

PRAIRIE FIRE

Newsletter of the Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society

Volume 13 Number 7
December 5, 1976

Editor: Terri Laurence 845-7817
Mailing List: Mills Miracle 231-1649

- Sunday - DECEMBER 12 "The Decline of the Saturnalia, from Ancient Rome to Contemporary Office Xmas Parties"
led by Warren Hagstrom
- Sunday - DECEMBER 19 "Family Christmas Service"
- Sunday - DECEMBER 26 "Varieties of Christmas Music"
led by George Calden

INTERESTED PRAIRIE ARTISTS - - -
who'd like to participate in the Arts and Crafts benefit for the Social Action Committee on December 12, please contact Barb Dykert at 271 - 5120.

ON MONDAY - - -
December 13, a regular Board meeting will be held at Portal-Foster. Everyone is welcome, and encouraged to attend.

THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PLAYREADING - - -
will take place at Pat Watkins', 2419 Norwood Place, on Saturday, December 18, at 7:30 p.m.. Phone: 233-5795

NEXT DEADLINE - - -
for Prairie Fire is Sunday, December 19. Please be prompt.

CIRCLE WEDNESDAY - - -
December 29 on your calendars. The annual Prairie Christmas party will be at the home of George and Ruth Calden. Festivities will get underway about 8:00 p.m..

CONGRATULATIONS - - -
to the eldest daughter of John and Shirley Grindrod who gave birth to a son, Elijah Daniel, in Ithaca, New York.....at home, with the help of a midwife.

from somewhere in Texas

"Dear Friends,
My thoughts often wonder about "you all" and look forward to the mail which brings some news via the Prairie Fire.
Have enjoyed my travels tremendously and visited State and National Parks galore. My first stop was with Betsy Roberts, and after the Kentucky mountains came the Smokies, Cumberlands, Ozarks then the Texas hill country. Stayed 2 weeks in Austin, even went to church there....spent a wonderful day at the Arkansas Wildlife Refuge, but then a storm made staying at the coast too cool. I keep looking for my perfect spot and am happy not to share the snow and cold with you.
Wish you all a good Holiday Season. Should anybody feel like writing me, mail is being faithfull forwarded by Rachel; send either to Fern Ct. or give to R. directly. Would enjoy hearing!

Love,
Lilo Koehl"

INTERVIEW with Mike Briggs....over coffee with George and Ruth Calden

Q: Mike, would you say something about your own roots?

A: I was born in a small town of 2500 people in Holt, England, in the county of Norfolk. It's a part of England that's entirely agricultural. But my background was entirely urban. I was raised in a house that had no backyard and the house fronted right on the village street. We had no garden; we raised nothing. It's only in the last few years that I've touched a green plant. My father ran a bakery and a little restaurant.

Q: How would you describe your religious background?

A: Conventional Episcopalian, Church of England, Anglican Church. I went to Sunday School. When I was nine, I got drafted into the choir where I got my first real crack at music. The singing I did was treble. I can't conceive of myself as a treble anymore. I can't even sing good falsetto these days.

Q: When did you decide to live in America rather than England?

A: Norma and I met, were married while we were in college in England. Settling in America wasn't a decision. It was something we fell into. We came here to go to graduate school, and attended Duke University and the University of North Carolina. At no point did we say "We are not going back; we are staying". It just happened. I started out in English but quickly discovered that I was not any sort of English scholar. Then I got a degree in library science. Norma got her Master's degree in social work. I worked as a librarian for 12 years before I left to get my law degree at the University of Wisconsin. I'm not into any particular branch of law. I don't want to get too specialized. I'd like to keep my options fairly open. I tend to be interested in the legislative process: law making -- the extent to which popular rather than special interest groups can assist and make their wishes known.

Q: How did you and Norma find your way into the Prairie Society?

A: We had been members of the First Society, having joined in '68 or '69. We wanted to give the kids something of a grounding in religious culture. It was something we weren't particularly competent in doing ourselves; I don't believe in anything supernatural at all. And that includes mysticism and ESP. I would define myself as a rationalist. But because the kids wanted this and needed it, we signed up at First Society for that. We attended the Friday night group there, then that folded. We knew a lot of people in the Prairie Society, and living just 3 blocks from the Portal Foster Center made it easy to attend. (It was in '74 that Norma and I decided to go to Prairie, and see what it was like.) We've been faithful attenders ever since. We haven't insisted the kids come. Only two of the four attend with regularity.

Q: What has been your reaction to the lay ministry program at Prairie?

A: I think the lay ministry works; I like it a lot. It makes for a much freer organization. It gives us a structure we need -- that we wouldn't have operating purely with a Program Committee sponsoring a series of unrelated programs. The lay minister takes responsibility for a chunk of time, and develops a series of related programs.

Q: Could you comment on your own lay ministry?

A: I've enjoyed it. I wish there had been more time. There were many topics I would have liked to explore more deeply, but there never seemed to be nearly enough time at each service to do so. I may yet do some more programs in the future if the Program Committee will permit it. I would like to do programs on Shakespeare and the Anglo-American legal system. My lay ministry was helped by observing others run their services; I became aware of what I wanted to borrow and whether I wanted to develop my own style. You can learn from others' successes and others' failures.

PROFILE on Hermine Davidson from Theron Caldwell, D.R.E.

Hermine Davidson is a U.U. pillar, and we reap her benefits. She has taught our kids for half of each of the past four years. This fall she works with team teacher, Kim Loucks, in the 3rd, 4th and 5th grades...comparing our culture, presently native Americans, with others. (The group is constructing a teepee, having first figured out all the whys and wherefores. The children will use it to camp out next summer, and it'll work because of their own research!)

Hermine graduated from UW Madison in Dance, taught in Martha Graham's N.Y. company, and understudied there. Returning to Madison with husband Charlie and siblings Lisa and Rob, she became active in the First Society. Through '67 she worked on their R.E. Committee, conducting assemblies for their entire group as part of their morning classes. (While serving as Vice-President of First's Executive Board, the decisions to purchase the Prairie Site and begin the Prairie Society were made. She and Charlie have been very "up-front" with us since.)

What makes Hermine teach? "To inspire an "awe" in our children for those who do things differently -- across time and peoples. To help us find out for ourselves the important facts needed to respect the living of the world. And dance is always incorporated into this reaching out to understand. "Everybody", she says, "has a need to move, and moving together is, of necessity, a unifying experience."

AWAKENING II

Caught. Up in a tree. I grabbed
branches slipping
away from me trying
to hold, and change my fall.
Calculating the wind and the gravity,
planning ahead
like those signs that run off paper,
Afraid and tense, letting go,
falling I find
feathers.
I giggle and sneeze
not broken
not broken at all.
Lying here, looking up
I'm looking
down and around.
Life whirls around me. Today,
today, today -- it plays
in a phonograph groove.
Tears flip over into laughter
both of them build me
inside out.

If you fall into a circus,
watch the show.

Ester Hauser Laurence

(Terri Laurence says: "I've been happy to make the small contribution of putting this newsletter together over the past few months" --- Prairie members would like to express their appreciation and thanks for her efforts and help.)

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CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

BEST WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR

The Middle School group will carol the night of December 19. Please meet at Willard's at 8:00 p.m..

"Laurence's pigs have gone to their reward (in the freezer) and while we're not about to offer any of the pork chops, the amount of lard is overwhelming! Any who want to make a lot of pie crust, Mexican food, slick down hair or whatever, let us know, and we'll supply the greasy white stuff. Joë and Terri"