Shul.

Our next series is about spiritual seeking, and we hope it will be of interest to people from the house, the Meeting, and the larger community. The first event in the series will be on Wednesday evening, April 24th, at 7:30 PM. Zach Alexander, BHFH's kitchen manager, will share his story of converting to Quakerism as an evangelical Christian and facilitate a discussion on what it means to be moral and/or a Quaker in a godless, naturalistic world. On the second Wednesday in May, Sarah Spencer of Beacon Hill Friends Meeting, Frederick Martin and I will guide folks through

an exploration of the deceptively simple practice of Quaker worship. On the second Wednesday in June, Ryan McGrath will lead a discussion on spiritual topics. We hope that these events will give attendees some food for their spiritual lives, as well as bring members of our extended community together.

In the summer, we will have a series of talks by house alumni. Would you like to speak? Do you know any house alums who would have something interesting to say? Send us your ideas!!

If you want to hear about upcoming events by e-mail, please e-mail Mykal at directors@BHFH.org. We look forward to seeing you!!

Strength in community: reflections in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombings

By Ryan McGrath, resident

I live in an intentional community run by Quakers with 19 other adults. We also have guest rooms. Most of the time, we have only adults as guests here, but on occasion, we get families. These past few days, we happened to have a family staying with a very cute little girl.

Naturally, the parents were concerned about what to tell their daughter about the

manhunt going on and why, during their vacation, they could not leave the house and go see the museums and do the other stuff they'd planned on doing.

Fortunately, there were some toys here in our First Day School room (Quaker Sunday school). She played in our courtyard and up on our deck, and even baked cupcakes with my wonderful housemate, Annie.

In short, she had a great time and prob-

ably won't even realize what happened this weekend until she's much older. She wants to move here.

As for those of us who live here, we were careful not to talk about news updates in the kitchen, where the family often was. We limited discussion of news stuff to our TV room. We also had the library as a news-free zone, so housies who didn't want to hear it could avoid it.

We set aside our parlor as a 'sacred space' for prayer or meditation or quiet time and at noon, we had a small gathering for those that wanted to pray or meditate together. We sat in silent worship for a bit, then sang uplifting songs.

We also had an impromptu House dinner where some of us helped out with cooking, others helped out with cleaning. So all of us stuck in the House, including our guests, could be fed.

Then after dinner, those of us who weren't glued to the TV (and there were several of us) went into the library to watch "How To Train Your Dragon".

All in all, it was as best a day possible under some crazy circumstances. I love living in community! And I especially love how our staff handled a difficult situation.



Memorial of the Boston Marathon bombing, courtesy of Bill Mitchell.

Codman Academy internship brings new life

by Mykal Slack, Residency Manager

In March, Beacon Hill Friends House had the pleasure of helping Dorchester's Codman Academy support one of its students through their internship program. Thammy PierreLouis, a Junior at the Academy, arrived early on March 11th (and just about every day thereafter), uncertain of what to expect but eager to hit the ground running! BHFH Staff had spent time preparing projects for her that would enrich her experience in a new community and help her build valuable workplace skills. It was a lovely two-week period for all of us – Thammy always arrived and left with smiles and hugs in tow; she engaged the community in memorable ways; she learned a great deal and so did we. We have Lisa Graustein, a member of Beacon Hill Friends Meeting and the internship coordinator for Codman Academy, to thank for making this moment of connection happen!!



Thammy PierreLouis working at BHFH.

To help paint a picture of Thammy's time with us, we've included in this edition, with her permission, a collection of her reflections throughout the internship. Enjoy!

3/11/13 – The Beacon Hill Friends House is a big house where people from different places come to live. It's like a community hotel. Everyone here is really friendly

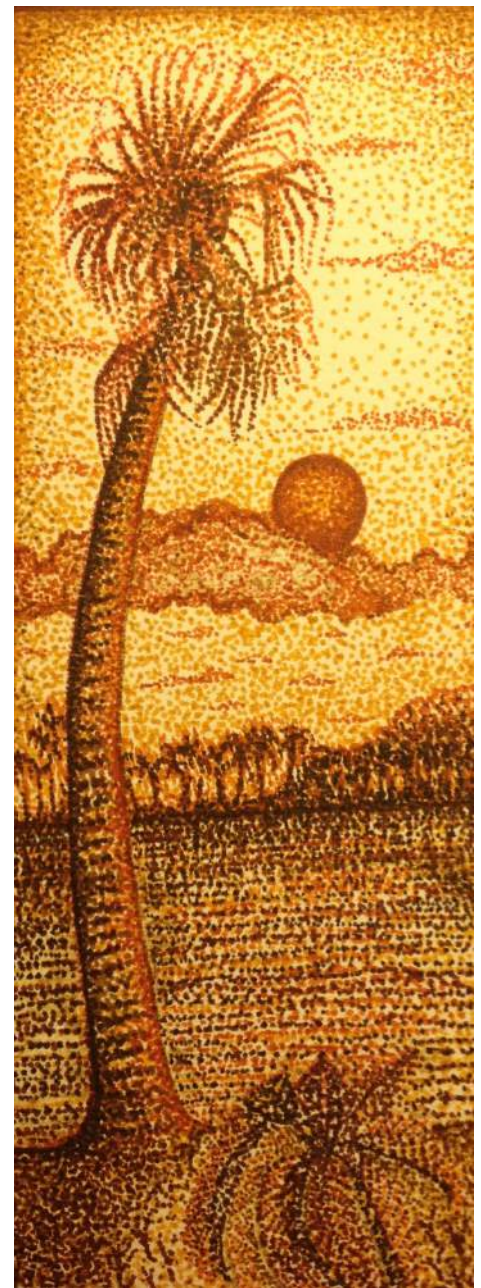
to me and is so interested in what I'm doing here. As for Holly and Mykal, they live and work here. Over lunch, I got to build a positive relationship with Mykal. We talked about Codman, what I do there, and what my interests are for the future. There was one big thing that I learned - don't be shy to ask something if you don't understand. Asking the question just makes you a better person. As an intern, I learned that I was going to be doing a lot and helping out a lot. Overall my first day went by okay. I'm looking forward for what tomorrow will bring me and the rest of the week.

