The Leaves of Twin Oaks

Twin Oaks has touched so many people in so many ways over the years. It is the manifestation of the creative energy, hard work, and utopian vision of thousands of members, visitors, guests and friends. In order to commemorate our 40th anniversary as a community, we've solicited articles from current as well as ex-members, and dug into our archives for excerpts from early issues of the Leaves, old O & I papers and old photos. We hope that this issue captures a small slice of this rich history.

THE LEAVES OF TWIN OAKS

Number 1 Louisa, Virginia July, 1967

WE ARRIVE

On June 13 the newly purchased school bus left Washington for Atlanta. It was empty when it left, having had all of its seats removed. It had been painted blue-green and white, in order to comply with a law that prohibits privately owned buses from resembling school buses. On June 16 the bus arrived on the farm, loaded with furniture, appliances, printing presses, household and personal miscellaneous, plus a bee hive, a skunk cage with a skunk inside, and two motorcycles. Skillful packing, plus a small trailer behind one of the cars, did the trick. Those of us who had not gone to Atlanta hurried out to the farm to meet the Atlanta group. The farm was dark when we arrived. The house was locked, the electricity disconnected, which meant no running water as well as no lights. The exhausted group located their bedrolls from the midst of their belongings and camped out under the apple trees. And the Community began.

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News of the Oaks

by Mala

Comings and Goings: The big news on the membership front is that, for the last few months, we've had a waiting list for the first time in ten years. We also hit our highest population ever - 96 adult members - when we temporarily increased "pop cap" this spring to reduce the waiting list. Since that peak, we've held steady in the mid-nineties.

Since our last issue, we've welcomed new members Goat, Eve, Bridget, Carmen, Ethan, Ake, Drea, Airy, Brian, Codi, Zane, and Caroline. Ezra and Kassia returned from their leaves, and Alyssa and Ivy pleasantly surprised us by trying out the outside world and deciding they liked Twin Oaks better. (Word on the path has it that Lotus Vortex might be the next recent ex-member to come home!) Short-term members Lorne and Al arrived and departed over the last few months, but Al plans to return in the fall after spending the summer at the Omega Institute.

Speaking of the Omega Institute, Owen's spending the summer there, likely returning within the year. Madge and Meredith are on leave as well. Madge is traveling the world, Meredith has returned to the monastery in California. Scout's returned to Vermont to complete her degree in anthropology, Juniper's returned to California to study Chinese medicine, and Erin's moved to Richmond to get her master's in social work.

Three of our 50-something members have taken off to shack up with their partners: Darwin

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What is Success?

by Bob Herbert aka Koala ('76 - '82)

Many people in the outside world are coming to the realization that our free enterprise model is actually sowing ecological destruction and destabilizing huge portions of the world as we pursue our ever growing needs for energy, raw materials & new markets. Twin Oaks is a model for a sustainable village. It has both embraced and integrated into the larger world economy. The local effect and diversity it has helped sow has also been profound with literally hundreds of ex members putting down roots in the area between Charlottesville and Richmond.

I do not hold up Twin Oaks' model of complete income sharing, vows of poverty and intentional communal sharing of all resources as the only answer. However, I do believe that within the context of a wider and more diverse community, Twin Oaks has succeeded admirably.

Are we a failure in that we have not spawned a hundred thousand new Twin Oaks? Is the slow growth of the Intentional Community movement a sign of failure? I think not. We have helped sow many, many diverse communities, often with very different ideological views then those held by most Oakies.

Koala in the early 80's

This embracing of differences is refreshing in a world currently bent on isolation, polarization and conflict.

I can only speak for myself. I joined Twin Oaks at 19. I was a founding member of Tupelo. Mostly I just jumped at the chance to move in quickly even if it meant living in an abandoned farmhouse next door.

I didn't know how long I would live at Twin Oaks, but I had prepared for joining the way some

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*editing and layout by karmakas and skyblue**

A Long Walk Off a Short Pier 1

by Dream ('03-'05)

This article first appeared in the Leaves issue 101, Winter 2004 --ed.

In an established community with over ninety members, sweeping changes are few and far between. While a member or two might be swept off their feet in any given year, Twin Oaks as a whole tends to maintain more of an equilibrium. But in the summer of 2004, Pier I proved to be a broom big enough to affect the entire farm.

In that summer, after over thirty years of business, Pier I told us they had decided to stop carrying our hammocks. Our buyer, Fred Poggemeyer, said their top priority in "a difficult economic climate" was to recapture customers and increase traffic by changing their image and their product line. He insisted that he enjoyed dealing with us and told us their decision was not meant to reflect on the quality of our products. He even left a small door open, saying they would consider us in the future, if they decided to carry hammocks again.

Some members were relieved to get out of a sometimes difficult relationship, while others advocated setting out on a course to try to win Pier I back.

East Wind decided to greatly reduce their hammocks business, from making thousands of hammocks to only hundreds a year. Faced with a massive reduction in our hammocks needs, we were forced to fire all of the outside entities, including Acorn, who had been making hammocks for us.

Through the years, various managers had enacted strategies to prepare the business to survive such a blow. We had grown both our wholesale and retail businesses with the hope of being able to support the needs of the community

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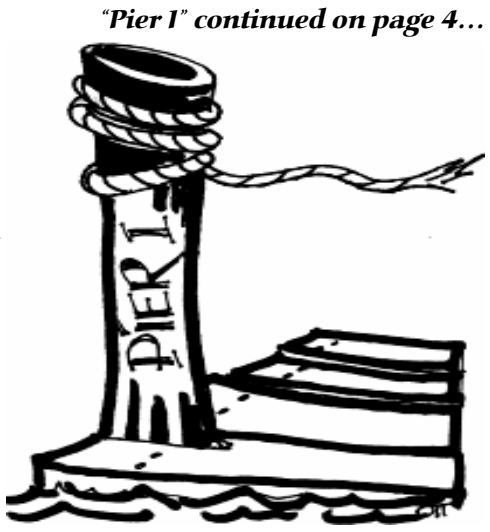

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with Lynn at Baker Branch, Rollie with Amelia at Shannon Farm, and Jake with George in Savannah. In typical Kawatski fashion, Jake left with such an enormous vacation balance that he's still technically a member. Thomas suggested that we try to compensate for the particularly large vacuum Jake left by taking turns being "Jake for a Day." Each day's designated Jake would engage in twelve hours of frenzied multi-tasking activity accompanied by creative grumbling and punctuated by random acts of kindness.

The departure of the above members may be part of a phenomenon Pam has termed "boomer flight." Six other members in their fifties have announced plans to leave this year. Casey recently posted a graph of our average age; it went steadily up until the beginning of 2000, when it peaked at 44; as of a few months ago (before any of the above-mentioned departures) it was slightly below 41. By the end of this year it will probably be significantly lower. The good news is that the fears of several years ago of Twin Oaks becoming "an aging community" seem to not be manifesting; the bad news is that it will be very difficult to replace the skills and commitment of our long-term departing members.

Finances: In tandem with hitting our highest membership ever, we achieved another benchmark when our long-term savings fund crossed the million-dollar mark for the first time ever. Kudos to our Econ Team for guiding us through austerity without having to break into our nest egg.We're continuing to do a good job of recovering from the loss of Pier I, and creating a better-balanced income scene. "Rope products" (hammocks, chairs, etc) remains our biggest business, but tofu and outside work continue to grow, and indexing is still going strong. We've decided to significantly upgrade the tofu hut again and expand the business, but have put the upgrades on hold until we find a satisfactory method of dealing with our tofu wastewater. Our newest business, spearheaded by River, is growing seeds for Acorn's heirloom seed business. This project is exciting in how well it fits in with our values of inter-community cooperation, sustainability, and self-sufficiency.

Due to the solid performances of our businesses, we ended 2006 with a substantial surplus, and just played our first OTRA game in several years. We funded 25 labor OTRAs (One-Time Resource Allocations) and 51 money OTRAs. Like the new seed business, the OTRA results manifest our increasing focus on sustainability. Among the funded projects are plans to reduce run-off from our pasture into the South Anna river; to purchase more eco-friendly dish soap; to decrease dryer use for personal laundry; and to build a solar oven, a rainwater catchment system, a solar shower, and another composting toilet.

Agriculture: Our first big controversy of 2007 focused on the proposed removal of eight pine trees next to MT which were shading the garden. We did eventually decide to cut them, which resulted in an unexpected silver lining: Casey was able to revive his 16-mm film series at a much more convenient location then Emerald City! The north wall of MT has made a fine screen for outdoor showings of classics like "Really Rosie" and "Zlata the Goat."

We've had a rash of "immaculately conceived" calves, including one that we've named Jesus. Apparently the fencing between our pastures and those of Tommy Andersen's bulls needs some work . . . The poultry crew decided to move the chickens from their distant home across the road to a little yard near Aurora. However, it was decided that moving the geese to such a central location would be disruptive, so the crew trained the geese to get water for themselves from the river, and left them in Sadler field. Now they're so free-range that we may or may not see them again.

Nuts and Bolts: Rollie's departure leaves us especially bereft in the building maintenance department, but Kevin, Ethan and Carmen have stepped into the breach. They've been doing a lot of work up at Tupelo, included a big project of improving Tupelo's drainage so that the lawns and gardens don't become muddy moats after each rain.

