The Witness

Volume 82 • Number 6 • June 1999

Embracing a politics of place: the Penobscot watershed

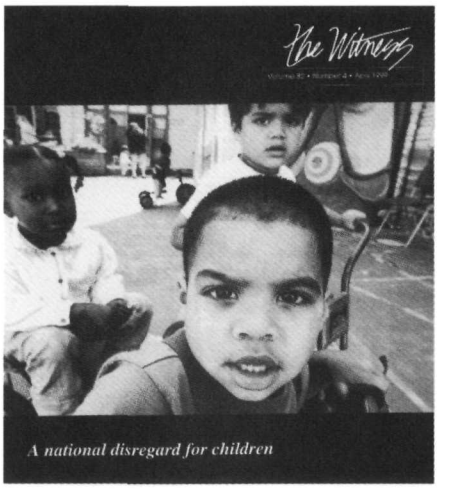
A national disregard for children

I WAS QUITE INTERESTED in the editorial, "What's in a name?" in the April issue and your mention of Deborah Cotton's group that works with an alternative sentencing program for first-time juvenile offenders. For the last nine years I have volunteered with a program called DECISIONS, which pairs trained community volunteers with inmates at the Tennessee Prison for Women. We use a structured curriculum which teaches a five-step decision-making process over eight weeks.

About one and a half years ago we piloted the program at the juvenile facility down the street from the prison and are currently updating our curriculum to make it more appropriate for use with teenagers. I'd like to be in touch with Cotton to find out more about the program with which she works.

Kathy Masulis
Nashville, TN

[Ed. note: Cotton's group is the Knox



A national disregard for children

County chapter of Jump Start, a program which Doug Sharlow helped found and now directs. Write him c/o Kennebunk Police Department, PO Box 247, Kennebunk, ME 04043 (phone is 207-985-6121).]

YOUR ARTICLE ABOUT Martha Overall and her work (*TW* 4/99) gave an added face to us readers of Jonathan Kozol's *Amazing Grace*. What she does is no less a work than that of Mother Teresa's order in India. My prayers are certainly with her. Thanks again for the work you all do at *The Witness*.

Betsy Willis
Zionville, NC

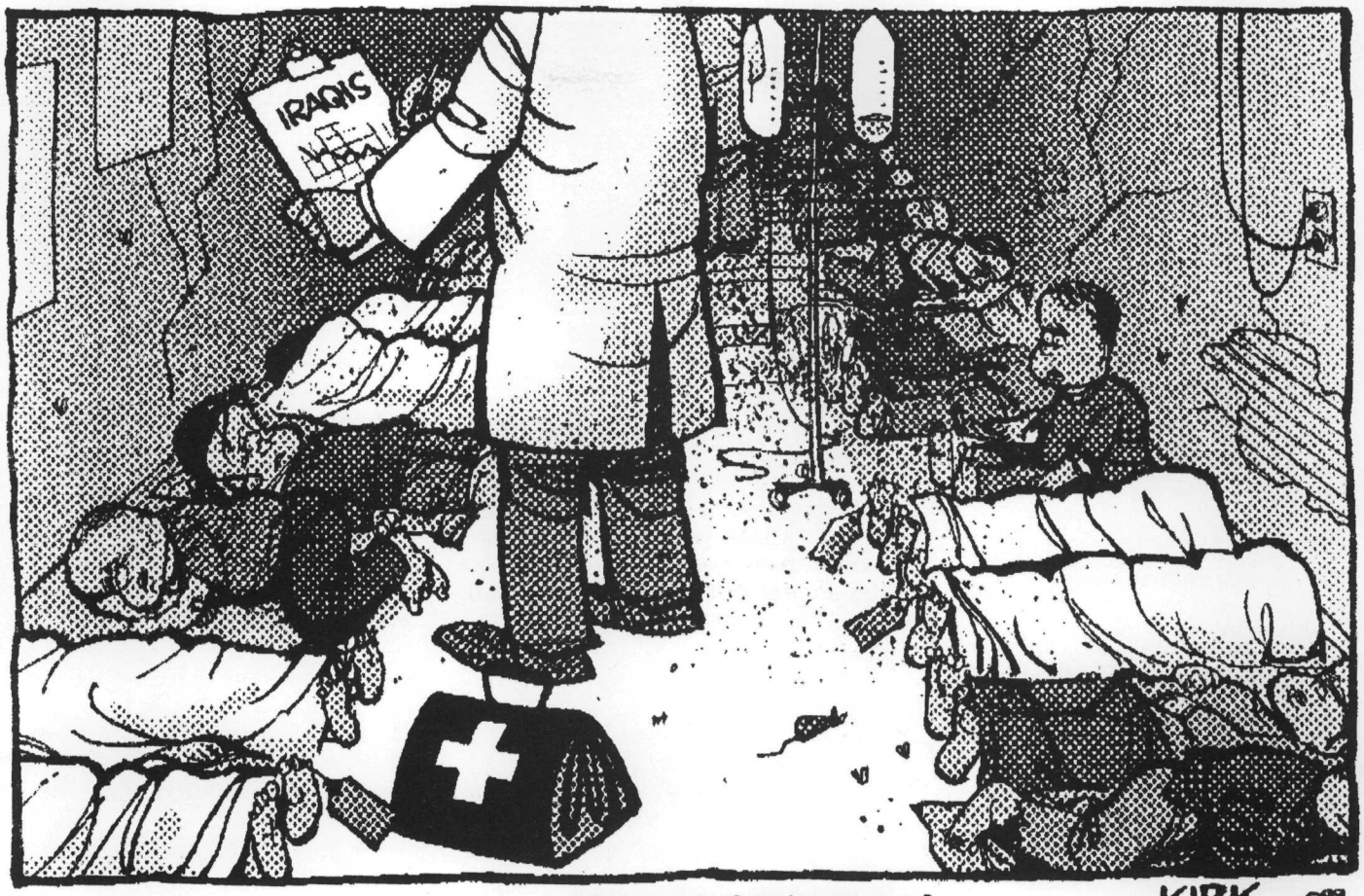
HIV/AIDS: overcoming religious barriers to prevention

SOME OF THE COMMENTS by writers in the March *Witness* have continued to buzz around in my brain. I am pleased that this publication which early on tackled AIDS as a public and theological issue has revisited it.

