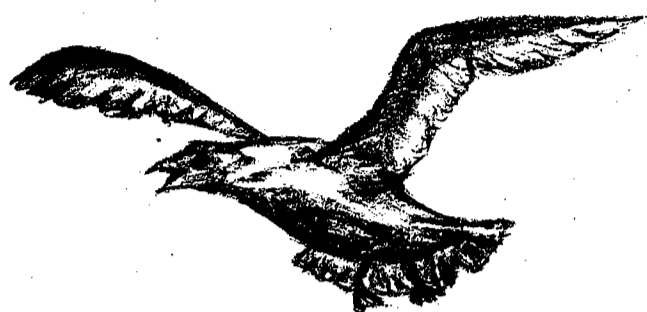


SUMMER 1987

SYNAPSE

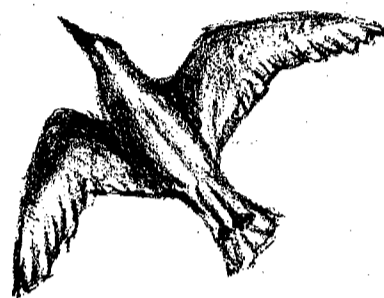
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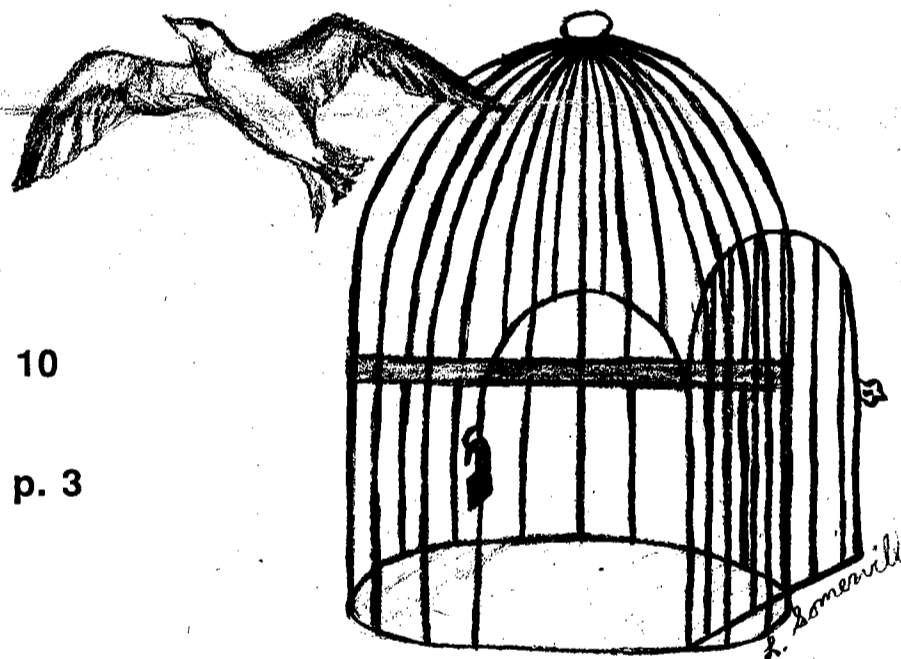
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THE FAITH OF THE FREE

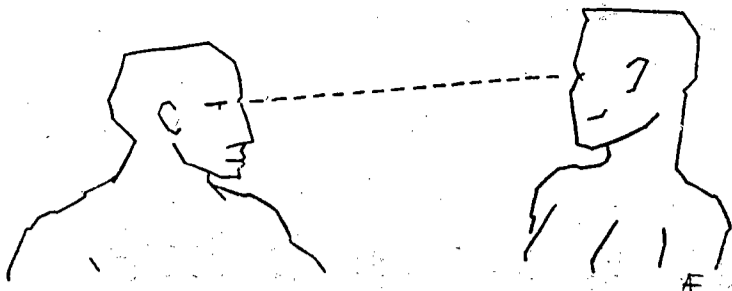
Synapse - a publication of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists
Next Issue's Theme: **Spirit Song** (*YRUU As A Spiritual Community*)
- Deadline for Submissions: **Sept. 15**



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YRUU'ers,

I love writing letters, and I love meeting new friends. I know many of you do too, but I know how hard it is to find people like yourselves to write to. Therefore I decided to do something about it, UU MATCHMAKERS! If you are interested in meeting another UU penpal, just send me your name, address, age, sex, and a little about yourself, and I'll try to connect you to another friend-hungry UU like yourself!

Write to: Paul Klipp
3625 Warick Dr.
Dallas, TX 75229

P. S. I will also need a stamped envelope to help cover the cost of the service. Thanks; I look forward to hearing from you.

Paul Klipp

P. P. S. Love to Misha, P.J., Shawn, Lisa, and the whole wonderful Austin group.

To Riq and Ryk -

I worship the reality in which you do or do not exist. And I haven't forgotten you, you scum puppies.

Luv,

Your Favorite Month

I miss and love you, my SWUUSI pals--NitWhit, Sky, Hope, Stacey, Adam Man, Johnny Boy, Jason M., Jason F., David P., Rusty C., Gayle K., David G., Debbi W., and Jodi B.--write me, people!

Ellen S.

Steve,

You will always be a part of me,

No matter what happens, I'll love you always.

Still Stuck in the Mud

Chris--

Pep Chews, Cadbury cream eggs, sex class, hard gum, warm fuzzies, remember *me*!

I love you

Lucia

P. S. SPRING?

To N. Reby Lewis:

Now you're really part of it. (I've got you.) Roll on Mini.

Love,

Beck Bear

Hey SINFUL SKINS of Con-Con '86.

Take a walk on the wild side! How about a repeat performance this year?

Love, Leia

Alyce and Emily, etc.:

Thanks 4 the communique. Shall I C U in June?

Kris

I WANT PICTURES!!

If you have any from the Ohio Valley conference write to me, send prints, take them to the next one, *anything*! Please?! Unfortunately I have none of my own to trade, but money is negotiable.

P.S. If a pair of bright blue Sox or black shades rode home with you and refuses to divulge its owner's name—it's me. Let me know if they're still alive and we'll discuss ransom. I am:

Laurie Tryon
8570 Rockville Rd.
Indianapolis 46234

Jessica,

I am so very, very sorry that your name wasn't on the list. Can you ever forgive me? That doesn't mean that I *forgot* you. You are my favorite dance partner.

Love ya--

The Guilty One

Liz--

Thank you for being such a kind, warm, loving, and understanding friend. I will always love you.

Chris

Wonderful Teresa,

I still miss you and love you so much! Everytime I hear "Bridge Over Troubled Water," I think of you. Little Teddy and I are doing great, but we miss you and everyone else so much, we can't find peace. Please send me a post-card from wherever you are!

Chuck Grogan
2415 Nassau St.
Sarasota, FL 33581
Phone: (813) 922-1187

Dear Ben, Kathie, Sonja, Lenore, Lara, Mark, Lisa, Wendy, Laila, Russ, Dawn, Rufus, Ron, Erik, Renegade, Kent, Jon, Jonathan, Josh and Cattie,

You are the best people in the world, and I love all of you to death. Drop me a card sometime! Peace, love and happiness to all forever!

Chuck Grogan
2415 Nassau St.
Sarasota, FL 33581
Phone: (813) 922-1187

Hi Funny Bunnies!

National Workshop for Social Justice . . .

Mrs. Fields' cookies *rule* . . . alone on a desert island . . . TRUTH . . . length or width . . .

digital watches . . .

Colorado clan . . . peace & disarmament . . .

I love you all. Write/call me.

I am alive and awesome:

Kate White (the one with the 100% greensilk skirt)
21 Lake Ave.
Newton, MA 02159
(617) 332-2446.

Denise:

Roses are Red
Violets are Blue
Life is wonderful
And

I love you!
Happy 18-month anniversary and
Happy 18th Birthday!

Love,
Dave

Skip:

We all missed you at Winnipeg IV. It wasn't quite the same. I have your pillow. Green stripes! I WOULD DIE 4 U.

To Charity Naomi Bear
(in sunny CA)

So much makes sense since we talked on the phone. Beware of crazy triangles. Counting the minutes to Con-Con.

Love,
Becky S.

ATTENTION

All you PNWD/YRUUers, especially Jones, Wade, Scott, Dirk, Chris, Aaron N., Aaron A., Anna, Shonele, Jordan, Rachel, Ben, and anyone I forgot--I love you. See you in the spring.

Lucia

Phyllis--OK, you're out of the Netherlands and back in the States--write to me! Sean.

Dearest Frank,

I didn't include your last name because I didn't know how to spell it!!!

Donna and I started talking about the conferences yesterday on the way to school. It started me thinking of Ithaca; that was by far the best one. That place was incredible, and spending time with you made it all the more special.

I've thought of you many times in the past few years, and I would really like to write to you again if you would put your address in the personals.

Frank, I'm not asking for anything now, just remembering then.

Memories of the past
flood the present
and make me smile.

Much love,
Lisa

NOTE: THIS PERSONAL IS WRITTEN IN A HEAVY CANADIAN ACCENT.

To: The Wizard of Oz no longer in KS:

Don't forget, I'm always here (wherever that might be) with you inside of me.

Love,
Babe in Boonies

Pat, Kate, and Mr. Nick,

Thanks for *always* being there. You make me SMILE.
Love, Leia

To God - Thanks, I now know where the Green Couch is. Oh yeah thanks a lot for the shower and the car rides!!!

Love, -The Canadian
living in Boston
P.S. send me a conference list

To the sexy editor of the FT,
I miss you. When will we see each other next? Before you read this, I hope.

Love,
Your fool

PRSNLSPRSNLSPRSNLSPRSNLSPRSNLSPRSNLS
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Givingtreebear:

--You seem so far away yet you see the same sky, wish on the same stars, and howl at the same moon. Glad I don't live on Mars. --Yet if I did: you'd see my star shine, and I would see you --flying.

--Eaglebear

Niddi: Yes, you . . . yac will not be the same.

Bang your body against the wall,

Sway on the grapevine, make faces,

and laugh when you think of me.

I love you. Peace.

--Tracy

Dear peoples,

If you're lookin' for a friend to talk to, someone to share your problems with, and you're willing to give me solutions and advice on my problems, and let me jabber away, then give me a ring, or a letter in this case! Write:

Inga Vickerman
Box 288
Washington, ME 04574
Gimme a ring, Honey!