We're also a bit anxious about the impending departure of Inge, who's done an amazingly thorough and conscientious job of maintaining our fleet of vehicles for years. Fortunately, her exit coincides with the arrival of Zane, the first new member in ages to show up with a solid background in auto maintenance. Sabine and Keenan will also be helping keep the auto area running. We've resurrected the tradition of giving our cars members' given names (which had languished since Margaret Fitzgerald) by naming our newest car Krista Laffoon (the given name of Thea Tupelo). We christened our other new car, a Toyota Matrix, Nebuchadnezzer (after the ship in *The Matrix* and after Aubee's nickname for Zadek).

Our new T-1 internet connection means that Twin Oaks, like the rest of the world, is now hooked up to YouTube. Twin Oaks video clips on YouTube include Apple and Gwen singing "Poor Unfortunate Souls" from *The Little Mermaid* and visitors playing in the Playground of Death.

Pets and Kids: A few years ago, a series of weird anomalous events and circumstances caused us to find ourselves with seven community dogs instead of our set limit of four. With the amount of hullabaloo that normally accompanies a "dog issue," we decided to allow all seven to stay. With the departures of Nibbles and Kasta with their owners, we're almost back down to our theoretical limit now.

Three couples have announced their hopes of having kids in the next year or so, and we're very excited about the impending baby boom. Gwen and Jonah have both been taking ballet classes in Louisa; Arlo's become the latest home-schooled kid to enter the world of school; he's just completed a semester at the Living Education Center in Charlottesville. Congratulations to Asana and Imani, whose step team took first place at a big competition in Richmond; and to Topher, who's graduating from Woodbury Academy and starting at UVA in the fall.

Community Connections and Outreach: We've been enjoying more cultural exchange than usual lately with both Acorn and Ganas. Acorners have been coming over to work in our garden and to participate in regular Ultimate Frisbee games. There's been lots of visiting back and forth between Twin Oaks and Ganas, and Kevin has become the first TO/ Ganas dual member.

Twin Oakers were once again extremely well-represented at the National Conference on Organized Resistance in DC. The crew of 25 or so Oakers tabled, networked, and gave well-attended workshops on everything from polyamory to hula-hooping.

"Twin Oaks at 40" is the cover story of this week's Cville Weekly. The reporter, an Oberliner from Harkness, grokked us well, and the story is reasonably accurate and positive, with nice accompanying photos.

Culture: Although we're doing well in terms of membership and finances, we've had a relatively high level of community conflict this spring. Some of the conflicts have focused

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THE LEAVES OF TWIN OAKS

Number 1 Louisa, Virginia July, 1967

WE BECOME TWIN OAKS

The question of a community name had been a source of warm and frequent discussion for weeks prior to our actual arrival on the farm. We had to have a name immediately, for without one we could not incorporate, or open a proper bank account, or send out a newsletter or start a business, or even be sure of receiving our mail. We did not lack ideas. At one time we had a list of nearly sixty suggestions. We had Latin names, names with great hidden significance, names with no significance at all. We had three-letter names and three-word names. And of course we had all the possible Walden-related names, each with its hopeful adherents. What we lacked was a uniformity of taste. What seemed a perfect name to one member was preposterous to another. We kept putting off the decision.

Finally one member gave out an ultimatum. Either, said he, we decide on a name today, or I am going to start calling the place "Walden Farm" tomorrow, and you know the name will stick. We knew he was right, for people were already referring to us as Walden Farm (so natural after Walden House). Thus stirred, the Walden opponents came up with some counter suggestions, and the vote began. We decided to experiment with a voting system which allows each member to distribute his vote among various names acceptable to him, giving each name that proportion of his total alloted vote that seemed to him to represent his real feelings about their relative value. The system was a bit complicated, but there was something satisfying about being able to express one's split opinions with a split vote.

Just before the vote was taken, some neighbors dropped in to visit, and out of politeness we explained to them what we were doing and asked for suggestions. "Twin Oaks," said the neighbor, glancing at the large twin oak that stands over our well. For politeness, again, we added the name to the list for voting purposes. Fifteen minutes later Twin Oaks came out the winner. There was a general feeling of shock at the result, for Twin Oaks had been no one's favorite. It was merely an acceptable second- or third-choice candidate in case one's favorite did not win. What actually happened is that we were forced to a second choice name because we couldn't stand each other's first choices. We mused on the startling result of our voting method, and somebody suggested we vote again. Nobody wanted to vote again. We had a name. Let it stand.

THE NEXT GENERATION MOVES IN

by Sky

When I moved to Twin Oaks in 1999, I was one of five members in their twenties. In my membership interview I was asked, "what's your biggest concern about moving to Twin Oaks?" My answer was, "I'll have no peer group." My interviewers told me that if I moved here, more young people would follow. It seems they were right; twenty-somethings have been our biggest age group for about three years running.

It was in the early nineties that the community recognized that the population was aging. The average age had increased every year from the founding of the community. Folks realized that that this might pose some problems, particularly in our labor scene and the repercussions for our income-generating abilities. Additionally, the community recognized it wasn't fully equipped to deal with the debilitating conditions that often accompany advanced age.

In response, the community started an Aging and Fire Fund, built Nashoba (a residence designed for members with limited-mobility), and produced the Aging in Utopia report. Then, just months before my visitor period in '99, the community instituted an age-cap of 54 years for new members. Around that time Re-

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The "next generation" rocks the '06 Twin Oaks Rave

…"Success" continued from page 1

people prepare for college. This included telling my parents at age 15 that I planned on joining Twin Oaks when I graduated from high school.

I had lived in an alternative community school in Northern California for two years and felt I would do very well in the Twin Oaks environment. And I did. To say that I was a " high risk youth " was a vast understatement. By the time I joined Twin Oaks I had been arrested twice for drugs on international borders, wrecked three cars, been kicked out of two schools and attempted to burn one down. I craved stability and found it at Twin Oaks. I pursued interests as diverse as gardening, dairy management, food management, construction and Dj'ing parties for our dances (I still say "our " even though I moved out 25 years ago). But what really stuck with me was learning that I had a talent and love for business, and I became involved in the hammocks business.

I also had a strong activist interest in alternative energy. I participated in our anti nuclear actions and later became very involved in solar and energy conservation; this is what I have a career in to this day. As I write this paper I am sitting in a business center in a hotel in Greensboro, NC where I will be meeting with associates from the North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association, Environmental Defense & Duke Energy to discuss an Energy Efficiency program being launched by the utility. It is funny and ironic that I now work through and in partnership with utilities that I used to protest against. What have I accomplished?

In the past 21 years my business, whose motto is "Creating Power through Energy Efficiency", has sold over $30 million worth of energy efficient lighting. That's enough to power over 30,000 homes. And I owe it all to the lessons I learned at TO. Oh, and I still protest at anti nuclear events for those same utilities even as I work to drive them towards greater energy efficiency.

Twin Oaks was and is a success for me and I am a proud "Alumni." Now the question is, what is the name of my fraternity? How about Co Oaka Ti ?

TWIN OAKS: THEN AND NOW

THEN	NOW
Metas	Pirates
Pier 1	Sunergia
The Screamies	Radical Honesty
Belize/Trapeze	The Zegg Forum
Macrobiotic	Vegan Gluten-Free
Love-Ins	Raves
Reaganomics	Dubya
VE Outside Louisa County	VE Inside Louisa County
Behaviorism	Mis-behaviorism
Riverfield	Pond
Sweat Lodge	Sauna
The Flying Tomatoes	The Vulgar Bulgars
Herbert Rhaburn (the van)	Krista Laffoon (the 4-door)
OPP	VE
Sabbaticals	PALs
Assigned Labor	Done Labor
McCune	McCune

A Day in the Life of a Twin Oaks Breakup

by Matt Gallup ('01 - '04)

I thought I'd share a little of my life at Twin Oaks in honor of the 40th anniversary. I came to T.O. with my girlfriend at the time. We soon broke up and thus ensued the most painful nine months of my life. In retrospect, it was the most intense period of spiritual development I'd had up until that point. What follows is a brief description of my day. For the record, everything turned out fine.

8am; Wake up in my room at Tupelo. Hear birds singing. Smell the forest. Notice diffuse and lovely light of the sun warming my young body.

8:05am; Remember that I am alone in bed. Feel uncomfortable burn in heart region. Fully remember painful breakup in strange new place. Flash of about a dozen painful memories and what I SHOULD have done to change things. Heart burning now very uncomfortable.

8:15am; Go back to sleep.

9:00am; Drag pathetic ass out of bed. Avoid fellow Tupeloids, half of which are having emotional breakdowns of their own. Ask God again why I came all the way from Colorado to live in hell. Remember hammock-weaving date with Brian.

9:30am; Collapse in martyred agony on logging road between Tupelo and ZK, "As long as she's happy, sniff, I'll be okay." Back path affords only safety of not seeing HER.

9:35am; See HER at ZK, Dam! Put on happy face. Despite break up we still are very warm with each other. Burning in heart on medium high now. Choke down delicious breakfast of fresh bread, homemade butter, organic apples, and yes, organic oats. Community in salad days. Pier One still ordering hammocks. Organic grains for all.

10am; Meet Brian in courtyard for weaving date. Brian greets me with a warm "Duuuuuuuude!" He is as old as my father, divorced and could be an angel in disguise. Brian hands down sage advice, humor, and heart-felt sympathy. After an hour of weaving we hug, part and I feel a bit better. Suddenly remember weaving date with Rita.

11:10am; Meet Rita on other side of courtyard where she's been for the whole time, wondering if I'd remember. In retrospect, my forgetfulness only increases over the years at T.O. Cause? I'm not sure. Will have to ask Pele. She notices things.

