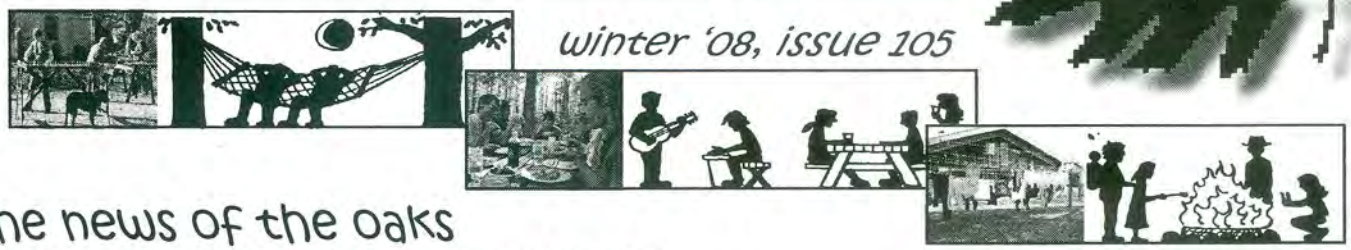
The Leaves of Twin Oaks

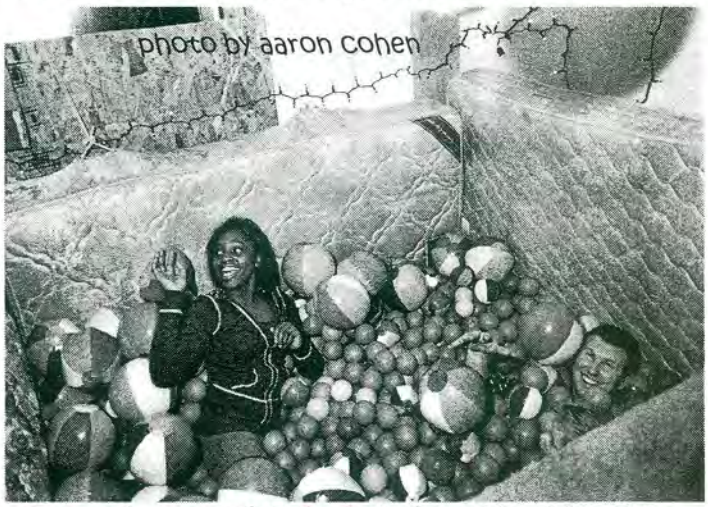


winter '08, issue 105

the news of the oaks

by ezra w/ assistance from mala and gordon

Well, it's been a while since the last News of the Oaks came out, right around the time of our 40thanniversary, and we're pleased to report that the intervening eight months have been (generally speaking), a time of relative peace, stability, and prosperity. Despite a relatively high turn-over rate, and the departure of several long-term members, population has remained in the eighties. Among the old-timers to strike out on their own this fall were Alder, HLH, Jack, Inge, and Indigo. Jake, who we all hoped might come rushing home, is still living in Savannah with George, and writes that he doesn't even miss Twin Oaks anymore. On the other hand, this fall has seen the return of the oldest old-timer of them all-- Kat Kinkade! At the end of 2007 Kat returned as a full-time member, after 7 years of living in Mineral, and moved back into Nashoba. While our adult population remains stable, our child population has continued to fall, and is now at its lowest point in many years: 7 full-time kids, two half-time kids, and one kid on sabbatical. Although the child population has been shrinking, our young folks themselves have continued to grow, and thanks in part to a new child labor policy, are becoming more integrated into the community than in the past. Rowan, now 11, has thrown himself into his duties as chef, and has been helping with meals in ZK kitchen every week. Kids have also been tutoring at Reading Window, helping with road maintenance, and primarying younger kids.



ezra and asana enjoy the ball pit on New Years Eve

Marx once famously said that history repeats itself, first as tragedy, the second time as farce. His saying held true for our most recent round of local teen hooliganism. Around Anniversary, we began to have trouble once again with petty crime: a car window was broken, and a keg of beer intended for the Anniversary festivities was stolen from Emerald City,

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forty years and counting

by Valerie, aka Ultra-Violet Waterfall

Anniversary this year brought over one hundred ex-members and friends to help us celebrate this milestone. We kicked off the weekend with a live-music contra dance in the backyard of Kaweah. With Kathryn calling, and music from the Okara Mountain Jig Riggers (Ezra, Kassia, Trout and Madog, and Sky on mandolin, fiddle, guitar, bass and drums), we danced well into the evening.

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editing and layout by kassia and sky

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along with some hanging chairs. Things took a turn for the bizarre, however, when on a repeat visit the teen miscreants left their car parked in a suspicious location, keys and wallet inside, and a clever Twin Oaker drove off with it. Complex negotiations (conducted by the fearless and wily Keenan) ensued. In the end, the teens got their car back, we had all of our stolen property returned (and the keg was still full!), and Twin Oaks hasn't had any problem with teen crime since.