Stormcrow,

Tell Dar that Cass misses hearing from him! Love & exotic Indian dishes,
Soul Rider

Caprice, Tristan, Laila, July, Andrew H., Bert, Brian (and many more): It has been too long since I've seen all of you--

write to me, dammit! To those of you who want to write to me and have forgotten my address--
Sean D. Elliot, 875 E. 32nd Ave., Eugene, OR 97405, U.S.A.

To everyone and *anyone*,

I like letters! I love hearing from and writing to interesting people from all over! I have recently discovered the JOY of having pen pals! So, if anybody out there has spare time to send a letter, I'll have spare time to send one back. Here's my address:

Misti Hall
12720 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 830-9844 or
(703) 250-5401

P. S. Warm fuzzies to all!

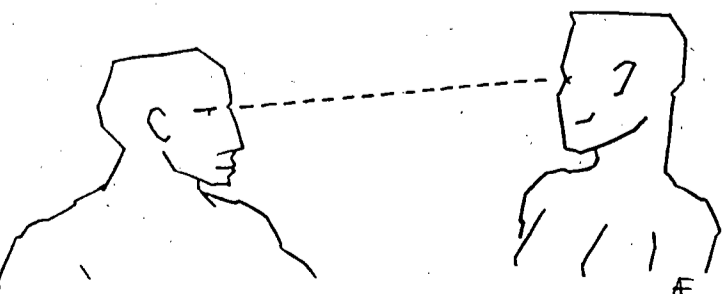
To Renegade/Ren/Sweet Baby René -

I was just thinking about my fateful trip to Colorado, and wanted to say thank you, again, for being so wonderful and taking care of me when I was in need. You're truly wonderful.

-July

To Everyone:

Where & when is the next Ohio Valley confrence? Judith--d'ya like the earrings? John--remember to write! Brett--thanks for listening. Kati, Margaret, et al--ditto. Brent, Larisa, Rachel--congratulations! It was great! Eric--congrats to you, too, and good luck! Linds & Judy--Happy Birthdays (again)! Circle Fellowship--I *loved* your play! It's the day after and I'm very sore--but very happy! Love & Hugs & Write to me
Laurie



SYNAPSE

Are You A UU Without Knowing What It Is?

by Mark Harris, Information Officer for the UUA

For many years, Unitarian Universalists have said that there are thousands of people who are UUs without knowing it. But the question for those of us who are already UU is often, are you UU without knowing what it is? Sure, you have heard we are open-minded, and tolerant, and free to believe all kinds of things. But, what if you want to know where this Uni-Uni faith came from, or what we believe (or not) about God, or what we have to say about peace and justice. Here's a few clues to help grab hold of this slippery faith of ours.

A good place to start is right in your own town or city. My parents always told me, "If you don't know the answer to something, go look it up." If your local library doesn't have anything on UUism, then see if your congregation will buy some books on our history and beliefs and donate them to the library. Your society may have its own library, and even ministers have been known to loan books once or twice in their lives.

One thing that's becoming more and more popular is oral history. Find someone in your congregation who has been a UU for a long time or even (and these

are rare) someone who was born a U or a U (before they became twin UUs). What do they remember about issues, traditions, beliefs in the past? In addition, you can talk to your minister, visit other UU churches, or make a video (this seems to be "in") about your society.

What if you like to write letters? The UUA has all kinds of resources. A good place to start

is with me in the information office. I can send you a wide range of sample pamphlets for free. God or Jesus? Christian or Atheist? UU women with vision? Gay and lesbian rights? There are lots of subjects and even a brochure that lists them all.

Books are available from the UUA Bookstore (you have to pay for these). The Bookstore has a catalogue listing of all the items

they sell. You can also rent audio-visual items from our A-V library, like slides, film strips and videos (yes there is an A-V catalogue, too). Sorry, nothing by the Boss or Madonna, but again you can learn about our history, our beliefs, and the issues we support.

Quite a few youth groups even make trips to 25 Beacon Street for a tour of the UUA headquarters. (Since I conduct these tours, you have to find it interesting and exciting.)

If you are especially interested in issues like racism, feminism, gay and lesbian rights, or peace, you can write directly to our Social Responsibility Department at 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA, 02108-2800 for information.

There is also a UU Peace Network, 5808 Green Street, Philadelphia, PA 19144, and our UU Service Committee, 78 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108.

If these things don't help answer your questions, then give me a call. My job is to know the answers to everything. You might even end up knowing what it means to be a UU.



The National Workshop on Social Justice was a great success with a youth contingency of 20 out of 110 people. Above, participants receive a briefing on political issues before going to lobby congress people. Below, youth with their bunny ears await their appointment with their congressperson.

IARF in the U.S. of A.

by Marianna Tubman

This summer the IARF (International Association for Religious Freedom) is having its international Congress at Stanford University in California. IARF was founded in 1900 by outward-looking Unitarians to promote religious freedom and inter-religious dialogue. Its membership now includes a variety of religious and philosophical groups in Africa, India, Asia, Australia, Europe, and the U.S. and Canada. Recently the IARF has been promoting youth involvement, by offering scholarships and organizing international "Youth Encounters."

The main Congress includes not only assemblies and speeches but also worship services, circle groups, home visits and a Mexican fiesta. This year's theme is "World Religions Face the 20th Century." The Congress runs from July 31 to August 7 and the registration fee for youth (17-25)

is \$25/day or \$75 for the week, plus \$50 for housing at the local Unitarian church. Adult registration is \$45/day or \$150 for the week. Each UUA district has \$500 available for youth scholarships. Contact your local church for information.

The pre-Congress Youth Encounter runs from July 27 to 30 at the Marin Headlands north of San Francisco (site of the 1979 LRY Continental Conference). The Youth Encounter presents a rare opportunity to meet with liberal religious youth from the U.S., Japan, Romania, France, India and the Philippines. Besides the usual fun and games, the Encounter also offers diverse programs such as workshops, philosophical discussion, nature hikes, and a chance to learn about youth organizations abroad. (Sightseeing is also a possibility.) "Youth" means ages 16-35, and the total cost for the 4 days is \$150.

Several foreign participants have already registered for the Youth Encounter. Let's show them North American hospitality and what YRUU is about across the continent.

Registration forms and fees must be sent in advance to the IARF Secretariat in Germany. For details and forms, write to: IARF Secretariat, Dreieichstrasse 59, D-6000 Frankfurt 70, FR Germany.



Frolicking In Toronto

by Ruth Mitland

The Toronto Winter Frolic (Jan 30 - Feb 1) was, I am happy to admit, as much of a success as its name indicates. It was an excellent method for youth all over the district of SLUUD, Canadian and American alike, to shed themselves of all problems for two days of fun.

There were about 85 youth in all. We experienced a variety of workshops which consisted of everything from sensual eating (if you enjoy having pudding slurped off your face by a friend), to astral travelling, to tie-dyeing. We also managed to squeeze in a dance and a speaker from the African National Congress, as well as some old Unicamp videos.

The conference proved an excellent opportunity to not only meet up with old friends, but also to find new ones. The Toronto Youth Group thanks all who turned up, and tells all who didn't that they missed something pretty groovy.

About the Cover Artist

The cover was drawn by Laura Somerville (17 yrs) from Lake Placid, Florida. She doesn't have a local church to go to, where she lives now, but she grew up with the Miami UU church and has been a SUUSI and SWIM participant. She likes playing the flute, listening to music, art, and wildlife.

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4 Local Group Program Ideas: Doing it yourself

Local groups are always looking for new programming ideas. People in locals invent activities, pull ideas from memory and adapt them, trade ideas with each other. But there are resources that can make the quest for program material much easier. Below is a list of ways your group can find new activities.

1) For games, invest in copies of *The New Games Book* and *The New Games Book Volume 2*. These books are full of wonderful games of varying levels of activity, for small or large groups. The games are based on a "win/win" philosophy rather than a "win/lose" philosophy, so that everyone ends up feeling good. Some of these games may already be familiar to you, as they have been passed around a lot in UU circles.

2) Pick an activity that your group wants to learn how to do together, such as massage, tarot readings, bicycle repair, or juggling. Get ahold of an introductory book on the subject and teach yourselves.

3) Worship in local groups is usually a "construct your own" sort of thing, but the more raw materials you have to choose from, the better a worship you can construct. There are many places you can go to get good songs, readings, and other ideas to use in worships. Your church probably has copies of *Hymns in New Form for Common Worship* and *Readings for Common Worship*, both of which have some good stuff in them. Beacon Press puts out many books on spiritual subjects which can provide inspiring readings. (Ask the UUA Bookstore for a catalog.) Your own record or tape collection can be a good source of music. If you are looking for new kinds of things to do in worships, read up on religions from other cultures.

4) If you are interested in social issues or social action, contact the UU Service Committee (78 Beacon St., Boston MA 02108, (617) 742-2120) and ask for their pamphlet on education and action tools, and any other programming materials they offer. You may be particularly interested in *SEEK*, which is described in the pamphlet as, "A handbook to encourage young people to act out their social responsibility by working inter-generationally."

5) For very active, interesting participatory activities on social and political issues, you might try simulation games, such as "Wildfire" or "Bullets and Ballots." Contact the Roosevelt Center for American Policy Studies, 316 Pennsylvania Ave. SE Suite 500, Washington D.C. 20003.

6) If your group is interested in learning more about UUism, take a look at Mark Harris' article

("Are You a UU Without Knowing What It Is?") elsewhere in this issue.

7) Check out what the UUA Religious Education Department has to offer. Both the *Local Youth Group Program Handbook* and the *Youth Advisors' Handbook* can be great resources for a local group. If you're feeling ambitious, try a curriculum. There are some excellent curricula designed specifically for junior- and senior-high aged youth, such as *About Your Sexuality*, *Life Issues For Teenagers*, and *How Can I Know What To Believe*. In addition, there are several curricula designed for adults which may contain materials you would find useful. And finally, the REACH Packet, which comes out three times a year, frequently contains program ideas. For all of these materials, check first to see if your local church has copies. If not, contact the UUA Bookstore

for the handbooks and curricula, and the REACH Editor for the REACH Packet, both at 25 Beacon St.

8) Find out what other people are doing. Get in touch with people in other locals, even other districts, and exchange your best ideas with them. Both your group and theirs will benefit.