11:45am; Am sobbing on hammock with Rita. She is as old as my mother and is definitely an angel in disguise. Again, she has led me to the place in my mind that is telling me bad things about the breakup and helped me to see that they are not true. How did she do that? We hug. I'm feeling a lot better. I go to pond to skinny dip before lunch. It's like 100 degrees out. Hallelujah I'm a neekid hippy in Virginia. Jake is weeding the flowerbeds around pond, neekid. A mother is playing with her baby, neekid. As I look at the other neekid hippies like me I think, "Maybe it's not so bad being single."

The author connects to his hippie manhood by playing drums in a skirt

12:15pm: Arrive at ZK for perfect garden grown organic lunch. See HER at table with new friends, new…boy friends? No, couldn't be, we made an Agreement. The last Mediation went so well….shit! The time period is up by about 3 weeks now! Oh my GOD, she could be dating any one of those guys. Those evil bad men, NO! They're not bad, they're my new friends. We grew so close in the sweat lodge last week. Must get away, too confusing, too confusing.

1pm: Manage to pull off entire rope making shift on machine called The State. Operating the antiquated machine is totally involving and, at times, perilous. I focus my mind on River, the master of The State. No one runs this thing like River. He is the glue that holds this place together, I'm sure of it. Suddenly remember I have a Mediation scheduled with Hawina at five. My heart sinks to the sound of the bobbins spinning madly. I see my life twisting like the polypro fibers that fly through the machine I operate. The question is; will I become strong and supportive like the rope that I am creating? Or will I fray and snap. Clogging the machine. Possibly breaking a spindle arm of the State. Calling down the wrath of Jack, Phillip, and Alder, the Elder Gods of this commune who will have to fix whatever mess I make of my work and my life. No, I will be strong.

5pm; Mediation with Hawina and HER. First breakthrough, I agree to call Her, her with a lower case. Second break through, I agree to give her space as I've been sort of following her around and sticking too close to her at social functions. Third break through, wow, Hawina is amazing, I ask her to stay out of ZK for the first 15 minutes of lunch and dinner so I can just get my food and get out of there before I have to see or hear her and the stabbing searing pain of my heart makes it impossible to eat. Score! I negotiate a whole week of no ex-girlfriend in the food line. Fourth break through, we unload weeks of breakup feelings to each other and come to a new place of understanding and intimacy.

5:45pm; I feel great. I have been heard and my feelings validated. She and I walk uphill from Morningstar to ZK hand in hand. A shining example of how two people can survive a breakup at, hands down, the worst place in the world to break up.

6:45pm; Playing Hacky sack after perfect dinner of amazing organic like-no-where-else-in-America food. Sky pulls off tricky jester hack move. Kate dropkicks it onto the roof of ZK. Dexter the dog herds the group and grabs hack repeatedly, John accidentally kicks Jonah in the head. Jonah is fine. John needs group support to stop crying and continue playing, I invent a new move called 'The Matrix'. The hack circle swells to fifteen people. Rapture! I've never been so happy.

7:30pm: Catch Coyote before he goes to bed. After much good conversation and wisdom slinging, Coyote agrees to be my illegitimate father which is not so far fetched. After hanging out with Coyote I always feel a whole hell of a lot better.

8:30pm; I go to a "Cuddle Puddle" in Mary's room. She vehemently denies that this is a light sex party. I am wearing nothing but a tiny silk skirt and a g-string. The heat has dropped to only 98 degrees with 90 percent humidity. The party starts slowly with wine in a box and cheese on crackers. Someone pulls out a chocolate bar. The party picks up. Soon we are a mass of sweaty smelly bodies all over Mary's room. Someone is touching my ass….Frodo? Whatever, I like him anyway. After all, I'm learning to shed my notions of what is appropriate behavior for a hetero man that were pounded into my head by mainstream society. I'm a Twin Oaker now. I shamelessly give long hugs to my male friends. I'm not shy at the pond. And hey, if, after a long night of Yuen-Ling and box wine I end up making out with some magical German dude who is feeding me mangos, then I'm okay with that.

9:45pm I drag my sweaty mango stuffed self back toward Tupelo. The cuddle puddle was getting a little too intense and I sensed some real boundary-pushing coming on. I'm starting to get the feeling that everyone has already been with everyone else here. In fact, I'm beginning to suspect that there are people here who are roman-

"Breakup" continued on page 8…

All Tied Up:

Reflections From A Hammock Shop Manager

by Kathryn

When I joined Twin Oaks, I could not have predicted that I would spend the first few years of my membership as the primary go-to person for problems great and small in the rope products business. I pictured myself building straw bale structures, learning to install solar panels, and growing and eating nothing but home-grown produce, dairy and eggs. But I also wanted to be useful to the community, and, as it turned out, Twin Oaks needed money, perhaps just as much as it needed idealistic people looking to make a better life.

So I jumped in, learning everything I could about the rambling behemoth called Twin Oaks Hammocks. There were almost twenty different managers for the production and overhead areas, not to mention assorted project leaders, honchos, and unofficial advisors. Thousands of useful and not–so–useful files stored in over a dozen filing cabinets, forty or fifty cubbies, a few different buildings, several email accounts, and hundreds of network file folders. A communications system based largely on word–of–mouth and assorted scraps of paper tucked, taped, or pinned here and there. A warehouse filled to bursting with supplies and finished products. And (hooray!) a Rolodex full of happy customers. At first, I wanted to clean up, organize, and streamline everything—how else could I make sense of all the chaos? I'm sure I made some hearty attempts, and maybe even organized a thing or two in my first months on the job. But entropy is a strong force in community. Rather than bringing the business into line, I let it bring me into line.

I feel enormous appreciation to the people over the years who kept our rope products business running and thriving under Pier One. It must have been an enormous job. In preparing to write this article, I visited the archives to skim some issues of the *Leaves* from the mid nineties for a glimpse of what Twin Oaks Hammocks was like ten years ago. What struck me most was how busy the rope products business was, and how central to life at Twin Oaks. Nearly every issue contains tales of a major push event, unexpected Pier One orders (or lack thereof), production incentives, new equipment, new products, labor crunches, joint business talks with East Wind, or recruiting other communities to make hammocks. In one push, Oakers got allowance bonuses if we made our production goals, and managers had a $12/day budget to buy treats for workers. Amazing. These days, if we're falling a little behind in hammock production, the problem can usually be remedied by a couple of notes on the 3 x 5 board and a handful of people rearranging their schedule a little bit. If someone wants to serve goodies in the hammock shop, the answer is either "No, we don't need it," or "Only if it doesn't cost money."

The rope products business of yesteryear was certainly more exciting, not to mention richer, than today's Twin Oaks Hammocks. The flip side of excitement, however, is stress. Behind all those push events and incentives were hours of meetings, pages of proposals, millions of brain cells, and probably at least a few repetitive strain injuries. I can just imagine the seemingly interminable meetings in which the planners and rope products managers hashed out compromises enabling us to meet the needs of both Pier One and ourselves. I can imagine the person in charge of providing goodies to the hammock shop overhearing someone grumble about the selection; the motivated weaver breaking a sweat at one jig, resenting the person at the next jig, who stops after every row to get a drink; the person on the phone with one of our suppliers, finding out that our raw materials won't arrive on time; the manager who withdraws because of the strain of dealing with folks's resentment about the decisions she helps make.

All in all, I think the rope products business under Pier One was more fun for the general population of Twin Oaks. High production goals, a busy hammock shop, and lots of cultural activities centering around the courtyard fostered comraderie and community. And the managers must have gotten a lot of satisfaction out of keeping the business going, at a cost of exhaustion, burn out, and stress. For me, that trade–off would not be worth it. I am glad that I happened to walk in to Twin Oaks Hammocks just when it began to shrink. I get the satisfaction of doing a necessary job, of fulfilling my responsibility to the community, without the level of pressure that previous managers endured. And I get to witness and help shape the changing of our economic picture and our culture as we spend less time in the hammock shop.

The hx shop, circa 1979

THE LEAVES OF TWIN OAKS

Number 1 Louisa, Virginia July, 1967

Since the previous part of the newsletter was written and printed, some new developments have occurred which are important. Twin Oaks now has a very promising industry. The industry is the manufacture of rope hammocks. The industry is promising because we already have a fairly large order to fill and we have reason to believe that we will soon have all the orders we can handle.

• • •

To obtain the money we need, we wish to solicit help from our subscribers. Several people have commented that they feel that they have a stake in what is going on here and that they wish to help. At this point, financial help is the kind of help we need and the kind of help that all of our sympathizers can provide to some extent--some more than others, of course. So this article is beginning to sound like a letter from college to home. It basically says: Please send money. If a dollar is all you can spare, please send it, or better try to send a dollar a week or a dollar a month. Every penny will help, and every penny will be put to good use in making Twin Oaks a more economically secure community. Make checks payable to Twin Oaks.

Twin Oaks Faces A Financial Setback

(The Leaves, Spring 1988)

By Kat

Do you remember last year at this time, when we told you what exciting things we were going to buy with 1987 money, and how we didn't have quite enough votes to get a pond or a swimming pool? Do you recall that sense of pleasant amazement we felt that we had grown medium-prosperous without noticing it? Well, this year's report is different.

