

CONNECTIONS

WWW.UPLANDHILLS.ORG FALL 2008

This year, Connections will focus on the Upland Hills Community: the farm, the school, and the ecological center.

Our first issue looks at the beginning of our community -- Upland Hills Farm.

Community is the heart center of this place. Consider your place in it.



Making a Farm a Learning Community

By Ken Webster

My father, Knight Webster, was born in Dodgeville, Wisconsin in 1922. His parents farmed 100 acres there. The farm raised pigs, sheep, chickens, and most importantly, dairy cows. His family was conservative Baptists and took their faith seriously. Many members of my grandmother's family were Baptist ministers. While dancing, card playing or women wearing shorts may have been frowned upon, ideas of social equality and civil rights were not. Dad's parents were concerned with the Nazi ideals, they despised the famous American Nazi supporter Father Coughlin. Though there were no African-American people in Dodgeville, Dad felt his parents had little prejudice toward any social group. Education was important to the family. Dad and his sisters all attended and graduated from college.

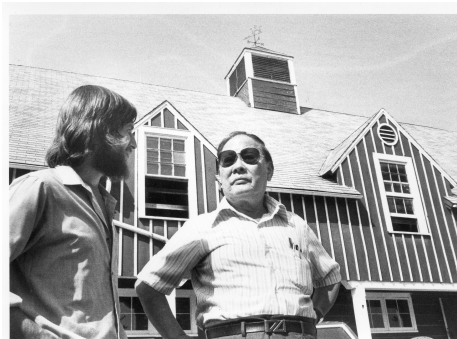
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Finding a Learning Community

by Phillip Moore



A drive in 1967 foreshadowed the rest of my life. I turned north on Woodward to Adams Road and remembered a phone conversation where my girlfriend read from some flyer I had misplaced: "Take Adams Road north until it ends." A half hour into the drive and my thought was "Will Adams Road ever end?"

It was December and I was headed to a winter reunion of a summer camp. My girlfriend, Nancy, had talked me into applying to be a camp counselor in the Upper Peninsula. Unlike me, she had many fond memories of camp and went on and on about canoe trips, campfires, and crazy, larger-than-life counselors. On the other hand, my summer camp experiences could be summed up in one word: ticks.

I tried hard to suppress memories of a fever induced by an insect smaller than the edge of my fingernail and off we went into the biggest forest I had ever seen. That summer, I fell in love with the wild. Our camp was hidden inside the boundaries of the Hiawatha National Forest, nineteen miles from the nearest phone.

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Upland Hills School
Mission Statement

Upland Hills School, founded in 1971, is an independent school community whose purpose is to educate pre-high school children. Our aim is to discover and respect the uniqueness of every child.

Guiding Principles

Upland Hills School holds the following principles as our core values and seeks to create an environment that:

- Protects, nurtures and defends the innocence of childhood
- Encourages a relationship between children and the natural world
- Empowers teachers and staff
- Fosters cooperation and consensus in decision-making
- Promotes mutual respect and trust that encourages our community to form authentic relationships
- Teaches us to think comprehensively
- Builds friendships that connect us with others around the world

Upland Hills School encourages children to know themselves and to connect with their environment as responsible world citizens. We provide a full academic program that emphasizes mastery of skills and creative growth. Our vision is that through the alignment and commitment of parents and teachers, children will come to see themselves as having extraordinary learning potential and access to the greatest miracle or tool in human experience, love.

Community Calendar

November

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Fri., Nov. 7, 1 pm | karen Joy theatre
TPS - "Arabian Nights" |
| Sat., Nov. 8, 2 & 7 pm | karen Joy theatre
TPS - "Arabian Nights" |
| Mon.- Tues., Nov. 24-25 | Holiday Book Fair
<i>@ Upland Hills School</i> |
| Mon.-Tues., Nov. 24-25 | Evaluations - NO SCHOOL |
| Wed.- Fri., Nov. 26-28 | Thanksgiving Recess
NO SCHOOL |

December

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Sat., Dec. 6, 7 pm | karen Joy theatre
Billy Jonas |
| Wed., Dec. 19 th | Staff & Students
Holiday Celebration |
| Thurs. ,Dec. 22-Jan.4 | Holiday Break -
NO SCHOOL |

January

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Mon., Jan. 5 | School Resumes |
| Sat., Jan. 17, 7pm | karen Joy theatre
Community Show-case |

Finding a Learning Community.....continued from page 2

The lakes were pure and without human trace, the forest was huge and primeval, and the smell of the air was so pure it had an intoxicating effect.