As a hospital chaplain, I began caring for people with HIV when the first case was diagnosed in my major medical center back in the early 1980s, when terms like GRID and ARC were common. For a while I saw all the PWAs in my institution until after three or four years there were too many for one chaplain to visit. I was one of the founders of Boston's AIDS Action Pastoral Concerns Committee, the Province I and the Diocese of Massachusetts AIDS Task Forces, and an AIDS educator and trainer of educators back in the mid-1980s. I want to testify that there were Christians, Episcopalians among them, involved from the very start of AIDS care, and that from those days we were "prevention not judgment" oriented. Churches started from zero knowledge and a lot of fear, and quite quickly many sought education and began to wrestle with the call of compassion over and against their fear.

During the first five years of AIDS in America, we began to talk of the impending devastation when HIV reached parts of the world with no medical care or money for condoms and education: parts of Africa and Asia, in particular. In 1989 the downtown church of which I had become rector was involved in a clean needle exchange and condom distribution. It was not just "a few heroic exceptions" involved in AIDS care and prevention — there were rooms full of Christians, Unitarians and Jews from the start, and I want to give public thanks for them.

We have far to go still. I am now in Missouri, and the rural areas outlying St. Louis are still places where residents are afraid to seek care from local doctors because of the danger of violence and ostracism by neighbors should their HIV status become known. But many clergy and churches here — not all, but many — welcome those living with HIV, and provide tender care to them, even while they still struggle uneasily with



issues of homosexuality and drug addiction. Progress is deep but uneven, but praise God for all those good souls who have labored so hard for a decade and a half and are still at work.

Jennifer Phillips
St. Louis, MO

Cancel our subscription

PLEASE CANCEL. We are so disgusted with the Episcopal Church, which is being messed up by its ESA and Roman Catholic wannabees.

Peter Tringham
Fort Worth, TX

Subscribing

THANK YOU FOR SENDING ME the October 1998 issue of *The Witness* on earth-based spirituality. I have no idea how *The Witness* came into my home. After letting it alone for a while I opened it and after reading some of the articles I knew I wanted to have more. I am subscribing and also sending $3 for the back issue, "What to do with what you don't believe."

Beulah Soliz
Lincoln Park, MI

Renewing

YOU'VE HEARD MANY TIMES that the world really has to be falling 'round my ears to keep me from reading each issue from first to last page before I sleep on the day it comes! Keep up the good work!

Elisabeth Rees
Ann Arbor, MI

The Witness

Volume 82 • Number 6 • June 1999

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The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted this issue.

Cover: Flying Across the End of the Island *by Eric Hopkins (Hopkins lives in North Haven, Me. More of his work can be seen at <www.erichopkins.com>.)*

Back cover: Lone Rock and Sea *by Rockwell Kent, 1950, Collection of the Farnsworth Art Museum, Museum Purchase, 1972.*

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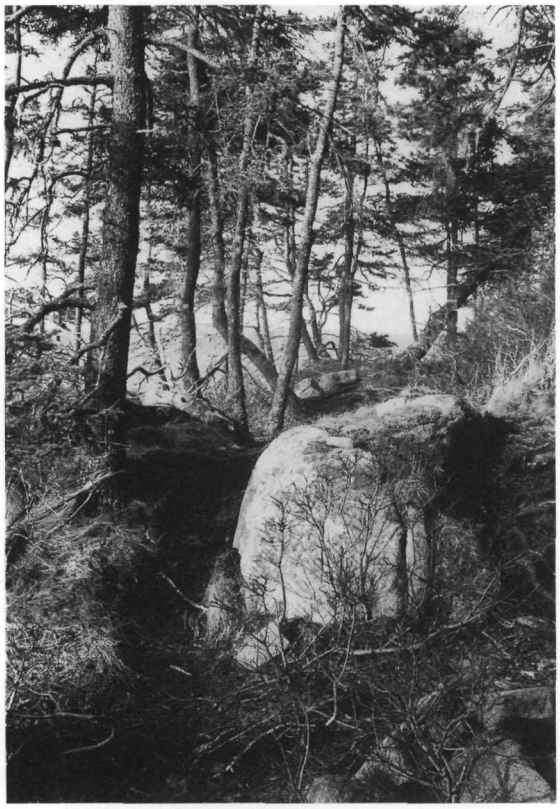
Embracing a politics (and spirituality) of place

by Julie A. Wortman

When my partner Anne and I moved to this beautiful peninsula on the west edge of Penobscot Bay, there were those who behaved as if we were either very irresponsible or crazy. At the time, it is true, the explanations I offered for our anything-but-precipitous decision to abandon the relatively secure known of metropolitan Detroit for the downwardly mobile unknown of Martinsville, Me., seemed woefully inadequate, even to me. But, finally, after two years of immersing myself in the rhythms of the tides and seasons, working the earth, walking the beaches and kayaking among seals, I'm beginning to have words for the quest which brought us here.

Quite simply, we longed to see if we could begin living life from within nature rather than apart from it, hoping that if we could internalize the metabolism of earth, sea and sky our souls would find badly needed nourishment. Depleted by social and cultural pressure to keep ourselves informed about — and appropriately responsive to — every oppression, aggression and exploitation taking place on this globe, we hoped that by living very locally we might discover an activism scaled to the limits and range of our energy and consciousness, an activism that we'd find absorbing and recreative rather than exhausting and dispiriting.



Morning walk, Martinsville, Me. Julie A. Wortman

Aspirant "dwellers in the land" is what writer/activist Kirkpatrick Sale would have called Anne and me if he'd known us as we plotted this move (for an interview with Sale, see page 15). In his 1985 book of the same name, Sale writes: "In *The Interpreters*, a book written at the height of the Irish Revolution by the Irish author known as AE, there is a passage in which a group of prisoners, a disparate lot, sit around discussing what the ideal new world should look like. One of them, a philosopher, advances the now-familiar vision of a unitary world order with a global, scientific, cosmopolitan culture. Another, the poet Lavelle, argues fervently against this conception, trying to show that the more the world develops its technological superstructure, the farther it gets from its natural roots. 'If all wisdom was acquired from without,' he says, 'it might be politic for us to make our culture cosmopolitan. But I believe our best wisdom does not come from without, but arises in the soul and is an emanation of the Earth spirit, a voice speaking directly to us dwellers in this land.'"

Our current world bespeaks the triumph of the philosopher's vision, but at disastrous environmental and social cost. Relearning the wisdom which comes from the earth, Sale says, is the project of creating an ecological world, which requires that we create a society that thinks and operates bioregionally. This issue of *The Witness*, focused on the region of the Penobscot River and Bay, offers a glimpse into the implications of such a perspective, since it is contradictory to talk about bioregionalism in the abstract.