There won't be any swimming pool in 1988, nor any new buildings or remodeling projects. We aren't buying any more cars, either. Instead, we took two vehicles off the road in order to save insurance money. There are, in fact, no special projects in this year's plan at all. What's more, all the regular ongoing budgets have had to be cut back to three quarters of their pleasingly plump former selves.

What happened to our income? Was it the stock market crash? Did Pier One go out of business? Did somebody drive up in a truck and cart away all our inventory? Is the whole nation all stocked up on hammocks?

No. As a matter of fact, people still buy lots of hammocks, and Pier One is doing fine. What happened is that there is a management theory Pier One is trying out, to the effect that they don't want to bother with products on which the profit is less than 200 percent. A 200 percent profit is not unusual for an import business. Our hammock is not an import but an American folk product. We can't work for Taiwan wages. So this year's Pier One order is considerably smaller than in previous years and future sales to Pier One are not guaranteed.

What this means to our hammock business is that we have to make a substantial sales effort. We haven't really tried to sell hammocks for 15 years, but we believe it can be done. So the atmosphere in the office these days is filled with talk of brochures and mailing lists, fairs and shows and discounts. (This will be a good year to buy from us retail through the mail, by the way. We'll have them on sale.)

While we're at it, we can use this opportunity to concentrate more effort on our other businesses. The beautiful hanging chair and its floor-sitting companion have been perfected for a long time, and we have never been serious about pushing sales until now. Indexing, too, is ready to expand. Our new Software business could grow, too, if we had two programmers to work in it, instead of just one.

We're not ready to organize ourselves into teams to go into the city each morning and take waitress and ditch-digging jobs, as we did in the early days. But if any member wants to do professional work in a nearby city and can net a reasonable wage, the door is open. Some people are mulling it over.

What are we going without? The first casualty was coffee. The food budget no longer buys it. Kleenex came next. Back to blowing our noses on toilet paper. The mailing of personal packages will not be covered by the community this year. The Health Team made car-pooling mandatory for medical appointments. Other pinches will be felt as the year progresses.

..."Pier 1"*continued from page 1*

in the event of losing our biggest customer. Beyond hammocks, the tofu business and indexing had been encouraged to grow to a level where they might take some of the income burden off of hammocks. Unfortunately, while such efforts had made strides, the hammocks business remained the dominant income area by a wide margin.

The most obvious effect could be seen in the year's trade off game. At the end of each year, the general management team of the products business must project the number of products we expect to sell. From there, we calculate the anticipated income. For 2004, we had projected the products business would make about $470,000. For 2005, without Pier I hammocks to make, the projected income dropped to about $260,000. This massive drop, over $200,000, represented about 40% of the entire income of the community.

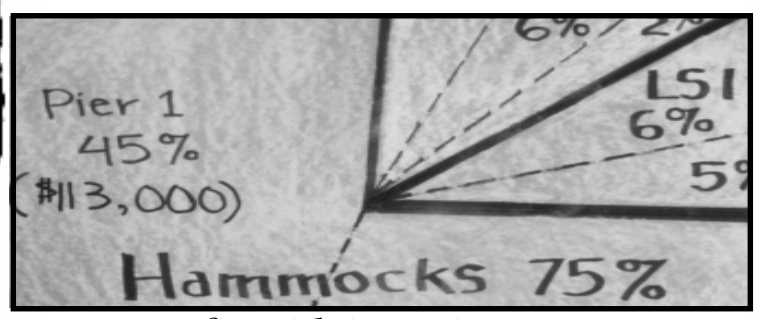
Meanwhile, tofu began ramping up production, indexing was chomping at the bit, the hammocks business redoubled its marketing efforts while striving to reduce expenses, and several members began pursuing new business ideas. I was encouraged and inspired by efforts on so many fronts to work towards a more sustainable economy. My personal hope is that if Pier I comes knocking again in the future we will have the economic security to politely decline their advances, to tell them to take that big, corporate broom somewhere else.

A Pier I Post-Script

by Kathryn

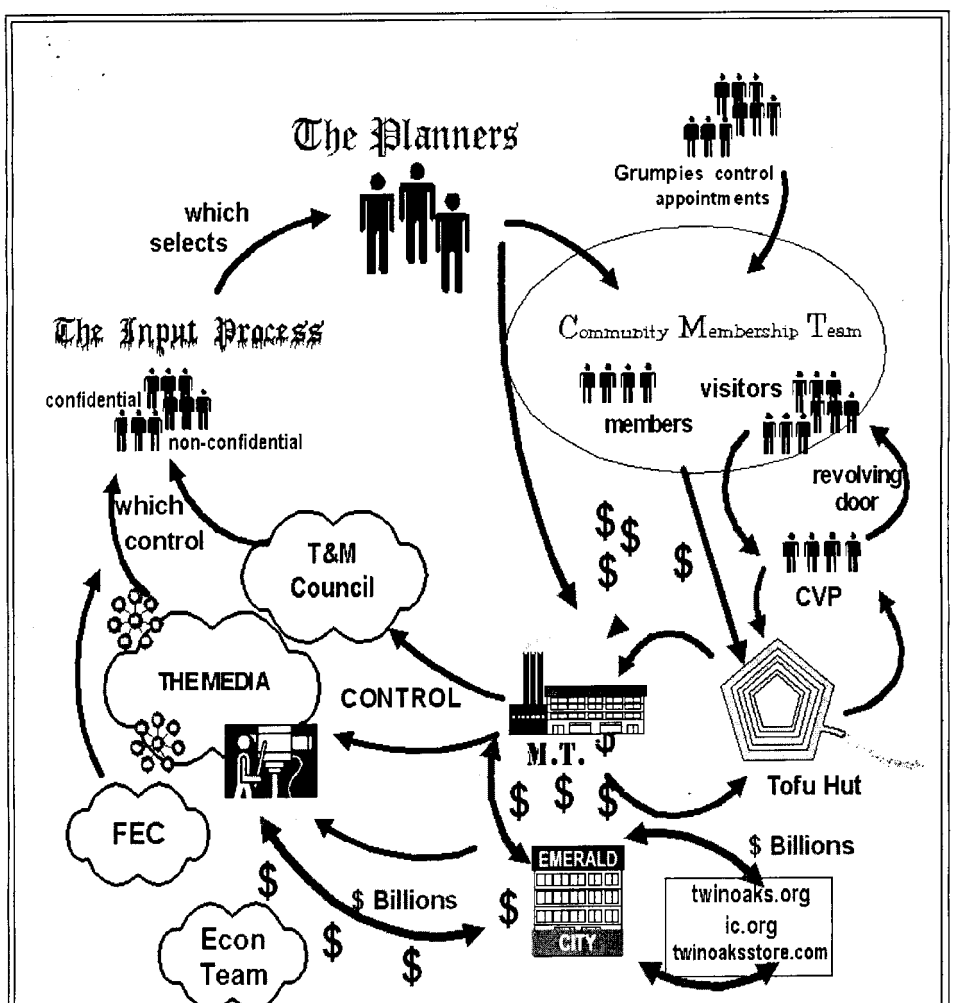
Just days ago, Pier I contacted us again, curious if we would be interested in supplying them with hammocks again. Thanks to our combined efforts in tofu, indexing, retail and wholesale hammocks, outside work, investments, and other miscellaneous sources of income, we can most definitely tell Pier I to take a long walk off a short, um, pier—if we choose. Our net income for 2006 was higher than 2003, our last year with Pier I, and 2007 seems poised to be a similar year. Our economy is not yet entirely stable—the loss of any one of our sources of income would be a blow—but neither were we stable under Pier I. At any point, they could decide that they wanted fewer hammocks than we expected. Additionally, because we have reduced the amount of capital invested in expensive inventory, we have been able to increase our available cash. It is this cash that is allowing us to upgrade our tofu hut, contribute to our savings, and earn lots of interest.

We may decide that we want to supply Pier I with hammocks again. There are certainly many benefits to the arrangement—a busy and social hammock shop, and the opportunity to offer work to other communities and friends of community, along with the extra money. But we are not desperate anymore. If we resume a relationship with Pier I, it will be a bonus for us, not a necessity.



Our financial picture, circa 1979

Ez for Planner



He's got it all figured out.

Topicless O&I Paper (1998?)

What is the issue here? ← where is the rest of the paper? ← What IS not the issue here, Nexus? - Val

Forms

I support this. - Val

I HAVE CONCERNS, BUT AM CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC... PERHAPS ANOTHER MEETING.

Hhtt

For once, I thought this was something we could all get behind Ken // Maia

I am very concerned about the impact this has on the environment! - Aidan

I support it too, Val, but I wish you had expressed yourself differently. Not better, just differently.

Myra

Didn't we already decide to do this, back in 1967? (or '76?) Can anyone remember the decision, or refer me to the relevant Planner Informant? I'm glad we're standing by our principles and keeping up our traditions and trying exciting new things that we all like. blah blah blah Pam

Yay! Keenan

It's not my dog! It was like that when I got here! - Gigi

aw Shadalap! ← Who's the jerk who wrote that? (Anonymous)

I feel this issue needs more process. A lot more process.

NEXUS

I totally disagree. How did we get to this sorry state? - Kirsten

after careful deliberation and reading the above comments, i withdraw my support. -val

Commune Lullabies

by Valerie

Rock-a-bye communard Tofu Reserve
Did you get a shift that you don't deserve?
Will you get on Aubee's last nerve?
Or will the tofu business take a downward swerve?

Rock-a-bye communard Hale and White
Outside Work, VE, who has the right?
Sheltered, unsheltered, what will it be?
Will the emty cover my health costs for me?