Kat returns to enjoys the fruits of a lifetime's labor

Shortly after the previous issue of the Leaves was printed, Twin Oaks found itself in a unique governance situation-- we had no planners. Stress and community infighting had led to the resignation of all three of the planners, leaving Twin Oaks adrift and without official 'leadership.' Unsurprisingly, not many people noticed the difference. By the end of the summer, however, we decided that we might as well get some new planners, so after much processing over the process, Twin Oaks held its first ever planner election. The election gave us four fresh new planners, and a new sense of involvement in community politics. Other exciting occurrences this summer included a brief but powerful storm in June that knocked down nearly as many trees in 20 minutes as 2003's hurricane Isabel took out in a whole day, including the top third of the big sycamore in the courtyard. Speaking of falling trees, we also had to cut down the big locust tree next to Oneida, when it was discovered that it had been planted (twenty years ago) directly over the building's sewage drain pipe.

Kayde lays down some hard-core karaoke at tupelo

Despite Rollie's departure, we have continued to maintain - and in some cases even improve - the community's infrastructure. Daniel's honchoed the most ambitious project of the year, a much-needed re-roofing of Ta Chai, involving three new skylights, improved insulation, and a roof that (imagine that!) doesn't leak. Several Hale&White workers have assisted with this project, including Maya, who in 1973 was the first child born at Twin Oaks. Some destruction/construction was necessary in Llano office to make way for a brand-spankin'- new copier, which from the complexity of its interface, looks capable of printing, faxing, surfing the Internet, complex trigonometric functions, and reprogramming the DNA of the user. With the help of much child labor, Keenan has been building a 'kid palace' on the site of a decrepit play structure in the Degania back yard. At the time of this writing, it looks more comfortable and structurally sound than many of our SLGs! Ex-member Denny Ray has been a ubiquitous and much-appreciated presence this fall, organizing our equipment maintenance area, and keeping our washing machines, stoves, and steam table functional. And safety manager Sam has been presenting a series of "fire extinguisher training events," to help us keep it all from burning up. So far so good-- no major fires in the past six months!

2007 turned out to be a reasonably good year for Twin Oaks businesses, which have continued to pull us out of the dark days of austerity. The tofu business had another strong year, with head honcho Aubee working mightily to fill the big shoes left by Kele and Jason's PAL. Although the major upgrade/automation planned for last year never quite happened, the project remains in the works for 2008. Outside Work continues to be a solid source of income. One of our strangest and most remunerative outside work gigs involves a crew of 10 Twin Oakers going to Charlottesville once a week or so to lay down or take up the basketball floor at UVA's John Paul Jones Arena.

The good news for our hammocks business in 2007 was that the demand for our hammocks was significantly higher than we'd anticipated. The bad news is that, with our more diversified income scene, we had trouble meeting the demand and lost a lot of sales as a result. In the fall we decided to once again yoke quota to making hammocks production goals, and have been doing a better job of getting the hammocks made since. Our weirdest hammocks headache of the year (reminiscent of the difficulties of the beaded hammocks) has been trying to make hemp hammocks for a custom-

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er in France with hemp fabric imported from Romania.

Labor shortage was also a problem in the garden over the summer, but didn't prevent the successful harvesting of record garlic and onion crops. In other agricultural news, Pele's looking into relocating the orchard and Rusty's gotten a grant to reduce run-off from our cattle into the South Anna. The dairy crew is considering incorporating miniature Dexter cows into our operation; Debbie assures us it's not just because they're cute, or because they're named Dexter.

Our current roster of ongoing weekly 'extracurricular' events includes Queer Quorum, bridge night, knitting night, games night, and a new anarchist discussion group. Robert is teaching a weekly calculus class for those in need of a mental workout. And for those who prefer interpersonal communication, Wednesday night Zegg-style Forums have been popular. Ultimate Frisbee continues to be a popular past-time, with a hard-core group of 'regulars' continuing to play twice a week, undeterred even by winter's ice and snow. Many Acorn members have been coming over for games, and Twin Oaks' relationship with the 'folks down the road' is the strongest it's been in years.

Although there has been less live music at Twin Oaks in the past six months than in the recent past, we have had several contra dances, with pickin' by the Okara Mountain Jig Riggers (who also performed at the Charlottesville contra dance in January). Brenda followed up the success of last year's Validation Day Bijou concert with an evening of waltzes and an ambitious and much-rehearsed holiday show. She's organizing another Bijou concert, titled "Music of Love," for this Validation Day. Several musically inclined new members, including the electronica duo OMFG Bacon, have arrived recently, and the forecast for homemade music at TO looks good.

We've been having fun playing dress-up lately, with a drag ball hosted by Byrd a.k.a. Tristan, and a hammock shop fashion show displaying the fabulous creations of new members Sparkle and Tikvah (see ad on page 9). Puppet shows, featuring our resident puppet-master Purl, and up-and-coming puppeteer Gwen, have become an entertainment staple. And no description of cultural events would be complete without a mention of the recent appearance of Kimya Dawson (of Moldy Peaches fame), who performed for a large and enthusiastic crowd of Oakers at ZK this January. We love Kimya!

