The Leaves of Twin Oaks

Summer 1999, issue no. 90

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News of the Oaks, May 1999

by Valerie

General News

Once again, Devon has achieved regional acclaim, this time by the local city-paper which declared her the "best musician without her own band". She also recently completed a week-long internship at Ladyslipper Music in Raleigh NC. This homegirl is doing us proud--catch her playing at this summer's Women's Gathering.

"DragonWagon" is the name of our newest car, a blue/green/gray station wagon (runner-up was the popular "Kootchie-snorcher"). DW will replace our old gray van Grace Slick.

In early April, we were treated to a performance of "The Vagina Monologues", a spoken word performance based on the book by Eve Ensler. Eight Twin Oaks women spoke, each reading aloud from a series of vignettes about that unsung heroine, the vagina.

Brenda is once again planning a kids summer camp for Twin Oaks kids and friends. Activities planned so far include art, jewelry-making, making a gingerbread house, outdoor adventure skills, and more.

The community has decided to adopt a limit on the number of incoming "pensioners" (members who are over a certain age and therefore work fewer hours than younger members). This was a difficult decision, finding a balance between maintaining a non-ageist policy, and on the other hand, being able to meet our labour needs. As of now, the limit is age 54.

Our phone system has had an upgrade recently, with the introduction of a voice-mail system for members, as well as an infusion of new management energy by Felix. He's been repairing broken or poor-quality sound phone lines to buildings-which both Oakers and people calling us can appreciate!

Congratulations to ex-members Lisa (Dylan) and Jonathan, who tie the knot on July 3rd in Maryland!

Keeping Busy, Having Fun

In between making tofu and hammocks and keeping 100 people fed and housed, we manage to find time to relax and enjoy ourselves. Sunday afternoon coffeehouses in the courtyard have started up again, and the 30th anniversary quilt was finally finished (2 years after the fact!) and hung up at Zhankoye. A couple of members have taken to the skies lately, with Sasha taking a day off to go hang-gliding, and David working weekends at a job folding parachutes for a local sky-diving company. Three carfuls of Oakers and Acornistas headed out to East Wind Community in Missouri to help celebrate their 25th Anniversary.

Connections

In April, Kristen and Keenan hosted a meeting of the Virginia Midwifery Coalition in the Bijou. About 20 midwifery activists from throughout the state of Virginia attended this organizational and social meeting.

Also in April, Melissa had an opportunity to visit Chiapas, Mexico, with Witness for Peace. She spent a week meeting and talking with people and learning about life in Chiapas, with the goal of raising awareness upon her return to the US about the conditions of poverty and oppression that the people of Chiapas live with.

Troubled Times

Early this year, tofu's biggest customer declared bankruptcy, owing the business ten thousand dollars in unpaid accounts. We quickly set up a better system for dealing with delinquent customers.

Due to a series of difficulties in the dairy program, we've been having a shortage of cheese and milk products this spring. A community meeting was held, and plans are underway to address the situation.

The hot topic of controversy this spring was the debate over the fate of the Kaweah chickens (aka Uncle Beasley and Chick-Chick). They had unfortunately been wandering into the flower gardens at Nashoba and ZK, where their scratching was damaging the flower beds. In the end, they were relocated to the Little Flower Catholic Worker Farm, a nearby community and friend of Twin Oaks.

Computer World

Twin Oaks entered a new era of business advertising when we recently unveiled the webpage for the Twin Oaks Hammocks retail business! Check it out!
Also our community webpage was overhauled and now has a new look!