It was at camp that I first discovered the power of community. We had each other and the wild, children and a job description that implored us to 'have fun'. My job, as a camp counselor of 12 year olds, was to think up ways for us to explore the world around us and to invent unforgettable experiences which would keep the kids wanting more. Days off with fellow camp counselors were adventures into the world of Lake Superior, or Lake Michigan, Manistique or Munising, where the edge of adulthood could be glimpsed. We traveled as a group of eight or ten, and found such delight in the freedom and newness of it all, that I never wanted to return back to the suburban world I had come from.

It was at camp that I met Ken Webster. I was now driving to his parents' home, a place he had talked about during late night lodge sessions. Upland Hills Farm on that cold grey winter day looked like it didn't belong. It was a place with barns and old houses, huge Belgium horses and flocks of geese, bound by a large wooden fence. A huge Saint Bernard seemed to have the full run of the place, and we were to meet in a place they called 'The Club House'. If this was still in Oakland County, it was somehow the Oakland County of the Twilight Zone.

I met Dorothy and Knight Webster that day and was impressed by them both. Dorothy was as straight talking as her son and Knight was a man who knew about things that had almost died, like how to drive a team of horses. The farm was only 7 years old and it had already blazed new trails. It was Knight and Dorothy's passion to teach children about where their food

and fiber came from. It was also their passion to share a way of life, that harkened back to a simpler time. They taught generations of people about the beauty of working and living together. Their legacy to me and so many others included: square dancing and sing-alongs, hard work and hard laughter, risk taking and belt tightening, courage and continuity, and a determination to make peace among nations a reality instead of a dream.

In April of this year, while in a circle of stones we call the medicine wheel, I had a heart attack. This medicine wheel was created by a neighbor who must have known that our world needed a place where people could pray or think or be still. It is a simple place. I have gone there often, to pray out loud, under the big sky and to connect with those who have gone before me. I have often directed a prayer of gratitude to Knight and Dorothy. I remembered when Dorothy told me about her father and the Great Depression, how he lost 'everything' like so many others. I remembered her constant state of worry about the future of the farm. I remembered how Knight seemed to lose his worry as soon as he entered the woods.

The day of my heart attack was the beginning of a journey that would take me from the safety of the medicine wheel into the world of doctors, hospitals, operations, and daily uncertainty. A skillful doctor suggested the image of crossing a perilous river as a metaphor for my medical experience. I embraced this idea, in part because I had once rescued a canoe that had been damaged by the power of the raging Ontonogan River in the Upper Peninsula. I liked it a lot more than telling people I had undergone a quadruple bypass operation and later a sternal wound infection that needed extensive debridement. I was on a journey, an initiation, that would shake the foundations of everything I knew and believed. It would take every ounce of courage, every thought and prayer of help and healing, and the brilliance of 60 trillion cells in

my body for me to travel from one shore to the other. I was crossing a river where my life was at stake and my world was turned inside out.

On the edge of my 60th birthday, five months after the heart attack, a visitor from Sri Lanka stood on our stage in the Karen Joy Theatre and offered me a birthday present. This small man with a huge heart had received much recognition for his work in the 15,000 villages of his native land. He had left his teaching job to found an organization called Sarvodaya.

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne had only been in our school for a few hours when he wondered aloud. "What if I had chosen to stay in one school and participate deeply in the lives of the children, parents and teachers? What a marvelous life it would have been. Our Phillip is now 60 but he needs to live another 40 years, there is much work to be done." So there it was -- a gift of words from a man who had traveled half-way round the world to deliver it.

This is the learning community that Knight and Dorothy helped to found and nurture. It is far more than the sum of its parts. Upland Hills became a reality that had substance, resiliency, and love written into its fabric. The Websters' dream of a place where people could come together to learn from each other has grown and evolved with the energy, ideas and ideals of those of us who resonated with the soul of this place. It continues to evolve and grow stronger with the help of all of us. As a community, we rely on one another to create the steps needed to further that dream. We need all of us to make it work.