Our fall was also enlivened by even more parties than usual. A season of cookouts and get-togethers in the Kaweah back yard culminated in an October wedding reception for Robert and Thea, who got hitched at the Yanceyville church. A large part of the community was in attendance, joined by dozens of friends, relatives, and ex-members. As the weather turned colder, festivities moved indoors, centering in the Compost Cafe and newly-resurgent Tupelo. In November, the residents of upstairs Beechside hosted a well-attended multi-room hall party, their first in over two years. December gave us a wild 'Tofu Crew Appreciation Party,' with a Mexican theme, and plenty of nachos and margaritas to go around. The fall culminated with our usual New Year's bash. Along with the normal tidal wave of friends, ex-members, and totally random strangers, this year's celebration had some special highlights. Countless hours of volunteer labor transformed the green room into a maze of 'fuzzy tunnels' and a mattress-lined 'ball pit' that must be seen to be believed. And a Karaoke machine loaned to Twin Oaks was an excuse for spirited Karaoke parties every night for a week straight following New Year's.

"I never knew you did that!"

twin oakers in their spare time

by noah

"So, Noah, what do you do on the farm when you don't have any scheduled labor?" Leo asked me during an afternoon tofu pack shift last month. Well, not too much, usually. I sit around ZK, read magazines, go for walks. But some Twin Oakers are quietly pursuing an eclectic range of hobbies.

Jessie likes to draw and paint and read. Shakti does bead looming and quilting. Bridget is into flowers, writing poetry, and uses bookbinding to make beautiful journals with fine paper. She hasn't done much bookbinding at Twin Oaks yet, but she hopes to do more. Leo and Ethan keep semi-regular study hall dates to discuss and read philosophy and anthropology. Puck says he plays guitar badly. Alex says his hobby is annoying people, which goes really well with Debbie's: arguing.

Brian collects live Grateful Dead shows on CD, and met someone last summer at the Floyd World Muisc Festival who opened his eyes to a whole network of Deadheads who trade shows on CD by mail. He has another hobby, too. "I like to collect little boxes, like pill boxes, anything small, just pretty little boxes." Do you keep anything in the boxes, Brian? "Maybe I'll put in a marble, it doesn't matter." One of his current favorites is a pill box with a picture of the Mad Hatter, captioned "Medicine or madness?"

Apples brews beer. It's a win-win situation—she likes brewing it and a lot of us like drinking it. Apple learned homebrewing at Sandhill, where, she says, it is considered a job and would receive labor credits if such things existed there. Luckily for us, she has continued to brew for free while LEXing here. In mid-October Apple hosted a home-brew tasting party at Beechside kitchen featuring eight different varieties, including Double Train Moon and Thief's Lager. It

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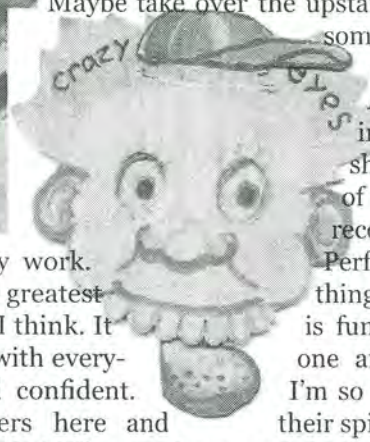
making it as an artist @ TO

by purl www.seansamoheyl.com

I was asked to write about my art for the Leaves and I didn't know what to write. I thought about just writing it backwards or something. But then I figured no one had the patience for that. But I don't just want to write something straightforward like a book report or something. I thought I might write an article about one of my favorite artists here, Cherry, whose work inspires me. I only wish I could be so subtle and solid in my vision. Or Madge whose ideas and work also inspires me to think in other directions other than the 2 steps I sort of know. I was making rope today and watching all the strands go into the shower head and feeling hypnotized and just staring at it. I was thinking about my successes and my follies with art in the past 3 or 4 years. How sometimes it all seems like folly. And how it comes back into my head that it's worth it. Or I'm worth it, or whatever worth who or whatever. I sort of have to keep making art now no matter what so in some ways it doesn't matter about validity. I sometimes feel weird making something and then thinking, where do I put this thing now? Will people really want to stare at this thing in the hall forever. God I hope it sells for this reason if not to get some hours. This is one of the hardest things about making art in community. I was recently included in a couple of events that are better than marginally legitimate. They are achievements in the eyes of other artists even. One is an auction held at the Corcoran College of Art where I was invited by a curator of the Richmond Museum of Fine Arts. The other is my inclusion in a show at the Reed Gallery at the University of Cincinnati where a curator from the museum of contemporary art there saw my work and is wanting to buy a piece for that museum. I am finally starting to feel like my efforts are really valid. As I was staring into the twister where all the many yarns go into the eyes of that behemoth, I imagined it was eating this yarn. Then I imagined the yarn was coming out. I imagined it was a big elephant with yarn coming out of it's eyes. Then I had an idea for a drawing where I would draw a bunch of dots on a card surrounded by the word "cloying". I thought the colors would make the word's meaning sort of disappear. Things just develop is all I can say really. Ideas come and some are terrible. Sometimes good ideas come and it feels easy, then I work so hard on something and cut my hands and break something I've been working on for a week and have to start over. My craftspersonship is so poor sometimes, but that's the fun in a way. Some of this stuff, I don't even think will work. Like I was trying to weld a piece for this wooden fire extinguisher. I wasn't sure if maybe the heat of the welding would catch it on fire because of how close it was to the wood. It wasn't bad but it did in fact burn a little. I thought that was hilarious. I was laughing all by myself up there at M.T. at around 11:30. I thought, "it's a good thing I know how to use a real one now" I was also glad no other welders and machinists weren't around to see my foolish mistake. Still, I was able to complete the piece as I hoped it would turn out. I ended up making 11 different appliances or other objects out of wood. I've made 2 vacuums, 3 phones, a fan, a hair dryer, a Nikon camera, a fire extinguisher, a remote control, a light bulb with threads that screw into a socket. I'm planning to attempt a sewing machine. I would like to install a "junk room" somewhere on the farm. Maybe take over the upstairs red barn or something for a week maybe. Also, I am filming my puppet show with hopes of having it as a record of that discipline in my work. Performing in community is the greatest thing that ever happened to me I think. It is fun and I feel so comfortable with everyone and they really help me feel confident. I'm so inspired by all the performers here and their spirit. When I see it I think, "Right! What am I so worried about? They aren't worried. They know they are supported in their passions." It was with that spirit that I did my first skit here as "Tory grouse" the radio personality interviewing Martin who was supposed to be a singer in a Quebeqois punk band.



