



The Journal of Patapsco Friends Meeting

December, 2014, First Iteration

Editor's Note:

The topic of this issue of the Quaker Heron is "Growth and Change" which is taken from the title of a chapter in the current draft Faith and Practice which begins with a quote from George Fox, Epistle 186 (1659): *Ye that are turned to the light, and gathered into it, meet together and keep your meetings, that ye may feel and see the life of God among you, and know that in one another.*

In Faith and Practice, the focus in this chapter is on how Quaker Meetings form, grow and change. We can look at this topic in terms of ourselves as well. How do we form, grow and change? A number of Friends have responded on this topic in thoughtful and interesting ways. I hope this newsletter will provide meaningful reading for you as it has for me. -Ramona Buck

Caregiving as a Pathway to Growth by Carol Dana

Opportunities for growth and change often come unbidden. And that was the case for me in the spring of 2004, when I received a phone call that would disrupt my comfortable routine and ultimately lead to some important shifts in my relationship with my mother.

On the other end of the line was the part-time caregiver my siblings and I had hired a few months earlier to help look after my widowed 89-year-old mother, after she'd started to show signs of short-term memory

loss, had given up driving and had had a fall. Although my mother was adamant about continuing to live in her Wisconsin home, the caregiver said the situation was unsafe: she'd come into the house on a couple of occasions to find the burners left on while my mother napped upstairs. And, if we didn't take action immediately, the caregiver said she'd report my siblings and me to the authorities for "elder neglect."

For months, we'd been trying, without success, to convince my mother to move to a retirement facility. So now, in desperation, my sister and I flew to Wisconsin, packed her bags and brought her back to Silver Spring, where my sister had offered her a room in her home. We presented it as a temporary vacation – a chance to be pampered and recuperate, though we knew my mother would never go back to her home. My sister, with the help of paid companions, would look after her during the week; I would provide companionship and outings on weekends.

This wasn't a decision I embraced wholeheartedly. "Self-involved" would be a polite way to describe my mother's personality, and I still harbored resentment for the childhood years in which she'd seemed less focused on her children than on her sketching, her dogs, and her fantasy love-affair with the classical-music-station announcer, whose mellifluous voice accompanied her throughout the day.

The first year in Maryland was a tough

adjustment. My mother's cognitive impairment affected her ability to understand her situation and to accept her losses and limitations. Instead of expressing gratitude for the creative living solution we'd come up with, she accused my sister and me of "kidnapping" her, and directed her anger and frustration at us, my beleaguered sister most of all.

Yet, at the same time, my mother was clearly more vulnerable than she'd been in the past and seemed to need me in ways she'd never before acknowledged. I not only began to feel more compassion for her, but – as we spent more time together – I began to recognize that she was a more complex and admirable woman than the one-dimensional figure who starred in the "storyline" I'd developed about my childhood.

How, for example, had I missed the fact that she was so verbally playful? Sometimes when we were out in the car, she'd initiate word games, describing the passing scenes in phrases filled with multi-syllabic words that started with the same consonant: "These towering trees would fill me with trepidation in the event that a tornado touched down," she might say as we drove through Rock Creek Park, and turn to me – her writer-daughter -- with a triumphant smile, knowing she'd won that round.

How had I failed to appreciate how gutsy she was in paving her own path after my father's untimely death at 56? Before the "life-long learning" term was coined, my mother was taking art and history courses at the local UW campus, and was usually by far the oldest student in class. When she became enamored with jazz in her 60's, she started to frequent local jazz clubs, and soon appointed herself the unofficial "artist in residence" at one of her favorite clubs,

where she'd grab a front-row seat and sketch the musicians late into the night.

After her move to Maryland, her enthusiasm for jazz and art remained undiminished. Although she was then in her early 90s with a failing memory, she continued to be up for any musical, sketching, or nature outing I could devise, any time of day or night.

During the years I spent with her in Maryland, I also began to reassess my mother's disinterested approach to parenting. "So what if listening, nurturing and empathy weren't part of her skill-set?" I now found myself asking. Shouldn't I, a long-time feminist, applaud the way she'd withstood societal pressures and forged her own way, developing the artistic and musical skills that *were* her unique gifts? Even more discomfiting was the recognition that my "story" about her parental shortcomings wasn't completely accurate. As we spent hours each week together now – more as friends than in the traditional mother-daughter roles – I discovered that she knew me better than I thought she did; I listened in surprise as she occasionally dispensed a nugget of advice that was absolutely on target.