3/15/13 – The whole week that I spent at the Beacon Hill Friends House was really good. It took some time for me to get used to everyone and the place. I'm hoping that next week goes well and that I enjoy the rest of my stay. I like the fact that everyone tries to talk to me and asks me how things are going. It helps me always keep a smile on my face; I enjoy having that feeling! One thing that I am looking forward to is having dinner with them on Thursday night. One thing I want to do is leave by the end of my internship, knowing that I made their business easier with my organizational skills. I'm looking forward to finishing all my tasks. I have another week to enjoy with my Beacon Hill Friends. I'm going to continue to be my best self and try to keep up the good work. That was my day!

3/22/12 – My last day of internship! My last day went really well. I finished every task I had as best I could. I hope that I helped and pleased my mentors, Holly and Mykal. Today I spent my day with Mykal, and, while I was working, he was in and out because he had meetings to go to with people who live in the house. Then we made hot cocoa together, which I must say was really good. Then we went to lunch and we got to learn about each other much more. My two-week experience at the Beacon Hill Friends House was good. I enjoyed every moment. It's a place where you can feel at home, while at work and have nice people in your surroundings.

At the end of the day, Holly, Mykal and Zach gave me a gift! It was a picture frame with a sketch of the house drawn by Clif-

ford Putney. It's really cool! They also gave me a card to tell me thank you. I'd also written them a letter that they could also share with the house. I'm glad that I know I can be a big help in people's lives. I must admit I will miss them. I plan on visiting them whenever I'm in the area because they don't want me to be a stranger. That was my last day and experience at the BHFH! Time to say good bye :-)



"Palm Tree" by Angeline Pacy, resident

Fond memories and new beginnings from afar

By *Sasha Adkins '12*

In November 2012, I left the BHFH for an eco-village called Dancing Rabbit in northeast Missouri. I've been delighted that the relationships I cherished here have continued to deepen. I can't describe how it feels to be greeted with "Welcome home!" hugs when I come through the BHFH doors, and to be allowed to pitch in on dish crew and chores, just like old times.

One of the pleasures of my time with the BHFH was greeting guests and getting to know their stories. I still receive occasional emails from former guests of the house from Iraq, Canada, and Maine. Recently, Lavina, a BHFH bed and breakfast guest

from Toronto who spent 10 days with us in December 2011, wrote me that she was coming through Boston on her way to meet family in NYC. She was due in at 11:30 pm and needed hospitality until her connection left at 6 the next morning. It so happened I would be visiting the BHFH that week. My housies made it happen. Ben reserved the Garrett for us from a distance. When the time came, Jared helped me make her bed and tidy the room. I recruited Ed and Ryan as able bodyguards, and we met her at the Park St Station and escorted her back to the Friends House, where a midnight feast of Italian gelato awaited. We gathered around the kitchen table to update each other on

our lives. What a treat!

I continue to share our BHFH spirit with the wider world. This summer I will volunteer with Ecovillage Education USA (ecovillageeducation.us), where we are expecting a group of activists from India, Guatemala, Brazil, Senegal, Uganda, and Korea to join participants from across the US in visioning how to build sustainable intentional community. I will facilitate diversity workshops, incorporating experiential exercises that draw on the work of Paulo Friere and Augusto Boal. If you would be excited about contributing to the scholarship fund or about volunteering your expertise, please contact me at sasha.adkins18@gmail.com.

One thing leads to another...

By *Joanna Brelstaff '10*

It is true that one thing does lead to another. I am appreciating the contribution that being an alumna is making on my life in the here and now.