But some simple, appealing principles do apply. Instead of focusing on national and world politics, bioregionalism is a citizenship primarily of one's region and local community — a natural, comprehensible scale that encourages rather than discourages active participation. Instead of a focus on

editor's note

Julie A. Wortman is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <julie@thewitness.org>.

competitive, global economics that rapidly depletes natural resources, the emphasis is on cooperative, self-sufficient and sustainable strategies. Likewise, a bioregional perspective embraces nature's own inclination towards diversity and decentralized decision-making.

Not so simple is unlearning the detachment of the industrio-scientific world view. What's required, I'm finding, is a discipline of paying attention. So most every day I walk an hour in the woods and along the shore, intent on noticing the direction of the wind, the status of the tide, the flight of an osprey or the course of a deer swimming to a nearby island. I heed with anticipation our dogs' zealous stalking of beaver, loons and seals, taking note, too, of the surprising (and sometimes unpleasant) array of natural artifacts they uncover. I store away for future reference neighbors' instructions on when and where to successfully harvest fiddleheads or on how to dry edible seaweed and which kinds are best. At neap tide, from May to November, I devote hours of single-minded focus to measuring and describing juvenile lobsters for the Lobster Conservancy. And, finally, I'm monitoring the progress of the moon across our night sky in hopes of understanding its relationship to our seasons and tides.

Pulling the Dory **by Winslow Homer, c. 1880, Collection of the Farnsworth Art Museum, Bequest of Elizabeth B. Noyce, 1977**

I've been aware that this self-imposed practice of noticing the peculiarities of this place has made me more mindful in a variety of ways, just as bioregionalist theorists like Sale would hope. I have been taking greater and greater care about putting food on our table that we've grown ourselves or can obtain from local organic producers (we are participants in a cooperative venture with several other households to grow a wide range of crops that can supply us through the winter). Threats to the quality and reliability of our water supply have become regular topics of discussion — and the reason for attending community hearings and meetings. And whenever I have the choice, the goods and services I purchase are ecologically responsible and obtained from regional providers.

We hoped that by living very locally we might discover an activism scaled to the limits and range of our energy and consciousness, an activism that we'd find absorbing and recreative rather than exhausting and dispiriting.

But most importantly, I can see, these small commitments, along with the fierce readiness I now feel to fight for the health of the clam flat I can see from my bedroom window, are flowing from — and restoring — my sense of groundedness in a larger life. Thus anchored, I've a renewed feeling of solidarity with this land, sea and sky — and with all those who understand creation as God's gift and determine to live accordingly. This change of heart alone, I'm very grateful to say, was well worth the move. TW

Flame-Heart

by Claude McKay

So much have I forgotten in ten years,
So much in ten brief years! I have forgot
What time the purple apples come to juice,
And what month brings the shy forget-me-not.
I have forgot the special, startling season
Of the pimento's flowering and fruiting;
What time of year the ground doves brown the fields
And fill the noonday with their curious fluting.
I have forgotten much, but still remember
The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

I still recall the honey-fever grass,
But cannot recollect the high days when
We rooted them out of the ping-wing path
To stop the mad bees in the rabbit pen.
I often try to think in what sweet month
The languid painted ladies used to dapple
The yellow by-road mazing from the main,
Sweet with the golden threads of the rose-apple.
I have forgotten — strange — but quite remember
The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

What weeks, what months, what time of the mild year
We cheated school to have our fling at tops?
What days our wine-thrilled bodies pulsed with joy
Feasting upon blackberries in the copse?
Oh some I know! I have embalmed the days,
Even the sacred moments when we played,
All innocent of passion, uncorrupt,
At noon and evening in the flame-heart's shade.
We were so happy, happy, I remember,
Beneath the poinsettia's red in warm December.

— *from* The Negro Caravan, *ed. Sterling Brown, Citadel Press, N.Y., 1941*

Turning back to the river

by Murray Carpenter

A moose wades in a quiet cove, loons yodel and brook trout sip mayflies off the placid surface of Penobscot Lake. Here in Maine's dense spruce and fir forest, a mile from the border separating the U.S. and Canada, snowmelt and rainfall gather into the bogs that become the rivulets that become the brooks that join to become Maine's largest river — the Penobscot. Two hundred river-miles south and east, after dropping more than a thousand vertical feet, the river feeds Penobscot Bay, among the richest lobstering grounds in the world.

The Penobscot watershed is enormous, nearly the size of Massachusetts and Rhode Island combined. But Massachusetts and Rhode Island have more than 7 million residents — over 800 people per square mile. The 8,600 square mile Penobscot watershed has just 180,000 residents — less than 20 people per square mile — and the vast majority are concentrated in the lower watershed from Bangor to the bay. The region is sparsely populated but it is not all pristine. Protecting and restoring this heart-of-Maine watershed is a huge and exciting challenge that is inspiring Mainers from the woods to the sea.

A forest owned by paper companies

Penobscot Lake is surrounded by the vast, sparsely populated working forest known as the north woods. The country is wild, dotted with lakes and ponds, buried in deep snow in winter. It is the land of black bears and blackflies, the best wild brook trout habitat in the country, and the summer home to over 20 species of nesting warblers. Although the land is wild, most is by no means wilderness. Nearly all of Maine's north woods have been owned by paper companies for over a century, and the land is criss-crossed by thousands of miles of logging roads (many built in the last quarter century after down-river log drives were phased out). Much of the land is logged regularly and managed intensely.

Public concern over timberlands management reached a crescendo when a referendum to ban clearcutting nearly passed muster with Maine voters in 1996. Referendum advocates said banning the logging practice would better protect wildlife habitat, lead to more sustainable wood yields, and protect water quality in the bogs, brooks and rivers that lace the north woods. Clearcutting can harm water quality by raising water temperature, increasing turbidity and sedimentation, and even changing water chemistry and pH levels. Even small water quality impacts on little north woods brooks are significant when the same impacts are being felt on hundreds of other brooks in the watershed.

The fate of the north woods is uncertain, as corporations are trading off parcels of land like so many squares on a Monopoly board. Well over 15 percent of Maine's total land area changed hands in a series of land deals in 1998 and early 1999.

RESTORE: the North Woods

The fate of the north woods is uncertain now, as corporations are trading off parcels of land like so many squares on a Monopoly board. Well over 15 percent of Maine's total land area changed hands in a series of land deals in 1998 and early 1999. Jym St. Pierre wants to see the north woods Monopoly board rearranged a bit. St. Pierre, a former staffer for the state agency charged with regulating the vast unincorporated area that comprises the north woods, now works for RESTORE: the North Woods. The non-profit group wants to see much of the woods protected as a national park.