9) Even if your group is wary of other denominations, a lot of good material can be borrowed from them. You just need to take what you like and leave what you don't. We recommend the books published by Group Books, Box 481, Loveland CO 80539 (*Building Community in Youth Groups*, *The Group Retreat Book*, the *Try This One* series, and others), and the books published by Youth Specialties, 1415 Lake Drive SE, Grand Rapids MI 49506 (*Play It!*, *Great Ideas For Small Youth Groups*, *Tension Getters*, and others).

Luucy Buuth Answers Your Mail

Dear Luucy,

I have this problem. I mean boys. Three boys have asked me to go with them and I said yes to one and we broke up four days later. It made me kind of mad. But really the thing is even if I had a long relationship with someone I wouldn't be able to go downtown or anything (my mom thinks I'm too young.) I feel like I'm so unpopular and if I became popular what could I do with people? —Glum

Dear Glum,

Even Luucy feels unpopular at times and it is a drag. It's so very normal. But aren't you being a



bit greedy? *Three boys?* Luucy would be satisfied with *that—if* they were good looking. But, to answer your question . . . here is

a list of mother-approved things to do with a guy that don't require going downtown (or anything):

1. Meet at a school dance.
2. Get him to join your church youth group; then get your church youth group to go downtown.
3. Meet him at the library and suggest going for coffee or ice cream afterwards.
4. Tell him you'd love to help him pick out some decent looking shirts and then meet him at the mall.
5. Offer to baby-sit for his little sister.
6. Sit in the park and talk.
7. Play tennis, ride bikes, go swimming, go to the movies, go get a pizza.
8. Be patient.

Dear Luucy,

I am a reasonably sane person. Being reasonably sane I think I like this guy. I also think he likes me too. The problem is this. Even if I knew for sure that he liked me and vice versa I am almost positive he wouldn't ask me out because he is too shy. And don't try to get me to ask him out because I am also a very shy person. I am going berserk with waiting. What should I do? —Very Confused

Dear Ms. Confused,

Now, look. *You* are the one who's "going berserk" which indicates to Luucy that *you* need to take some responsibility here. Do you really want to wait around for him to make the first move? You'll wind up as old and grey as Luucy - (but not nearly as wise, of course.) In my experience, when two shy people are too shy to connect, it is time to call in a third party to act as a go-between. This technique has been used successfully for centuries by good and honest people who's psyches are not immune to the harrowing possibility of rejection. Good luck.

YOU'VE GOT ME WRONG

Do we have your right address?
Do you still want *Synapse*?

PLEASE HELP US UPDATE OUR MAILING LIST.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone () _____

*Birthdate _____

____ Please remove my name
____ Please change my address
____ Please add my name

Mail to: *Synapse*
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA
USA 02108 -2800

YOUTH STAFF POSITION

Applications for the UUA Youth Staff position beginning January 1, 1988 and ending December 31, 1988 are now being accepted.

The successful applicant will: be between the ages of 16 and 22 at the time work begins; have an amiable personality with leadership qualities; have good written and verbal communication skills; have administrative and office skills; have the maturity and creativity to handle an often hectic but rewarding full time job and; have the freedom to live in the Boston area and to travel.

The following qualifications are also considered important: some experience writing/editing a newspaper; YRUU and other leadership experience; the ability to work sensitively and diplomatically with people of all ages; an understanding of Unitarian Universalism and of YRUU history, issues and structure; good mental, physical, and emotional health; and an ability to work under pressure.

The responsibilities include: working with the UUA Director of Youth Programs, in conjunction with the other Youth Staff person, to carry out the administration of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists. Duties will include but not be limited to: preparing a youth newspaper; traveling to district and local groups as outreach; planning and administering conferences and other youth gatherings; participating in meetings of and implementing recommendations of the YRUU Youth Council and Steering Committee; and managing the continental YRUU office. Stipend: \$9700 (US) for the year. Room and board are not paid for but assistance will be provided in finding housing.

To apply: please submit a resume typed or printed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper including UU and pertinent non-UU skills and experience relevant to the above qualifications. Don't forget to include your name, address, phone number, and date of birth. Along with your resume, please submit an application letter and three letters of recommendation.

Questions to address in writing your application letter:

- 1) *What's in it for us?* Include your visions for YRUU, your special areas of interest or focus, your experience with leadership development and problem-solving, and experiences working with different age groups.
- 2) *What's in the job for you?* Include how it will fit into your life plans and personal goals.
- 3) *What is your relationship to YRUU?* What does the "religious" in YRUU mean to you? What influence has YRUU had on your life and what would you like it to have?
- 4) *What are your strengths and where do you feel you need to improve?*

Your Application MUST be postmarked by September 15, 1987 and sent to: YRUU, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108-2800.

Letters To Those Editors

5

Dear Editor,

According to the Spring '87 issue of Synapse, "less than one in 2,800 Unitarian Universalists is Canadian." Actually, about one in ten North American UUs is Canadian, corresponding closely to the 1:10 ratio of total population of the two nations. However, only one in 2,800 Canadians is a UU, a low proportion we seek to improve through the "infiltration" reported in your article and by other means.

Carl von Bayer

Dear Carl,

Alas and alack you are correct that we did make a mistake; however your numbers are also a little off. It is not 1:10 Canadian UU's to North American UU's, it's 1:28. (Somehow two extra zeroes got into the final copy - I suspect it was sabotage.) The correct figure for UU Canadians out of all Canadians is 1 in 3180 compared to 1 in 1376 for Americans.

As for this "infiltration" business we don't know what you mean! (Shhh, comrade! Do you want to give it away?)

The editors

Dear Editors,

The story of how my wife and I met may be of interest to your readers.

Janet Knickerbocker (now Webster) and I were members of YPRU way back in 1931. She was from West Side Church, New York City, I from First Unitarian Church in Lexington Mass. I had been and she was later Chair of YPRU week at Star Island.

We both went to a YPRU conference in Providence, Rhode Island in the Spring of 1932. I don't remember the discussion at Providence, or even the topic. I'm sure we solved all the world's problems then as you are now. In any event, the main topic we pursued was each other! resulting in a 3 year long distance courtship and marriage on June 1, 1935.

Four children and ten grandchildren later we are still active in UUism.

Sincerely,
Albert Webster

Thanks Albert. That should give some of you conference romantics some hope. -The editors

New Staff!!!

Say wah-up doezs! I'm the new Youth Staff in town and I'll be moving to Boston in September to find out how things are going and to offer my assistance in any way I can. My name is Andrew Moeller and I'm a native of Detroit (Motown) Michigan (the Great Lake State). I'll be graduating from High School June 10 and I hope that this position will help me decide where I want to go to school and what I want to study in the fall of '88.

I'm looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible (the more the merrier) at GA, Youth Council and Con-Con this summer. If you have any questions, concerns, or good colleges to

recommend, or just want to chat, my mail box always has room for more letters and my phone is (almost) never off the hook. Until we meet again, namasté, and as Woody Guthrie use to say "Take it easy, but take it!"



Peace and Love, Andrew
12314 East Outer Dr.
Detroit, Michigan 48224
(313) 885-2433

Dear Editor,

I'd just like to share this. In Spring 1986, I ran for the position of student body Vice President with the campaign slogan of: "Dare to be Different; Break Out of the Mold!" The scary part is, I won! and it is very difficult to stay different in the context of high school government. But I try, and maybe I'll make everyone else a little freer and more honest in the process.

In love & peace,
Adam

Dear Synapse,

I am Canadian and I really enjoyed the article about the "Canadian conspiracy". I think that Synapse should run biographies on some of their staff. Because I am from Canada I was wondering where in Canada did this guy (Scott K.) come from? (within Canada) B.C.? Ontario? Why did you choose him? etc. etc.

I also really enjoyed the article "Giving and Receiving Luck" by Brian Parrish. I really like his articles and poems. Is he a member of the staff? I also think you ought to give a whole list of staff other than Editorial Staff? Or is that all the staff? If you could put in a behind the scenes look at how Synapse is made I'd really appreciate it.

From,
Aphra Leach,
Lost in Canada

Dear Lost,

Scott is from Edmonton, Alberta.

Why did we choose him? Sometimes we ask ourselves that, but the selection of Youth Staff is done by the Steering Committee of the continental YRUU Youth Council.

Brian Parrish is just somebody who sent us in a bunch of articles and poems, just like anybody can. (Because you and others liked the things he says, we've included more of his stuff this issue.)

The staff consists only of the editors. All of the writing is done by YRUUers like Brian, and like you. See our "Staff Box" for more information. You will also be interested in the article about Synapse, in this issue.

The editors

Dear Editor,

Please excuse the pun, but the Spring issue of Synapse -- expounding on the theme of the male and female in all of us -- was a refreshing beacon of enlightenment and compassionate good sense.

I was so relieved to experience the calmly reflective messages of the articles -- articles that regarded sexual preference as a choice rather than the usually regarded freaks of nature.

In my own congregation, reportedly one of the most liberal in our district, I have been pained to discover many of us tend to be suspicious and fearful of gays and lesbians because we do not understand they are part of the human family, our brothers and sisters, the person sitting next to you in your pew, the coffee server, the canvasser, the janitor, and so on.

How many of us understand that choice of sexual expression does not equal corruption?

Instead, the Synapse issue treated sexual expression as an inherently okay thing. I find this a much more comfortable, pro-life attitude in which we all win, no one loses.

Synapse and the current UUA Youth Office staff have won my respect for producing such a beacon. I am very proud to add it to my library and to show it to non-Unitarian friends as an example of UUism's ability to flourish in our times.

Yours truly,
Florence Sicoli

Dear Florence,

Thank you for your kind letter. Unfortunately not everyone is as understanding as you. We did have some cancelled subscriptions due to those articles of the last issue.

-The editors

The Letters To Those Editors is a new regular feature that we hope to run at least once a year. Sooooo, if you have any ideas or comments on how YRUU, Synapse, or the universe in general is run, pick up a spray can, chisel, crayon or even a pen and write and tell us. Send the letters to: SYNAPSE, 25 BEACON ST., BOSTON, MA 02108-2800. Don't forget to include your name and address (Name withheld by request)

IRF Conference in Switzerland July 25-August 1

The International Religious Fellowship, of which YRUU is a member, will be holding its 1987 conference in a beautiful village in Switzerland. "Cre-active" is the theme: from "creative" and "active."

Cost: 195 Swiss Francs for adults, 100 Swiss Francs for those under 14 yrs. For more information contact Christian Lohr, Alleeweg 10, CH-8280, Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, or Kathryn Deal, 105 Greene Ave. Brooklyn NY 11238 (718) 298-0043.