I am enjoying a nomadic five months traveling in India following a yoga Seminar in Bellur, Kanartika, India that began in January 2013. What a luxury, I know -

my goodness! Life continues to support me beautifully in mysterious and practical ways. Last week, I also happened upon three days teaching with His Holiness The Dalai Lama in Salugara, West Bengal. What a good fortune is that!

Central to the Tibetan Buddhist teachings, as well as our Quaker practice, is the commitment to a practice, a way of life that

reduces suffering and supports all beings to live with dignity, with harmony and in peace. Our core intention is altruistic; we are continually in the process of bringing discretion and kindness to the ways in which we live with one another. We are aware that our own happiness is not an isolated individual matter, but a collective responsibility, which it is our privilege and joy to contribute to in ways big and small.

Once a seed is watered, it may be dormant for years, but one day when the conditions are right it may sprout and grow into a beautiful plant, tree, flower and fruit. I ask you what can we learn from a tomato, a rainbow and the person next to us who deserves our patience, understanding and love? How we continue to unfold in the present moment is perhaps worthy of our complete attention. I like to think of our continuation, not simply as a matter of our future, but also as everything that exists, exactly as it is, right now!

This photo is of the village kids in Bellur, Kanartika, India that I took in January 2013. All the village kids are supported in schooling and health care by the yoga tradition of BKS Iyengar. The reason I arrived at BHFH in 2006 was to study Iyengar Yoga with Patricia Walden in Cambridge MA. How interconnected we all are, including these kids and you!



Alumni news: a photo from the archives

Harriet Potter (mid '70s)

Harriet Potter considered BHFH “a godsend” when she was at Boston University in the mid 1970s. Currently, she keeps busy on Martha’s Vineyard gardening, playing violin with the local orchestra and recorder group, and helping with a local oral history project. She’s also glad to run into Steve Judge & Jim Skelton (both former residents), who are occasionally on the Island.

Victor Neuman ('10)

Victor Neuman is back in California after working for 19 months in Shanghai, China. Victor specializes in saving energy in buildings to help fight global warming. Victor’s daughter, Tori, is just finishing the first year of two in her Master’s in Latin Education at UMass, Boston, so say “Hi” if you bump into her.



This is a snapshot of the BHFH community in 1981, graciously sent to us by Rebecca Nebesar.

Pictured from left are: Joyce Brown, Rebecca, Anne Kriebel, Hiroshi (standing), Rob (sitting), Deborah (standing), Marion Ferguson Heller (sitting), Lisa Rooney Winddotter, Tim (sitting), Nan (standing), the cook from Antioch, and a gentleman whose name we do not know.

Chef’s notes: a sauce for newfound friendship

By Myles Louis Dakan, Resident Chef – Kitchen Manager

My first days at BHFH were entirely intimidating. As one resident told me, mastering all the systems that make the house work is a full time job for new residents. Added to that, I needed to know the kitchen front to back before Zach’s departure.

Somewhere between frying the tofu and chopping the cabbage for my third dinner, I started to settle in. I still didn’t know where everything was, but residents on dishcrew were happy to help. That night was Indonesian food, including gado gado with peanut

sauce. Its rave reviews helped me begin to feel at home here. Feel free to adjust the soy sauce in the recipe below to reach the desired consistency. Serves 16-20, naturally.

Ingredients:

- 4 cups peanuts
- 12 cloves garlic, peeled
- 8 shallots
- 8 thai chilis (or more to taste)
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 tbsp tamarind paste
- 1 cup soy sauce (at least)

Directions:

1. Preheat an oven to 450 °F.
2. Roast peanuts for 15-20 minutes.
3. Roughly chop the shallots, garlic, and chilis and fry them a few minutes in oil.
4. Blend tamarind and soy sauce before adding all other ingredients. Blend to desired consistency.

My smooth arrival in the kitchen would not have been possible without Zach’s training. I am so very thankful for his welcoming introduction to the house. Farewell, and good luck in SF!



Zach Alexander (right) with friends.



Keep up to date with our new website and e-news

By Hugh Gelch, Clerk, Development Cmte.

Beacon Hill Friends House is increasing the wattage of our Light this spring with a newly designed website that has just gone online! Please visit www.bhfh.org to see a new look and easier navigation through the site. The Development Committee is taking responsibility for keeping the website up to date so check it often for timely news about our activities, articles about our residents, alumni and friends, and listings of upcoming programs and events.

We have also started using Constant

Contact to create easy to read, attractive emails to keep you informed and enlightened. You may have already received an email. Send your email address to news@bhfh.org if you haven't!

Please email your comments, suggestions and news to news@bhfh.org. Our hope is that these improvements bring our BHFH family together by sharing how we "seek 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."

Save the date: First Annual Midsummer BBQ!

We invite you to join us at our First Annual Midsummer BBQ! We hope that this will be a festive open house for alumni and friends to gather and celebrate our community at 6 & 8 Chestnut Street. Save the Date for Saturday, June 22 from 1pm to 5pm. Stop by anytime!



The BHFH deck awaits the BBQ!

Subscribe to e-news: news@bhfh.org!

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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