an unprecidented political event in Twin Oaks history

by pam

The summer of 2007 was hard on us all, and especially on the planners. We had several contentious people to deal with, feelings ran high, and were expressed vociferously. Some planners couldn't take the stress; few if any new planner candidates came forward. And so it happened that we limped along and got to a point where Gordon was the sole planner; our Bylaws state that we will have three. In Article III, Paragraph Two, Board of Directors and Officers, we are instructed:

"C. No member of the Board of Directors shall serve alone for a period of more than six weeks. Should this period pass without the appointment of at least one additional member of the Board of Directors, the remaining director shall resign and elections shall be called immediately by said director or any member of the Community, as provided for in subparagraph (D) below."

D goes on to explain exactly how the election should

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be carried out. Although we had had some attempts at going through our usual planner selection process with a few brave or foolish candidates, we ran out of time before completing the process, and were compelled by the Bylaws to have an election. This is, as far as I know, the first time in our history that we have had a planner election. (Some people got excited just for that reason. Others thought it was a bad omen to have got to that point.) We called for candidates, and also asked for volunteers to be the "returning officers" of the election. To choose the returning officers, the community gave input on the volunteers and three of us were chosen. (I think it was mainly a vote of confidence in our honesty, ability to keep votes confidential, and to count.)

We were divided about whether voting represents greater democracy, or a fall back to a "might is right" ruling system where whichever side gets the most votes smashes the opposition. All interesting political and philosophical stuff. Generally in our decision-making we like to give everyone the chance to share their opinion and then try to craft something that pleases as many people as possible and takes care of the concerns of the minorities. This desire can make our decision-making system hard to label (if you want to label). It's always fascinated me that the safety net to our appeals system is an over-ride petition of planners' decisions, which is essentially a vote. I see that as using a less-good system when the better one fails. But, being pragmatic, I see that it works, and that we only use it rarely. And so, the value of having that safety net, for me, outweighs the oddity of its form. And no-one has ever come up with anything I think is better. And here, in moving out of a situation where we have only one planner, once again we have a safety net that involves voting. And a pragmatic way forward appeals to me a lot more than making circles in a quagmire.

The exact method of voting is spelled out:

"D. ..... Each voting member of the Community may cast a vote for up to three of the candidates whose names appear on the slate, but no member may vote for the same candidate more than once. The three candidates who obtained the most votes shall be the new Board of Directors, provided that each of these candidates obtained votes from at least a majority of eligible voters voting in the election. If any of the three candidates did not obtain the necessary votes, then co shall not be appointed director; however, if one or two candidates did obtain the required votes, they shall be appointed the new Board of Directors and shall obtain additional members in accordance with the provisions of subparagraph (B) above. If no candidate obtained the required votes, runoff elections shall be held immediately."

Those who have opinions about the merits and drawbacks of various voting systems just had to accept that we were required to use that particular method. Some people wondered aloud about revising the Bylaws for the future, to use a better voting system. Others thought the effort of revising the Bylaws, which are made to endure, and not be that easy to change, was not the best use of our talents and time. If we've only needed it once in 38 years, why worry? And, of course, during all this time of turmoil in our self-government structure, issues requiring attention were piling up. We held the election in early September 07.