Come Be a Part
of an International
Community

SYNAPSE is a publication of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists, the youth organization of the Unitarian Universalist Association, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108-2800 (617) 742-2100 ext. 246. Subscription is free. Three issues per annum. **Staff:** Scott M. Keeler, Meg Wilson, Ellen Brandenburg, Cara Gallucci **Mechanicals:** UUA Publications Department **Editorial Policy**

Articles for Synapse are chosen from among those submitted by Unitarian Universalist youth and adults working with youth, and other interested parties. Articles are chosen on the basis of content and quality, with some preference given to new authors. All written materials are subject to editing before publication, and graphics may be enhanced. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editors or the majority readership. Opposing opinions are welcomed.

Submissions Policy

Each submission must have name and address attached. Multiple submissions accepted. The editors observe the following limits for each author's submissions:

Articles: One per issue of each of 3 types—theme, news, and reflective.

Poems: One per issue.

Personals: Two per issue, up to 50 words each.

Graphics: No limit.

Submissions not used will be kept on file for possible future use. Name may be withheld on request. If you wish to be notified prior to publication, enclose a self-addressed envelope (no stamp necessary).

Advertising

Rates for camera-ready ads for UUA-related groups are:

\$4.00 per column-inch	Quarter page	\$60.00
Half page	Full page	\$200.00

For all other groups, these rates are double. For non-camera-ready ads there is an additional fee of up to \$20, negotiable with the Youth Office. Advertisements do not carry the endorsement of the Youth Office or YRUU. The editors reserve the right to refuse any advertisements.



The Tension Of A Liberal Tradition

The Youth Staff interviewed UUA President Bill Schulz about the theme of the upcoming General Assembly, "Faith of the Free."

If UUism is a faith of the free, what are we free from?

Traditionally the "faith of the free" in a religious context has been understood to be freedom from the imposed authority of either religious leadership or an authoritative scripture, and an affirmation of the individual as the final autonomous source of religious authority. Of course freedom has many dimensions, including a personal dimension and a political dimension, but in religious terms, and in the terms that the theme is being used in the GA, I think it refers to freedom from the tyranny of an outside religious authority.

Do you see any conflict between freedom and the responsibilities of living in community with others?

I think first of all it's important to understand the different ways in which freedom can be construed. There is of course a kind of existential freedom. I would say first of all that UUism affirms that human beings are free agents, that we are not in the hands of an angry god or an inexorable fate which is controlling our destiny. Then we move into questions of political freedom, and freedom within a small community, be it a house or 25 Beacon St. or a church. It seems to me that we have to recognize that there are limits to what we can tolerate as a religious community, and if someone attempts to disrupt a worship service for example, or attempts to prevent other members of the community from fulfilling their own freely chosen ends, then I think we have to set a limit to tolerance. That tension of where tolerance ends, has always been part of the liberal struggle, the liberal heritage.

UUism upholds freedom of belief, yet clearly there are belief systems which we condemn. How can we go about drawing the line?

I think that we set limits by articulating a whole set of principles which we affirm. We have a continuous tradition which has been interpreted differently from age to age but which, for example, affirms the fundamental equality of all human beings. Equality is something which we affirm on faith. We can't prove that it is the right or the wrong way to live. We don't appeal to empirical principles to affirm it.

LEAVING HOME?

Keep Your UU connection when you move away from home. The Church of the Larger Fellowship offers a Student Service for young adult UUs. For \$20, CLF will send its QUEST from September through May and also include you on the WORLD mailing list. This Student Service was developed at the urging of one of our UUs away from home at college who found a need for the connection that CLF provided for her.

She said:

"it made me realize that there was a caring community I could belong to, on which I could rely if necessary. I needed to know there was a community of people out there who like myself were far from a church, or needed a bit more than their church could give them. CLF filled a hole in my life."

To keep the connection through CLF's Student Service, complete the coupon below and send it with \$20 (US) payment to:

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Learning About Faith From

One year on the day before Easter, when my sister Allison and I were getting ready to color eggs, an amazing thing happened. I had boiled eight of the eggs we had just purchased, and then set them on the counter. I went over to the next-door neighbor's house to borrow some vinegar and was just coming back when Allison dashed out the door.

She said — she swore to C eggs was chirping and mal at that — "No, it couldn't b

Sure enough, I picked up it; there was a bird in the instinctively called Mom conceal her doubt. She to Allison dialed, I put the washcloth around it, and a over it. I was trying to kindergarten some years b farmer set up an incubator our classroom, and kept miraculously hatched. So l conditions to hatch our chi

Amnesty

by Jacqueline Alissa Pearce

Too many countries in torture and execute their ci Turkey, violate the rul themselves in internation women of all ages and ba their homes and workpla These prisoners of consci misery and in pain. Their are or if they are alive.

Amnesty International i to help change unjust la internationally. It is an impartial movement that preservation of human goal is to free persons beliefs, race, Amnesty requests trials for all end to torture cases. Amnesty and appeals to do not advocate adhere to the they have agreed to

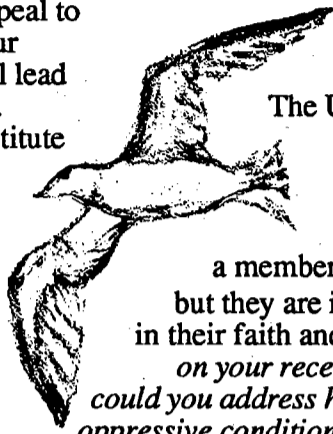
These goals, and Amn motivate me partially beca Universalist goals. The tor have done nothing wron aspect of themselves and th and attitudes. We value f pain, freedom to hold polit be equal and yet different confront problems, and to and happiness.

Amnesty needs suppor public awareness of the dyng alone. By helping A injustice internationally, U our own and others' goals you are interested in lea International, 322 8th Ave

We simply take it as a matter of faith that equality is one of the religious assumptions we are going to make about how best to live in the world.

We also appeal to experience. Our community will lead of conclusions. Purposes constitute to articulate and we simply person cannot may remain if they wish, Universalist

Drawing and Hungary, free faith in



contemporary experience as a us to certain kinds The UUA Principles and our latest attempt those conclusions have to say that if a affirm them, they

a member of our community, but they are in fact *not* Unitarian in their faith and practice.

on your recent visit to Rumania could you address how people practice oppressive conditions?

There are some very clear limits beyond which our sisters and brothers in Eastern Europe are not encouraged to go by the state authorities. On the other hand, there are within a more limit context a variety of issues which the churches are permitted to address. These are largely personal issues: problems in the family, how to live one's personal life, personal morality, personal faith, what to believe about death, suffering, and re-creation. What that means is that the understanding of what a church is all about is circumscribed in Eastern Europe in ways that are very different from here, because for us a church has to have a public dimension to its witness and prophecy which for the most part is absent from our churches in Eastern Europe. So, I think that the answer is that people practice freedom cautiously and within some tighter restrictions than we do here in the west. But what is remarkable is that nevertheless they are able to maintain their traditions, which are very consistent with ours, to maintain their basic faith affirmations even within a climate which we in the west would probably find intolerable.

Would you say that UUism is a freer faith than others?

The basic affirmation of Unitarian Universalism is that the universe, all of creation as we know it, the cosmos itself, is more mysterious than any human being can ever know or at least has ever been able to sense. That frees us from the kind of restrictive metaphors and myths to which other religions may feel themselves bound. On the other hand it also presents us with a problem, which is that we don't have one secure organizing principle or metaphor or mythology around which to center our faith, and that is another perennial tension of Unitarian Universalism. But I would say that if one judges freedom, religious freedom, in terms of one's openness to surprise, from whatever source, then Unitarian Universalism is as free as a religious faith can be.

The Prison Experience: Ho

by Rev. Bob Thayer

Rev. Bob Thayer, minister of the Unitarian Society of Fairhaven, MA, was head chaplain and LEAA counselor in the Sheriff's Department, Middlesex County, MA, from 1972 to 1977.

In prisons there is no freedom as we think of freedom: to go and come, determine our hours of sleeping, waking, working, and loving. In prisons the feeling of freedom vanishes once you are "inside the wall," and the reality vanishes also. Once a human being is stripped of all the freedoms which we take in our stride, then the central issue beyond survival becomes power.

The system of incarceration sets up the power game, and almost all inmates play that game because this is how these men and women existed on the street. Brute strength is power, and so is fear. Find out what the other guy is afraid of and go for control of him. If he is afraid of you because of your looks, then use your looks to control him.

Sex and drugs, television and home-brew: these are the

goodies inside the prison—parole for good behavior. They have needs which n cold turkey for a lot of peo turkey on the streets, so in can get. Sex is there. I sodomized daily by their way—friends bring prote respects it is slavery.

Every prison, old or physically, and some state Virginia are abominable. inside a prison, it is usu including Congress, legis out all the time and never caused by a combination very bad food or a lack of is not listening, or an inma In the average prison there people can get hurt.

"Idle, empty, and wait experience. Some studies

THE FAITH

m Believing In The Unbelievable

by July Siebecker

and it was true — that one of the egg was scratching noises. I scoffed — but she dragged me inside. She held the egg and then nearly dropped it. We both got flustered — I was surprised, trying to get us to call the pet shop. While the egg in a shoebox with a warm small light (Allison's nightlight) lit up a makeshift incubator; in the morning my teacher had had a local complete with unhatched eggs in the nest there until the little chicks started to remember the necessary en.

Internat'l

the world, 128 to be exact, still exists. Many countries, such as those to which they committed laws and treaties. Men and grounds are stolen away from them, and imprisoned illegally. People often die incarcerated, in families have no idea where they

an organization that was created to free political prisoners independent and is dedicated to the rights. Its specific prisoners of conscience, who are held for their sex, origin, or language. fair and prompt prisoners and an and execution in all works through letters to free prisoners of conscience who violence, and to make nations human-rights policies which uphold.

its effort to reach these goals, of their similarity to Unitarian and execution of people who who are imprisoned for one or lives, conflict with UU values freedom, freedom to live without illy unusual beliefs, freedom to JUs strive to face conflicts, to work with others to achieve peace

to free more people and to raise thousands of innocents who are in custody end torture, conflict, and 's can help realize and further universal peace and justice. If ing more, write to Amnesty New York, NY 10001.

Anyway, the petshop told us we were doing the right thing, so we calmed down a bit. We shifted the box over to the piano and put it on the music holder, and used the piano lamp instead of the nightlight.

