



May 2011
Number 70 (2)

What Canst Thou Say?

Friends • Mystical Experience • Contemplative Practice

*You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this: but what canst thou say?
Art thou a child of Light and hast thou walked in the Light, and what thou speakest,
is it inwardly from God? —George Fox*

Animals (Supplement)

In Memory of Priscilla

Jennifer Elam

About 40 years ago, my dad, a farmer, got his first urge to raise horses. At that time, he wanted to raise Appaloosa horses, a kind of horse with a special coloring, beige with beige spots.

So he bought a nice mare, Regina, and took her to Kentucky to have her bred by a fancy stud and paid a fancy stud fee. The grand-dam had won the Kentucky Oaks, which is like the Kentucky Derby for the female horses. The baby was born and she was gorgeous! She was given the name Priscilla.

Only, she had just one eye. This made her defective by racehorse standards. Oh, the disappointment! No running Priscilla in those Appaloosa horse races. Instead, Prissy became a family pet and a companion to my dad. When the family moved back to Somerset, Kentucky in 1984, Prissy moved too. There were those who wanted to buy Prissy, but Prissy was not for sale! When the family moved from Somerset to the Lexington area in 1999, Prissy moved too. She lived on the family farm, in a field next to the thoroughbred racehorses.

By the time Prissy came to this farm, she was pretty old for a horse—turning gray. But, Prissy never seemed to know that she was old and gray and getting sway-backed! Prissy never knew she was defective, and never walked one-sided as might be expected for a horse with one eye. For the last twenty years of her life, she loved living in the back field in her favorite corner; she never wanted to be in a barn. She flirted with those young thoroughbreds like she was a young hussy. They'd come over to the fence, and she would put her head up next to theirs and nuzzle-up, close. I always had the urge to open the fence and let her run with the young horses, but I knew that my neighbor, whose perfect horses they were, would kill me for that. People are quite serious about their perfect racehorses.

Prissy died today at age 38, a practically unheard-of age for a horse. My dad had a friend come over with his backhoe, and they buried Prissy in her favorite corner of the back field.

I am trying to take in the life-lessons from Prissy. May we never know ourselves as defective; may we never compare ourselves to other people's standards that don't suit us; may we walk upright and straight, even with our blindnesses; may we never know we are old or reject-able; and may we flirt with Life as if we are young hussies, especially when others see us as defective, blind, old, gray, and sway-backed.

Jennifer Elam is the author of Dancing With God Through The Storm: Mysticism and Mental Illness, and has sometimes been a guest editor for WCTS. She is a member of Berea meeting, Kentucky, but presently attends Swarthmore meeting, Pennsylvania.

From the Editor:

Animals have a life and logic of their own. Left alone, they come and go unbidden. *Other*, they yet are like us. Wordless, they yet communicate with us. Their messages seem to come from another world, a purer, cleaner, clearer, holier world. When their lives intersect with ours, we are affected. They touch a deep place within us. We present these stories from the world of the *other*, from the wordless ones, with gratitude for the kaleidoscope of ways that animals affect us.

Once again we have many more articles than could fit into our print version, so this is the website version <whatcanstthousay.org/extras>.

Amy Perry and Mariellen Gilpin

Any Tigers Today?

Faith Paulsen

We boarded the train in Agra, my husband Bart, our sons Paz and Gideon, and myself, still starry-eyed from the pure white symmetry of the Taj Mahal. A hotel transport carried us from the train station to our hotel in Ranthambore National Park, where stewards offered us trays of moist towels and glasses of lemon drink. As we gratefully wiped the dust from our faces, a jeep pulled up to the hotel, returning with a group of tourists from a tour around the park.

Looking up from his tray, one steward called out to them with a greeting we had never heard before, “Any tigers today?”

That was the first time we heard this strange new salutation but certainly not the last. We soon found out that this was the one urgent question asked of groups returning from the park. Everyone wanted to know – *Did you see what you came here to see?* As we watched, the tourists’ heads bobbed with enthusiasm.

“Oh, yes!” they beamed.

We sipped our lemon drinks and longed for our chance to see a tiger too.

We’d come to India to visit our oldest son Paz, then 21, who was doing a semester in Hyderabad. But India had always been on my “Bucket List” – a place I wanted to see during my lifetime. I’d always wanted to see the Taj Mahal, and I’d always wanted to see a tiger in the wild.