We're also in the process of improving our bulk mailings. McCune has been saving us money and making mailings easier using new, faster, bulk mail software. And even faster, cheaper and more eco-friendly than that, is the new electronic bulk mailing we've been experimenting with. This means news about the Communities Conference and Women's Gathering can now be sent using recycled electrons instead of paper.

my life, my CD, my dog, my hair

-devon

Devon now spends most of her time in Charlottesville, trying to make it as a folk-punk singer/songwriter/musician. Here is her recent O&I Board report.

oh goodness. i have become such a busy girl. since i haven't been around twin oaks much lately, i wrote a lil something to keep ya'll informed. plus it's a lil shameless self-promotion.

as most of ya'll know, i've been pursuing a hyper musical career in c'ville for a good year or so. i've mostly moved on from coffee shops to bar gigs (late night... ugh...) but, of course, i still play out on the Downtown Mall from time to time. it's interesting - sometimes i get slightly joking shit from people about not playing small small gigs (the Mudhouse, for example). this is traumatic. supporting and being involved in local happenings is very important to me, and i think i'm pretty sensitive to the issues... i don't want people feeling like i'm all caught up in some arrogant bullshit and, and... i get so much advice and so many opinions, it's hard to know what to do. but i'm learning. i don't get all that much money for an evening at the Mudhouse, playing for a varying number of people. this is fine and dandy 'cept that i'm trying not to play more than two gigs a week in c'ville (don't want people to get bored, y'know), and i'm paid quite a lot more to play these bar gigs (usually Orbit, on The Corner, and Rapture, on the Downtown Mall). the extra money means i can then pay people to play with me (my band!). i can pay jess (manager/girlfriend) to book these gigs and basically organize and motivate my musical life. i can contribute to my c'ville household and feel kinda independent and grown up. and i can pay for gas to get home to twin oaks as much as can be managed.

my band is amazing. three guys, rod (hits things with sticks), ben (bass masta), and rolland (maniacal 'lectric fiddle boy). they're all quite young (19-26) and are some of the best damn musicians in town. our full band shows are so high energy and fun-WOW! when jess and i first got the band together, stefan played bass, but he has prior obligations (dave matthews band) and is back on tour these days. i started playing with back up so i could do this CD. we practiced non stop for a couple weeks, recorded in the studio for a couple weeks, and then spent the last couple months getting the artwork and small details smoothed out. finally... yesterday, i got 1000 CDs back from Nimbus (local CD manufacturer). they're self-titled ("devon") and quite spiffy. i gave the first one to ayden rain for his birthday.

i will bring a whole box of them out here to sell to oakers who want one. i suppose, if you don't want to spend the money, you could just dub it off someone, but the money goes to a very good cause and it's quite cheap ($10). so....talk to me if you want one, or if you're just curious about it or whatever. i have to keep really good track of all the CDs because all the money goes to the record label that jess started for this project, "three word records", until the debt for the CD is paid off. make sense? any questions, ask me, i might know. the CD is also available at local record stores (Plan 9 in c'ville and richmond, Spencers, etc) and eventually, all over the place. we've already gotten some radio time, which is exciting. jess took the CD over to WNRN as soon as she got it and they played "survive alone". oh yay! i will probably be on NRN's live Saturday evening local music show this week.

the CD has 8 tracks, plus a short "hidden" punked out jam ditty. the cover photo was taken by a friend of mine who goes to tandem school in c'ville, nora oberman. inside and rear end photos were taken by martha ex-acorn, andy ex-twin oaks, and the jessanator. the whole thing is quite well done, especially for the short amount time that we did it in. there are a couple guest musicians, and uhh...well, yeah...i think it's pretty darn good.

in other news, the next few months are the summer-o-touring for me and the boys. we're doing a few side stage gigs at dave matthews band amphitheater shows. (side stages are smaller performance areas in the merchandising/vending area.) this is very interesting, and slightly weird for me, but very very exciting nontheless. then we'll return to those cities (pittsburgh, nashville, chicago, etc) for smaller follow-up gigs. jess is going super high speed promoting, sending out promo packs to all sorts of venues and radio stations. what a awesome woman....jeez! we're producing some merchandise to sell at these shows along with the CD (t-shirts, stickers, etc). pax and i have this great idea to make customized 'devon" t-shirts out of thrift store shirts.....very exciting.