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artwork by Zach Meyer, Ted's Group 2008

Green Team

Two years ago, staff and community members created the Green Team, a parent-teacher collaborative working toward increased energy efficiency at the school and promoting sustainable living within our own and other communities.

This important work has begun to bear fruit. This past spring, we were recognized as a Green School by the State of Michigan for our staff and student efforts. In September, UHS led headmasters from other AIMS schools in a day-long discussion of green school activities and efforts. Thanks to the hard work of Green Team members, we are quickly becoming known as a resource for this information.

If you would like to become involved or need more information, please contact the office.



Anissiation

by Anissa Howard

I began mentoring and teaching at Upland Hills School when my daughter was four years old. Upland Hills School has a particular grace with which children are taught. Each day, my moments spent with Holly and Jean and the children at school, fed the notion that this place was not only where my daughter belongs, but where I belonged as well.

I spent the mornings in classrooms. In the afternoons, I began teaching basket weaving which I learned from my grandmother who also taught basket weaving years ago at Upland Hills Farm. For a while, I worked at Upland Hills Farm helping with school tours. I spent time with Phil, talking about the school and the farm and my joy at finding so much beauty here. I soaked up the mentoring experience and found the quality of my life kaleidoscope with a sense of the larger whole.

David Sosin taught at Upland Hills School for 22 years. His time here was a steady stream of genuine kindness and love. When we learned that David would be leaving the school, it was time to consider how years of mentoring had served to cultivate a new morning meeting teacher. I am deeply honored to be this teacher.

David's shoes are large. Stepping into his room was surreal for me. Over two decades of school life were lived in this space. In time spent with David, I sensed the depth of his devotion to the school and how much he had grown by the experience. I learned all that he did on a daily basis and whispered "yikes", more than once.

After he moved, I began to dream. Over the summer, a progression of what I called the "David Dreams" occurred during which I entered the classroom in increments. In the first of the dreams, I kept returning to Holly's room – the room of my mentor and friend, who continues to encourage me with the depth of a deep river.

As summer moved along, each dream brought me closer down the hallway toward David's space. In mid-dream series, I would merely peek around the doorframe into David's room: "Wonder what's going on in there...?"

As I worked in the room over the summer, it began to transform and merge into a hybrid that was somewhere in between David and Anissa. My "Anissiation," as David had said, was underway. The plant, that was a birthday gift from Holly to David years ago, scrolls along the walls and window, marking time. Growing with us. Growing like we do, all twisty and turny. Green...greener. Always seeking the light. Taking all the time it needs to be what it will be. The children and I take care of it and it is only one of the ways we remember David.

Time has a way of aligning intentions. The very year I discovered Upland Hills School, I was in the process of creating a farmers' market in my hometown of Clarkston. With a friend, I shared my love and respect for area family farms. We watched farmland being sold and developed. We drove around together, eyeing remaining farms and wanting to create an outlet for those farmers who continued to hold onto their land. There had never been a farmers'

market in Clarkston before. I knocked on many doors, introducing myself and inquiring about backyard gardens.

We opened the Clarkston Farmers' Market in the summer of 2005. Although my friend has since moved away, I remain rooted in running the farmers' market each season. It has grown from 15 to over 40 farmers and invites quite a crowd of 'locavores' or individuals choosing to eat food grown locally. Over 14,000 people passed through our farmers' market this past summer. This year, there was an integration of the farmers' market and the school. I noticed it when school folks kept showing up consistently at the market wanting to get more involved, and market folks began to ask the question: How do I get to Upland Hills School and Farm?

Sustainability is in question everywhere. Creating food communities that can sustain the local area is an antidote to all kinds of fear. Preserving the integrity of our food and making sure it can still grow on the land nearby makes sense. It is exactly what we want and hope for our children – to be nourished. The learning community of Upland Hills School, Farm, and Ecological Center can serve as a model of sustainability for others, providing spiritual food for our children and ourselves.

Chris Dorman sings of family farms, "The land on which we stand is the only thing we have that will withstand the weight of our lives. So learn to treat the land like you treat your own two hands, honor its strength, cherish the gifts it brings." Knight and Dorothy Webster left behind a blueprint for educating children through the direct experience of living close to the land. It lives on in the people who have been here all these years and knew them, and it continues in the people who arrive each year. The children are thriving by learning in this environment. My group reveals joy each day in places I never thought to look. To teach children here is a great gift and one that I am perpetually opening.