The next morning we piled into a jeep in the pre-dawn chill. Thankful for the hot-water bottle the steward provided, I wrapped my shawl around me and snuggled next to Paz and eleven-year-old Gideon. (Our son Seth, a college freshman, could not miss classes to travel with us.)

The jeep bounced along dirt roads, past tiny villages of mud huts. Our

guide told us about Ranthambore, one of India’s renowned Tiger Preserves, located on property once used by a maharajah as a private hunting ground, now rededicated with a new purpose: to preserve wildlife, especially the endangered tiger. Ranthambore is believed to have about 15 tigers, so tourists arrive with high hopes, but there are no guarantees.

A rustling in the grass!

“*Is it a tiger?*” Gideon whispered.

We passed binoculars among us. No, it was not a tiger. It was a bright blue peacock.

“Wait! What was that?”

This time it was a sambor deer, large as a moose, antlers crowning its head. A herd of spotted deer watched our jeep drive by. In the tree above them, a langur monkey cradled her fuzzy baby.

Stopping for chai under a shady tree studded with monkeys, I spotted something white in the brush at our feet. The clean dry jawbone of a sambor deer.

That morning we saw monkeys and langurs, deer, peacocks, plum-headed parakeets, green pigeons, boars, and a ripple in the lake that could have been the nostrils of a crocodile.

Our jeep brought us back to the hotel for lunch. As we jumped down, our eyes wide and cheeks flushed, the steward greeted us.

“Any tigers today?”

Oh yeah, the tigers! I’d nearly forgotten. “No, no tigers.”

“Well, maybe this afternoon,” he smiled, offering us lemon drink. After lunch, our jeep took us back out into the park. We no longer huddled together as we did in the early morning. Now, it was hot! We passed a group of local schoolchildren wearing flower necklaces, waving and singing. Our guide said their song was about the importance of protecting India’s treasured tigers.

We plunged into the park, this time taking a different trail, one that led up a steep hill. We passed the ruins of the maharajah’s hunting palace overlooking a still lake crowded with different species of bird: white egrets, purple heron, and the neon kingfisher.

Again I forgot all about the tigers, absorbed in the warm sunlight, lush landscape, and the delight in sharing each animal sighting. I snapped hundreds of photos.

Our guide received a message on his radio. He signaled us to be quiet,

What Canst Thou Say? is an independent publication by and for Quakers with an interest in mystical experience and contemplative practice. It is published in August, November, February, and May. The editorial and production team is Lissa Field, Mariellen Gilpin, Lieselotte Heil, Richard Himmer, Judy Lumb, Patricia McBee, Grayce Mesner, Mike Resman, and Eleanor Warnock.

Please write for *WCTS!* Instructions to authors are on page 7. Send editorial correspondence to <mariellen.gilpin@gmail.com> or *WCTS*, 818 W. Columbia, Champaign, IL 61820. See the *WCTS* website for a history of *WCTS* and updated queries for future issues: <whatcanstthousay.org>

Subscriptions are \$10 for one year, \$18 for two years. Back issues are \$1.50 each, \$15 for a partial set (Issues 1-20, 21-40, 41-60), and \$45 for a complete set up to the current issue. Email subscriptions are \$5 per year. Subscription correspondence should be directed to Richard Himmer <WhatCanstThouSay@verizon.net> or *WCTS*, 1035 Hereford Drive, Blue Bell PA 19422-1925.

Please write for permission before reprinting excerpts.

then cocked his head, closed his eyes and listened. Silence. Not even the chattering of monkeys. Suddenly he grabbed the steering wheel, whirled the jeep around and hurtled us down the trail, then slammed on the brakes.

There she was, not ten feet away.

The tigress.

Gideon opened his mouth. No sound came out but the shape of his lips formed one word, “*Whoa.*”

We didn’t need our binoculars to see her close-up as she emerged from the brush, her otherworldly markings, black striations on orange fur, white face, burning yellow eyes. Her mouth slightly open, fangs visible. We might have been afraid, sitting in our open jeep, unprotected. But the tigress betrayed no notice of us. She kept to her path, the sinews in her shoulders rising and falling with each magnificent stride.