The Maine Woods National Park would encompass 3.2 million acres, an area larger than Connecticut. The park would protect the headwaters of five major Maine watersheds — the Allagash, Aroostook, Kennebec, St. John and Penobscot — so the boundaries of the proposed park are not linear, they follow watershed lines. The headwaters of these rivers are so intertwined among a series of high lakes that the waters from Telos Lake in the Allagash drainage were once diverted into the Penobscot drainage, in order to float logs downriver without paying a Canadian duty. St. Pierre is well-aware of the area's importance as the sponge from which the waters of five rivers are wrung. "Everybody's downhill from here," St. Pierre says.

St. Pierre hopes the high pace of land sales in the north woods and the growing interest in Maine's wildlands will lead to more land being protected.

Sale of the century

"It really is the sale of the century," St. Pierre says. "I think some of the ownership changes we are seeing are going to

Murray Carpenter lives in Belfast, Me., and writes for the *Maine Times*, an alternative weekly. Photographer **Jane Roundy** lives in Owls Head, Me., and **Buffy Parker** is a photographer who lives in Stockton Springs, Me.

Mount Katahdin Jane Roundy

lead to more opportunities for public ownership and protection."

These opportunities are already panning out. In late 1998 the Nature Conservancy spent $35 million to buy 185,000 acres, including 40 miles of river frontage, in the upper St. John River watershed. Two months later Pingree Associates announced plans to place an easement on 250,000 north woods acres. In both cases the land will continue to be logged, but development is to be restricted and public access forever guaranteed.

In March, Plum Creek Timber Company (which bought 905,000 acres of Maine woodlands last year) offered 3,800 acres, including 65 miles of river and lake frontage, to the state of Maine for just over $5 million. Legislators are hoping to pick up the tab from the state's current $46 million budget surplus. Meanwhile, two timber companies are trying to sell another 745,000 acres of Maine woodlands. As these transactions proceed at a dizzying pace, the legislature is scrambling to ready a public lands acquisition bond that could be as high as $100 million.

St. Pierre thinks protecting the north woods is an urgent and exciting opportunity. "This is the last biggest undeveloped, unprotected place in the eastern U.S.," St. Pierre says. "It's our generation that will be making those decisions."

The brook turns river

Below Penobscot Lake, Penobscot Brook tumbles into a wooded gorge, and ripples over smooth, mossy granite shields creating nature's own water slides, perfect for swimmers to fanny-slide into ice-cold plunge pools. Several miles downstream it joins the South Branch of the Penobscot River, and a few miles further on picks up the North Branch. The growing river feeds Seboomook Lake, then emerges to flow north and east as the West Branch of the Penobscot.

By now the brook has become a mighty river. When most people think of the Penobscot, they see the picture-postcard image of the West Branch as it blasts frothing out of Ripogenus Dam, thrashing, tumbling and brawling beneath the dramatic faces of Abol Mountain and mile-high Mount Katahdin, the highest point in Maine. Here the river is a major recreational destination. Anglers are attracted by its reputation as the best landlocked salmon fishing in the country. And rafters by the thousands bob down the class IV rapids throughout the summer, brightly-colored, adrenaline-charged crazies

white-knuckling their paddles.

The north bank of the river here has long been protected as Baxter State Park, the legacy of Governor Percival Baxter who spent years buying up over 200,000 acres of this high and wild country with his own money, then donated the park to the state. More recently the state acquired 2,699 acres along the south side of the river, and added the land to the park. Even along this heavily used recreational corridor, the big river and high mountains retain much of the wildness that attracted Henry David Thoreau, and inspired his book *The Maine Woods*.

The industrial influence

Below Baxter, the West Branch tumbles down to its confluence with the East Branch just below the milltown of Millinocket. The river changes character here. From Millinocket to Bangor, the river slows, broadens, and braids among islands through mostly flat country. Here the trout and salmon give way to warm water fish such as smallmouth bass (not native to the river, but long ago introduced and now thriving), pumpkinseeds and pickerel. Canoeing the river here is a Huck Finn pleasure. Great blue herons stalk green frogs in the shallows, snapping turtles bask in the slow side channels, bald eagles soar overhead and bass rise splashily along the edges of the channel.

There are a good many bass in the river, but you might think twice about eating them. Paper mills in Millinocket give the Penobscot its first major dose of directly discharged industrial wastewater. Downriver, the river also receives effluent from mills at Lincoln, Old Town, Brewer and Bucksport. More industrial discharge flows to the river from a factory in South Orrington. The river also catches effluent from 10 municipal wastewater treatment plants between Millinocket and Bucksport. Some of the industrial wastewater contains traces of dioxins — highly toxic by-products of the chlorine bleaching process used in some paper-making.

While the pulp and paper mills clearly produce the bulk of the dioxin, the source of the PCBs and the mercury is less clear. Much of the mercury may arrive in polluted air from the midwest that drifts over Maine.

Following the discovery, in the early 1980s, that Maine's river waters showed high dioxin levels, the state issued fish consumption advisories. The current warning for dioxins and PCBs (another group of toxic chemicals) advises against eating more than 12-24 freshwater fish per year from the lower Penobscot River. Additionally, all inland waters in the state carry this fish consumption advisory for

A strategy to save and restore forests

Any strategy to protect forest biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of forest products would have to contain reserves, low-impact forestry and demand reduction. All three parts of this strategy work together for forest protection. If one of them is absent,this means that forests, wildlife or people will be harmed either at another location or at another time.

Reserves: We need wild, unmanaged areas as a baseline against which to measure our impacts and as a place to allow and study natural processes and forest dynamics. We need reserves to ensure that all habitats and species are protected — including ones that are sensitive to human encroachment or that require old growth. We also need wild places for spiritual renewal.

Low-impact forestry: We need forest products. Wood can be a renewable resource if forests are managed in a sustainable manner. Obtaining wood products can cause less environmental harm than obtaining some wood substitutes. Low-impact forestry strives to reduce the known undesirable impacts so that after the cutting is done, there is still a recognizable and functional forest. Low-impact forestry also ensures that forests are not overcut — they can continue to grow in height, volume and complexity.

Logs piled up in Millinocket J.Wortman

Demand reduction: Demand reduction ensures that any local reduction in cut, due to reserves or lower-impact forestry, does not get translated into greater environmental or social damage elsewhere. Demand reduction deals with waste and inefficiency, but it must also address the trend of unlimited growth of consumption. One does not have to live near the forests to participate in demand reduction.