other news, i just finished a week long internship at ladyslipper music in durham, NC. i stayed with a couple women i met at the women's conference and played open mics (and got lost a lot) around the triangle area.

speaking of getting lost, i've been spending a lot of time with my car, lucy, lately. she's the spiff lil red sports car you've prolly seen around twin oaks. god, i lover! it sure is a pain in the ass to pay for all the repairs 'n stuff, but having a car right now is a good thing for me.

oh, and one of my housemates, rolland, who also plays fiddle, has a dog that i like to call my dog. actually, we call him Blue. i love my dog. i've never really gotten into dogs before, but living with blue is awesome and having him really know me as one of his caregivers....yay! i'd like to bring blue out here but he seems to be quite hostile towards other dogs, or at least other dogs that he hasn't totally dominated. so, maybe he'll grow out of that. he's been kind of inspiring for my songwriting lately.

some slight problems for me, i have to remember to eat and sleep enough. i have eternal struggles with songwriting. and of course, life's little melodramatic happenings! and i've been smoking cigarettes on and off which i really regret getting myself into. yuck yucky yuck yuck.

and, as you know, my mom and ann are living in c'ville these days, so i see them around. sharon, kirsten, logan, and ann came out to my last rapture gig. it was a pretty late show. i used my free drink privilege to get logan some coffee, but she still didn't last the whole show. ah, well... she was at the tandem school's mother's day music festival when i played there. afternoon shows are good for mom.

i guess this is about wrapping itself up. i'd love to talk to people who are interested this whole thang. thanks everyone for being so wonderful and supportive. if you get a chance, check out the webpage that marc and i have been working on: actually, he does most of the work.... and if you can, come to a show!

LOVE!!!

oh. hair color of the month is "chocolate cherry".

Reading Window School

by Piper

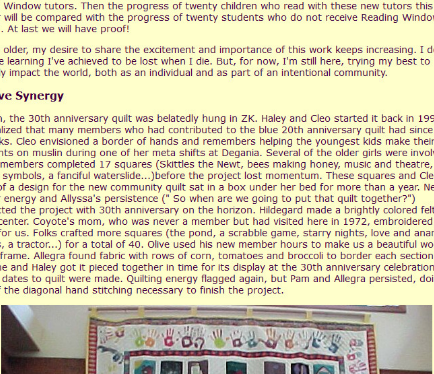
I first joined Twin Oaks in 1971. I joined as, and still am the oldest member here(now 75). One of the things that keeps me excited about Twin Oaks is that by sharing resources and supporting each other, we can help each other to have a positive impact on the world outside Twin Oaks. While some members put hard work into worthy political causes, and others do volunteer work at a women's shelter, an animal shelter, a food kitchen, and prison workshops, my main vehicle for 'making a difference' is Reading Window School.

Reading Window School gives me the chance to use the special methods I've developed to help at-risk children learn to read. After doing individual tutoring for years, in 1997 we expanded our reach and successfully applied for Reading Window School to be a tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Along the way, we discovered that children as young as three can- and do- learn to read with pride. And 'average ' and 'disadvantaged' six and seven year olds can-and do-leap ahead in school, becoming eligible for local 'Talented and Gifted' programs. Right now I'm excited about a study underway in Harrisonburg. I was invited by the Northeast Community Association to train 10-20 parents and high school students as Reading Window tutors. Then the progress of twenty children who read with these new tutors this summer will be compared with the progress of twenty students who do not receive Reading Windows tutoring. At last we will have proof!

As I get older, my desire to share the excitement and importance of this work keeps increasing. I don't want the learning I've achieved to be lost when I die. But, for now, I'm still here, trying my best to positively impact the world, both as an individual and as part of an intentional community.