Making a Farmcontinued from page 1

My mother, Dorothy Teckmeyer, was born in Madison, Wisconsin in 1925. Her father worked for the Armory and in the ROTC program at the University of Wisconsin. The family lived only a few blocks from the University in downtown Madison and she and her siblings all attended college. My mother's family was socially less conservative, but politically more conservative, having racial and ethnic prejudice.

Wisconsin had a rich history of social and political leaders during the first part of the twentieth century. Frank Lloyd Wright lived only eighteen miles from Dodgeville. A family of Wisconsin politicians, the LaFollettes, influenced national politics through the Progressive Party. Midwest-based Norman Thomas led the American Socialist Party and founded the National Civil Liberties Bureau (which eventually became the ACLU). These movements influenced my parents as they went through college and for years later.

After graduating from high school, my father did not go directly to college. His parents expected him to take over the farm. However, he had been a successful track star in high school and wanted to do more running. After a year at home, he convinced his parents to let him attend that "radical education center," the University of Wisconsin.

My mother was a good student and loved to learn. She graduated fifth in a class of 400 and lived only a few blocks from the University of Wisconsin, so there was no doubt about her going to college. During one summer, Mom started a nursery school. She was the only teacher, organizing a group of parents who trusted her and sent their young children to the Dorothy Teckmeyer Nursery School every morning.

My parents met as students at UW in the fall of 1943. My mother was a freshman, my father a sophomore. Continuing his love for running, my father ran track and cross country every year he attended college. He was captain of the cross country team at least once and took second in the Big Ten in that sport in 1945.

My father was active at the Baptist Student Center. My mother lived next door to a minister, 6 foot 8 inch "Shorty" Collins, who advised the Student Center and introduced my mother to it. My mother also began working at the nursery school at the Baptist church led by Shorty Collins. In addition to their interest in athletics and the Baptist Student Center, both my parents were 6 feet tall. So the statuesque freshman who loved children was attracted to the varsity multi-letter winning track star.

It may not have seemed like a match made in heaven to their respective parents. Already, I suspect my father was questioning some of his religious upbringing and my mother was questioning the validity of her parents' social conscience. My father had become a pacifist and began examining some of the socialist-leaning movements of the 1930s mentioned earlier.

They married in January, 1945. My father had avoided military service because of a congenital palsy that developed in high school. His hands constantly shook, which affected his fine motor coordination. He had the worst penmanship I have ever seen. He suffered this disability his

entire life, although it never slowed him down a bit.

During the war years, The Church of the Brethren (one of the original peace churches) pioneered an alternative service program of conscientious objectors to war. My father was a pacifist and one of these early conscientious objectors. He applied to the draft board and was granted temporary 4E status, conscientious objector. Later, upon review of Dad's draft status, they took away the 4E status and reclassified dad as 4F, based upon his palsy.

In 1946, my father graduated with a degree in rural sociology. My mother quit school to join him and many young college graduates in missionary work that summer, assisting rural farm families in central Puerto Rico. Dad used his farming background and degree to help the farmers. My mother helped at the mission school, modeling homemaking and child care skills to these rural farm families. My parents observed first-hand what the effects of true poverty, malnutrition and a lack of education can mean to the world at large.

They left the mission upon learning that they would become parents. I was born in August of 1948, at Madison General Hospital.

Over the next year, my family lived in Minnesota while my father worked for a rural insurance cooperative. In 1949, my father's father died and we returned to Dodgeville to help my grandmother with the family farm. My brother, Steve, was born in Dodgeville in 1950.

My father did not really want to run the farm, so after a year, the farm was sold. We then moved to Richland Center, WI where my father found a job working for another cooperative insurance company, Group Health Mutual. For him, this was a good job working for an organization with a social conscience.

In 1953, my brother, Bruce, was born and we returned to Madison. My parents joined the Unitarian Church in Madison, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. They would later incorporate Wright's ideas into their design for the house at Upland Hills Farm. My mother worked as a nursery school teacher at the church.

In 1957, my father's company, decided to become a for-profit business. My father, along with many of his co-workers, quit his job. My father's job search led him to the Michigan Credit Union League, where he helped set up and advise credit unions. My mother found a nursery school job at the Roeper's City and Country School.