— Mitch Lansky, forest policy analyst and author of "Beyond the Beauty Strip: Saving What's Left of Our Forests," in Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener, *March-May 1998*

mercury: "Pregnant women, nursing mothers, women who plan to become pregnant, and children less than 8 years of age should NOT EAT warm water fish species caught in any of Maine's inland surface waters: consumption of cold water fish species should be limited to one meal per month."

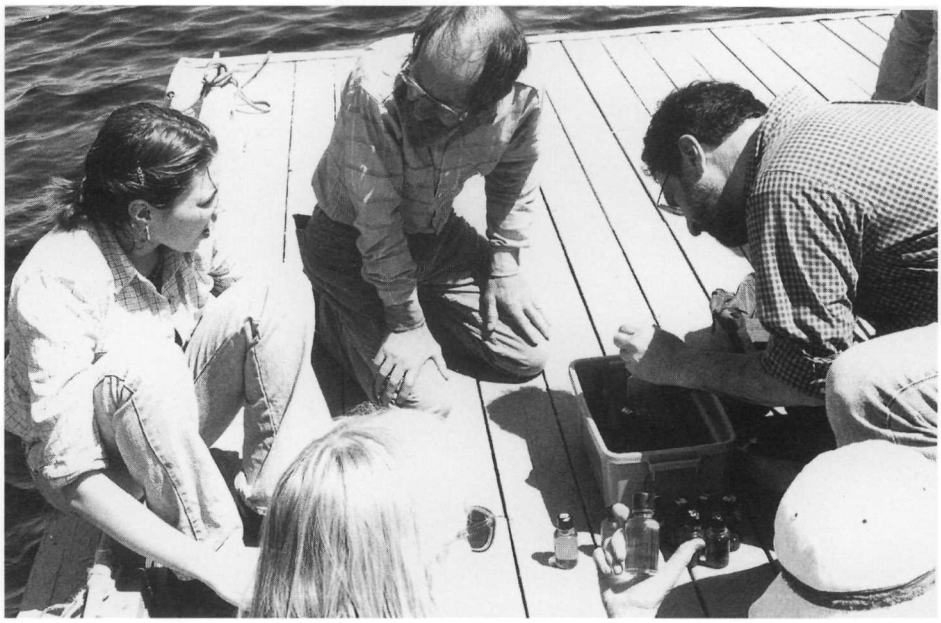
Tracking toxins

While the pulp and paper mills clearly produce the bulk of the dioxin, the source of the PCBs and the mercury is less clear (with one obvious exception, about which more later). Much of the mercury may arrive in polluted air from the midwest that drifts over Maine. It is not just fish that are affected by these water pollutants. Worse off are the top-of-the-food-chain animals that feed on fish — the toxins become more concentrated as they move up the food chain. In 1996, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said dioxins released in wastewater from the Lincoln Pulp and Paper Company were at least partially responsible for reduced reproductive rates of bald eagles nesting nearby. Even far downstream, in Penobscot Bay, dioxin concentrations are high enough to have prompted the state to advise pregnant women not to eat the tomalley (liver) of Penobscot Bay lobsters. The dioxins are clear evidence that water pollutants don't respect political or geographical boundaries. The river ties us all together: Paper-making in Lincoln taints lobsters below Bucksport, and smokestacks in Ohio emit mercury that poisons fish and loons in Maine.

In an effort to reduce dioxin emissions, Maine mills are changing their chlorine use, from elemental chlorine to chlorine dioxide. According to Barry Mower of Maine's Department of Environmental Protection, the levels of dioxin in fish have dropped greatly over the past few years, and things should continue to improve. New state legislation will require fish below the dioxin-producing mills to have no more dioxin than fish above the mills by 2002.

"Concentrations are coming down," Mower says. "We're hopeful."

Many environmentalists, however, would like to see chlorine phased out entirely.



Government scientists and conservation groups have begun to enlist the aid of volunteers in collecting data on water quality in the Penobscot River watershed. Here students from Camden High School share their expertise with potential adult volunteers. Buffy Parker

The Penobscot Nation: fighting for subsistence

Perhaps no one is more aware of the problems surrounding fish consumption than John Banks, the Director of the Natural Resources Department for the Penobscot Indian Nation. The Penobscots were traditionally subsistence fishermen. Now they are advised not to eat the fish that their forebears ate for centuries. The Penobscot River surrounds their reservation on Indian Island near Old Town, and Banks wonders if the elevated cancer rates on Indian Island are related to the dioxin in the river.

The tribe has recently become a formidable force in Penobscot watershed issues, reinforcing the notion that effective environmental advocacy springs from a deeply rooted understanding of an area.

"We know the place intimately. We've been here since the ice age," Banks says.

Over the last decade or so, Banks says the tribe has been more actively fighting for a cleaner river. At least part of the fight will involve cleaning up the sediments trapped behind the many hydroelectric dams in the river system. Toxins that would normally be flushed downstream with the current instead settle out in the still waters behind the over 100 dams in the watershed. Cleaning up the sediments won't be easy, Banks says, because the corporate river users "play the blame game." The hydro dam operators say "we don't pollute" while the paper mill owners say, "it's not our fault" that there is a dam preventing the river from flushing. Even on the dam front, though, the Penobscots won a major victory in 1998

Traveling fish: a health index

There may be no better indicator of the health of the Penobscot watershed than the "diadromous" species which converge here each spring — migratory fish that spend part of their lives in freshwater and part in saltwater. These fish require more than good water quality in a single stretch of river, they require entire healthy ecosystems that can cover thousands of miles.

Any June morning below the Veazie Dam a salmon might swim past a striped bass eating an eel — the salmon just in from the north Atlantic wintering grounds near Greenland, the striped bass recently arrived from its birthplace in the Chesapeake Bay, and the eel spawned in the Sargasso Sea.

The Penobscot River was once packed with millions of migratory fish. The fish supported the Penobscot tribe's subsistence fishing for centuries, and many Mainers depended on income from commercial salmon, shad, alewife, smelt and striped bass fishing through the 1800s. Today the river is perhaps best known for the hatchery-augmented run of Atlantic salmon that still supports sport fishing in the Bangor area. Sadly, the salmon are now in perilous decline, with Maine's few remaining wild salmon now considered strong candidates for endangered species status.

Before the great dam-building era of the 19th century, the annual salmon spawning runs likely numbered 40,000 to 75,000 and ranged far up both branches of the river. The salmon runs tapered off quickly after dams cut off most of their spawning habitat. Now, despite massive stocking efforts, the annual salmon run has declined to 1,300 or so, down by half in the last decade.