Rock-a-bye communard Labour Sheets
You know who you are, people who cheat
Labour Manager, Planners, pass the buck,
We're divided by those who do and don't
Give a.....

Hush little communard, don't you cry,
Mama's gonna write you an O&I.

And if that O&I turns hypocritical,
Mama's gonna become a-political.

And if being apolitical brings dread,
Mama's gonna post a paper about Fred.
(aside: there was a controversy about him at the time)

And if that O&I paper gets taken down,
You'll still be the sweetest little co in town.

BRAINSTORMING SESSION

Yes, we've got an acronym for that.

Twin Oaks in 5-7 words

"100 people sharing their lives"

1/19 posted by Hillary

— The Road to Utopia is paved with good intentions!

A Commune Even Your Grandparents would Love

"HOME FOR THE BEWILDERED"

Keeping the dream alive

Building the future 1lb of tofu at a time

"I EAT good 2 EAT, but"

Hey, Index this!

Jump in and find out how deep we are

Where Yesterday Meets Tomorrow

where tomorrow runs into the day after the

where hammocks flow like honey

WE'RE NOT YOUR TYPICAL ORGANIC FARM! Come, meet Gwen.

Just follow the Tupelo Road....

Living the Dream since 1967

"Keeping the Dream... On Life Support"

— Another world is happening

where we put the moon in community

Virginia on 2 dollars / day

- we put the "nit" in community

Twin Oaks... a Certified business commune

"You can't always get what you want"

LAND of MISFIT TOYS

We put the T.O. in tofu!

Twin Oaks ..... only 30 minute drive to Mozzie Jefferson.

We put the "fun" in dysfunction!

— The house that Kat built.

K-shifts for everyone!

Our queen gives us candy
Come own twenty cars!
We put the "ham" in "hammock!"
Much better than sitting in traffic
Musicals, zippy carts, nutritional yeast and cows

"Process is Our Most Important Product"

"Leave your dogs home!"

McCune's Leaving Letter

McCune, 4-1-98

I'm writing to let you all know that I'm dropping my membership, effective today. This may come as a shock to you, as I have lived here for the past 25 years and all, but you all know what a flighty, impulsive guy I am. Why am I leaving? Well, I just woke up this morning, and it seemed like the thing to do. Where am I going? I have decided to move into the old mill house. George said it was okay with him. But this is just temporary while I make arrangements for my permanent move: to Hollywood. Yes, it has been a lifelong dream of mine to be a movie star. I want to dine on chicken and caviar, as the song goes. I think I have real acting talent that has just been bottled up inside of me for too long. I need to express myself. I intend to get roles in major action pictures, the kind of roles Sean Connery gets (but not for long; I can act circles around that fool!) After my first audition, the industry will realize what a potential gold mine I am, and they will flock to me with multi-million-dollar contracts for me to sign. After establishing myself as a living legend on the silver screen, I will turn my focus to directing. I have already prepared a screenplay. It's about an intentional community, and the wise elder member who helps them pull through crisis after crisis over a quarter-century time-span.

But these are just stepping stones on the path to my ultimate ambition: **money**. Yeah, I've had enough of this egalitarian shit; I want to be rich! And I'm not just talking well-to-do, I mean BILLIONS. Soon, Ted Turner will be quaking in his boots. Bill Gates will be sweating bullets. I will use the tried-and-true strategy for achieving financial prosperity: hostile takeover, followed by merciless downsizing, selling off assets, and raiding of pension funds. Through mergers and acquisitions, the multinational corporation I head will eventually swallow up all other companies, until I have a global monopoly on everything. Wielding absolute power over a cowering planet will be fun, plus it will give me a nice little nest egg to retire on.

I hope you can be happy for me, because this is my dream.

Good Luck - K~

Dear McCune - I was beginning to think you weren't listening to me - Ken

In community, McCune

YOU KNOW I JUST WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY - Lucy. [redacted]

…"News" continued from page 2

attention on what appears to be a larger rift than usual between longer-term members and newer members. Although conflict is inevitably stressful and painful, we seem to be responding with a wide range of creative solutions, which is heartening. We recently had a large and productive community sharing circle; we're expanding the new member integration program; and we're resurrecting "Groups of Six" to encourage members to talk regularly with others outside of their ordinary social spheres.

Many Oakers are also getting involved in "the Forum," a community communication method pioneered at ZEGG. Groups have also been meeting steadily over the past year or so to work on other personal growth and communication methods, including radical honesty, inquiry, and nonviolent communication.

Some of us have been bonding with our co-communards in a very different way, through participation in our collective menstrual calender. The calender, a gift from Eula X, hangs in a ZK bathroom, and is utilized by many members, visitors, and guests. At the top of it, one person has written, "Get to know your cycle" and another has added (enthusiastically or sarcastically?), "And every other bleeder's – yeah!"

Holidays: We rang in the New Year with our traditional bash up at Tupelo, enlivened by the unusual absence of the New Year's plague. For Validation Day, a Dutch internet friend of Cassie wrote a computer program specifically to do the 4-point-game matchmaking. Due to the computer's matchmaking abilities, group dates were an option for the first time. Another V-Day highlight was a concert of love duets, organized by Brenda. Apple and Daniel's performance of "Islands in the Stream" led many of us to spend many hours trying to make any sense of its lyrics.

We had two May pole rituals this year - one more pagan, and one more secular. We've been having more "just for the heck of it" dances this spring than we've had in quite a while, which has been great. The teen girls have even deigned to get out on the dance floor a few times. As we go to press, Sky is gearing up for Twin Oaks' third rave, up at the conference site. And, of course, we're absorbed in preparations for the best anniversary party ever, which is probably raging as you read this. If Twin Oaks is still standing when the party's over, we'll let you know how it went in the next issue.

Still Socialist After All These Years

by Pam

The C'ville Weekly claimed we are the country's oldest commune. I doubt it's true, but after 40 years here, Twin Oaks is obviously successful at surviving. How well have we done as a social experiment?

We are a group of nearly a hundred members, jointly owning this community and our various "means of production, distribution and exchange". (That's my dictionary's definition of socialism). We do it pretty well. We own and run businesses together, we grow a lot of our own food, and we share a fleet of vehicles. We can each choose from an amazing array of types of work, and each assemble our own portfolio of jobs, with flexible hours to suit our internal clocks. We care for our sick and elderly, and support our children.

Pam and Alexis-X bask in the success of their socialist lifestyle (1995)

A lot of the success of our work-sharing is due to our labor credit system. Local currency systems are nothing new to us. We've been valuing an hour of work with one labor credit for a long time. Another part of the success is to base everything on a trust system – expect the best of each other and we nearly always get it. No police, no heavy beaurocracy. A third factor is setting up our decision-making so that people can choose to participate or not, but can't hold up the process if they don't participate.

So, that's the outline of what I think works.

It does rankle though, to have my lifestyle still called an "experiment". I've been living communally for 34 years, 15 of them at TO. For me, it's my lifestyle, it's not an experiment. By now, I know it works. Why do we hang on to the "social experiment" label? I'm an unabashed socialist. Does the word "socialism" make people uncomfortable? Calling my life an experiment is like telling me it's "just a phase" I'm going through!

Actually, one of the things we're not good at here is conducting experiments. I can't think of one piece of policy that we've successfully experimented with. We tried with the nudity policy one summer, experimenting with a looser policy. We failed to follow through in evaluating the experiment and making a conscious decision on what to do next. We drifted for much longer than originally stated, then got a decision from the planners that got an over-ride. While "experimenting" some people got attached to the temporary state and wanted to abandon the agreement.

What else hasn't worked, or has changed for the worse? I think we've slid into a wider disparity of wealth than used to be common here. Quite a few people now have a weekly house-cleaning job, or other VE opportunity. The rules for spending VE are not always followed, so some people live higher on the hog than others. I regret that.

Our efforts to address our imbalanced age demographics several years ago led to publicity that deterred over-50's, and outreach that very successfully recruited 20-somethings. We have more of a revolving door now – higher turnover. (I know turnover was very high in the formative years, but later it stabilized somewhat). We offer PALs– the right to leave and return within a year without going through membership application process again. It's hard to see friends leave. It's hard training people and then having to train more people. I hope we move more towards encouraging long term membership.

We're not great at confronting people who abuse our trust and openness. We mostly shy away from confronting and dealing with those problems. We could use more courage, and less hoping someone else will deal. We're all struggling humans, we'll never be perfect, but we do give it a good try!

We're not great at writing articles for deadlines, we tend to hope someone else will do it!

THE LEAVES OF TWIN OAKS

Number 2 September, 1967

LABOR CREDITS

For five weeks Twin Oaks managed without any work system of any kind. Everyone did what seemed to him appropriate to do, and the meals were cooked and the dishes washed, the garden hoed, and numerous miscellaneous projects carried out. After a time, though, we came to see that we needed more organization in order to get more work accomplished and in order to divide the duller jobs more equally. So we divided the work into categories and appointed managers to be responsible for them. We now have a manager of housekeeping, of gardens, of hammocks, of food processing, and so forth. All together there are over twenty managerships, enough for two or more to be assigned to each member. At the same time we initiated a labor credit system similar to the one formerly used at Walden House. This time we wrote all the jobs down on little cards, along with the number of credits allotted for each, and dealt out the deck. Each member passed his unwanted cards to the right until he had a full hand--that is, until he had accumulated the number of credits he needed to fill his quota. The system worked fine, except that it took a great deal of time, and we kept imagining what it would be like with 50 members, all passing cards. Now the system is undergoing various changes, designed to cut down the amount of administrative time spent on deciding who does what, without limiting the feeling of free choice of work. It will probably continue to change for some months until we arrive at something really satisfactory.