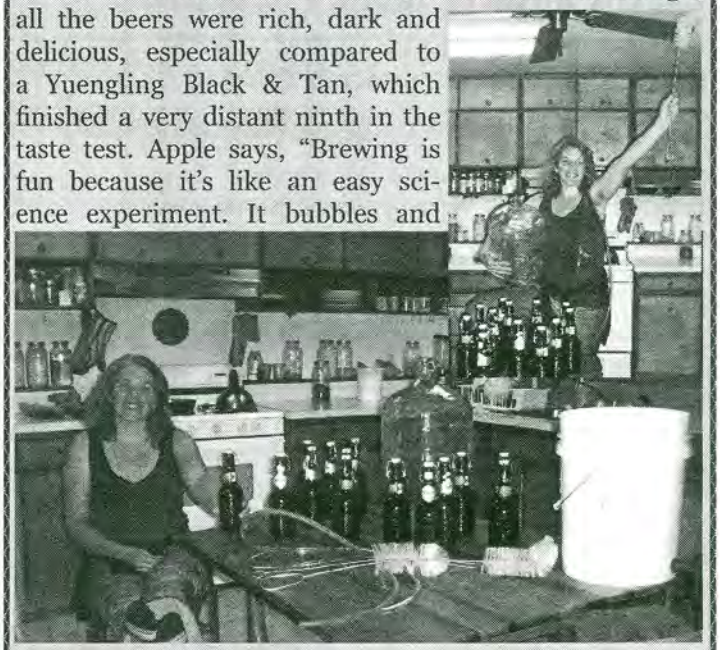
And the outcome of the election, you're asking? (Thank goodness we don't have all the Primaries hype, like some elections, I thought). Jess and Keenan got votes from a majority of eligible voters (full members) who voted, and so became planners. No-one else among the candidates got a majority. Our new board of two planners decided to immediately appoint two stand-in planners from among the other candidates, and so Pele and Paxus became stand-ins. Unlike full planners who serve (ideally) for the full 18 months, stand-ins serve for 3-6 months.

"The term of regular members of the Board shall be eighteen months. The term of a stand-in member shall be three to six months."

And now we are almost six months from those elections, and it will be time for the stand-ins to stand down, or apply as full planners. My hope is that we can return to having a full board of three full planners, with staggered terms to ensure continuity as well as change. We certainly have plenty for them to do, and it's kinder when the work is shared.

...hobbies, continued from page 3

was easy to be picky when comparing the beers, and say things like, "Hmmm, I like the fruity flavors, but it's got a little bit of home-brew aftertaste." In the end, though, all the beers were rich, dark and delicious, especially compared to a Yuengling Black & Tan, which finished a very distant ninth in the taste test. Apple says, "Brewing is fun because it's like an easy science experiment. It bubbles and



gurgles, you complete short steps that are satisfying, and at the end you have something you would normally buy."

On the farm, Pele likes growing hot peppers, trying to grow avocados in Ta Chai stateroom, and "talking to the kitty [Olive]." But off the farm she has another hobby. She has maintained a section of trail in Shenandoah National Park for the past two and a half seasons. It's the Rose River Trail, and "from a maintainer's perspective it has lots of elements—a steep slope with water bars [for erosion control], a really old rock staircase right by the nicest waterfall, a retaining wall because you're walking along a creek." Pele

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page 6 photos by aaron cohen
page 7 photos from the archives, selected by aaron cohen

Clockwise from top left: 1. The Twin Oaks Community Players get ready to perform "The Compleat Works of Wm. Shakespeare, Abridged" at Anniversary (2006). 2. Thea, Jonah and Gwen in Degania (2007). 3. Luuk on the playground (2007). 4. Pele and Aubee during a garden shift (2007). 5. Hans in the woodshop (2005).

Clockwise from top left: 1. The bathroom addition to Oneida, designed by McCune (ca.1985). 2. Rob Jones and his daughter Moriah (1983). 3. Twin Oakers pose for a group photo (1971). 4. Founding members in the summer of 1967 (the original Twin Oaks schoolbus is in the background). 5. Scott and Sara Elder in Llano (1969).

...hobbies, continued from page 5

drives out to the park a few times each season and picks up her tools from a locked box behind the entrance station using a key issued her by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. Then she gets to work and prunes back brush, cleans out the water bars, replaces rocks that other hikers have knocked off the retaining wall by shortcutting down to the stream.

Sparkle keeps an extraordinary number of potted plants in his room—more than 70. Orchids are his favorites, and he's adding to his collection by growing new orchid starts on a table covered in jars of soil. Last month he threw a party on the courtyard lawn while waiting for UPS to deliver his newest orchid. About his plants: "I talk to them. Sometimes they talk back. We just talk about life and things. I got into plants when my grandma gave me a whole bunch. I got into orchids 'cause I found one at Lowe's for $3.50."

Many of our hobbies are remnants of past lives off the farm. Byrd and Angie have been writing a musical.

Robert is teaching a calculus class. I have designated a low sandstone outcropping in the beefie pasture as the new "Twin Oaks rock climbing wall," and have spent some time there re-training my climbing muscles. But a couple of past-life hobbies reflect the values of Twin Oaks in surprising ways. What does a devotion to a computer operating system have to do with resisting the dominant paradigm? How does an obsession with copper wire fit in with Twin Oaks' vision of sustainabil-

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...the big "four-oh", continued from page 1

The reporter from the Richmond newspaper who was covering Anniversary even joined in for a dance or two, and the weekend edition of the paper featured several Oakers in mid-twirl. Once we were tired out, Kele and Caroline treated us to a performance of middle Eastern belly-dancing, complete with exotic outfits and exotic fiddling.