A salmon angler fishing below Veazie Dam, the first obstruction to fish passage on the Penobscot River

Murray Carpenter

Any June morning below the Veazie Dam a salmon might swim past a striped bass eating an eel — the salmon just in from the north Atlantic wintering grounds near Greenland, the striped bass from its birthplace in the Chesapeake Bay, and the eel spawned in the Sargasso Sea.

If salmon were once abundant in the river, shad were super-abundant. Biologists estimate two million of the three-to-seven pound fish spawned in the river annually, ranging as far as 100 miles above Bangor. Even after dams prevented shad from reaching the best spawning grounds, the commercial shad catch in 1902 was 731,000 pounds. Precious few shad remain, perhaps a thousand, maybe less. Alewives and blueback herring, smaller cousins of the shad, once abounded in the river, with alewife runs estimated at 25 million annually. In May 1827, one seine haul in Bangor was reported to have landed 7,000 shad and 100 barrels of alewives. As with shad, an uncertain low number of alewives and bluebacks remain. Rainbow smelt, small trout-like fish which ascend rivers to spawn in early spring, have declined from their pre-dam spawning runs of up to five million fish. And sturgeon, archaic behemoths growing to over 10 feet in length and 300 pounds, used to return to the river each year, but are now rarely seen.

The American eel has the opposite life cycle from all the fish above. The eels are spawned in the Sargasso Sea, then drift north in the Gulf Stream. After over a year they have turned into slender transparent, two-inch-long elvers that ascend Maine rivers. The males mature in the lower reaches of the tidal rivers, and the females ascend as much as a hundred miles upstream, sometimes surmounting dams by wriggling up the faces, or sliding through streamside grasses after the rains.

Eight to 17 years later, the eels, some now four feet long, journey to the Sargasso Sea (south of Bermuda and east of the Bahamas), to spawn another generation. A recently booming elver netting industry (up until this year, when the market took a nosedive, elvers were sold for up to $300/pound to markets in China and Japan, where they are raised to adulthood and served up for dinner) landed over 7,000 pounds of Maine elvers in 1997, a number that likely represents over 18 million baby eels. But even the fishermen-sponsored Maine Elver Association concedes the fishery is rapidly being over-fished.

While most of the modern fish runs are scarcely shadows of their former abundance, there may be some good news on the horizon. Increasing numbers of striped bass have been swimming in the Penobscot over the past decade, and salmon anglers often catch stripers below the Veazie dam, where they congregate in late May and June. In the fall of 1998, a dam removed on Souadabscook Stream, a large lower Penobscot River tributary, opened the 160 square-mile watershed to migratory fish for the first time in over 200 years. Within months of the dam's breaching, at least one pair of salmon spawned in the stream. Shad may soon benefit from a restoration program initiated by the Penobscot Indian Nation and several federal and state agencies. And the energy company that recently bought several large hydropower dams in the lower Penobscot basin has expressed interest in improving lower river fish passage, long-deferred by the previous owner.

— Murray Carpenter

when the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission nixed Bangor Hydro Electric Company's plans to build Basin Mills dam, just north of Bangor. Among the many concerns raised about the dam was its impact on the river's imperiled Atlantic salmon, which hold spiritual importance to the Penobscots.

As the Penobscots work to protect the river they have gained many partners, from fishing clubs to the Maine Council of Churches. Banks says the Episcopal Diocese of Maine formed a committee to look at watershed issues and has been "a very strong advocate of the tribe." Additionally, the tribe is one of five in the country now working with the Environmental Protection Agency to draft a watershed assessment and management model. Overall, Banks thinks the future of the river looks bright.

"I'm very optimistic," Banks says. "I'm very hopeful. Things are moving in the right direction. There's a lot more education."

The river wide

Below Old Town the river powers a series of huge hydro-power dams, the lowest spanning the river just north of Bangor. From here to its mouth at Penobscot Bay near Bucksport, the river becomes a long estuary. Fresh and salt water meet and mix here, churned by the 13-foot tides that extend above Bangor. The river is broad and deep enough to accommodate shipping, and barges regularly bring oil to ports in Bangor and Brewer. Here, too, the impacts of human settlement are more apparent. Polluted runoff from roads, shopping malls, and new housing developments drift toward the river.

The lower river also has another industrial heavy hitter: HoltraChem Manufacturing Company in South Orrington. HoltraChem uses as much as 3,000 pounds of mercury annually to manufacture chlorine and other chemicals for the paper industry. The plant has discharged approximately six pounds of mercury to the river annually, released as much as 800 pounds up its smokestacks, and accidentally spilled a hard-to-measure amount into the river. Now the river sediments below the plant are heavily contaminated. A 1998 report by a Maine agency said: "The upper Penobscot Estuary and River at Orrington have mercury levels that exceed — by orders of magnitude — any others found in the state. In fact, the DEP has been unable to find any areas in the country with higher concentrations."

A bill passed by the state legislature in 1998 requires the company to phase out their mercury discharges to the Penobscot, and reduce their airborne mercury emissions by two thirds. And in late 1998, the company broke ground for a new brine containment system to help prevent further spills to the river.

Still, the company draws fire. A March demonstration targeted the industrial collusion of HoltraChem and the paper mill in Lincoln. Demonstrators briefly blocked the riverside railroad tracks in Costigan, between Bangor and Millinocket, to bring attention to the chlorine, caustic soda and bleach riding the rails upstream from HoltraChem to the mill.

Richard Stander was one of the protesters. He lives within sight of Penobscot Bay in Stockton Springs, near the head of the bay. Stander has been actively working to bring attention to the Penobscot watershed's troubles since he realized the mercury from HoltraChem was affecting the water near his home, where mussels show elevated mercury levels. "The water comes down the river, takes a right at the bay, and laps up on our shores," Stander says.