We went back to coloring eggs . . . But we checked each one first. They were O.K. We went back a hundred times to see how it was doing. We changed the washcloth and looked at it, saying, "Come on sport, hang in there." We planned how, if it hatched, we'd call a T.V. station and they'd do a story on the Miracle Easter Chick.

Then my friend Ricky called up, and when I told him he laughed at me and called me a fool. He's a funny person, Ricky, so I didn't get too hurt. But there was a chicken in there, we heard it scratching. Rusty, another friend, also called, and was also doubtful. I held egg up to the phone, but it wasn't making any noise at the time.

A while later Mom and my big sister Anne came home and acted hopeful. The egg hadn't made any noise for a while, and we were afraid that all the shock of refrigeration and boiling may just have been too great for it. We figured that it had been in a coma while it was refrigerated, and when I boiled it, it was like one of those electric-shock treatment things they do to people when their heart line goes flat, and had shocked it out.

Ricky had his stepfather, Wendal (who was a veterinarian) call me up. He had a good laugh about the whole thing and explained to me all the reasons why there was no way there could be a chicken in there. Neither Ricky's nor my family did anything more religious or ceremonial for Easter than coloring eggs, so he asked me to bring over the egg tomorrow and open it up there. I knew there was a chicken in there, that there was a miracle and they'd see. I had had my moments of doubting that afternoon, telling myself maybe it was only gas escaping as Ricky said, but then every time I heard the egg make sounds again, I knew there was a bird in there. But the egg hadn't made any noise since late afternoon; we were afraid it had died.

That night I dreamed that it hatched and the T.V. men came; and I dreamed that I opened it up and saved the chicken and showed it to Ricky. We named it Sport.

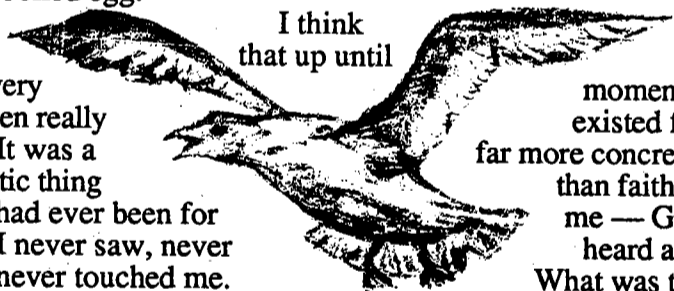
When I woke up on Easter morning I had absolute faith, the kind I've never had in God, that we'd open up that egg and find a bird in there. I *knew* it.

After breakfast, when the egg still hadn't made any noise, Mom and I removed the egg from the piano-nest and I carefully peeled off the shell. It was just boiled egg now. We had thought that the bird was up against one side, because of the scratching, but we guessed that it must just be inside. I carefully broke open the white stuff. It was just a hard-boiled egg.

that very chicken really me. It was a realistic thing God had ever been for who I never saw, never who never touched me.

I think that up until

moment a existed for far more concrete, than faith in me — God heard and What was the



use of believing in something like that, just because I'd been told to? But a chicken, now that was something to believe in. It was warm, soft, and I could hold it like I had in kindergarten and feel the miraculousness of it breathing and moving in my hand . . . and not feel foolish for my faith. Ricky had a field-day of "I-told-you-so"s when he found out about the egg, but strangely enough I never did feel foolish for having truly believed in my Miracle Easter Chick. I suppose it's because wrapped up in a little white shell, fuzzy and oh-so soft, and scratching and chirping to get out, in a way, was my faith. I had found that I could truly believe in something and not feel conned. Chicken or no chicken, it still felt like a miracle.

UCC: Free Faith

by Leslie Wilson

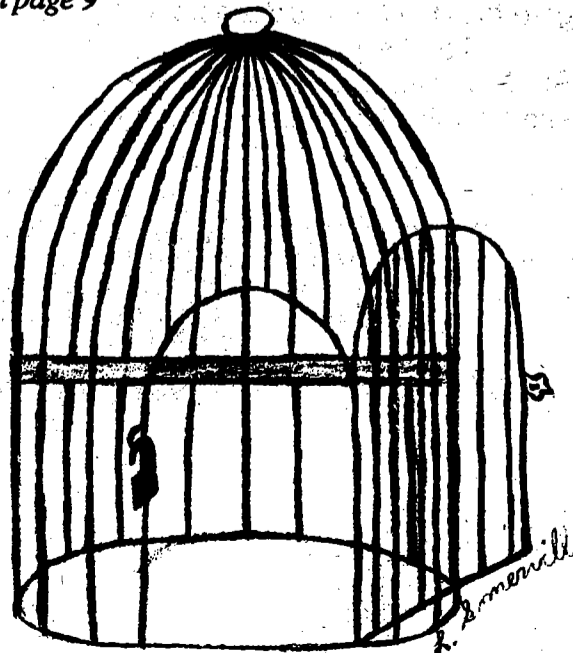
The United Church of Christ is a liberal Christian denomination which acknowledges Christ as the sole head of the church. The basic unit of the UCC is the local congregation; congregations call their own pastors, conduct their own business, and have freedom of the form of their worship services and even of their beliefs.

The United Church of Christ is known as an activist church. Its General Synod (a biennial national meeting) has repeatedly called for racial justice. In 1985 it declared the UCC to be a "Just Peace Church." It has called for congregations to be "open and affirming" toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons. It has called for support of sanctuary for Central Americans. It has called for divestment of UCC holdings in South Africa. It was one of the first church bodies to advocate legal protection for selective conscientious objectors and amnesty for youth who resisted the draft. It has called for equality of rights for women and freedom of choice on abortion. It advocated withdrawal from Viet Nam.

Women's issues are a central concern for the UCC. The denomination has recently published a worship book for congregational use, written in inclusive language (eliminating hierarchical notions as well as sexism). A recent survey shows that though the United Methodist Church has the highest number of ordained women, UCC has the highest *percentage* of clergy-women.

Let me give you a sampling of what a local congregation of the UCC may be involved in. Your correspondent belongs to a congregation (in the small coastal Southern California city of Santa Barbara) that nine years ago called a woman as pastor. In the intervening years, a bathroom was remodelled for handicapped accessibility; the congregation declared itself to be a Sanctuary for Central Americans, giving shelter to an individual and to a family (the first in Santa Barbara); declared itself a nuclear free zone (the first in Santa Barbara); and declared itself Open and Affirming of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Persons. For many years the congregation has hosted a congregation of the Universal Fellowship of Metro-politan Community Churches (MCC), whose ministry is primarily to the gay community; and it provides its facilities during the week to a project for training develop-mentally handicapped adults. The pastor is frequently called upon by local peace and Central American groups to speak at vigils and marches. Recently the church planted "Crosses of Sorrow and Hope" in the church lawn, as suggested by Witness for Peace, to commemorate persons killed in Central America in recent years and those killed by Contras in Nicaragua since the authorization of Contra aid by Congress. About two years ago this church attempted to initiate a shelter program for homeless in its physical plant, but angry and frightened neighbors put an end to the project. However, the ensuing publicity galvanized the community into action, and a coalition of churches was formed

continued on page 9



Lack of Freedom Affects Us

next to the ultimate good of early on and women are only human. t be met somehow. Prison is who would never choose cold a, the average guy wants all he ny younger, weaker men are lends. It is not entirely one-on and rewards. But in most

w, has things wrong with it es like New Mexico and West t when things go badly wrong y because of people, people rs and officials. Riots break ce the papers. Usually a riot is human suffering, sometimes owers, an administration which eader who is hungry for a riot. serious riots twice a year, and

"—this is the universal inmate ow that inmate blood pressure

is 10% above normal and that the average life span of imprisoned men is ten years less than the average for all American men.

But at times the altruistic element comes to the fore. A guy who has killed men in cold blood in his past becomes a listener and mediator on the tier. He can spend his inside years helping poor inmates get prison jobs, or listening to depressed guys cope with broken families, or stopping fights between inmates who lock horns.

The one sustaining asset to an inmate is his or her friends and family who keep interested, who visit or send letters and gifts. Most inmates doing felony time spend less than six years in prison. They are going to get out, and their family and friends provide the chief incentive to change, or simply to endure.

If UUism is the faith of the free, the way we can minister to men and women doing time is simply to hold out the promise and the hope that the person can use their freedom happily and gainfully when that day of parole and freedom does come. Most ex-offenders really do doubt that they can make this freedom work. If you and I know it works, then our knowledge can help them to believe it too.

IF THE FREE

B L A C K B I R D

by Naomi Leite

"Look," she whispers, "that tree, it's covered with blackbirds. Watch them, silhouetted against grey sky, on grey branches . . . do they see us?" Then, tugging on his sleeve, "Well? Do you think they know we're here?"

He shifts uncomfortably, kicking at the gravel, hands shoved deep in pockets of worn and faded jeans. "What's the big deal about a couple of birds?"

Her face smoothes instantly, as ripples on water that break the reflection, then settle back to glass. She becomes his mirror, pushing dirt with the toe of her scuffed tennis shoe. Slowly she sinks to the ground. Blinking, she stares at the sky, pushing back a stray black curl that has escaped from a limp ponytail.

He stands abruptly.

"Hey, you know, I mean, I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings. I mean . . . I just can't understand these kicks you go off on. I just can't see the big deal about a bunch of ugly birds. All they're doing is sitting in an ugly tree. And it's getting cold. C'mon, cheer up. Let's go get some Cokes or something."

He sees how childlike she is, hugging her legs, chin on knees. Something stirs inside him that he cannot name, cannot understand.

He pushes it away, squelches it. One must only recognize what one knows is normal to get along in this world. Any fool could tell him that.

"It doesn't matter now. They've all flown away," she sniffs, wiping her nose on a dirty sweatshirt sleeve. Is it white or grey? she wonders. Well, it doesn't matter, grey or white, it's dirty. Everything's somewhere along the lines of grey lately. She picks up a rock, throws it. Distant splash in water. Silence.