Saturday morning arrived with a classic Ira/Velma brunch, and many people lingered and chatted, reminiscing, telling stories, recounting bygone controversies, scandals and gossip, and also catching up on the current events of everyone's lives. People who wanted some grounding were welcome at Anton/Vinnie's guided meditation. Anyone who wanted a more visceral reminder of the good old days could pay a visit to TCLR, where a huge table of archival photos and a slide-show helped jog peoples' memories. Ex-members could also sign the newly-unveiled 40th Anniversary Quilt displayed on the wall.

What anniversary afternoon would be complete without gin and tonics on the courtyard lawn? There was also the requisite coffeehouse, with this year's unofficial highlight being Matt reading his break-up story, published in a previous issue of the Leaves. For people who wanted more physical activity, a game of Ultimate Frisbee temporarily took over part of the parking field, and for those looking for more educational pursuits, Nathan/David gave a workshop on his vegetable-oil powered truck, which he had converted himself to run on "greasel" fuel.

Saturday evening started with an outdoor viewing (on the exterior north wall of Modern Times) of the classic Nova show from the 1970's featuring Twin Oaks and BF Skinner. Several members who were featured in the episode were in attendance at the showing, and there was some good natured teasing about the changes they'd gone through in the intervening 30 years. A high-energy, low-drama dance party ended the night, featuring a performance by our own home-grown experimental dance-fusion band, Supermoon (Sky, Ezra, Promethea, and Kassia).

Sunday was lower-key, with lots of story-telling and recollecting continuing throughout the day. There was Tibetan Heart Yoga and a ritual planting of a new Peace Pole between Nashoba and Tupelo. Brenda had organized an Instrumental Recital in the Bijou, in which both current and former members shared their musical talents.

Many people generously supported the event with donations towards the festivities, and we thank those people. One misfortune of the weekend was some difficulty with theft by locals. Besides at least one broken car window, we lost one of the kegs of beer we had bought for the weekend. Several weeks later, it was recovered, still full, as the thieves were underage and had not been able to obtain a "tap" to access the ale inside! (The keg was held in reserve until Ivy and Daniel's wedding party in early September). The weekend also featured "$40 hammocks for 40th Anniversary", and so some people brought a souvenir home with them. A fine time was had by all, and we look forward to future Anniversaries-we hope to see you here!

a true commune wedding

by caroline

Shortly after I moved to Twin Oaks in May, my dear friend Promethea Tupelo asked me to coordinate her wedding to Robert. I agreed readily. A few months later I found myself walking into Degania, past a sign on the door reading, "No Admittance Except on Party Business," only to leave an hour later with a pile of scraps of paper, each one containing vital information, and a dazed look on my face. To be sure, this was going to be a capital-e Event.

photo by aaron cohen

Many more lists and a few art projects later, the wedding day was only hours away. It was a warm October evening, and I was trudging up the hill from Degania to ZK, carrying the last of four or five large boxes of mismatched wine glasses yet to be washed. Everything else was on the launch pad, pieces of tables yet to be put together, tablecloths, and decorations upon decorations all ready to be set up on the Kaweah lawn. I had a map of the reception site, complete with a seating chart for the family table, placecards, and a schedule of the event, down to the moment when Thea would throw her bouquet.

There was rain in the forecast. The next day the sky was gray, but my team of decorators (Byrd, Suede, Kayde, and Tikvah) and I were hard at work in the backyard of Kaweah, setting up tables with multicolored tablecloths, napkins, gold glitter, Wren's carefully crafted centerpieces, juice and sparkling water. It was drizzling, but we forged ahead with faith that the sun would break out later.

Right at lunchtime, the drizzle subsided and the reception site was set. The tables sparkled in red, purple, green, and white. The buffet tables were ready to receive food. Luminaries, made in Acorn's tinnery and lent by Shana, were lined up around the perimeter. The wedding party was gathering at ZK.

Oakers and guests alike were decked out, be-glittered and festooned with ivy. There was a sense of excitement and suspense as we waited for Thea and Robert. Suddenly, the chatting and laughing subsided and all attention turned to the path from Degania. Glowing and regal, flanked by friends, they had arrived, and a frenzy of picture taking began. Thea looked like a queen in her Renaissance style wool-crepe gown, trimmed in gold and with belled sleeves. She could have just stepped out of a fairy tale. Robert was dashing in leather pants and a cream colored shirt that matched Thea's gown. Gwen, the flower girl, was dressed like a little princess, and was acting the part. Jonah, though equally decked out as ring bearer, was chasing the other kids around. Thea's hair was crowned brilliantly by a circlet of seasonal flowers, most notably a large sunflower at the back of her head. Both Gwen and Thea carried simple, colorful bouquets.

photo by joan mazza

The procession to Yanceyville church went through the woods, over streams, up and down hills, up onto the front porch, and we gathered inside, where it was standing room only. The room was decorated simply, with an altar that included items that were important to Robert and Thea. Kristen as officiant was resplendent in yellow. We sang a welcoming song as the wedding party came into the church. The ceremony was beautifully uncomplicated. Robert and Thea spoke vows to each other, and made a commitment to being a family: Thea and the children welcoming Robert as part of their unit, and Robert making a commitment to the children as well as to Thea. Their vows were followed by a joyful song, and an equally joyful, sunny procession back to Twin Oaks for the reception.