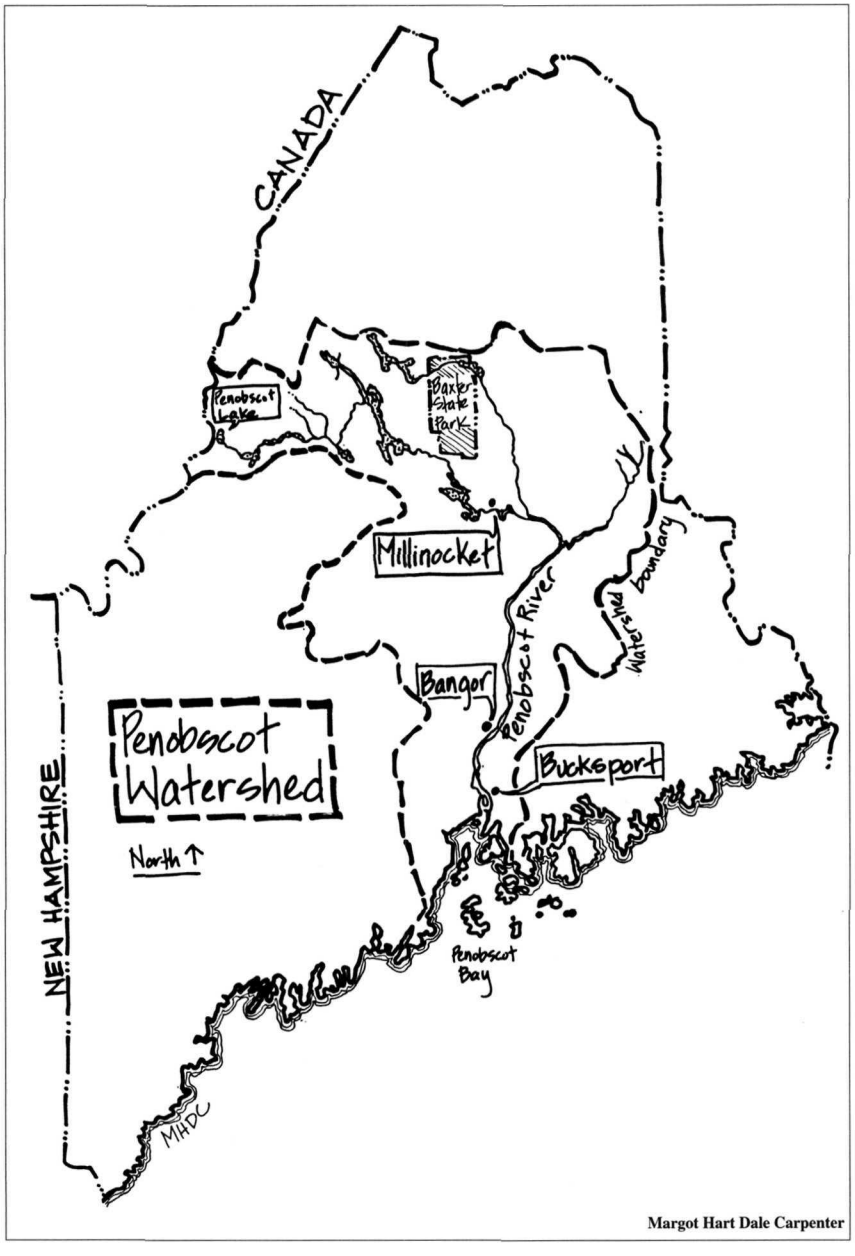
Stander has helped to organize a group called Friends of Stockton Harbor, which is working to protect the

portion of the bay near his house. "We want to understand this piece of the watershed," Stander says. Now he and his partner Nancy Galland are also trying to use the existing municipal framework to protect local water quality by reviving the town's long-dormant Conservation Committee. Stander says that although the watershed is dauntingly large, it is all interconnected, and it is important for everyone to work on their own piece of the puzzle.

The river recovers

While the water quality challenges of the river can paint a bleak picture, all of this is changing. Water quality, in general, is improving. No longer is the river viewed as a convenient dumping ground for waste and trash. One of the most popular eateries in Bangor, a brew pub called the Sea Dog Tavern (in a building where Penobscot floodwaters once flowed chest high), now boasts of its riverfront location. Bangor is even developing a riverfront trail system. A great testimony to the river's revival is the popular Penobscot Riverkeepers expeditions. Since 1994, the Riverkeepers have organized annual canoe trips from the headwaters to the sea, sampling water quality, teaching students and learning about the river on the way.

Another emblem of growing love of the river is the annual Penobscot River Festival in Bucksport, where school kids and millworkers, greenies and grannies, gather at a beautiful waterfront park in the shadow of the Champion mill to celebrate the river that ties them together. Cheri Domina, who works for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service helping to restore Penobscot salmon runs, has been one of the festival's organizers since its inception in 1996. The festival was the brainchild of one of her colleagues who knew that salmon require a healthy watershed, and recognized the need for more education. "I think a lot of people take the river for granted. We drive by it everyday and just see its shiny surface," Domina says. "It is really exciting when you think about what's going on beneath the surface."



Margot Hart Dale Carpenter

Domina has conveyed her excitement to the hundreds of school children who visit the festival annually to learn about the river, the dams and the fish. Attendance has grown steadily since the first 700 children toured the festival in 1996 — Domina expects 2,000 to attend in 1999. After this year's festival 4,500 students will have attended, one out of every 40 people in the watershed.

Domina says people used to turn their backs to the river and buildings faced away from the waterway, but all that is changing, and riverfront parks like Bucksport's are more popular than ever. "We've come so far with it!" Domina says. "People are excited to see the river. People are turning back to it." TW

The bioregional vision:
an interview with Kirkpatrick Sale
by Julie A. Wortman

In 1985, Kirkpatrick Sale's Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision *(Sierra Club Books) put forward the philosophy and rationale for bioregionalism. In it he wrote: "I have been led to this consideration of the shape of the bioregional vision, inevitably as it were, by the trajectory of my previous work: on American radicalism, on American regionalism, on the abject failure of American giantism. It expresses for me not merely the newest and most comprehensive form of the ideals of decentralism, participation, liberation, mutualism and community that I have expounded in all that work — but, as it stems from the most elemental perception of the crises of the planet, the ideals of ecological sanity, regional consciousness, speciate humility and global survival. It is for me, therefore, not merely a new way of envisioning and enacting a very old American ideal, but also a crucial, and perhaps virtually the only possible, means of arresting the impending ecological apocalypse."*

Sale is a contributing editor of The Nation *and the author of many books, including* Rebels Against the Future: The Luddites and Their War on the Industrial Revolution *(Addison-Wesley, 1995).*

Julie A. Wortman: Have you seen any indication that the bioregional vision has been taking root since *Dwellers in the Land* was first published in 1985?

Kirkpatrick Sale: In some respects the movement has remained fairly static. The main means of communication is Planet Drum, which continues to send out a publication three or four times a year from California, and there are still biannual congresses that are held. But I don't detect any real momentum there. It tends to be a lot of the same people over and over again.