"He's gone," she says aloud, a little confused, startled by the harshness of her voice. Standing, brushing the gravel and dirt off her jeans, she looks at the sky. Blackbirds dancing, chattering to

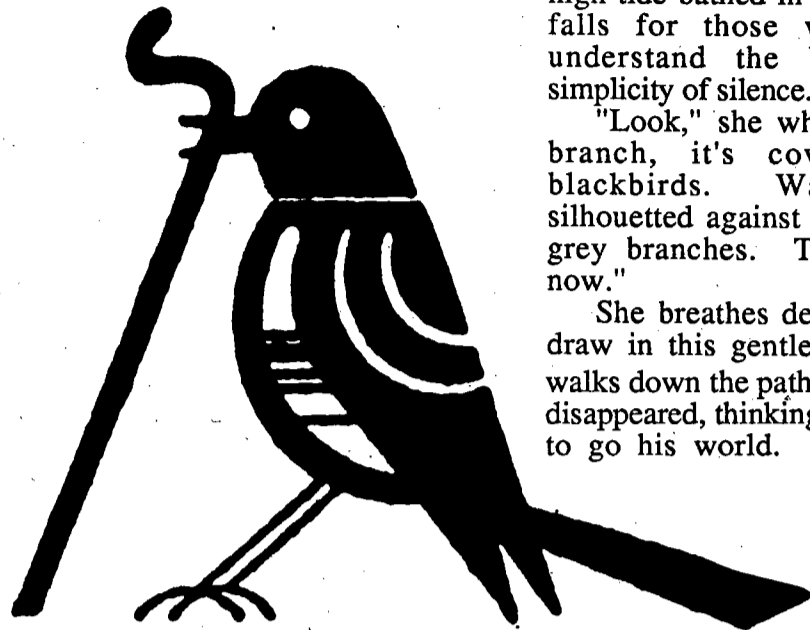
we searching for different gods? I need their freedom, their wings.

Five fly overhead, now dip and swerve, flutter . . . but it's

She sits again, motionless, squatting birdlike, feeling the bars of her world. How caged she is. Emotion washes over her, sea at high tide bathed in mist. A tear falls for those who cannot understand the beauty and simplicity of silence.

"Look," she whispers, "that branch, it's covered with blackbirds. Watch them, silhouetted against grey sky, on grey branches. They see me now."

She breathes deeply as if to draw in this gentle reality, and walks down the path on which he disappeared, thinking that she can go to his world. For she has



... calling to some unknown god

each other, calling to some unknown god. Does anyone else hear them?

"Why can't he see me?" she whispers, leaning against the barren tree trunk, stark and cold as the sky and the water and the world . . . stark as her world.

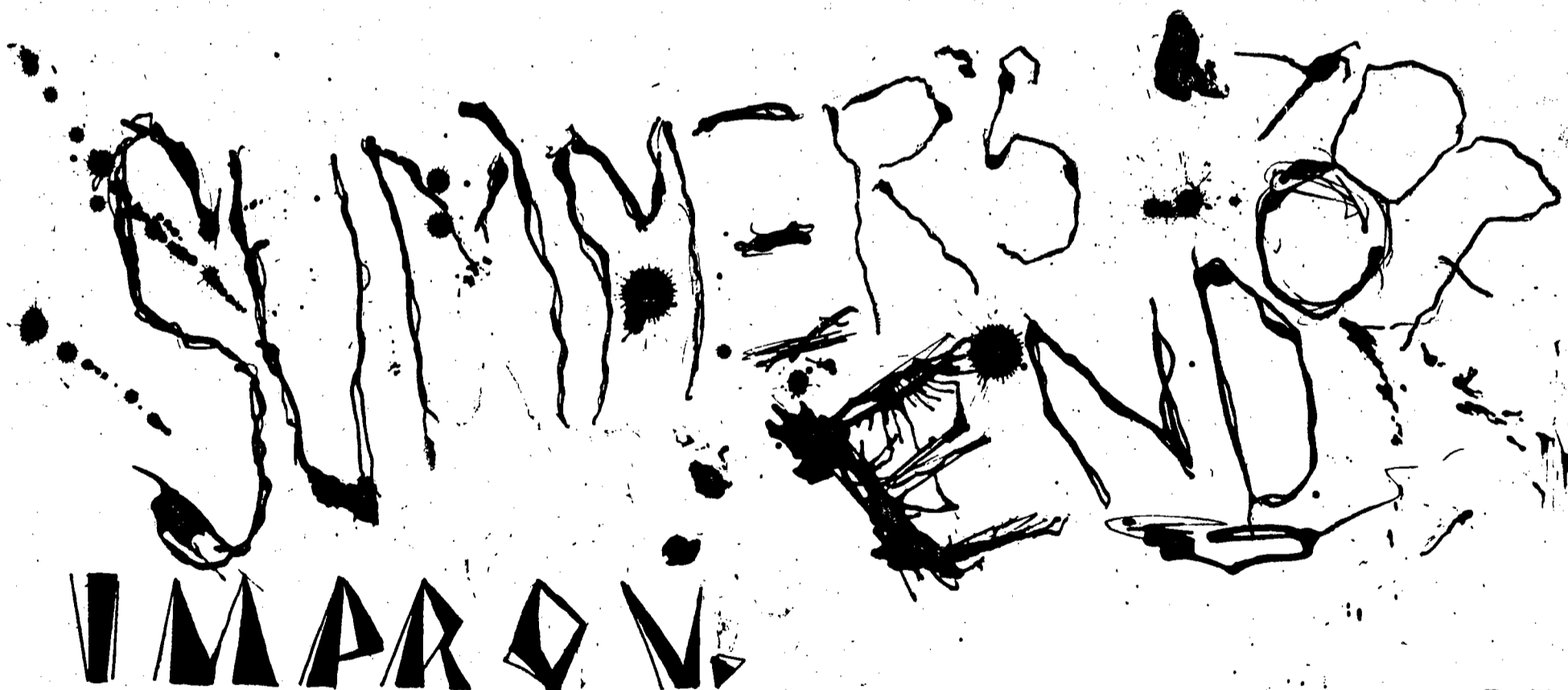
Am I alive? she muses, hearing only the stillness. If I scream, will anyone notice? Will the blackbirds cry with me, or are

getting darker, colder. Hugs herself, wonders where he went, when he'll return, if ever.

If I cried, would he understand? No, I'm alone. She lets out her breath, watching black wings dance and dive. Now two, now three, and the stillness is intensified with the chirping of returning birds. They fill the tree, just as before. All is as before. Only he's not there. It doesn't matter, she tells herself. He can't see them anyway.

found her world inside--the blackbirds, the trees. Embracing their truths as her own, she understands.

A sudden swoop behind her, blackbirds fly, turn and land on stark branches. She calls silently with them, turning her face to the sky, knowing that they have become a part of her. The stillness is filled with a blackbird's song.



THE DRAMATIC DIFFERENCE
AT
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WEST STOCKBRIDGE
MASS.

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Slug: Little Brothers Feature

9

by Brian Parrish

My domain has been trespassed, for another entity stands between me and my life.

He is known as my little brother.

I now propose that all little brothers be folded, spindled, and mutilated. Harsh, you say? I offer conclusive proof that I have witnessed first hand.

"No, look Kevin, those magazines are old *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issues," I

say, stashing the evidence behind a tire in the garage.

"I didn't see them wearing no swimsuits."

Smart kid. "Now look, let's go out for an ice cream, or maybe go to the movies, or . . ." Oh, no. It's THAT LOOK! How can a kid look so evil?

"I'm tellin'," he sneers.

"Okay, how about you can look at all my comic books?"

"MOMMMMMMMMMMMMM!" Great.

"Brian," he says sweetly,

"can I borrow your bike? Please? It's a long walk to the junkyard. . ."

The phone rings and I'm suddenly distracted. Little brothers and private phone calls don't mix, so I say, "Sure," feeling like a saint.

Three hours later, I hear the screech of metal in my front yard.

I look out on the porch. Now where did he get that mangled hunk of . . . HEY! Is that my bike? I rush outside.

No, it's not my bike, he proudly explains.

I take a deep breath.

He smiles, "I traded it for this one! It's a ten speed!"

I'm holding off on getting a car; he'd probably swap it for a tank.

"Look, give me back my Walkman, I was listening to it," I complain.

"No, make me, wimp!"

"All right, you little brat, I'm going to count to ten, and then I'll . . ."

"MOMMMMMMMMMMMMM!"

His bellow rudely interrupts me, shaking the house.

Concerned mother arrives.

"Brian hit me real hard, right in the face." Strategically, he rubs his cheek.

"But I didn't even hit him!"

Innocent until proven guilty in this country.

He gives her his "wounded puppy dog" look and sniffles, "Am I bleeding, Mommy?"

While I am washing the dishes for the 34th consecutive week, I ponder over civil rights and these proceedings.

"Hey, there's this great show on TV tonight called 'Godzilla and the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders'."

"But I'm going to watch 'Fuzzie Bear and the Whatzits Comedy Hour'," the little critic comments.

"I'm older, so seniority rules. Ask Mom. Besides, you'll like this show better."

Oh, no . . . THAT LOOK again.

"MOMMMMMMMMMMMMM!"

The very fabric of the universe is tested.

Actually, Fuzzie Bear turned out to be a very witty guy.

UCC: A Free Faith (Continued)

which has since provided a community shelter.

The youth and young adults of the UCC are active and make their presence felt in the larger body of the denomination. At the Fourteenth General Synod in 1983, a Youth Priority was voted. (A Priority is a focus of study and action for the denomination for the next four years; there are usually four at any one time.) In 1985, the youth delegates, feeling that the Priority was not being taken seriously, successfully put forth from the floor a measure for further implementation of the Youth and Young Adult Ministries Priority, calling for the convening of a task force, the majority of the members of which were to be youth and young adults.

The organizational structure for youth in the Southern California Conference (the regional body, comparable to UU Districts) is the Youth Program Council, a body of elected representatives. However, because Southern California has many small ethnic churches that have virtually no youth program, the diversity of the Conference

was not being represented in the Council. In an attempt to correct this, the Conference Annual Meeting of 1986 passed a measure establishing a Youth Round Table, with positions appointed by the Conference staff, to ensure the inclusion of the ethnic groups. The Round Table's task is to help develop local church youth programs. Youth and adults co-chair the Round Table.

The Youth Program Council, which plans Conference-wide youth events, reflects the character of the denomination at large, in that it focuses on social issues and personal awareness. The youth of Southern California have held meetings and conferences addressing peace, racism, identity questions, and sexuality.

In fact, this mother of a former LRYer finds a striking similarity in the youth organizations of the UCC and the UUA—at least in Southern California. And it's not surprising, in view of the frequent informal acknowledgment that "UCC is the next most liberal denomination after the UUA."