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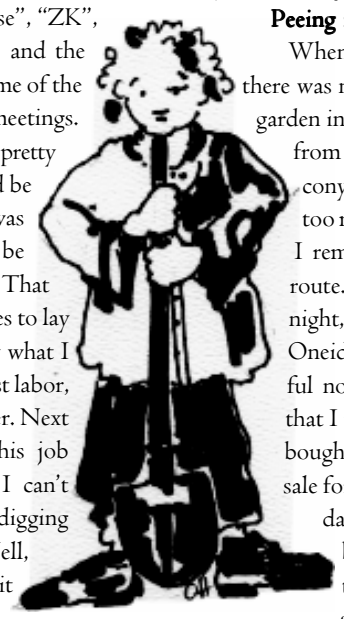
Memories

by Bev Yaeger AKA Beverly Biko Oneida ('86-'90)

Being a visitor

I remember being a really excited visitor. Everything was pretty fascinating, and labor sheets were just too cool. I remember looking at the sheet and being impressed with the variety of work on my schedule. "Greenhouse", "ZK", "Path Lights" and "Telephones" and the ever-popular "Dump Run" are some of the things I remember, besides all the meetings.



I showed up for "Greenhouse" pretty well prepared. I figured this would be a job involving some dirt. Since it was December, I thought maybe we'd be planting some greens or something. That job turned out to be digging ditches to lay the electric line. Well, not exactly what I thought, but still some good honest labor, and I got to meet an actual member. Next was "ZK". Very mysterious. This job turned out to be digging also, I can't remember now what we were digging ditches for. Drainage probably. Well, I guessed somebody had to dig, it might as well be me.

Ok, path lights next. Hmm. Maybe replacing light bulbs? No,… you guessed it… digging ditches! This project as I recall was when the path lights were just being installed between MT and ZK, and we had to dig the ditch to lay the wires in. So, on to telephones. I assumed this meant ANSWERING phones, in the office. Finally a chance to wear my hippie dress and impress people with how nice I look all showered and dressed up. I showed up at the office, but it turned out I had the wrong idea about "Telephones". That job was really…..digging ditches!!!

Peeing in Community

When I lived in the Furnace room, there was no bathroom in Oneida. The garden in back always smelled like pee from people peeing off the balcony. I was never a fan of pee jars, too messy and liable to get spilled. I remember having a regular pee route. If it was the middle of the night, I went in the grass between Oneida and Harmony, being careful not to wreck the new peonies that I think Reese or Tigerlilly had bought from one of the kids doing a sale for school. If it was too cold, or daylight, I went to Harmony bathroom. If someone was on that toilet, I went to Llano. If someone was there too, I went to TaChai. I don't remember ever having to wait because all three toilets were busy. But maybe I don't remember because I just ended up in that garden in the back of Oneida! I never had much trouble sharing the bathroom for peeing, but I always did prefer to poop in private.

Thanks for the memories!!

Turmoil and Transition: Twin Oaks 1973 - 76

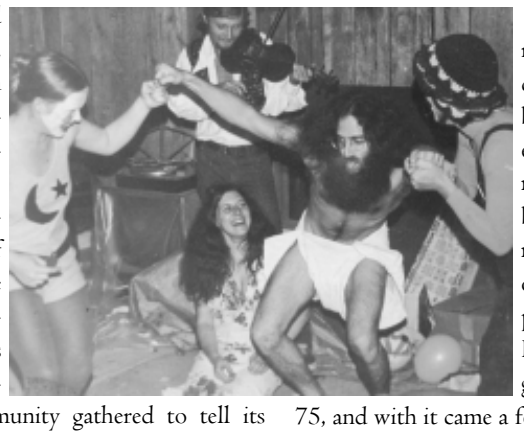
by David Ruth ('73 - '77)

The following account of Twin Oaks' 2nd five years is excerpted and adapted from a 35-page essay originally written in 1977-78. Due to limited space, the second part of this essay will appear in the Fall 2007 issue of the Leaves -ed.

In the spring of 1973 when I arrived, Twin Oaks was in the midst of an expansion from 35 to 50 members. And there appeared to be a division among the leaders of the community.

The most influential of the members who had joined in the late 1960's were idealists determined to create a self-sufficient, egalitarian, socialist community; one that would grow large, spawn offshoots, and greatly influence the mainstream culture by becoming a model to be emulated by all those dissatisfied with capitalist consumer culture.

Then had come the early 1970's, with turnover and expansion bringing in a different brand of dreamers. These new members were people excited about their first experiences in the burgeoning human potential movement—they sought openness and honesty coupled with emotional intensity – community as communion among beings striving to be authentic and centered. Kat Kinkade, thought by many at that time to be an indispensable political leader of the community, left Twin Oaks in the winter of 72/73 believing that a "religious takeover" was occurring; the socialists were losing out to the "touchie-feelies." Kat left to help found another community, East Wind, which she hoped would remain more committed to her ideals.



With the coming that spring of what came to be known as "The Tuesday Meeting,"[1] Kat's fears seemed to be realized as the community gathered to tell its leaders that it would not sacrifice interpersonal and intrapersonal goals for other ideological goals, particularly for the further growth of the community's population. Thus began the "summer of the screamies," as some called it, when most members worked only 35 hours a week, and when many felt they needed still more free time to engage in work of personal value – holding week-long sessions in primal screaming, and working through every event and relationship containing elements of interpersonal tension.

If there ever had been, as Kat alleged, a "takeover" occurring, it certainly faltered that autumn with a large exodus of those who had been leading voices in the forces for personal and interpersonal growth. It was, however, the financial crisis of the 73/74 winter that diverted the attention of the whole community from ideological issues to those of survival.

Noticing that the bank balance was plummeting toward zero, and realizing that no income was expected for months, the community dug in and began working again. It also began its first serious efforts at economic planning, setting the stage for a more disciplined approach toward work and governmental decision-making.

As the community grew in 1974 and 1975, another wave, this time of Eastern spiritualism, affected both old and new members. By then, however, the community was large enough to discourage those who hoped to transform Twin Oaks into a spiritual community, and diverse enough to absorb many of the new spiritual ideas into what was beginning to feel like a fairly stable socialist community, a community tolerant of a wide range of religious beliefs.

During the same period in which the community's culture was being affected by Eastern thought, its governmental infrastructure was becoming more rational, more tuned to the values of planning and more expert in its techniques. Land-Use Planning began in the winter of 74/75, and with it came a feeling among many that Twin Oaks had entered an era of stability. That feeling, however, proved to be both illusory and fleeting – for a new period of turmoil was already in its nascent stage.

(to be continued...)

Saturn Returns:
My twenty-eight year cycle?

by Jake Kawatski ('79-'06)

I first came to TO as a young adult of 28 and am leaving again shortly after I turn 56. I am making plans to join George Wilson, my partner of six years, in his adventures in Savannah, Georgia, for the next phase of our lives together. We'll be renovating a big old house near the city center with enough space for (at least) three other adults (potentially kids too)… so I am leaving Twin Oaks but plan to continue my "alternative lifestyle" on a smaller scale. Prior to Twin Oaks, both George and I had been involved with communal households (he in Atlanta, I in Oregon and Florida), so between the two of us we will bring a lot of experience to this new urban enterprise.

Jake, spamming it up for Halloween

Just prior to Twin Oaks (late 1970s), I was a technical director and scene designer in a community theatre (Sarasota, Florida) and all through my years here continued to be involved in many theatrical events; I was holiday manager for a number of years as well. I have a degree in art, and shortly after we moved into our new kitchen-dining complex (Zhankoye) in 1985, spent many happy hours of my free time filling the empty wall space with color. A half dozen of my paintings and fabric art still hang there.

My life here has mostly been defined by the work I've done: I was deeply involved in the childcare program as metta (childcare worker) for six years in the 80s, a child board member and teacher. I still enjoy being around children, and hope to make them part of my future life. Food service has been another focus: I managed food processing (canning and preserving the harvest), cooked lunch or dinner at least once a week for most of my life here, spent six years as milker (in both old and new barns), played cheez wiz (cheese making manager for two years), and most seriously, was garden manager for nine years in that same decade. I was fortunate to have grown up in a large family on a small farm in rural Wisconsin, and so, from my earliest years, I've been comfortable with children, home grown food, gardens, soil and manure. Cleaning up after children ain't so very different from cleaning up after the cows!

Kat, Jake, Breffni, Gordon, Peggy celebrate our 20th

I haven't been here continuously since 1979, but have left twice to gain perspective and appreciation of the rural village that is Twin Oaks. In 1982-1984, I left with a small group of like-minded folks with plans to start a life together in rural Oregon. Our plans went awry, but I stayed in wet coastal mountains of Oregon at Alpha Farm, gardening mostly for nine months, before returning (via Sandhill sorghum harvest) to take on the mantle of planner and gardening management. My most recent break (1994-1997) started with a three month stint as head cook for a boy scout camp (I was glad when that was over!) followed by two wonderful winters in Poland teaching English. (I returned to Twin Oaks in the summer breaks and worked in the garden.)