Creative Synergy

In March, the 30th anniversary quilt was belatedly hung in ZK. Haley and Cleo started it back in 1994 when they realized that many members who had contributed to the blue 20th anniversary quilt had since left Twin Oaks. Cleo envisioned a border of hands and remembers helping the youngest kids make their handprints on muslin during one of her meta shifts at Degania. Several of the older girls were involved and various members completed 17 squares (Skittles the Newt, bees making honey, music and theatre, feminist symbols, a fanciful waterslide...)before the project lost momentum. These squares and Cleo's sketch of a design for the new community quilt sat in a box under her bed for more than a year. New member energy and Allyssa's persistence (" So when are we going to put that quilt together?") resurrected the project with 30th anniversary on the horizon. Hildegard made a brightly colored felt logo for the center. Coyote's mom, who was never a member but had visited here in 1972, embroidered a square for us. Folks crafted more squares (the pond, a scrabble game, starry nights, love and anarchy symbols, a tractor...) for a total of 40. Olive used his new member hours to make us a beautiful wooden quilting frame. Allegra found fabric with rows of corn, tomatoes and broccoli to border each section of the quilt. She and Haley got it pieced together in time for its display at the 30th anniversary celebration. Many evening dates to quilt were made. Quilting energy flagged again, but Pam and Allegra persisted, doing much of the diagonal hand stitching necessary to finish the project.



The resulting quilt includes wood and wire, sequins, a seashell, part of a canning jar lid, and a photovoltaic cell, in addition to denim and patchwork. It currently hangs in the sunny foyer of ZK dining hall, delighting all who enter and providing vivid testimony to the multifaceted life we have chosen to share with each other.

Acorn News

-by Owl

Acorn is EAGERLY SEEKING GARDEN INTERNS. Please spread the word. We are looking for 1 or 2 people to stay at Acorn for 2-6 weeks assisting Cricket and Moonglow with garden work. In exchange for labor, you will receive a basic education in organic farming from very experienced and passionate people.

Acorn has a number of small businesses - agricultural products is our second largest income source and continues to grow, largely thanks to Cricket's vision and persistence.

This year we are growing radishes, spinach, lettuce, peas, Chinese greens, broccoli, cauliflower, beans, beets, chard, melon, carrots, tomatoes, zucchini, yellow squash, cucumbers, potatoes, green onions, onions, peppers, garlic, cabbage, celery, winter squash, pumpkins, kale, sweet potatoes, and a variety of herbs. We plant a large variety of some species - for example, red, pink, gold, yellow and green cherry tomatoes. We specialize in growing heirloom varieties of vegetable - that is, varieties that were developed prior to 1945. They tend to have better flavor, texture, and nutritional value than modern commercial varieties (developed for yield, storage capability, and tolerance for chemically fertilized soil - yuck.). At Acorn everything is grown without pesticides, herbicides or chemical fertilizers, and we have begun the process of applying for certification as an organic farm.

Most of our vegetables are sold through our Community Supported Agriculture project. A number of friends and neighbors with an appreciation for healthy food and healthy farms, have committed to buying a basket of our vegetables every week, which we deliver to their home or a convenient pick-up location. This year, Cricket and Tony built a trailer to haul the vegetables around in, so they will stay fresh in the heat of the summer. We also teamed up with two small local farms in order to include eggs and sweet corn in our deliveries. This spring Cricket got involved in the seed growing business, providing some lettuce seed for Southern Exposure Seed Exchange of Charlottesville. S.E.S.E is a mail-order seed company specializing in preserving genetic diversity and heirloom seeds. Such businesses are important - 90% of the varieties grown before 1945 are now extinct.

We also grow vegetables for sale to stores, restaurants and at farmers markets. Notably, we have a lot of garlic, which will probably get made into decorative braids to sell along with other craft items.