We got a good long look at her. And I remembered William Blake’s poem, “Tiger, Tiger, burning bright/ In the forests of the night.” And in my heart I asked the tigress, “*What immortal hand or eye/ Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*”

I held my breath. The tigress’s muscular footsteps exuded the Divine Presence within her DNA.

Riding back to the hotel, I relaxed into my seat. We’d seen what we came to see: a wild tiger. Like the Taj Mahal, she didn’t disappoint. She was even more miraculous than I had imagined—so much more than a check mark on my Bucket List—more than I could express in words. Yet if seeing a tiger was supposed to be our purpose, I’d all but forgotten that goal in the midst of the adventure. And I was grateful for that. Because if I’d focused on just that one thing, I might have missed the wonders of the journey.

Back at the hotel, the steward smiled his greeting, “Any tigers today?”

“Oh yes!” we all nodded, then added in unison, “And so much more!”

Faith Paulsen attends Gwynedd Meeting in Pennsylvania, where she participates in the Spiritual Book Club, Group Spiritual Guidance, Quaker Writers Group, and Meditation Group. Her writing has appeared in A Cup of Comfort For Parents of Children With Special Needs, A Cup of Comfort For Mothers, and two upcoming collections: A Cup of Comfort For Couples and Chicken Soup For the Soul: Shaping a New You.

Guided

Carol Roth

Heather, our tiny cat, was just diagnosed with brain cancer. She will not survive this, but for now the medication is helping her with the pain. She is my girl, and has been for a dozen years. The way we came to adopt her is clearly a case of God placing human and animal together.

At that time, my daughter had an older cat named Nic. We decided to take him to a Vet Clinic at Cape May Courthouse, which is about sixty miles from my home. A friend had a daughter who was working there. Off we went, Nic with us. It really was quite a nice drive. I am normally a nervous driver. But it seemed to be effortless for me to drive that day, although I did not know the way and traffic was heavy. I have never felt so guided, so safe, so in the hands of God, as I did that day. It was unusual for me to drive so well and without any sense of nervousness.

Our friend’s daughter was surprised to see us so far from home, because she knew we lived around the corner from a vet clinic. I had no logical explanation, except to say I felt guided. Susie took Nic to see the doctor and came back shortly with a stray left at the clinic. The cat was suffering from gross diarrhea, pitiful to look at and painful to smell. She turned her head and her eyes looked directly into mine, and that was it: love pure and simple just welled up in me, overflowing and boundless. Love from her just flowed into me. I named her Heather, for she just seemed to fit that name perfectly.

I adopted her that day, although it would take a few weeks for her to be released. She soon began her life with us. Nic was too old and much too mature to engage in her kitty antics, but he never tried to hurt her. In time, other cats came to live with us. But it was me that Heather chose to be her

Tell Us Your Stories!

What Canst Thou Say is a worship-sharing group in print. We welcome submissions of articles of 350-1500 words and artwork—line drawings or artwork suitable for black and white reproduction. Please send your text submissions in Word or generic text format and artwork in high resolution jpeg files. Photocopied art and typed submissions are also accepted. Send via email to <mariellen.gilpin@gmail.com>, or diskette or hard copy to **WCTS, 818 W. Columbia, Champaign, IL 61820.**

All authors and artists retain copyright to their articles and artwork published in **WCTS**. **WCTS** retains the right to publish initially and also to reprint in **WCTS** anthologies.

If you want to reprint an article from **WCTS**, please contact us for permission.

Mommy, and I was honored to have her as my baby.

Now, my baby is slowly dying. My heart is breaking, as are my husband's and my daughter's. I will know when it comes time to euthanize her, for I do not want her to suffer. But now, now is the time for rejoicing in every second that she is in my arms, with her little paws wrapped tightly around my finger and those big, brown eyes staring into my soul. God is so Good, so Good, to have guided me safely to her and to have placed her with us. She is a miracle to us. I know that she will be with us always in our hearts.

Carol Roth is a former editor of WCTS and our Good Angel. Her combination of honesty, humor and deep sensitivity helps keep the editors grounded in God.