After a serious heel injury (1992) turned arthritic, I was forced to look for more sedentary work. I moved into indexing work and filled the vacancy in management for the last 8 years. I have always enjoyed the mix of mental and physical work possible here. (Still wishing there were more options in the "mental" category than there are currently, as most of us are overeducated for the tedious "blue-collar" hammocks and tofu work.)

Over my twenty some years at Twin Oaks, I have also enjoyed the larger "Yanceyville" community, (the remnants of an old village that borders Twin Oaks), and sang with their church choir on and off for most of twenty years, especially in the period when George Payne (their choir director) came to Twin Oaks weekly to direct our choir here (c. 1985-1995). I will miss that connection when I leave Virginia. It was challenging 4-part choral singing that only rarely happened in Twin Oaks "rock and roll music culture". We performed original music by George and Kat Kinkade, and traveled with various musical programs, performing at churches and events in Virginia.

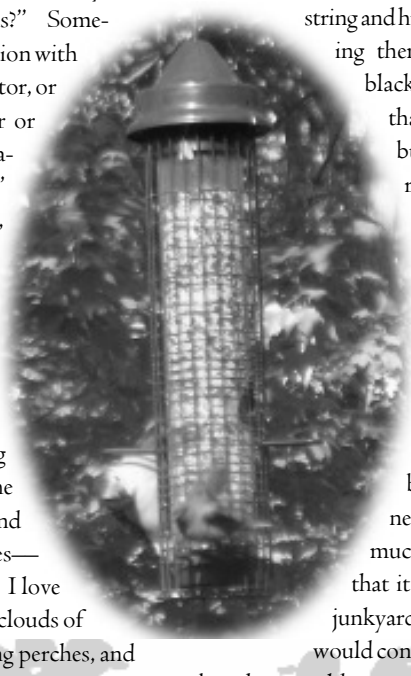
In 2000, came major changes in my life at the Oaks: my favorite brother Jay (aka Woody) came to live here just months after I had met George and enticed him to live here. George is 14 years my senior, but still has the energy and ambition of a much younger person. I am mildly surprised that our years together have passed so quickly. His family has been wonderful (there are two other gay couples in his immediate family) and I look forward to being closer to all of them in whatever time remains of our "sunset" years together.

If I have any regrets, I wish I had allowed more time for art! But I imagine when I move to the city, there will be more inspiration in that area, as Savannah is home to a major art school.

This one's for the birds!

by Ezra

Every so often, I am asked "what are your favorite things about Twin Oaks?" Sometimes it's during a dinner conversation with a guest, on a garden shift with a visitor, or in a survey put out by a member or visiting academic. On such occasions, I know what the "correct" answer might be: our organic food, our communal lifestyle, what a safe and supportive place Twin Oaks is to raise a small child. But the truth is that—with the possible exception of my son—nothing at Twin Oaks gives me more pleasure than the birdfeeder hanging outside of my window. I love the woodpeckers— downy, hairy and redbellied— and the nuthatches—white–breasted and red–breasted. I love my birdfeeder in the winter, when clouds of purple finches battle for the feeding perches, and flocks of dark–eyed juncos gather on the ground below waiting for the seeds they spill. I love it in the spring, when the Goldfinches exchange their dull winter plumage for the bright yellow of the breeding season, and the Rose–breasted Grosbeaks drop in during their spring migration. I love it in the summer when the Indigo Buntings arrive, and I can sit on the outside deck and watch the birds flitting up for a late-afternoon snack, oblivious to the noisy joyful humans just a few feet away. And I love it in the fall when…well, you get the picture.



I began fantasizing about a birdfeeder soon after I moved to Twin Oaks. The day I moved into my room in Beechside, I realized that I had found the perfect location. A feeder hung there would be close to the forest, and high in the air, but would be directly outside of my window. The small deck just outside of the second story door was a perfect place to attach one end of a pulley, allowing me to pull the feeder back and forth and re-fill it with ease. My original plan involved attaching the other end of the pulley to the building itself, so that the feeder, a cheap plastic tube–type affair, hung just inches outside of the window. It seemed like an ideal arrangement, but it didn't take long for the squirrels to figure out that there was a free lunch within easy reach. Soon, they were scampering all up and down the side of the building and across the outside of my windowsill. Their loud scritch-scritch-scritching, at all hours of day and night began to drive me insane. Naively, I tried anchoring the other end of the pulley on a long rod that held the feeder a foot or so away from the window. This didn't faze the squirrels at all. They would leap from the ledge onto the feeder and casually—mockingly even— munch on my expensive birdfeed (this was during austerity, mind you!)

This was too much to take, so I climbed onto a high ladder and moved the other end of the pulley to a nearby tree. The feeder would hang further from the window, but would hopefully be squirrel proof. It wasn't. The nasty little creatures simply ran along the string and hung upside down, gorging themselves on the finest black–oil sunflower seeds that $60 a month could buy. I tried hanging round plastic disks beneath the line to shield the feeder. I tried sheathing the line itself with slippery spinny plastic so that the squirrels couldn't run along the line. I tried pruning back branches from the nearby trees. I hung so much armor on my feeder that it looked like a hanging junkyard! Each new technique would confuse them for a week or so, but they would soon regain the upper hand. They gnawed holes in my birdfeeder for easier access. They even began to eat the plastic bucket that I kept the birdseed in. I would open the lid to find a pile of empty seed–shells and squirrel poop. Oh how I raged! I would run outside in a frenzy and shake the rope to dislodge the vermin, hoping to send them plunging to their deaths. When, in my frustration, I shook the rope so hard that I pulled the feeder clear off of the tree, I realized that I needed a better plan.

Today, I am at peace with the squirrels. With my superior human technology (a 'squirrel–proof' feeder with a spring–mounted steel cage, and a galvanized bucket for the feed), I have bested their gnawing teeth and scurrying claws. They don't even try anymore. I can sit in my bed with my Sibley Field (sic) Guide to Eastern Birds and my binoculars, and watch the charming antics of my feathered friends. Almost every week this year, I have experienced the sublime thrill of identifying a new species just outside my window— 20 different types so far (I saw an Eastern Bluebird there for the first time last week!), and I'm sure there are far more that I've seen but not identified. I delight in re–filling the feeder nearly every day, satisfying some deep nurturing instinct. This spring, I have been sharing my obsession with my son Zadek, and it has been quite delightful to see him standing on the bed, pointing and saying "bird… big bird… yellow bird," and knowing that he is just as excited about them as I am.

THE LEAVES OF TWIN OAKS

Number 7 August, 1968

WE CELEBRATE OUR ANNIVERSARY

Though we don't pay much attention to most holidays, it seemed appropriate that we should do something special to commemorate the 16th of June, when we completed our first full year on the farm. We had very little idea how to celebrate it. Parades and speeches just didn't seem appropriate.

What we finally hit upon was calling a holiday from all but the most necessary labor credits and having special things to eat. We asked every "old" member, "What foods have you missed here at Twin Oaks that you would like to have served on our anniversary?" The requests were varied, but there was a heavy emphasis on breakfast. Orange juice and sausage were in demand. One member wanted "Cap'n Crunch for breakfast, lunch and supper." Another hungered for potato chips and onion dip. Everybody wanted real milk. We planned our menu as best we could around this miscellaneous assortment, adding strawberry shortcake to make the day complete.

Other than eating, we didn't do much that was very special. Some went right ahead and worked on hammocks or farming. Some got together and sang folk songs. A small folk dance session was held. The day passed quietly, and we went to bed with strawberries on our breath.

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Eulogy for a Feline Friend

by Meredith

It is impossible to write about being a dairy manager without writing about the creatures that I care for and learn from. Here is the story of one of them.

He was the cat of many names. Emily called him Gris-gris. I called him Smokey. Most people just referred to "the grey cat that hangs around the barn". This phenomenon was an apt description of who he was, because he was a half-wild animal and never knew himself by any name. This cat belonged to no one, associated with no one, and yet at the same time, he was part of Twin Oaks every bit as much as you or I.

He appeared at the north end of the property a couple years ago, near the hay barn where the chickens were kept. He lived among the hens, in apparent harmony; he didn't try to eat them and the ladies seemed to accept his presence. His two yellow eyes would look out from beneath the old wood storage area by the compost while chickens ruffled their feathers, settling down in the dust just a few feet away.

The first time I started paying attention to him was as a little gray tail darting out the dairy barn door. He had discovered that there was free food if only you were willing to risk being seen by bovines and their rubber-booted human caretakers. I didn't like the idea of feeding this cat. We already had Tang, our sweet orange barn cat. Besides, I said, farm cats should eat mice and spare milk.

But my heart softened with time, and eventually I even stopped taking the cat food away from him. I thought he was an absolutely beautiful cat; he had a deep blue-gray coat with those bright, fearful eyes that always watched me, whenever I was within sight. They would watch even while he drank milk, tongue lapping up the white creamy liquid with eyes peering upwards to keep tabs on me. And if anyone came a

"Eulogy" cont. on page 8…

Twin Oaks Community is 40 years old!!!
The Leaves #104
138 Twin Oaks Rd.
Louisa, VA 23093

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Hey Readers!

First off, a very big THANK YOU to folks like you. Since our plea a year ago, we've recieved over $550 in donations! Although the community has started devoting a modest amount of money to our budget, these donations have been instrumental in allowing us to continue printing. And we still want your support! $10 puts you on the mailing list for 3 issues and helps us provide *The Leaves* to our extended family around the world. Checks can be made out to Twin Oaks Community, and sent to *The Leaves of Twin Oaks.*

We hope you enjoy this special 40th Anniversary issue!

