

April 29, 2003

Dear Friends,

I'm sorry it has taken us so long to reply to your invitation to the May 23-25 Homecoming at the Clearing. It is so easy to put things off! We are, of course, very disappointed to tell you that we will not be able to attend the Homecoming since our grandson is now back living with us—probably through high school—and we are once again, after many years, confined to school vacations. A long weekend is really too short for us to drive down or even for the three of us to fly. We will miss you all.

A few days ago I had Bill Hughes/McIntyre's beautiful poem to The Clearing in my hands and now, when I would like to read it once again, I don't know where I put it—par for the course! I hope you have a copy there. It should be printed up, framed, and hung up in the cabin. My copy was the one printed in AMONG FRIENDS some years ago and not even signed by its author.

Might I suggest one activity on that weekend, if the photo albums are still around. It would be great if some of the people in the early pictures—perhaps in all the pictures—could be identified and their names inserted here and there throughout the album. Probably identifying people in the larger group pictures would be enough for checking back occasionally. I know that sometimes, by the time I got the pages organized, I had forgotten names and even faces. And, if anyone should run across the very good snapshot of Kenneth Boulding which was taken at a "poetry session" at Louise's home sometime way back, I would give my worldly goods to have a copy to put in his book of poetry and also another to give to Elise. She was at our 50th wedding anniversary party and was gracious enough to let us have a copy of a beautiful poem Kenneth wrote to her for their 50th. That picture was so "Kenneth," that I know she would appreciate having a copy. I don't know who took it—probably Louise. I can't find a copy among our negatives so I guess it wasn't Bill. Anyway, all the best copies of the pictures Bill took at The Clearing are already in the albums—or I may have left some of the later ones with Clarisse or someone else who was going to help me to continue with the job. I know I never got it quite finished while I was there.

Are the "Crinkleroot" books still around? I hope they are well worn by now. Oh there are so many memories. I remember the different nature games we planned for the annual spring weekends—one game in particular where we left ten bits of trash in plain sight along a given length of trail and sent a child at a time along that trail to see how many of the ten items he/she spotted out of some twenty laid out on a tray—or were they just on a list? I remember the nature trail, and particular the wild flowers I looked for each spring; the nurturing and care it took to create the grassy part of The Clearing; the old Clearing sign Bill carved—is it still hanging? the trail into and the trail around The Clearing; the trips to the lake; the trips to swim in Louise's pond—and the time(s) we left the gate open and the cows got out! Louise was a very patient woman—sometimes.

And I particular remember that fruitful weekend when we split up into workshops by age to answer the questions: "What has the Meeting done for your group? and What has your group done for the Meeting? That's the weekend which sent us elders in search of creating a Friends' retirement community in Richmond—which never came to fruition after about five years of "research," and some wonderful potluck suppers together. Now we are scattered all over or have left this world, and a grand group of younger Friends have so lovingly and effectively taken our places. From what we read in AMONG FRIENDS, the Meeting is strong, healthy, and spiritually sound.

I still remember and hold dear many of the Meeting's young people whom I knew from their nursery days. I am so proud of them and miss them very much, as well as their wise and loving parents. Though when we first moved here I tried, it was too difficult to keep in touch with so many. I love reading about where they are and what they are up to, from entering high school, graduating, going off to college, graduating again and even getting married. A few of the oldsters who stuck around are grandparents like us and a few of the younger oldsters may not be far behind, if they aren't already there.

I miss a Meeting large enough to worry about expanding its walls—no matter how long the discussion goes on.; a Meeting that has a thriving first day school large enough to be part of one big family; one where a committee meeting doesn't consist of the same few people who are also on most of the other committees as well. And try holding a committee meeting with each member coming from a different community. We do get a surprising number of things accomplished, however. Still, if you think Richmond Friends are scattered all over, try having members from Plymouth to Cotuit to Mashpee to half of Cape Cod and that's for the East Sandwich "branch" of the three "Preparative" Meetings which have made up our Monthly Meeting since 1657.

I wish we were there to share many more memories, but this is more than enough to have to read!

Love you all—especially those who kept us waiting for the "sense of the Meeting" to arrive year after year.

Yours in the Light,

Althea Walton