**Discovering God as Companion:
Real Life Stories
from What Canst Thou Say?**

Mariellen Gilpin, Editor
"DISCOVERING GOD AS COMPANION underlines the power of 'we' sustained by the Religious Society of Friends for more than 350 years. Contributing Friends and companions of God have drawn so close to the Source of Love that Light streams through their written words into the world. Through the testimonies of these writers, readers can glimpse contemplative witness as one mark of the whole Quaker community."
—Judith Favor's review in *Friends Journal*
Retail \$15.34, 172 pages
Available from FGC Bookstore <quakerbooks.org> (800) 966-4556

Two Visits from my Dream Bear

Sally Campbell

In the summer of 1945 I was not yet four years old. Our family had survived a very difficult winter: much illness, including my being hospitalized with rheumatic fever and my grandmother becoming frail. But now it was summer and we were at our summer house. My mother, who had been holding things together, decided to relax for once and go for a swim with my aunt, leaving me and my grandmother supposedly taking a nap.

The nap did not last long and I convinced Gaga to come with me to the beach. She didn't think to have me put on shoes as we went down the path together. I knew there were thistles just before the beach began, so I asked her to pick me up and carry me, which my grandmother gladly did. She decided to keep carrying me until we were safely on the beach. However, that meant making our way over some rather treacherous rocks.

My mother, waist deep in the water, turned around and, imagining an accident about to happen, yelled "Oh, no!" (My mother hardly ever yelled). Nothing terrible happened, however, and I was put safely on the sand. Unfortunately, I thought my mother was scolding me for asking to be carried. Also unfortunately, the very next week my grandmother happened to die. I blamed myself, thinking my bad conduct had caused her death.

At about that time I had a dream in which a bear was chasing me and even caught me. I asked him, "You don't eat good little girls, do you?" He replied, "You're right, I don't." The rest of the dream was filled with my being good, doing helpful things. Since that time I've spent too much of my life being good out a fear that if I am not, something terrible will happen and the bear of death may catch someone—maybe even me. It took me until I was in my

30's to figure out that I was not to blame for my grandmother's death, and that my mother was not scolding me as a bad child for asking to be picked up.

Then in 2003, on my 62nd birthday, my mother, who was suffering from Alzheimer's disease and a stroke, came to visit me in a dream. It did not feel like she was a character in a dream. It felt like the dream was a vehicle to let me see her. She was fully her own real loving self again. I woke up weeping for joy at seeing the mother I had almost forgotten existed.

The dream had another part too: the bear came back. This time he, not I, was caught. He was stuck in the wall with his front paws and head sticking out. I immediately started opening doors to let him escape. Each time I opened one, the bear got smaller and by the third cupboard door he was a toy bear that I could hold in my arms. Just as my grandmother had held me in her arms, now I was holding the bear in my arms. A true circle.

I thank this bear for coming back, for letting me learn to face and embrace the unknown of death that is so wild and scary. May I continue to remember what I learned that birthday morning when he and my mother came to see me:

*Face and befriend
what seems to you hateful
Face and befriend
that which you fear
Face and befriend
the power within you
And find midst confusion
a way that is clear.*

Sally Campbell is a Quaker singer/songwriter, retired librarian and freelance declutterer, as well as currently the clerk of Morningside Meeting in NYC. She feels the bear, the fear she most needs to embrace now, is whatever is keeping her from sharing her songs more fully.

The Perfect Cat

Earl Hurst

I'd tried to bring home many cats over the years, but my wife Cindy had always been allergic to them. But one day we came home and a cat literally jumped into my arms as I opened the car door. We brought her inside and named her "Millie." After an hour, Cindy was not sneezing, so we decided that I better go out and get cat litter, food, etc. We were adopted later by two other cats, but Millie made sure the other cats knew that she was in charge. She was our first cat, and she was the perfect cat. She gave us tremendous love and affection over the years.

But finally she got breast cancer. I was at a friend's house when Cindy called and said that it was time to put her out of her misery. I rushed home and kissed her one last time before we took her to the vet. She screamed and died in my arms. We took her to the emergency vet and left her there.

A few hours later I was outside in the dark and praying hard that somehow I could know that she was okay on the other side. Shortly after, I heard a cat crying. It was a cry I had heard many times before because it was the distinctive cry of my Millie. She had a meow like no other. I looked around and there were no animals whatsoever in the area. I know that it was a cry from Millie telling me that she was okay.

I know that Millie is out of her pain, that she is in a better place, and that she will be there when I join her.