The Editors, Sky and Kas

Twin Oaks Community
138 Twin Oaks Rd, Louisa VA 23093
twinoaks@ic.org www.twinoaks.org

THE LEAVES OF TWIN OAKS

Number 7 — Louisa, Virginia — August, 1968

"Tell me one thing you like about the Community," I said to Skip, "and one thing you don't like."

"What for?" said Skip.

"For the Leaves," I said. It makes interesting reading. The people out there want to hear from the membership."

"Do you want something profound or something funny," said Skip.

"Either," I said. "Anything at all, as long as it's printable."

"Well, let me think about it." said Skip.

And "let me think about it" was just what almost every other member said when asked the same thing. I let them think, and then I collected the following remarks:

Skip:
One thing I like is the fact that Twin Oaks has been able to attract people from various walks of life, of various ages and skills, engineer, dairy breeder, psychologist, secretary, revolutionary, mechanic, philosopher; that we are not, as you might expect, a uniform group of young radicals.
One thing I don't like is that we haven't made any organized effort to solve interpersonal problems.

George:
What do I like? Well, the food is pretty good. Also this one-day laundry service is something. I bring over my clothes in the morning, and they are delivered back to my room the same day.
What I can't stand is that nobody around here will take a project and see it through to the end.

Bud:
The best thing is the close relationship between what we produce and what we consume.
What I don't care for is the pedantic equalitarianism.

Susan:
The best thing around here is the swimming hole.
The worst is the long, hot walk to and from the swimming hole.

Tamar:
The wonderful thing is that everyone accepts you as soon as you get here.
The bad thing is the heat--especially hoeing in the heat.

Kinch:
What I like is working together with other people and being in a group.
I can't think of anything I dislike.

Terry:
I like the variability of schedule--different work from day to day.
I don't like the fact that there isn't enough space for private hobbies.

Donna:
I like the fact that my work here promotes my own goals more than it did on the outside and that I have some choice of whom I work with.
But it is hard to find a place to be alone or to have a private conversation or to study, and I am a great deal bothered by the lack of plumbing facilities.

Max:
I like the fact that Chareen (daughter can have a preplanned schedule of work along with the adults, rather than being at the beck and call of her parents. This develops responsibility.
One thing I don't like is the failure of communication between members, when it is so necessary, living so close together.

Theron:
I like being able to stay up as late as I want. Also, I like the majority of the food.
I don't like breakfast being served so early, so I have to get up early if I want any.

Connie:
I like the farm life--just living in the country.
However, I would like to see the house stay cleaner.

Chareen:
What I like is that there is always somebody around. I can always find someone to talk to. So if my mother and father aren't there, I don't get lonesome.
I don't like the outhouse much. It doesn't smell good.

Carnell:
It's nice that I don't have to take care of Zandra all the time and that I don't have to cook all the time.
But there could be more cooperation from other members in keeping the house clean.

Kathleen:
Life here is stimulating. I may at times be annoyed, distressed, or wretched, but I am never bored.
On the other hand, there is very little peace. We have taken on a project of such dimensions that there is always something to worry about, always a problem needing a solution, always several problems that have no solutions. It takes nerves of steel, and I haven't got them.

Rudy:
This is the nearest to Walden Two of any place I know about.
But it isn't near enough.
.....

…"Eulogy" continued from page 7

bit too close, away he would dart behind the old milk cooler and out the far door.

And so he became a sort of permanent guest. He lived at the chickens' area and came in to the dairy barn occasionally when he couldn't find enough mice to eat. Perhaps once a year, he'd disappear for a couple weeks, then return. We never did find out where he went or what he did.

So when he got sick a few weeks ago and it was apparent that something needed to be done, both for his sake and for the sake of those around him, I volunteered to take him to the vet.

We stood out a bit, in the waiting room. All the other clients had their pets in fancy cat carriers and nice leashes. The humans were well-groomed or at least wore clean clothes. I walked in wearing mismatched work gloves and cow jeans, carrying a wire cage with chicken feathers and fragrant manure embedded in it. The cat had scratched up his face while trying to escape. In addition to these bloody scratches, mucus and discharge ran down his face from his illness.

Nevertheless, the veterinarian and staff treated us like any other owner and pet. It felt strange to hear the cat referred to as "Smokey" rather than "that gray cat." For the first time in his life, he was treated as much more than a stray.

The news was the worst. His runny nose andwheezing were due just to a respiratory illness. However, he also had Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, or "Cat HIV". Contagious, incurable, and ultimately fatal.

The vet euthanized him while I waited in the parking lot. Standing in the wind, I shed tears for him, this cat who would leave the world as quietly and cautiously as he entered. When I drove home, his body in a cardboard box next to me, I experienced a sorrow so pure, like rain on the grass.

I buried him alone the next day, a shallow grave in the yellow flowers behind the chicken coop. It was how it should be; no procession, no words or songs, not even a coffin. This cat would want to end his life like the semi-feral cat he always was. I did, however, plant at the grave a wooden marker shaped like a hen to watch over and keep company with him forever, just as the hens were companions in this life.

I hope that I may live a life so wild and beautiful as this cat's. And, if I cannot, it is enough that I have witnessed his.

…"Generation" continued from page 2

cruiting was given a mandate to recruit more young people. In 2001 the weather changed and a deluge of young people hit the community.

Generally, its hard to tell how people find out about the community. In this case, however, there was a feedback loop: as more young people joined, it became more attractive for other young people. Friends of young members tend to visit more often, and sometimes end up moving here themselves. So what was the impact of this influx of young people?

Despite the higher turnover rate brought by a younger population, the influx of young new members beginning in '01 was so large that the population continued to grow. In 2003 we started approaching pop cap for the first time since the mid-nineties. While this meant more hands on deck to get things done, it also meant more time training and a lower overall skill level. It also meant a large disparity between the skill levels of different members. Additionaly, it's easier for older members to create satisfying work scenes for themselves; many of our young, new members are not accustomed to working so much. Several new members in '02 and '03 had their provisional membership extended because they didn't have a positive labor balance or barely managed to have a positive balance by their full member poll.

In many ways, what we are facing is a problem of how to better integrate new members. Because the age range of new members tends to be low, its also become something of a generation conflict. Starting in 2003, with their peer group dwindling and feeling alienated by the new dominat social group, a number of fifty-something members started putting out a call to repeal the age cap. A number of long term, older members have left in the last few years, several of whom seemed like lifers. Ione left to join a Quaker retirement communtiy. Rollie and Jake left to follow partners. Bob and Stella once again headed for Central America. With the average age plummeting, we didn't have time to prematurely repeal the age cap. The policy was designed to turn off when our average age dropped below 40 years, which it did in mid 2006.

A flood of middle-agers has yet to hit our doorstep. We're still getting large visitor groups with lots of twenty-somethings that we've been seeing for years now. However, despite a dramatic shift in the age of new members, we've hit a new phase in our evolving age demographic in the last couple years, with accompanying effects. Most of the young new members of recent years have moved on, but a number have stayed, learned skills, taken positions of responsibility, and become solid, respected, and influential. And while our thirty-something crowd has remained small, it is slowly growing as the twenty-somethings age. As they have aged and matured, both personally and as members, the social gap has begun to decrease.

Back in '00, before the deluge, I had a conversation about our age demographic with my father, Dale, who was a member in the late seventies. When he had lived at Twin Oaks most members were in their twenties and thirties. Over twenty years later, it seems they grew up and a new batch has arrived. I wonder, are we starting to see a long-term cycle?

…"Breakup" continued from page 3

tically involved with more then one person here. I'll have to ask Pax about this.

10:30pm; Neekid in the pond with several nameless visitor girls and my Life Dance Guru, Piankey. All these people are new to me yet I find that I really love them all. Is this what it is to be a flower child? The scene is too beautiful to describe. We are up to our necks in cool water. The frogs and crickets are blasting us with a wall of natural psychedelic sound, the stars are all out in hyper real brightness. Piankey is singing one of his own songs in a high quavering voice. The moonlight makes our skin glow. I think one of the visitor girls, Rachel, no, Sarah, I can't remember, is flirting with me. There are like twelve women in this visitor group. It's always this way. I hear that Valerie controls the male to female ratio of visitors. The community has found that things work better with more women and less men. Valerie is very wise and I trust her judgment.

12pm; I walk through the dark back to Tupelo. All is quiet. I hear the sounds of lovers coming from somewhere in Tupelo. I feel so good I don't mind. There's no real privacy here anyway. You just have to get used to it. I rummage through the refrigerator and eat some yogurt and left over popcorn. As I walk to my room I nearly run into her…I mean HER. We say "hi" and awkwardly keep walking. Wait a minute…what's she doing here? Is she sleeping over with someone in Tupelo!!!! NOOOOOOO!!!!!

12:30pm I am brutally reminded that I am still living in Hell. All the emotional progress of the day is flushed down the toilet and on it's way to the STP. The pain in my heart returns full force and I wonder how long I will last until I snap and become a little frayed and burnt wad of poly pro that Shal will find on the hammock shop floor and carefully put into the rope-recycling bin. Why, God, why does her new boyfriend live in MY building? I'm going to need another mediation. I gotta get off this farm. But I have no money and no vacation time saved up. Damn!

I am; as I drift off to sleep I struggle with the conflict of both loving and hating this place. I resolve to stay and become stronger. I know that with the help of my friends and lots of wine in a box that I will make it. And when my six-month review comes up, there will not be one piece of negative feedback.