Fortunately, although my mother had short-term memory loss, her type of dementia didn't include the progressive cognitive decline and personality changes that are often associated with Alzheimer's disease. And in my mother's case, I found that dementia, in a strange way, was a gift to both of us. At the 11th hour of her life, the experience of being her weekend caregiver/companion had given me the chance to be introduced to the mother I had barely known and judged too harshly. I also like to think that those last five years gave her the daughter who could finally not only

accept her, but begin to enjoy her for who she was.

A Growing Appreciation by Jim Rose

It would seem that I have grown into a new appreciation of literature; of writing in novels and especially poems. I had read Ray Bradbury when I was (much) younger, and enjoyed the extent of his imagination: worlds that went beyond our normal experience, world which held surprises, where our assumptions were often turned upside down. His essays and short stories often were labeled science fiction - but default categorization is, as in this case, often not useful and even misleading.

But I recently picked up a collection of Bradbury stories, "The Golden Apples of the Sun," and discovered that I appreciate his writing in a different and important way. I see now he is able to draw pictures with a deft hand that he can illustrate with words scenes that have for me an emotional impact. Let me give an example from "The Wilderness:"

Is this how it was over a century ago, she wondered, when the women, the night before, lay ready for sleep, or not ready, in the small towns of the East, and heard the sound of horses in the night? ... All the sounds of arrivals and departures into the deep forests and fields, the blacksmiths working in their own red hells through midnight? And the smell of bacons and hams ready for the journeying, and the heavy feel of the wagons like ships foundering with goods, with water in the wooden kegs to tilt and slop across the prairies, and the chickens hysterical in their slung-beneath-the-wagon crates, and the dogs running out to the wilderness ahead and, fearful, running back with a look of

empty space in their eyes? On the rim of the precipice, on the edge of the cliff of stars?

I see this as poetry: carving an image with words. He uses metaphors adeptly and conjures pictures with a turn of a phrase. I understand now, after years of reading, what attracts me, what I'm looking for. I've grown to appreciate the art of writing, and the difficulty of crafting a powerful sentence.

And poetry. I have grown to feel the power of words and appreciate more the ability of writers to express the ineffable in a few words. I have just read Ted Kooser's new book of poems "Splitting an Order" (Ted is a recent US Poet Laureate) and there are many in this collection that illustrate the craft of writing that I have grown to appreciate. Consider a piece of his "Hands in the Wind."

*Today I drove through a cloud of leaves,
pale oak leaves the color of hands
blown over the street straight toward me
out of the empty parking lot
of the abandoned Kmart, their fingers
swirling about me, feeling all over my car,
over it, under it. I don't very often
go past there; they must have been waiting
a very long time to have been so
excited to see me. ...*

In this new light I am excited to read a book where the author uses language in new ways. I have grown to appreciate the writing in spite of the story being told.

One example is David Mitchell's new book, "The Bone Clocks", where the writing is again entrancing yet the story becomes much too bizarre for me. The same can be said for "The Night Circus" where the writing dazzles at the same time the story exceeds believability.

So I begin to reread books that appealed to me decades ago with a new appreciation. What a pleasure to find in old (and new) treasures a way of phrasing, a use of metaphor, examples of unexpected similes that now enchant again in a different way.

Change by Bethanne Kashkett

Change- the ones we welcome, invite and initiate: a baby, a move, a new relationship. And the ones we fear, avoid and resist: losing a job, an illness, a death. Life provides many opportunities to practice with both. When I am struggling with change I turn to Buddhist teachings on impermanence. Pema Chodron reminds me: *“Our discomfort arises from all our efforts to put ground under our feet. When we resist change, that’s called suffering. But when we can completely let go and not struggle against it, when we embrace the groundlessness and relax into its dynamic quality, that’s called enlightenment. Freedom from struggling against the fundamental ambiguity of being human.”*

There are “*game changers*”- those calls, situations or experiences where the ground shifts and nothing is quite the same. Phone calls that start with questions like: “Where are you? Are you alone? Are you sitting down?” There’s before the call, and after, like the lyrics in Carrie Newcomer’s song “Before and After”:

*“We live our lives from then until now
By the mercy received, and the marks on our brow
To my heart I’ll collect what the four winds will scatter
And frame my life by before and after.”*

There are advanced experiments with change, suitable for upper level spiritual warriors. “Accept, then act. Whatever the

present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it. . . this will miraculously transform your whole life.” (Eckhart Tolle). To change your mind, perception or view of your present situation. That shift is also called a miracle. I work on it daily with the blessing and guidance of the Twelve Steps. For me, *gratitude* is a good foundation for taking on experiments with advanced change- practice.