The reception centered around a beautiful meal catered by Ira. The Vulgar Bulgars played, the bouquet was thrown right on schedule, champagne toasts were given in the form of stories, songs, and wishes.

A surprise hora was organized, and friends and family carried Robert and Thea aloft around the perimeter of the lawn as they laughed, holding a red cloth between them. Dinner was done, tables were moved back, and Kathryn called a short contra dance. As it grew dark, Keenan lit a wooden sculpture which became a bonfire.

I went home that night quite satisfied with the event. The wedding was beautiful, the reception joyful, and most importantly, Thea and Robert were happy.

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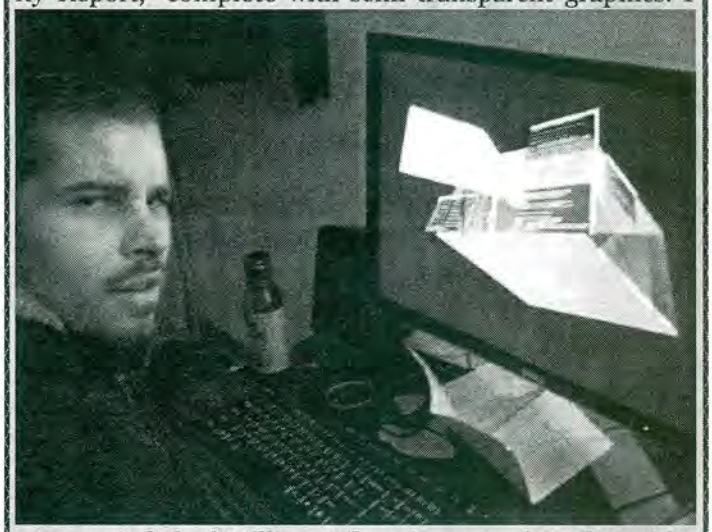
ity? Foxx and Carrol helped me answer those questions.

A few years ago, Foxx was frustrated with the Windows operating system on his computer. The straw that broke the camel's back was not being able to hide the date display in the bottom right-hand corner of his Windows XP desktop. It seems like a small thing, but perhaps it was symbolic of Microsoft's top-down tyranny. So he switched to Linux, and showed me why. Linux is very fast, and the interface is impressive. In a fraction of a second Foxx cycled through six different desktop windows, each dedicated to a different purpose: email in one, music player in another, movies downloading in another. It was like watching Tom Cruise flip through criminal profiles in the movie, "Minority Report," complete with semi-transparent graphics. I



was reminded of William Gibson's quote about how "the future is already here, it's just not widely distributed yet."

Foxx has taken it on himself to help distribute that future to friends, family and possibly Twin Oaks. We already use Linux on one computer at Twin Oaks (the middle one in the computer room) and we may install it on more. Unlike Windows, it is distributed for free, and the code is open-source, meaning anyone can tweak it and improve upon it. If a tweak works well, it becomes widely adopted. "Linux is a lot like Twin Oaks. It's kind of a cleaner version of Twin Oaks because it's a meritocracy. People have to champion a cause...kind of messy but powerful," Foxx says. The messy-but-powerful theme is reflected in Linux's history. Like Wikipedia, Linux is a triumph of collective action, cobbled together by amateurs and semi-professionals. Its growing mainstream popularity as an alternative to Microsoft is an inspiring vision of what anarchism can produce in digital form.

Before there was Earth Day, Silent Spring, or municipal recycling in three tidy sidewalk bins, there were scrap yards. According to the book Rubbish, Ta Chai's current bathroom reading, these scrap yards have been efficiently recycling millions of tons of metal for generations, making curbside recycling look puny by comparison. Carrol is our resident metal recycler. Whenever we make scrap on the farm—by pulling out old pipes, replacing copper

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turmoil and transition part 2

by David Ruth (member '73 - '77)

(ed note: The following is the continuation of David Ruth's account of Twin Oaks' 2nd five years, from the previous issue. In the first half, the 1973 population boom spawned some major interpersonal and ideological conflicts in the community, which were heightened by that winter's financial crisis. The community responded by instituting economic and land planning measures.)

Land-use planning reignited the conflict within the community over the issue of population growth. Would Twin Oaks revert to the original ideals and sacrifice current comfort in order to grow quickly to 300 or 350, the number that groups such as the Hutterites had found to be ideal? Or would the community concentrate on improving the attractiveness of its lifestyle at near the current 50-member population level?

In addition, as Twin Oaks' industries were developing, specialization and specialized information channels also were developing. Such trends undoubtedly contributed both to the community's economic security and to the possibility of physical growth – but they were proving more and more burdensome to the political leadership. The community's leaders were increasingly called upon to deal with the political consequences of the increased division of labor; that is, they were called upon to deal with the growth of workplace special interests and with the monopolization of politically relevant information.

Many members who were not actively involved in the current leadership, while appreciative of the expertise that was being brought to bear in dealing with contentious issues, felt that along with the expertise there had grown an arrogance that discounted the opinions of all those who lacked the time, talent, or personality needed to publicly challenge with rational arguments the decisions of the leadership.