Earl Hurst, a convinced Quaker, is a member of First Friends Meeting, Indianapolis, where he sings in the choir. Forty years ago he moved to central Indiana specifically to join the Friends. At college his Quaker pastor introduced him to Cindy. Cindy has more to say about Millie.

A Biblical Retribution

Marshall Gibson

In the summer of 1944 or so, when I was five years old, I visited my aunt and uncle on their plantation. My aunt spent nearly a week regaling me with vampire tales. Then bats started getting into the mosquito netting over my bed. The bat attack lifted the stories out of fiction into fear. Complaining to my aunt and uncle did no good.

One day I discovered a bat on the floor. I noticed a really thick book on a nearby table. I picked up the heavy tome and carefully dropped it on the bat, which ended that problem.

When my aunt found out (well, I bragged!), she went nuts. It was the family Bible I had used! At age five I had not realized either what the book was (nor did I care), nor had I ever seen so thick a volume.

It was the only time that summer I got a licking. But the bat never bothered me again.

Marshall Gibson is a member of First Friends Meeting and North Meadow Meeting, Indianapolis, and a biblical storyteller. Active in Quaker Earth Care Witness, he also is a lobbyist for Indiana Friends Committee on National Legislation. He values silence in worship.

Millie

Cindy Hurst

In 1989, my mother died. It was one of the worst years of my life, because I missed her so much. I was able to hold myself together enough to go to work, but when I came home, I would spend several hours just sitting and crying. Millie, our tortoiseshell cat, was on my lap the entire time, licking my face and showing me her unending love. She got me through that awful year.

Millie and I were cut from the same soul. When I was sick, Millie was right there on my bed. When I was sad, Millie was there to lick my face. She also was there for happy times. She would sit on a kitchen chair and color Easter eggs with me. She loved Christmas, especially opening packages, as well as the pretty Christmas tree. She loved to eat anything I was eating, even if it wasn't something cats normally like.

She taught our younger cat Pumpkin how to wash and also how to be

affectionate. When she died, Pumpkin tried very hard to be Millie and started to sit on my lap just like Millie.

I am also convinced that Millie helped us find our next tortoiseshell cat when we found Tammy Sue. We started to look for another cat a week after Millie died, as the house seemed so empty. The minute I picked up Tammy Sue, she licked my face exactly as Millie used to do. Tammy Sue also licked my husband's face the same way. I truly think Millie sent her to us because she knew I would be very lonely without her.

Cindy Hurst, a member of First Friends Meeting, Indianapolis, tries to see past appearances to find the Inner Light in everyone she meets. Her calling is to bring out the best in people. She has always tried to do this in her 35 years as a trainer and English teacher.

Mariellen's Corner

Mariellen Gilpin

Mariellen Gilpin is an editor of WCTS and a member of Urbana-Champaign meeting, Illinois. She grew up on a farm and drew many life lessons from her experiences there. The guest editor of What Canst Thou Say presents this section to honor her wisdom and her dedication to WCTS.

A Thin Ugly Pig

I put myself through college by raising pigs and selling them. One early spring day I went to dicker with a farmer for some sows (female pigs in a family way). I had agreed to buy five likely-looking pigs. The farmer offered me a real deal on a sixth pig. I thought I could make some money on her, so we threw her into the deal. This sixth pig must have had a razorback hog in her ancestry, because she was very, very thin, and had a ridge of hair that stood straight up along her backbone. When she was covered with mud, she was one thin, ugly pig. My mother took one look at her and named her Petunia.

It soon developed that she was low pig on the totem pole. When the sows were lined up at the feeding trough, the other sows pushed her away. I quickly developed the habit of fastening her in a pen in the barn and throwing her corn in there, so she could eat in her own private dining room.

In due time, the sows delivered their little pigs and later still, weaned them. Then I gathered up the five fat sows and sold them, but I kept Petunia, thinking I would fatten her some more and sell her with the baby pigs. And, since Petunia had always been a peace-loving pig, I put her in to feed with the baby pigs. It quickly turned out, however, that Petunia was now top pig on the totem pole, and she shoved away all the baby pigs and ran around, gobbling up as much corn as she could possibly cram in. I had to go back to putting her in her private dining room again. So, from being a thin ugly pig, Petunia became a fat ugly pig with a nasty personality.