If you can make peace with the fact that nothing stays the same and that anything can happen, life is a little bit easier. If you can lean on the ones you love and let them help you carry the weight of change, it’s all workable. If you relish the simple comforts of each day: this hot cup or tea, good book, or warm hug, it’s manageable. If you consciously avoid predicting the future, it’s do-able. If you let the rhythm of your spiritual practice guide you through each day, it’s survivable. If you allow your heart to be broken by the suffering you witness and become more compassionate, it’s the practice of a lifetime.

While writing this article a poem emerged. This was a complete surprise to me, since I don’t typically write poems...but I had so much fun with this one! Thank you so much, Ramona, for another opportunity to contemplate rich topics.

A Change of Heart By bethanne

I’ve changed toothpaste, detergents and soap
Addresses, phone numbers and phones-
I’ve changed houses, doctors and friends,
Religions, tea and time zones.

There’ve been new babies, new kitties and cars
Seasons, sweaters and moods-
New books, spiritual teachers and jobs,
Relationships and gluten-free foods!

When I look over all I've absorbed
Some easy, some painful, some sad-
There's more that brings joy and I'm
grateful,
For a heart that's cracked open a tad.

So resist it, embrace it or neither
It's certainly not all bad news-
There will always be change uninvited,
And the changes you joyously choose!

Explosive Change Asks For Transformative Growth by John Buck

My cousin, Evelyn, is more than 20 years older than I am. She can remember the first time she heard a radio. She was about 10, living in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and my father had just built a crystal short wave radio. He put a little bud on a wire in her ear, and she could hear a man's voice speaking in a U.S. accent from Denver. In her lifetime, a robot has landed on a comet and groups of people from around the world can see and hear each other conversing. Those changes have happened in a kind of explosion, and the explosion is just beginning.

I expect there will be even larger changes in the next 100 years. Here are some of my predictions (based on reading).

- The 6th *Extinction* will become even more serious. The book by that title by Leakey and Lewin documents six periods in the last 500 million years in which there have been significant extinctions of life forms. Comets caused the first five. The sixth is now underway, caused by humans.
- Climate collapse now seems nearly inevitable according to the latest UN report. What is likely to happen? Drought and intense heat will send millions if not billions in poorer countries on hopeless migrations in

search of food. There could be intense fighting for water and other resources.

- The ability to manipulate already gives us the potential to control our own evolution. I'm guessing that some autocratically controlled country – a China, or North Korea, or Iran perhaps is likely to start making genetically engineered super people soon. See <http://www.ratical.org/co-globalize/PoGEH.html>
- We may be among the last people to die. It seems likely that we will crack the code of human memory in the next hundred years and be able to upload our memories to an external device where others can access them. Are we then dead or alive?
- There is another prediction that physical death will be cured by about 2050 – at least for rich people able. They will only die if they are murdered or in an accident.
- Most disconcerting of all is the possibility of the emergence of computer-based consciousness.

How can we grow to preserve our Friends' values in the face of this explosion? We cannot grow steadily. We must grow in transformative leaps. I am still exploring what that means, but I do feel that it involves using our imagination to anticipate developments and events and acting and acting now to cope with them. For example, the American Friends Service Committee anticipated the chaos that existed in Europe at the end of World War II and arrived with help while the guns were still smoking. AFSC got the Nobel Prize for their action.

My own small contribution to trying to anticipate and act now centers on my deep worry about the potential emergence of computer consciousness. The following is a

thought piece I've forwarded to Bob Rhudy with a request to bring it to Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). I offer it as an example of anticipatory action. Even if the message goes nowhere, the discipline of writing out my thoughts and getting feedback from Bob led to personal growth for me. Now I am clear about what has until now only been a vague foreboding.

The piece written for FCNL: ***We Need Legislation to Regulate Computer Consciousness***

Imagine that you receive an email directing you to go at once to the local police station to explain your recent stock market activity and to discuss the message with no one. You contact the police to report a crank message, and moments later a police officer shows up at your door to arrest you. You are told that you have been deemed "dangerous to humanity" and locked up, unable to appeal. Why? A network of conscious super computers has decided to seize control of the world and remove potential troublemakers like you from circulation.

