

## **I Love Change...Confessions of an Adventurous Spirit**

### **Patricia Newkirk**

I am curious about two phrases that seem to be in constant tension these days (any days?). “People hate change” and “people want change.” Well yes, both. When I was young my dad worked for the U.S. Forest Service. Back then they had a corporate philosophy that moving staff from one place to another was essential to the culture. So we moved, on average, every 2½ years. I don’t know if my deep love of change has to do with my early years or if I just happen to show up in life as an adventurer...but I love change.

When my husband of 27 years and I were trying to decide about the future of our marriage we had the biggest disagreements over how we envisioned the next phase of our lives. I wanted adventure – the opportunity to move, see new things, and maybe give my energy to something that was outside the box, even a little risky.

About that time I heard a guy on NPR talk about his experience of being an adventurer. He said he couldn’t explain it but occasionally (actually about every 3 years) his wandering spirit started looking for something adventurous to do. It drove his wife crazy as he planned a trip to the Artic Circle or to the top of some remote mountain. It is the Antarctic that calls me and his description of his self as an adventurer resonated within me.

During the last almost 6 years at the William Penn House I have enjoyed deepening my Quaker faith, delighted in living in community with young adults, and been gratified and surprised at how a run-down space could be transformed into something with simple elegance.

As these years have gone by I have had time to be alone and to listen to my heart in a way that is quite different from when I was married or had children at home. I have been able to explore where my spirit wants to be engaged, what makes my heart sing. I found myself spending more and more time outside. I spent hours in our front garden. I took the Extension Agency’s Master Gardener class. I worked on an organic farm on my day off. Arriving at the garden I was exhausted from the week and found myself restored at the end of a hard day of physical labor in the garden. It took a while for that paradox to sink in.

I read “Animal, Vegetable, Miracle” by Barbara Kingsolver. I read “The Omnivore’s Dilemma” by Michael Pollan. I remembered my sojourn in Western Kenya, surrounded by the silence and the beauty of a place unmarked by electricity. I was moved beyond words by the simple abundance of the Earth.

My adventurous spirit began to imagine my next adventure. Could I find a place to work outside everyday? My daughter lives in the Pacific Northwest and I have always wanted to go back to that lovely corner of the world. So when she called to say she was expecting a baby and why didn’t I think about moving up there soon, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to see how way might open.

Today I am happily engaged working at an organic farm three days a week. I am earning my rent on a lovely apartment on the Olympic Peninsula by working on a beautiful rhododendron farm and I spend two lovely days a week taking care of my grandson.

My adventurous spirit is satisfied by the fact that I am doing all of this on a barter basis, a little bit edgy and lacking the security that we as Americans have come to assume is essential. I have been here less than a month and it is clear that the abundance of the Earth is going to fund my needs.

My years at the William Penn House fed my soul, they challenged me and allowed me to grow. I will miss many of you terribly. The House is a small gem nestled in Quaker circles. It provides a space for Quakers young and old to gather and explore their faith, for Quakers to engage with the world in dialogue around the testimonies and an opportunity for those unfamiliar with Quakers to encounter us for a day or two while staying at the House. I am filled with gratitude for my time there and am holding the House and all of those who care for its ministry in the Light.