Whenever I have to deal with someone with a nasty disposition, I find myself remembering Petunia and thinking that sometime, in some way, this person was shoved away from the feeding trough.

Act As If

The summer I was twelve, my parents and brother had jobs that took them away from the farm. I was left to take care of my dying grandmother and the household. On top of all that, I needed to train my 4-H calves to lead with a halter before the county fair.

Each of my two calves weighed close to a thousand pounds. I weighed maybe a hundred. My parents had cautioned me not to let a calf run away from me while I was holding the lead rope. Once it learned it could run away, it would never be trainable. The previous summer, my father had helped me train a calf by manning a second rope in addition to the lead rope, which I was holding. If it bolted, my father was strong enough to stop it. That's how we fooled the calf into thinking I was boss. This summer, however, no grownup could help. I brushed the first calf while he ate that afternoon and thought how to keep him from running away when I tried to lead him.

I decided to attach the second rope to a fence post in the feedlot. Then I looped the rope around the calf's neck, put on the halter, and tugged authoritatively on the lead rope. Startled, the calf jumped. The fence post broke off at the ground, scaring the calf. He ran bawling, the post dragging behind him. The lead rope wrapped my body,

leaving me with permanent scars from rope burns. Suddenly the dragging post caught between two fence posts. The posts held, and the rope around the poor calf's neck choked him so hard that his nose bled. There was no grownup to help. I prayed hard.

The calf stood in his tracks, gasping and wheezing for breath. I began talking to him, slowly moving toward him. I suppose he decided to trust me because he was desperate. I gently slipped off halter and noose. I carried a bucket of water to him and let him drink. Then I put him in his stall and gave him a little hay. I washed my face at the pump and went to the house to bandage my rope burns and fix supper. I had failed. The calf was wild, now, and could never be trained. I told no one.

But there was still the other calf. I could maybe train the other calf. Next day I went to the barn and brushed the second calf while he ate. I petted him and talked to him, and thought. For three days I petted the second calf and thought. The second calf grew tamer each day.

I knew I would never again use a second rope to stop a calf. I would never again use force with cattle. What I had to do was be so gentle and kind that the second calf would follow me unquestioningly if I tugged on the lead rope. I would train the calf with love, not force. And so it happened that I showed the second calf in the county fair, winning second place.

I was so scared—scared of the calves, scared of hurting them again, scared of letting the family down. But I was able to train the second calf because I acted as if I believed love could conquer fear. "Act as if you believe in the goodness of God," wrote English mystic Julian of Norwich. Julian was right. It's great when you have faith and courage, but when you don't, act as if you do.

Blackie Knew Something

My father was recovering from the terrible radiation burns he had suffered during his cancer treatment. Depressed, he spent much of his time alone. He often sat in the living room, looking out the window and drinking coffee. Blackie, the cat we had in those days, would sit quietly in the room with him, perhaps thinking. Suddenly Blackie would break out into the most awkward and clownish actions a graceful cat could think up. When Daddy laughed, Blackie would jump up in his lap and reach out with gentle soft-paws, and gently, lightly touch those radiation burns. Blackie knew something.

Squealing at the Top of the Hill

From the time I was twelve, I was responsible for the care of the pigs, chickens and cows on our farm. When I was thirteen, my mother struck a deal with a neighbor named Riley, that he would farm the fields and we each would get half the grain. Riley was anxious to show us what a good farmer he was. Almost his first act was to put an electric fence around the mud hole. It was a swelteringly hot August, and pigs can't sweat: they depend on being able to roll in the mud to cool off. Day after day passed, and the poor pigs did their best to cool off on the shady side of the barn. My sympathies were all with the pigs.

One evening my mother sent me down to the mud hole to see if the electric fence was still intact. I found the thin little metal posts were still solid in their footings, and the two strands of barbed wire were still tight, and the electric charger was still going bzz-zap, bzz-zap. You could be standing three feet away from that fence and know if you stepped any closer, you'd be bzz-zapped for real. I was just reflecting what a flimsy fence it really was, when I happened to glance up the hill toward

the barn. There stood an old mother pig, a sow, gazing longingly down the hill at that lovely cooling mud, just on the other side of that electric fence. Then, she started to look reflective. Suddenly she started squealing at the top of her lungs. A pig never squealed unless it was hurting, and there she stood, squealing and squealing. She tore down that hill, all 350 pounds of her, at top speed, squealing every step of the way. She hit that electric fence and went right on through, sank into the mud, and fell silent. The little pigs trotted silently down the hill, nosed at the fence to make sure it was really dead, and sank into the mud beside her.

