

PRAIRIE FIRE

Newsletter of the Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society

Volume 12, No. 23
April 15, 1976

EDITOR: Barbara Willard

PRAIRIE CALENDAR

- FRI
APR. 16 PARTY CALLED OFF Contrary to prior announcement, there will be no party and slide presentation at Theron's on this date.
- SUN
APR. 18 10 AM EASTER-FAMILY SERVICE Will everyone please bring bread or finger foods of some sort to share at our Easter feast; also a symbol of spring, rebirth, Easter etc. to hang on our Easter tree. New members will be welcomed.
- SAT
APR 24 TRIP SCRATCHED There will be (sob!) no trip to Chicago Art Institute on this date.
- SUN
APR 25 10 AM SERVICE-POLITICAL GAME PLAYING : The Chippewa River Dam Struggle. A political game in which members of the congregation are divided into groups to act out an hypothetical struggle over river development policy.
- SUN
APR 25 6:30 PM PRAIRIE THEATER PARTY A trip to see "Sleuth" sponsored by Prairie Playreaders. Linda Plum, 836-5547 is coordinating.
- SUN
MAY 9 10 AM SERVICE-"SWISS CHEESE, WORMHOLES, AND TALKING BICYCLES": A discussion of ideas and pictures from Bob Toben's Space-Time and Beyond.
- SUN
MAY 9 7 PM SPECIAL PARISH MEETING to resolve problems connected with the prairie site. See below for details.
- SUN
MAY 16 10 AM SERVICE-STRANGE THINGS THAT GO IN A CIRCULAR MOTION: a slide show and discussion of artifacts, art works structures and happenings, and planning of final Prairie Ritual for next week.
- SUN
MAY 23 10 AM FINAL SPRING RITUAL AND FAMILY CEREMONY
- SUN
MAY 30 PRAIRIE PICNIC

May 9 Special Parish Meeting

At the Parish meeting on April 4, a resolution was offered delineating a proposed position on the Prairie Site (also known as the "Prairie prairie") which was tabled until May 9. The consensus was that the congregation was insufficiently knowledgeable to make a wise decision on this important subject at the time of the general meeting. Background information and an overview of the situation will be provided to the membership before the May 9 meeting, so that we can proceed with adequate information.

AGENDA FOR THE MAY 9 PARISH MEETING

7 PM Call to order

- Minutes of the previous meeting
 - Old business- resolution of the board concerning the Prairie site
 - Other business
 - Adjourn
-

Living Quarters

Room in Co-op style house, 2305 Regent Street. We share cooking and housework. House has full basement and fireplace, lots of room and natural wood work. A good comfortable place. Bill Hafner 238-8994.

By-Law Revision

The Annual Parish Meeting appointed a three person ad hoc committee to overhaul and revise the Prairie Society By-Laws, which are perceived by a number of members to contain anachronisms and to reflect current Prairie concerns less than adequately. If you have any concerns you want considered, please convey them to Mary Slabaugh, Al Nettleton, or Barbara Willard. The more help we get, the more thorough and satisfactory job we can do.

Meet Annis Pratt

(First installment of an interview with our Lay Minister, Annis Pratt- by George and Ruth Calden.)

Q: Annis, could you start off by telling us a little about your upbringing and your family background?

A: I grew up and went to school on the upper east side of New York City, in a German section of town. I attended a finishing school that was supposed to prepare you to get into Vassar or Smith. I went to Smith, like my grandmother.

Q: Was that the grandmother who was a member of the Vilas family?

A: No - that one was from Milwaukee. She married Charles Vilas, who was one of the Madison Vilas'. William Vilas, the one connected with the Vilas Park zoo, is my great grand uncle. My grandmother and grandfather were actresses and actors. They were arrested in Evanston because they were caught rehearsing a play about murdering each other. They were using a retractable knife, but the neighbors didn't know this, when they saw grandfather lying "dead" on the floor. They were very dramatic people who got into trouble wherever they went. Ultimately, they ended up in New York City.

Q: What did you study at Smith College?

A: At Smith and at Columbia I was in English literature. I was training myself to be a myth critic. This is a person who researches the use of myth and liturgy. My PhD was on mythology in Wales - Dylan Thomas. While researching this I discovered there was a branch of Unitarianism in Wales. Dylan Thomas's uncle was one of their ministers. They believed in the presence of divinity in

nature. It derived from a branch of Druidism, the pre-Christian nature worship religion of Wales.

Q: At this time you weren't involved in Unitarianism?

A: Not at all. My family was Episcopalian. By the way, I also wrote on William Blake. He was a Unitarian, but he didn't know it. I came to the U. of W. in 1959 to get my M.A. After I met Henry I got my PhD at Columbia. I met Henry on the boat coming home from England. Right now I'm working on women's myths as separate from men's. We usually equate Western history and civilization with male myths. I'm looking at every novel and poem that every woman has written since 1600.

Q: What are you hoping to find?