Sunshine, Lovely Sunshine

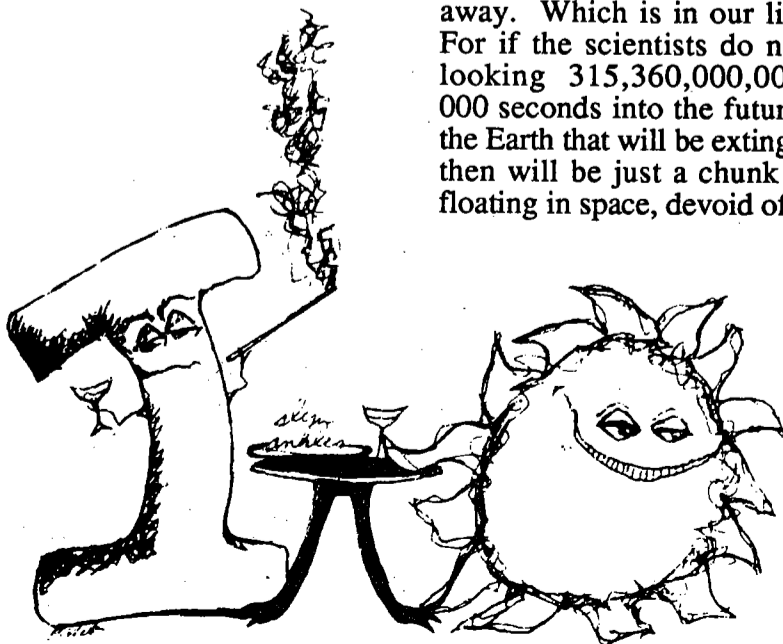
by Douglass Carver

I read once, in a science magazine, that scientists had discovered that in ten billion years, our sun, which is a type G star, an average star, will become a red giant, and then die, either in exciting fashion--by becoming a nova; or in the much more normal, sedentary fashion--by simply running out of fuel and sort of stopping. But either way, the red giant stage will cause the Earth, our home, to be fried worse than the Colonel's chicken. All this in ten billion years.

Ten billion years is a long time away. The number ten billion has many zeros in it: 10,000,000,000--ten zeros, in fact, if you bother to count them, as I just did. Ten billion years is a very long time. So in ten billion years, we have to start worrying about the end of the Earth. Which means, also, that we have three trillion, six hundred and fifty billion days to worry about it, also written "3,650,000,000,000" days. Well, now, that's a long time. Want to know the hours

until this event? Try 87,600,000,000,000 hours. That is also 5,256,000,000,000,000 minutes. And, finally, this big event, tying up all these big numbers, is 315,360,000,000,000,000 seconds away. Goodness gracious me. We really have a problem on our hands.

Ten billion years is, perhaps, too far away to even start worrying about. You would think that scientists might turn their attention to more pressing concerns, more immediate concerns, say, the depletion of the ozone layer in the next decade, which is 10 years, or 3,650 days, or 87,600 hours, or 5,256,000 minutes, or 315,316,000 seconds away. Which is in our lifetime. For if the scientists do not stop looking 315,360,000,000,000,000 seconds into the future, then the Earth that will be extinguished then will be just a chunk of dirt floating in space, devoid of life.



listened, and smelled the sun through its sky path towards darkness. One afternoon a meteor struck the Pugnewton's head. He felt very awake and for the first time he noticed the sands beneath him.

In the sand, a marvelous dark line lay below his tail. The Pugnewton watched the line for many hours. "When the sun moves this dark tailline moves also," he thought. Quite pleased, the Pugnewton resolved to do something about this, and decided exactly what the next morning.

Tail pricked and stick in mouth, the Pugnewton waited for the dark line to jump with the sun. With the stick to the sand, he marked the dark tailline's positions hour after hour after hour. Beside each mark he drew a symbol of the sun's place in the sky. Then the sun popped behind the hills and he slept.

The Pugnewton awoke slowly to the sun the day following and proclaimed it "uptime" to honor his stick and marks and symbols and intelligence. He sat through "nowtime," "twotime," "stick-time," and "redtime," learning his inventions. Glowing redly, the Pugnewton shouted, "I understand the movements of the sun!" And an Untrichado bird landed on his back.

"Why Pugnewton, how pleasant to sit on your back!" quipped the flighty creature. "If you do understand the movements of the sun, tell me the reason why the sun pops around the hills at night." The Pugnewton reasoned, "Because then it is newtonighttime!"

And it almost was. Untrichado, sensing darkness, said, "Not for those who fly," and flew to the other side of the round and spinning earth.

Once upon a time, in the land of UUA

by Rebecca Scott

Once upon a time, far far away, there was a kingdom called Boston. In this kingdom was a castle known around the land as the UUA. Every summer, youth representing all areas of the land met to celebrate. The celebrations took the form of making many plans for the coming year (plans, often, for more celebrations!).

This gathering of youth was called the Council, and all the members were very wise. Each year, during the celebrations, the Council elected six of its members (at least one jr-, sr-, and post-high and one adult) to visit the castle on the hill, in the kingdom, three times before the next Council meeting. This group of elected members was called the Steering Committee. This is the story of the current Steering Committee.

This Committee is made up of courageous youth and adults who came from over the mountains and from across the desert. They are: Amazing Ashley, Stupendous Sean, Lovely Leia, Daring Dylan, Learned Lark, Bubbly Becky, Eloquent Ellen, and Magnificent Meg. The first time the Committee met, they were also joined by Keen Kathryn, the second and third times by Scrupulous Scott. (Ellen worked at the castle permanently. Scott and Meg were each there for one year.)

The first trip to the kingdom was during the chilly winds of October. The second was a cold, clear January weekend. On this second trip they were allowed to play (only for a few hours, mind you) on the beach of a place a little way from the kingdom called the Cape of Cod. I will now tell

you of the third time this group of energetic people met.

It was as the calendar changed from the moon of April to the moon of May. Some of the members arrived a day early. They wanted to rest up for the



Hors d'oeuvre time! Ellen Brandenburg pretends to eat a fish, picked up off a beach at Cape Cod

grueling task ahead. The meeting began (after the nourishment of a few good pizzas) on Thursday evening. Full of energy and enthusiasm, the merry band pushed their way into a thicket of policies, plans and provisions. Behind them, far away, were the petty worries of home. Ahead, only paper.

Friday was tougher, but it slipped by with a minimum of discomfort. That evening, the team was to have the honour of dining with the leader of the mighty kingdom (a man referred to as Pres. Schulz) in his abode down the road from the castle.

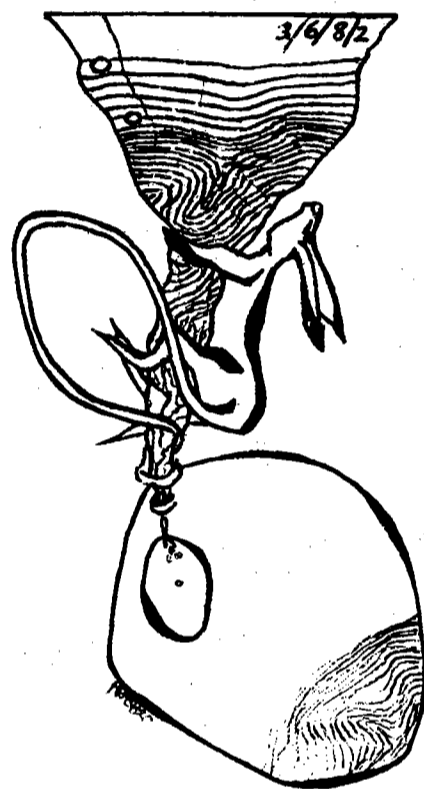
By Saturday, spirits had faded a tad. The work load was staggering and the practicality of extending the number of hours in the day was discussed. How could this small group finish all that needed to be done in such a short time? They had to keep going.

Sunday noon finally came and the committee took a look at what it had done. A new youth staff had been chosen, a Mr. Andrew Moeller from the Michigan fiefdom. At-large jr., sr., post high, and adult representatives had been selected from among the many applications for the next summer's Council.

Policy had been set on Youth Staff housing and the lines of authority in the office between the castle and the Council. The agenda was set for the upcoming council celebrations, and the big gathering following Council (often referred to as Con-Con) was also discussed. Tasks were assigned to all the members for completion before Council.

"Ahhh," the committee sighed. A job well done. They took themselves to the local market place to celebrate.

We are almost at the end of the story. This Steering Committee will meet only once more, during Council, before drifting into legend. The new Council will choose a new committee, and this group will be but memories. The policies will live on and all the youth and adults will live happily ever after.



Making of Synapse

by the Editors

The creation of a *Synapse* issue is a process shrouded in mystery and surrounded by myth. When we received a letter asking us to please publicly explain once and for all how it works, we decided it was time to explode some of those myths.

Myth 1: Some mysterious organization produces *Synapse* and will require me to go through arcane and complicated rituals in order to submit something. **Fact:** *Synapse* is put together by your friendly, cute and fuzzy Youth Staff, currently consisting of two youth named Scott and Meg, one adult named Ellen, and their assistant named Cara. We will consider for publication anything you send to us with a note saying "For *Synapse*."

Myth 2a: They would never print my stuff *Synapse*. **Myth 2b:** Anything I send in will get printed in *Synapse*. **Fact:** When we are getting ready to produce *Synapse*, we pull out our files that have everything we've received since the last issue (as well as some stuff we weren't able to print before), and consider each piece. We have to pay attention to considerations like length, balance of subject matter, space limitations, number of submissions by a particular person, and quality. But in general, we print as much as we can of the stuff we are sent.

Myth 3: Most of the articles are by people who know the editors, so why should I bother? **Fact:** We desire, we crave, we lust after articles by YRUU'ers we don't know personally. When

we get them, that means the system is working. What we don't like is getting too few articles and having to beg people we know to write things for us.

Myth 4: *Synapse* imports professional artists from Paris, and if I send my drawings in they'll laugh at me. **Fact:** We need *lots* more artwork than we're getting, and we need everything from simple doodles to big fancy stuff. Black-and-white is a must, and clean dark lines are best. We do pay attention to quality in what we use, but we aren't impossibly strict. (Sometimes we use commercially-done art, but only when we don't receive enough art from real people like you.)

Myth 5: The editors don't like my poetry. **Fact:** We receive *a lot* of poetry. If we can't use it when we first receive it, we generally keep it on file for future use. Please keep sending us poetry, but don't be discouraged if you don't see yourself in print right away.

Myth 6: The "Personals" section is an exclusive clique. **Fact:** Nonsense. Personals are submitted by people all over the continent who miss the friends they've made at conferences.