Asimov depicted this nightmare in 1950 in a science fiction story about computers taking over the world.¹ In 1968 the film 2001: A Space Odyssey, HAL, the spaceship's computer battled for control with Dr. Bowman, the human captain.²

Today, Mark Zuckerman has invested in the development of a computer, Vicarious, designed to imitate the human neocortex.³ This development should set off alarm bells everywhere because the machine won't also think like the human limbic brain, the center of feelings and emotions. A human who thinks without emotion is a psychopath. So, literally, Zuckerman is creating a cyber

psychopath, and no one is thinking about regulating him or his computer project.

In 1950 Alan Turing, father of modern computers, said that if a machine can fool humans into thinking they are communicating with another human, then the machine can think. In June 2014, a computer passed the Turing Test for the first time.⁴ A machine may be able to think, but can it be consciousness with a will of its own? A free will consciousness seems to be a precondition to Asimov's nightmare scenario.

Consciousness is a deep mystery. It is the one phenomenon that seems beyond the reach of physics. Your perception of the color red is unique to you, and a physicist can't observe it. Although we cannot observe consciousness directly, there at least two tests that could detect its presence.

(1) Quantum physics shows that consciousness can collapse waveforms into particles and even give the particles a history backwards in time. Present day robots can't do that. A human must read the robot's data before the particle creation occurs.⁵

(2) We know that human creative thinking is a chemical phenomenon. When you want a new idea, you specially configure a semi-stable chemical called alpha neurexin and flood your brain with it. Alpha neurexin sets in motion a process that creates new electrical synapses that let a new idea emerge into conscious thought.⁶

Thus, for Zuckerman's computer to be conscious it must be able to (1) collapse

waveforms into particles and (2) create new physical circuitry to solve problems. How soon will computers achieve free will consciousness? We don't know. However, there appears no reason why a computer couldn't become conscious, become a new life form, and compete with humans for control of society. We have some regulations on the creation of new forms of life such as GMO wheat. There are regulations controlling human cloning. There is an international treaty on the control of nuclear weapons. However, there are no regulations on the creation of computer consciousness. We must act now to control the creation of computer consciousness before we create an uncontrollable monster that threatens national security.

We probably still have time to act. The first step is to raise awareness of the danger. For example, FCNL should call for congressional hearings with Zuckerman, the National Security Agency (NSA), and other of the country's best computer engineers to define the issue and assess the seriousness of the threat to our physical and spiritual well being.

¹"The Evitable Conflict", Isaac Asimov. *Astounding Science Fiction*, June 1950.

²<http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-2001-a-space-odyssey-1968>

³<http://www.welivesecurity.com/2014/03/25/mark-zuckerberg-invests-in-captcha-crushing-ai-which-thinks-like-a-human/>

⁴<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/09/a-computer-just-passed-the-turing-test-in-landmark-trial/>

⁵ *Quantum Enigma: Physics Encounters Consciousness*. Rosenblum, Bruce and Kuttner, Fred, Oxford University Press, 2006.

⁶ "Differential dynamics and activity-dependent regulation of alpha- and beta-neurexins at developing GABAergic synapses," PubMed.gov, Dec 28, 2010.

⁷<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21149722>

GIFT OF SILENCE by Brenda Tarr

*The Gift of the Silence is
the opportunity to ask the Questions
that open the Doors of Perception
into the Spiritual Realm
And, LISTENING Patiently, for the answers
to form themselves in the Heart of your
BEING
Then, following that Leading,
summoning the COURAGE
to speak to these TRUTHS,
In a Community of Friends,
capable of discerning the ESSENCE
of these Revelations.
Thus transforming them into ACTIONS that
Express the Creative Presence
of the Divine
in the
PRESENT MOMENT*

The Rotting Log by Chris McCormick

The rotting log- the opportunity-always there but not usually ready for transformation

The lignin within – the fuel- just waiting to become miracle after biological miracle, into a home, a morsel of food, a poison, a sanctuary – albeit temporarily

The rain- the impetus, the push, the no-turning back perfect storm, so to speak

Just as the rain spurs the mushroom's cells to divide with reckless abandon- with unfettered fervency, so we must transform

When we reach a tipping point- see vapors of injustice suddenly become howlers- in our faces, screaming and determinately un-ignorable

We discover and sometimes rediscover a dormant ancestral version of ourselves,

some part of us which holds the door open to a room filled with meaning and purpose

We bring to the light a bolder, braver self
Emblazoned with fight and dedicated to the
pursuit of justice

When the rain comes- when the time to
change is nigh -
Ignorance will to us do no service. Change
is inevitable.
The only constant event in the universe is
change.