Moonglow and Cricket are both passionate about gardening but their passions move them in different directions. Cricket's pleased with the purchase of a new tractor. Moonglow prefers hand tools, small raised beds, and placement according to permaculture principles. For example, she planted a "snack garden" along the main path between 2 of our 3 residences, with peas, lettuce, broccoli and cherry tomatoes tempting you each time you walk by. Aesthetics are also very important to Moonglow - thanks to her and Ira, Acorn grows ever more beautiful to those who love flowers, trellises, and fruit trees.

The garden intern program differs in focus from our 3-week program for prospective members, but I'd like to mention at this point that we are still seeking new members, and that there are plenty of opportunities for members to contribute in the garden also.

IN OTHER ACORN NEWS: Our current membership consists of 11 adults and 3 children. (I feel justified in bumping one of our boys into the adult category now that he's driving our cars). As prophesied in my last article, we lost Tree to new lovers in Oregon. Our newest member, Rabbit, contributes greatly with positive attitude and hard work. I personally am very excited about the possibility of taking on a visiting family. Guess I shouldn't say too much about them as the membership process is still underway, but I will mention that they have a 12-year-old daughter (Hooray! A girl at last!) and that they are in my opinion VERY COOL.

Our SAND CANDLES BUSINESS has not (YET!!!) taken off as hoped - Raven just wasn't happy with the look of the product so the needed marketing hasn't happened. He got advice from some local businesses on which of our styles are most likely to sell. Meanwhile, Rainbow is planning a trip to Virginia Beach to show our candles to some stores there. Ira's ambitions for our main business, TINNERY, are ever-expanding. This year Peter and Ira will be attending craft shows in New England for the first time. And hope to make lots and lots of $$$$$. Customers have expressed great satisfaction with the look of our CUSTOM-MADE WOODEN PUZZLES. Contact Owl if you'd like to order one. The SOCIAL and MUSIC scenes at Acorn seems to be hoppin' of late. Possibly it's the intoxicating effect of warm spring nights scented with apple blossom and honeysuckle. At any rate, not long ago we had a huge bonfire and lots of friends showed up to help us celebrate. The very same weekend, Rabbit set up our out-door hot-tub and we had a campfire, drumming, and a little mandolin music to go along with it. Kiya is often found stitching her latest quilt (on the new frame built for us by Erica - Thanks!) especially when some other member is playing the piano in the living room (Thanks for the loan, Tree!) And THANKS also to our neighbors Buddy and Diane and all the local musicians who have participated in "open-mike nights" at their home.

As for the CHILDREN, they are looking forward to a summer of swimming in the pond, picking berries, and on-going homeschooling activities including a bunch of fun stuff organized by Brenda at Twin Oaks.

Metal

My mother is made out of metal
when i was little i thought she was made out of glass
and if i said the wrong thing or laughed too loud she would break
but i have seen steel flash in her eye and
when i thought i would be holding
shards
no one was cut
or bleeding
the knife
the unraveling of the mystery
of her secret strength

-by Val

Another Night Poem

Trimming nails in bed
a small pile gathers
like a cartilaginous
Chinese ideogram.
Two souls fall deep in love,
gently touching over shifting paintings;
blurry blue leaves coming into focus,
well within each other's eyes.
A precious gift, given softly,
with sweet double tears
in knowledge of no further;
for love of those not present .
Making solid this moving now
Pain is born where none existed;
So hold, lay steady,
Only gazing on each others trembling lips,
And capturing such delicate love
two need only remember
leaves and touching
and life's sad joy<

-Olive

When Lightning Strikes

a woman in her natural state
is a thing to behold
your fantasy come alive
we ride the night away

-by Val

Who We Are:

Twin Oaks is an intentional income sharing community located on 465 acres of land in central Virginia. We are a non-sectarian community which espouses the values of cooperation and egalitarianism while striving to eliminate racism, sexism, violence, consumerism, heterosexism, ageism, and competition from our everyday lives. We believe in living lightly on the land, conserving and reusing as much of our natural resources as possible.

For information about our regular Saturday tours, or to inquire about our 3-week visitor program, please call during regular business hours or write to us at:
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