The family lived near Walled Lake. We owned five acres so we had a horse, chickens, goats, raised some hay, and made hay stacks using a dump rake and a hay fork. My mother's job worked out and she loved it. Soon she was the head kindergarten teacher. But my father's job did not make him happy. He found he was away from home driving long hours from place to place.

At this point, many of the teaching and farming ideals that would become Upland Hills Farm were already established in my parents. My father respected small farmers, admiring the type of farming that is quickly being forgotten. He appreciated horse-powered farming and knew in his bones what farming by hand meant and the hard work it entailed. Most importantly, he sought a community that embraced hard work and working together. My mother quickly learned that she was an intuitive teacher. She loved children and almost without effort, understood what children needed.

By this time, I'm sure both my parents had a vision of a farm to teach and live at, for others to come and enjoy and learn about. But it was another family event that led to the formation of Upland Hills. Late at night, only a mile from our

house, on the way home from a far away credit union, Dad fell asleep at the wheel and hit a tree. As accidents go, it was not too bad and he walked home with broken glasses and a bruised and bloody face. But when he came into the house, my mother was shocked by the look of his face and his shirt covered in blood.

I believe this event may have been the final straw. My father needed another job, another way to live. My mother's work at the Roeper's City and Country School had led her to good friendships with many families more affluent than ours. With the investment of about 20 families investing \$300 to \$3000 each, and one large investor, a businessman named Henry Moses, Upland Hills Farm, was purchased in 1959 and began hosting children in 1960.

next issue: part two - Building the Community - The First Ten Years of Upland Hills



In 2010, Upland Hills Farm will be celebrating 50 years of connecting families with farm life. Please contact the farm for more information at 248-628-1611 or uplandhillsfarm@sbcglobal.net

Growing Community

From the beginning, Upland Hills School has appealed to families seeking a deeper connection with one another and their world. Many families learn about the school through their relationships with others connected to UHS. The stories of these connections and journeys to UHS will be featured here in **Growing Community**.

One Family at a Time

by Mary Beth Seefelt and Rick Joseph

"This school is so amazing...Whenever I go there, I seem to be elevated to tears." We were intrigued by this heartfelt endorsement offered by our friend and fellow teacher, Sheryl Netzky, in the spring of 2007 as she described Upland Hills School in almost mythic terms.

After a visit to UHS a short time later, we were embraced by the overwhelming love and warmth that radiated from every part of the school community. Our boys Zack (Kathy's group) and Nick (Jean's group) entered a year ago and now we can't imagine life before Upland Hills.

Since then, we have trumpeted the virtues of this "wild school" that has long espoused and embodied Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences by reconnecting students with the natural world and each other. Whenever our conversations turn to schools and children, we look forward to explaining the Upland Hills way to anyone who will listen.

As a public school teacher, I (Rick) had the opportunity to earn extra money waiting tables at a local restaurant close to home. The owners, had moved from Chicago and changed careers to open this new restaurant and keep their family business thriving into the next generation.

Amidst all the hummus and pita bread, the owners got to know me, and they heard amazing stories of morning meetings, neighboring and unique afternoon classes chosen by the students.

It didn't take long for them to realize that UHS was the right place for their son. They just didn't think they'd make the move until next year. As fate would have it, however, Zack and Nick made a new friend as their son was welcomed last week as the newest member of Jean's group.

We will always remember the grace Sheryl Netzky displayed as she introduced us to Upland Hills School. It was only natural for us to pass on our experience to this new family. We feel fortunate to help grow the UHS community one family at a time.



Calling all Writers --

The next issue of *Connections* will focus on "A Learning Community: Upland Hills School." Consider how the community has grown as well as your place in it.

Please submit your articles by January 1, 2009 to Karen Troshynski-Thomas at school or by email at tthomas5975@wowway.com.

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\$15 adults \$10 students/children

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Sponsorship Offerings

UHS Community Showcase

Discover hidden and not-so-hidden talents from our abundantly creative community. Alumni, parents, students and staff come together for a night you won't want to miss!

Saturday, January 17th 7pm

\$6 reserved/ \$7 at the door

**Upland Hills School
Theatre Play Shop
presents our 2009 Spring Musical
"Alice"**

Friday, May 1 1pm

Saturday, May 2 2 pm & 7pm*

***6:15p-6:45p "PJ Party"**

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