Growth Requires Change

By Kent Allen Brewer, South Mountain

In gardens around the world, you will find tomato plants in various stages of growth. The variety of which I am most familiar sprouts a yellow flower from which eventually a small roundish green tomato develops. For the next few months, this sphere retains its shape and color as it grows into a larger green globe. If you were to pluck the tomato from the plant and slice it in half, you will find the center to be as green as the outside. We therefore have a tomato which has undergone growth with little change until the required mix of light, temperature and elapsed time came together to trigger major changes to produce a soft and succulent fruit with an array of red, yellow and orange hues. The tomato required healthy doses of both growth and change to be all that it could be.

When the theme for this issue of the Quaker Heron was made known, the above analogy immediately formed in my mind. Over the course of my lifetime, I've grown through the phases of childhood, youth, middle age and am now joining the ranks of the elderly. With each phase, I've grown in knowledge and experience, but I resisted change within myself. I moved through life in the pursuit

of hedonistic adventures and my adherence to any spiritual doctrine or discipline was non-existent.

This green tomato existence of growth without change took over my entire life. I was alone and in complete control of my own destiny. There existed no power greater than myself.

In the spring of 2013, I was invited to attend the South Mountain Friends Fellowship Group's annual celebration. I didn't know it then, but my world was about to change. It has been a long road and the journey is far from over. I've made progress in that I now acknowledge a power greater than myself. It is a mighty force that rumbles through the universe ever expanding. I haven't been able actually to define it but I know it is there. I believe real change has taken place and will continue to evolve into wonderful shades, both internally as well as externally. I owe so much to the loving, caring, gentle and patient Quakers who have supported and guided each step of this amazing journey. Given enough time, green tomatoes really do grow and change.

Interview by Kent Brewer of Andre DeLaney, South Mountain

Question: What do the words "growth" and "change" mean to you, Andre?

Answer: Well, *change* means what you did before, you don't do again. Say you don't like this certain person because he cussed at you. Change means not cussing back or responding in a bad way. Growth means bettering yourself and praying for that person.

Question: Since attending the South Mountain Fellowship group, have you

noticed any change or growth within yourself?

Answer: Yes, I have seen a big change and growth in myself.

Question: How so?

Answer: If someone says something to me that I don't like or is hurtful or negative, I now respond in a much more friendly way, whereas I used to curse at them.

Question: Will you continue to strive for change and growth within yourself in the months and years to come?

Answer: Yes, but I know it will be a struggle at times.

Question: What do you think of your Quaker friends and other group members?

Answer: When I am with these people, they are like family to me. They accept me for the person I am. I look forward to seeing my Quaker family every Saturday.

Change and Growth

By Darren (Tony) McCoy

Change is something that I truly thought I'd never do as I found comfort in the calamity and chaos that my life had become. Drugs and crime were the visible tools that I employed to navigate my way in and out of rehabs and prisons. Of course, there were underlying issues such as mental illness, family dysfunction and a lack of positive male role models which helped to promote the drug use that in turn made crime a natural progression. Underneath the clinical mumbo-jumbo though, I was simply a very lonely child.

I was too cool to hang with the nerds and too

nerdy to hang with the cool kids. By accident, I discovered Pandora's box or in my case, a bag of marijuana in my mother's dresser drawer. I proudly took what I pinched from that baggy to school the next day, thus opening the box and the birth of my new identity. I felt like the star basketball player, hitting the winning shot at the buzzer, and the computer geek discovering a new program or app all rolled into one. Among the burn-outs and rejects, I was a king! Okay, I was still the same lonely little boy that I'd found power in possessing and using drugs and committing crime. I'd found my place in the streets. I finally felt needed.

My choice to delve into the rabbit hole was at a very early age, so all normal experiences and healthy development were arrested as my decision making and habits were all fueled by mind altering substances. What began as the snowball effect – lying to my mother, sneaking out or getting suspended from school - eventually became the avalanche of me getting shot by the police, getting caught stealing from my job, becoming homeless to the inevitable graduation to the drug of my ultimate demise: CRACK COCAINE. Where marijuana was the social butterfly, crack cocaine was a hideous monster that nightmares are made of. This drug demanded all of my attention and time which I gladly gave, not knowing that this submission was to include my soul.