A: Everytime I look for something I find something different. For example, at first I swore that women were not really different from men. My whole political belief was in equity. But the material showed me that women were different from men. So I had to suspend what I thought in the first place and I had to believe what the material told me. After all, women have had 10,000 years of repression and hiding what they feel behind all sorts of disguise mechanisms.

Q: Did you teach before you came to Madison?

A: I got my PhD the same day my daughter was born. We put our certificates on the wall, next to each other, to prove something. I then got a job as a lecturer at Emory College in Atlanta, Georgia. They fired me later because Henry was also teaching there. I got very angry at this, so I phoned Betty Friedan. She and I set up the first women's movement in Georgia in 1967. At that time I got a job at Spellman College, a black women's college. Then Henry was fired from Emory, and got a job at Georgia Tech. From there he went on to Wayne State in Detroit, Michigan. I couldn't get a job there or anywhere else in the area. So when I got this offer I came here to Madison in 1971. I'm full time, a tenured professor in the English department. I also helped set up the Women's Studies Program, where I have a courtesy appointment. I'm on the search and screen committee to find a chairwomen for that program. In the English department, out of 30 tenured positions, only two of us women are tenured.

Q: Could you tell us something about the books you've written?

A: Yes. The book about mythology is called "Dylan Thomas's Early Prose - A Study in Creative Mythology." Then there's a book on Doris Lessing, which is a collection of essays. It has an introduction by me. Then, the book I'm currently writing, which is in manuscript, is on feminism and fiction. My favorite book, which is out looking for a publisher right now, is called "The Transparent Woman." It's a poetry book.

Q: Do you have plans for other books?

A: Oh yeah. I'm working on a new one that ties in with my Prairie ministry. It ties in with folk lore. The whole thing I'm doing now is called "Feminism and the Literary Mind." The first volume is 600 pages long and it's finished.

It's sitting at the publisher's. It took five years. It started in 1970. I've had 4 co-authors and 3 assistants. It's a ten year project. The next volume will be a history of women poets. I'm starting with their oral history and their needlecraft history. This is in England and America. But I have to get into European folklore as well.

(The second exciting installment, dealing with Annis's views of the Prairie

society will appear in the next issue of Prairie Fire.)

Advance Notice of Lecture:

Ivan Illich (author of Deschooling Society and other books) will deliver a public lecture at 8 pm Thursday, May 20 at Union South. Illich's topic will be "Medical Nemesis and the Curse of Superindustrial Counterproduction." For further information call John Ohleger 251-8894.

Notices

The NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet is April 24 at the Edgewater. Speaker will be Gary Hatcher, mayor of Gary Indiana. For details call Rita Reffner 231-1816.

Volunteer Braillists, Inc. is accepting applications for a Braille class starting in September. Mrs. David Reynolds, 233-4096.

Ballet

May 1, at noon in the old Montgomery Ward Building, which is part of the new Civic Center on State street, the Dane County Arts Council is sponsoring a free hour long ballet presentation, choreographed by Barbara Carson.

Milestones

Wasn't it nice to see Betsy Roberts' good smiling face among us again last weekend!....The Carsons are visiting in California this weekend, making the acquaintance of the people who were climbing with their son Bruce when he met a fatal accident last year....John and Leslie Miller made it up from Chicago to see us two weeks ago, which is always a joy. Pat Watkins has made her long term intimate relationship with Prairie legitimate by signing the membership book... Marian Briggs is up and around, after a bad time with a thoroughly broken arm she sustained in a fall.

New Board Members

The officers elected at the April 4 parish meeting who will serve for the coming church year (1976-77) are:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| President---Pat Cautley | Finance--Laura Smail |
| Vice president--Charlie Davidson | Housing&prop--Roland Parrish |
| Secretary---Rachel Siegfried | Long Range Plng--Norma Briggs |
| Treasurer---Elizabeth Harald | Committee on Committees: |
| Religious Ed.---Paula Elkins | Melinda Roznoy |
| Social Action---Betty Jallings and
Dean Schroeder | Linda Pluim
Richard Perry |

Beer Cans

John Briggs is starting a beer can collection. People who drink (particularly exotic) beer out of cans are encouraged to open them from the bottom if possible, and save them for John. 256-3445. Andrew Seidl is also in the field, and would also appreciate consideration. 221-0859.

Bowling and Chess

Due to editorial incompetence, the announcement for these activities was bollixed up last newsletter. People interested in either activity are requested to get in touch with Pat Watkins (preferably in the morning) 233-5795. There are also sign up sheets on the Prairie bulletin board.

Quote from Pilgrim at Tinker Creek - ~~re That Lawn~~ Next to Portal Poster

John Cowper Powrys said, "We have no reason for denying to the world of plants a certain slow, dim, vague, leisurely semiconsciousness." He may not be right, but I like his adjectives. The patch of bluets in the grass may not be long on brains, but it might be, at least in a very small way, awake.

Annie Dillard

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