Myth 7: When all the material is gathered, the editors wave their hands, chant, sacrifice a goat, and the issue of *Synapse* produces itself. **Fact:** There is a straightforward process to physically produce an issue of *Synapse*. First, we type all of the articles into the computer. Then we print out all the articles in the right type-face and the right column-widths. We make xerox copies of anything that's not on

the computer (like drawings), so that we have a "rough draft" copy of everything. Next, we do "layout," which means arranging everything physically on big blank pieces of paper. Once we know what we want each page to look like, we give our layout pages to the UUA's design department, along with the original drawings and new copies of the articles. The design department does the layout over again, using the new copies and making sure everything is lined up perfectly. These new sheets go directly to the printer, who sends us back the actual copies of *Synapse*. It's a little complicated, but there's nothing mysterious about it.

Myth 8: They want to know my birthdate so they can send me a birthday card. **Fact:** We need to know your birthdate because that is how we keep track of what age group you are in. People have this mysterious habit of getting older, so just knowing what age group you're in *now* doesn't help us that much. If your *Synapse* comes with a little notice asking for your birthdate, *please* send it to us! And especially if you are sending in a lot of names at once, for everyone in your group, **INCLUDE BIRTHDATES!**

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EXPRESSIONS

11

DIAMONTE

War
Children Die
Blades Rise Gleaming
Death Stands, Silently Watching
Swords Fall Unused
Watchlights Fade
Peace

by Eric Dacres

THE OCEAN BIRD

The cry of the seagull
That hangs in the ocean sky
The changing colors of the sunlight
That shines so bright

The shells that gleam in the moonlight
The yelling of the ocean bird
A day at the ocean beach

HOLD TIGHT TO YOUR DREAMS

While the young man grows
With the greatest of ease,
In the wind blow
His greatest lost needs.

He cannot say why
His dreams flew away,
They are lost in the sky--
Saved for another day.

Maybe they were not right;
Paths with no heart,
They were just within sight--
But they never did start.

Hold tight to your dreams;
For if they be true,
They are of the means
Or the making of you.

by Brian Parrish

THOUGHTS OF A SCHOOL LOCKER ON FRIDAY EVENING

Students are all the same.
They come, they go, all alike.
Hairspray down my throat.
We are slammed shut, thoughtlessly.
Without a backward glance, they speed away.
From "their" locker.
They try to open me hurriedly,
So I refuse, once or twice.
Just enough to upset them.
But for a few, I cooperate.
Those who do not tape flakes of
parchment to my tongue.
Those who do not make me a
public meeting place.
Those students, I like.
The quiet ones.
No human ever talks to us.
None say, "Hi!" as they pass by
In the halls.
We "lockers." That's what they call us.
Little do they know.
What will they do,
when they come in, to "their" lockers,
and find them deserted?
Only the crumbs of their books remaining.
Scraps of paper, scattered.
Shreds of unattended coats, and
other things,
Destroyed.
Just wait.
The day will come
When they will not
Be
So
Careless

by J. Huyck

STATEMENT OF MY ASSETS

The bottom line
is that I believe in me
but above that
I believe in you
and above that
I believe in people--kind
and unkind--expanding in egalitarian
rings of concern radiating
from the stone of my love
and above that still
I believe in the fiber
of a universe
both known and unknown
good in its totality.

The bottom line
is that I believe in a me
that for the life of us all
I can't separate
from the mass of creation.

by Michel Bouchard

WORDS

I really should do that work—
It sure does need to be done—
Yes, I do plan to do it—
Later on.

I need to make that call—
The phone chain should continue—
I know it's easy to do—
Tomorrow.

I'd love to contribute to *Synapse*—
They sure could use some stuff—
I do believe I'll do that—
Next week.

I've got to write that letter—
I've owed one for a while—
I'll get around to it soon—
But when?

ACTIONS—?

by Deborah Dixon



We were so beautiful
covered with mud.
In the early day
we pushed to the ground
and soaked them in
grass and sunshine.
Leader Dick called unwillingly
from the steps for us
to stop
but could find no reason,
and soon he also wallowed,
giggling.
Tell them to play in the mud again.
We are so serious now,
the old and young.
They pushed him out,
and his stony-faced followers
wallow in less beautiful things.
We must muddy our hands
or we will never
be civilized.

by Paige Weber

TIE-DYED SKY

Swirling circular motions,
caught in the spider's web.
Merging colors,
illuminated by our veiled companion.
Grasped from beneath.
Her source may not be perceived,
only her aura,
and our sphere of undefined confusion.
A sphere controlled, as if leashed,
pulled around and around,
the light.
The light of a friend we have left behind.
She leaves us a reminder,
the tie-dyed sky.

by Karen Green

UNTITLED

all those moments
when knowing you meant
pain
and confusion,
all those uncertain times
when loving you meant
losing too much
of myself,
all those hot summer afternoons
of anger
of selfishness
of sacrifice,
and of planting them all
with an inexperienced hand.
all that time, when
hope
frightened me,

Now I feel autumn's subtle
approach, the soothing
of a cool hand after a fever
with the wisdom
the purposefulness
of ripened fruit,
the quiet
introspective
thoughtful honesty
of the changing leaves.

Farmers harvest all that has
survived
the draught
the storm, and the
early frost,

as we do the same.
The Harvest Years are
here
the red afternoon sun as our witness
of the satisfaction
or disappointment
of what we salvage.

by Brandi Martin

THERE IS LIFE

there are left-over grey-men of dependable lives;
perhaps there is an old song for them about plump roses.
each man quivers, rolling in their most private rooms
through unique images of every such episode.
but probably, there is life,
like the thin inch in the wine bottle remaining,
and nearly enough, each will find
themselves singular,
and separate,
in the sunset.

the stone and water mix in them.
the clay is shaped; breath into breathing.
this simple knowledge is more nourishing than fact;
they lift the chorus louder, lifting it louder.
and very nearly, there is life
like the thin inch, or two, in the wine bottle remaining.
and light upon light each will find
themselves singular,
and separate,
in the sunset.

the sun splashes in silken waves,
—they can see themselves when they're swimming
through the muscular summer . . .
because someone knelt, for no reason, to draw in the sand
and the picture was love, and it looked just like love.
there are shapes now drawn vitally,
the grey-men are inside themselves with ecstasy.
the song runs their blood to water the earth
and the dream-flowers are discovered in rebirth,

no shades, no shadows: light
singular,
and separate,
in the sunset.

by ryk mcintyre

What's The Youth Office Good For, Anyway?

by Ellen Brandenburg

It's 3:35 p.m. in the Youth Office and the telephone rings for the seventh time since 3:00. It's a YRUUer from a nearby church, distraught because her district is having problems planning a conference. "You've gotta help us," she implores. "We know YRUU has to be for 12 to 22, but the twelve year olds and the twenty-two year olds want completely different things."

It's 4:05 p.m. in the Youth Office and the telephone rings for the eighth time since 3:00. It's a board president from a floundering district with lots of youth but no organization. "I was told we're supposed to send somebody to Youth Council and that the district has to pay their transportation. Our problem is the last time we sent somebody they had a good time but didn't do a damn thing when they got back. It really isn't worth our while contributing to this continental stuff when we don't get anything back."

These two callers represent two different attitudes that people have toward the continental level of YRUU and what the Youth Staff is good for. On the one hand, some people think we have all sorts of power to tell them what they should or shouldn't do about things like rules and by-laws. On the other hand, there are people who think we have

nothing to offer and are just a pain in the neck. We like to think the truth occupies some sort of lofty middle ground, transcending either of these positions.

Basically, we are here to *serve*. We serve Unitarian Universalist youth by providing programs, resource materials, a newspaper, and an organizational structure. This structure, (which includes Youth Council, the Steering Committee, the Youth Staff, and our connections with district organizations) constitutes both our service delivery system

and a framework for leadership training and development.

We not only serve, we serve as a *model*. In the role of model, we try to adopt policies and operate in ways which are consistent with YRUU Purposes and Principles. We hope that you will take our model and adapt it to suit your own needs.

Unitarian Universalist congregations operate on a principle called "congregational polity," which means that the power in our association rests with the individual congregations—and

within the congregations, the democratic method is affirmed, and hopefully followed. Districts are similarly autonomous, and hopefully democratic. This model is just about opposite what you'd find in the military, where everything is controled from the top down. Your continental organization has the responsibility to serve you and make suggestions based on your unique circumstances, but not make *rules* for you. *Please* don't expect us to do that . . . we're busy enough just making our own!

Reasons To Be A Youth Advisor

by Tommi Urbanski

As one completing her fourth year as an advisor this time around, it occurs to me that being an advisor should be top priority for the movers and shakers of the church, inasmuch as our wonderful kids deserve to have the best of the congregation. Advisors should be flexible in thoughts, regardless of their ages. They must love challenges, they must be resilient, they must be caring. They ought to be excited to see, hear and learn from these kids.

Getting the youth to the church is a biggie. But in the long run, by using RE materials such as the LIFT program that our

high school RE teacher offered this year, some of the academic religious stuff seeps into their systems.

Kids too must learn and understand that advisors are people, that they need love and nurturing too: things like taking care of the cars used for transporting to rallies, greeting your advisors . . . Our kids here in Austin are great about this kind of thing, and I guess that's why I feel that advisors should abound.

Too, if several people were available to advise, the same persons would not have to drive out of town all the time, the same people would not have to be at church *every* Sunday (though most of your dedicated advisors want to see the gang at least once

a week, just as much as they are expected to be present).

My co-advisor, Ed Pope, and I feel that it is a privilege to be around the kids, and though I am asking for a respite at this time after four years, I would still espouse the cause for advisors.

If you have "chutz-pah"; if you have the ability to care, listen, and forget what you heard in many cases; if you aren't afraid to hug and get hugged; and if you want to keep up with what's happening, hang around YRUU. These kids are involved in social issues; they are gingerly learning about the facts of life, regardless of how worldly they sound. You as an adult can share your hopes, mistakes, and fears. Try it, you'll like it!!!

CON-CON '87

LE CHANSON D'ESPRIT (SPIRIT SONG)



Con-Con is the continental conference of the Young Religious Unitarian Universalists.

It is a conference full of fun, love, and UU community. It is part of the heart and soul of YRUU. It will be held at Pine Valley Camp which is nestled in the heart of the beautiful Laurentian Mountains, 55 miles (85 km) north of Montreal. The cost is \$230 (CAN.) or \$170 (US).

AUGUST 16 - 22

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