By the late summer of 1975 the rumblings of discontent were loud enough to persuade an ad hoc group of influential members to seek the advice of community psychologist Don Klein (a Twin Oaks sympathizer who many credited with having helped solve some of the community's serious interpersonal problems in the fall of 1971).

Despite Don's advice, and despite many efforts over the next eight months to relate growing discontent to governmental policy, the community found itself in an ever-growing social crisis. By the late spring of 1976 there were members who refused to talk with one another and who completely ignored each other's requests and demands. Sarcasm and ridicule, previously notable for their absence from the community culture, began to be used both to counter the efforts of the community's government and to insulate dissenters from public opinion.

Again Don Klein was called in, this time to conduct, with two associates, four days of workshops and simulations – two days on each end of six weeks of structured community discussion. The first set of workshops set the agenda for the next six weeks – to talk and talk and talk about basic disagreements over community goals. The final two-day workshop was an attempt to arrive at some consensus on common goals.

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As the summer of talking ended, few felt that any real consensus had emerged, but "The Process" as it came to be called, purified the community in that the most inaccessible of the leaders felt called upon to resign, and the "Good Times" group, the self-named group of members who most blatantly disregarded the decisions of the community's government, left the community.

During this period a new leadership emerged, one populated mostly by members who had been in the community five years or longer, leadership which had learned both the value of rational planning and the political necessity of intense efforts to inform and involve the membership when important decisions were in the making.

Lani Higgins, an anthropologist who had observed the community during this turmoil and transition, saw the change in regimes as the replacement of "advocate" leaders by "facilitators". In her view, the advocate leaders had had clearly defined goals for the community and were working rationally toward the implementation of those goals, but they had failed to include large segments of the community in the decision-making process. The facilitators, on the other hand, were attempting to help members arrive at common goals and to work collectively toward implementing them.

It was during these years of turmoil and transition, I believe, that the foundations of today's vibrant community were laid. The community learned to absorb and learn from new cultural enthusiasms, to engage in rational planning and decision-making, and to involve as much as possible the whole community in the most important community decisions.

Closing the books on 2007

by Kathryn, econ goddess

It will be some weeks before we close the books on 2007, and set down to the work of figuring out just exactly how our economic plan held up last year, but it seems clear that our income will exceed our trade-off game projections. In fact, it looks quite possible that our income for 2007 was not that much different from the Pier 1 days. However, even with available income at similar levels to 2003, the year before Pier 1 dropped us, many budgets have seen only modest growth as we inch out of austerity. Why is that? Expenses, plain and simple.

In particular, our health expenses in 2007 were staggering. Even after reimbursement by PEACH, our health expenses more than doubled compared with recent years--and we suspect that the increase is here to stay. So, we are making more money than we have in the past few years. And we are spending it. In testimony to our improved economic situation, however, domestic budgets are increasing, however modestly, and we are generating enough spare income to put some into OTRAs (one-time resource allocations), and to award small scholarships to some Twin Oaks children who are pursuing higher education.

Additionally, 2007 was a good year for the hammocks business: we sold 10% more hammocks in 2007 than the year before. Thanks to some new wholesale accounts, we expect the growth to continue into 2008, and have recently increased our annual hammock production goal from 6200 hammocks (our trade-off game projection) to 6700 hammocks. The result? For the first time in over three years, we have excess production to funnel towards OPP. We will be offering members the chance to weave rainbow hammocks for money rather than labor credits, if they are working toward an approved project. Compared with past years, this OPP experiment is tiny, but we'll see how it goes. If sales increase as anticipated, and if OPP helps us keep up with production goals, we may expand.

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wires, or retiring old equipment—Carrol goes to work and asks, "Is this worth the time and effort to salvage?" Often, the answer is, "No." When he chooses to salvage it anyway, without taking labor credit, it crosses the line from work to hobby. The art of recycling is in separating grades of metal, which requires a combination of persistence and meticulousness: pulling pipes apart, tearing down engines, stripping off housing to go after that last little bit of copper wire. One year he took a load of scrap in to Richmond and sold it for $1000, but the money is not really the motivation.

"Metal recycling is in my blood," he says. "My uncle owned a scrap yard, and I remember when I was six years old, the old crane operator said he would grab me with his magnet by the belt buckle, and pick me up and put me way up on top of the engine pile. Well, I did not want to go up the engine pile, so whenever I walked around there, I covered up that belt buckle with both hands." Carrol worked in that yard as an after-school job, much the way he continues to recycle scrap metal here at Twin Oaks. It can be an outlet for obsessive-compulsiveness, he says. "The great thing about recycling metal is that you take things apart and you don't have to worry about putting them back together. If you're having trouble pulling a pipe apart, you don't have to be careful, you just go and get a bigger wrench."

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Who We Are...

The Fellowship for Intentional Community is an inclusive networking group of many different kinds of intentional communities in North America and abroad. The non-profit FIC publishes the Communities Directory, Communities Magazine and an extensive webpage, as well as sponsoring workshops on community living.

Twin Oaks, a 39-year old income-sharing community, is a member of the FIC and home to one of their distribution offices.

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