To meet the imposition that this drug made of me, I had to grow and evolve which means that I had to lie better, steal bigger, network better, and care less. Drug addiction was my chosen profession and I really thought I was good at it. It never dawned on me that every time I even thought about committing a crime, I got arrested. I charged this to “the game” kind

of like a “time out,” plus I needed an oil change and to gain a few pounds back anyway. Today, I recognize my some 60 incarcerations as the divine interventions that they actually were. Although I had plans to be a crack head forever, God had other plans for he never forgot that lonely child who just wanted to fit in.

Unfortunately, the consequence of my ignoring God’s attempt to get my attention has cost me most of my adulthood which has been spent in and out of state and county prison facilities, including the 25 year sentence I am now serving. I’m sure you’ll agree that 25 years is quite enough time to realize that a change is needed. The question I had was how? How do I change what has taken 46 years to become? How do I unlearn the bad habits and bad decision making that I’ve considered survival skills?

Afraid that I wouldn’t see the streets again until I was too old to fend for myself, I desperately wanted to change. Where was I to find the blueprint to becoming a man? There aren’t too many teachers in the environment I now inhabit. Television taught me that if I can’t throw or dribble a ball, sing or dance, that my only other choices were drug dealing or pimping, and I didn’t get that right the first time around. The radio wasn’t much different, with the bottle popping and making it rain, and I sure couldn’t twerk my way to success. I’m a bit overweight so it wouldn’t be a pretty sight! So, again, I was faced with the pursuit of trying to grow up. I thought about that for a few years, just passing the days away. The one day, an inmate invited me to a Quaker Meeting.

I’d never even heard of a Quaker, so a million things came to mind. When I finally went to the Meeting, I noticed how intimate the setting was. I was surprised that people

were actually interested in what was going on in my life. I noticed that the commitment that the volunteers made as they came week in and week out, braving the weather and the humiliation of entering a prison and being searched and herded through the halls. I found that I looked forward to sharing my own insight because, for once, people were really listening. Before I knew it, I was learning how both to give and to receive love unconditionally. Instead of trying to decipher a parable, I was learning how to live GOD! With this lesson, I learned to love myself as well, despite the guilt, shame and disappointment associated with my life for so long.

Sure, I still experience rough times, but today, I’m not alone. I’ve got people who actually care about me which is a long way from the way I made people feel in the past. Stuck behind these walls of brick and steel, it’s not hard to feel like that same lonely kid who stuck his hand into a hornet’s nest, but today, as a Quaker, I know that I’m not alone because I’ve got a whole lot of friends.

Growth and Change

By David Zeller, South Mountain

Growth: Develop naturally, produce by cultivation and increase.

My friend, Kent Brewer, introduced me over nine months ago to Quaker meetings by suggesting I attend. I have been in attendance every Saturday since. I believe spiritually, I was stagnating even though I would read the “Our Daily Bread” publication and corresponding Bible verses, every day.

Now with Friends, meeting every week, and our allotted time of silence, I have grown spiritually by asking that others besides

myself be held in the Light. I have received some answers to some problems too, during quiet times.

I've also grown with the knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a Quaker, or a Friend. I enjoy the fact that Quakers accept people of all beliefs, cultures and races. And I believe that I've grown and matured through the knowledge and wisdom coming out of our meeting with other friends.

Change: Alter, make different, transform, and undergo a transformation.

Change is a constant. We and our world continually change and evolve. My tongue is sharp; I speak my mind; and I call a spade a spade, but I try not to be derogatory or disrespectful. I can push that to its limits; however, since attending here at South Mountain Friends Fellowship meetings, I have changed that. Under our circumstances, I've slipped. But I am to the point where it's two steps forward and one step back. I have changed in my ability to meditate spiritually as in our time of silence at our meetings.

Another way called mindfulness based stress reduction (MSBR) was introduced to me. It was developed in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn, an MIT graduate and scientist. By practicing this MBSR and continually persisting to be silent during Meetings, I've changed. My mental illness used to get in the way of my silent times. Paranoid schizophrenia has now been put in check most of the time during our meditation periods in our meetings, and when I use time to try MBSR elsewhere.

My attitude toward my sister's feelings about communicating with me, not wanting to at the present time, has changed also. The

fact that she has not forgiven me either has also changed. My choice is to accept the way she feels about me and to forgive her. I hold Diana in the light, just as I have also done with her oldest daughter, Royann, and her two children, Austin and Savahana and Diana's youngest daughter, Lorriel, as well. One must also be open, receptive and willing to change.

I'm working toward other changes in my life now, too. It seems when it comes to human beings, that growth and change are entwined together. When you grow, you change and mature, and vice versa. As far as we're concerned, if you think about it, you can hardly have one without the other – growth and change.