About that time, I realized my father was watching, too, and I called out to him, "Did you see that? She started squealing at the top of the hill.

She tore down that hill, all 350 pounds of her, at top speed, squealing every step of the way.

She knew it was gonna hurt when she went through that fence, and she wasn't going to let it stop her!"

I don't know exactly what her motives were, whether she was thinking only of herself, or whether she was also concerned for the little pigs. I do know that a mother pig will do very altruistic things for her little piggies.

I often think of that sow, squealing at the top of the hill. I think of my mental illness as a form of addiction—when my feelings get too unpleasant, it's just very tempting to escape into unreality. Then I think of that sow, and how she chose short-term suffering for the sake of long-term gain. One of my most important lessons in character building came from a pig.

Mariellen told this story in worship once, and a Friend told her if that old sow could face down an electric fence, the Friend could finish her thesis.

A Quaker Parable

In the late seventies, when my meeting still met in a converted residence near campus, the upstairs was rented out to a Friend who took in roomers, and at the time of this story, there were two young men rooming with her. The two young men came to business meeting to say the cockroaches were really bad, and request that the meetinghouse be sprayed. Most Friends were comfortable with this, realizing we could get in trouble with the Health Department if we did not comply. But one woman argued that cockroaches were God's creatures, too, declaring she would have to stand in the way of such a decision. A sense of the meeting was not reached, so the discussion was postponed until the following month.

The Saturday night before the next business meeting, the two young men became creative. They went to the meeting's kitchen, turned on the light, filled the kitchen sink with water, set a pan of dog food on the floor, and turned off the light. Fifteen minutes later, they flipped on the light and caught a number of cockroaches and dropped them in the water in the sink. They turned off the light, waited fifteen minutes, flipped on the light, and caught more cockroaches to add to the collection in the sink. About dawn, the young fellows went upstairs for some well-earned rest. The God's creatures lady was in charge of hospitality. When she arrived before worship to start the hot water pot, she found the sink had about forty drowned cockroaches in it. In order to draw water for the coffee and tea, she first had to reach into the sink to let the water out. There was no difficulty finding a sense of the meeting about spraying for cockroaches. Let's hear it for creative conflict resolution.

Mariellen reports there was some discussion of making the two young men honorary Quakers.

Please write for *What Canst Thou Say?*

(See instructions for authors on page 3)



August 2011

Creativity and Mysticism

Editor: Judy Lumb

Whether expressed as poetry, prose, drawing, painting, sculpture, dance, or music, our creativity often seems to have divine mystical sources. Have you felt like a channel with creative inspiration flowing through you? What is your experience of creative inspiration? How have others responded to your creativity? Have you experienced creative inspiration in a group? How do you celebrate and give thanks for your creativity?

Deadline: May 15, 2011

November 2011

Death and Dying

Editor: Mike Resman

Death be not proud (John Donne). Facing our own death or that of a loved one is challenging. What spiritual lessons have helped you? What have you experienced while supporting loved ones who were dying? Have you participated in a planned death? What are your reflections on that experience? How do you view your own death? What experiences have led you to that view? How have your loved ones responded to your plans and attitudes toward dying?

Deadline: August 15, 2011

February 2012

Shame

Guest Editor: Lois Pomeroy with Mariellen Gilpin

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame... (Shakespeare, Sonnet 129). Some of us ate shame for breakfast when we were very little, and have spent a lifetime learning to invest our spirit in healthier ways. Can you remember a time before you were shamed? How has baby-shame manifested in adulthood? How did you realize shame crippled you? What made you decide to change? What spiritual practices have helped you let go of ancient shame? Has Spirit helped you move beyond it? Share your story of healing from inappropriate shame.

Deadline: November 15, 2011

What Canst Thou Say?

WCTS c/o Richard Himmer

1035 Hereford Drive

Blue Bell PA 19422-1925

Address Service Requested



Animals