However, at the same time, the idea of bioregion has taken hold in lots of places. People are talking about it and mapping their own bioregions. The latest thing I got was a map from somebody in the U.S. Forest Service who had done a highly scientific designation of North America by bioregions. And I've noticed that for the academic geographer bioregions have become a familiar concept. So it's had that kind of official recognition and I keep hearing about people who have organized themselves into bioregional groups or who have had college projects of mapping out their bioregion. And New Society Publishers has also been putting out a series of books on bioregionalism — they published *Dwellers in the Land* in 1987 after Sierra Club dropped it. In that series there's a useful book by Douglas Aberley called *Boundaries of Home* (1993) on mapping your bioregion [see *TW* 10/95].

The basic understandings of ecology have not generally been part of progressive politics. Environmentalism is seen as a matter for the Sierra Club. But I'm finding progressive politics rather vacant these days — progressives think largely in terms of electoral politics and government as solutions.

J.W.: The ideals that you talk about in *Dwellers in the Land* — decentralism, participation, liberation, mutualism and community — seem to be ideals that are much more possible to realize by focusing in on the local. But so many people in the progressive community tend to focus on global politics. Do you encounter progressives who are changing their focus?

K.S.: Well, I don't know. I happen to be involved with a group of people who are concerning themselves with anti-globalism, so I know that that's an active sentiment. The trouble is that there are not enough people in that grouping who are talking about localism as the opposite of globalism, as the alternate way to organize the world, since globalism is going to be so destructive.

The basic understandings of ecology have not generally been part of progressive politics. Environmentalism is seen as a matter for the Sierra Club. But I'm finding progressive politics rather vacant these days — progressives think largely in terms of electoral politics and government as solutions.

But once you start thinking in terms of the local, then you are pointing in the direction of thinking bioregionally.

J.W.: Would the Community Food Security movement qualify as bioregionalist?

K.S.: Well, there's quite a number of groups doing food work and community-

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supported agriculture. These are local ways of operating that don't necessarily call themselves bioregional, but which in fact are acting out the principles of bioregionalism. Another connection is through the simple living movement, which obviously overlaps with the community agriculture and local food-growing movements as well. And, again, that represents the direction towards self-sufficiency to which bioregionalism points.

I should note that I am part of the group that has finally established an independent organization to keep the ideas of back-to-the-land movement pioneers Scott and Helen Nearing alive [*TW* 9/92. We've taken their home, Forest Farm, in Harborside, Me., and established the Good Life Center [named after their best-known book, *Living the Good Life: How to Live Sanely and Simply in a Troubled World* (Schocken Books)]. We are raising funds and publishing their material and material about them. Many of the people involved with the Good Life Center think in terms of bioregions and use that rubric to describe what they're doing.

J.W.: You say in *Dwellers in the Land* that there are plenty of people who are focusing in on very specific topics — like water quality — but who know they have to be part of a larger effort. Is the Green Party trying to work that sort of coalition?

K.S.: It would be hard for me to say. The last I looked at the Green Party in New York City — I live only 60 miles from Manhattan, in Cold Spring, N.Y. — there was no understanding of ecology, much less bioregionalism. And the people who ran for office here in this county were running on essentially an anti-development platform. I would bet they would mostly know the word bioregional, but I don't think that that formed a big part of their approach. The Green Party — with which I was involved for the first six or seven years — has been a disappointment in that regard because it has tried to be a kind of a left-liberal catchall. And so, in spite of the name of the party, the environmental part of that has never been a big component.

J.W.: What do you think it's important for the average person who's at least superficially attracted to bioregionalism to understand about it? What's the piece of work they need to do in order to "get" what bioregionalism is?

Corporations are antithetical and hostile to the idea of bioregionalism, not only because they don't like to operate at that scale, but also because it emphasizes local self-sufficiency. And of course self-sufficiency is anathema to capitalism, which has to have increasingly wider and open markets to survive.

K.S.: Well, where does your water come from? That's the first understanding to get — to understand that it comes from someplace and goes someplace and that you are a part of it and that anything you do to harm it will be harming you and others. That gets you thinking about sewage and garbage and agricultural run-off. And next you begin to understand what a healthy ecosystem is at a bioregional level. I mean, the way to "get" bioregionalism is to think about water.

Water is going to be an increasingly serious issue as the water systems increasingly get fouled. On the Hudson, where I am, the river is a good deal cleaner than it used to be and the worst of the superfund sites have been — or at least claim to have been — cleaned up. And there are sewage treatment plants everywhere up and down the river now which there weren't 20 years ago. So something has been done, but it's been done because people began to understand that they were killing the river. But even so there are PCBs in the river that are never going to be removed.

J.W.: The way corporations operate

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT to imagine the alternative to the [ecological and social] peril the industrio-scientific paradigm has placed us in. It is simply to become "dwellers in the land." ... But to become dwellers in the land, to come to know the earth fully and honestly, the crucial and perhaps only and all-encompassing task is to understand place, the immediate specific place where we live. The kinds of soils and rocks under our feet; the source of the waters we drink; the meaning of the different kinds of winds; the common insects, birds, mammals, plants and trees; the particular cycles of the seasons; the times to plant and harvest and forage — these are the things that are necessary to know. The limits of its resources; the carrying capacities of its lands and waters; the places where it must not be stressed; the places where its bounties can best be developed; the treasures it holds and the treasures it withholds — these are the things that must be understood. And the cultures of the people, of the populations native to the land and of those who have grown up with it, the human social and economic arrangements shaped by and adapted to the geomorphic ones, in both urban and rural settings — these are the things that must be appreciated.

That, in essence, is bioregionalism.

— *Kirkpatrick Sale,* Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision, *1985*

seems so contradictory to a bioregional perspective — do you have a perspective on standing up to them?

K.S.: You're quite right that corporations are antithetical and hostile to the idea of bioregionalism, not only because they don't like to operate at that scale, but also because it emphasizes local self-sufficiency. And of course self-sufficiency is anathema to capitalism, which has to have increasingly wider and open markets to survive. But as corporations gain more power, they represent a greater and greater threat to any successful operations on a bioregional level — which only goes to suggest that the various groups that are working to limit corporate power make the most sense. Such groups are consciously trying to get state legislatures — which incorporate corporations — to exercise their powers to limit and control corporations. But this whole voluntary simplicity movement is also inherently anti-corporate, as is the community-supported agriculture movement.

J.W.: And I suppose the focus on water that you suggest would be a good way to begin trying get at corporate practices?

K.S.: Well, yes. Corporate agribusiness, for example, is a major polluter of water and a major user of water. But corporations being what they are, and the economic system being what it is, I don't see that trying to get them to change is probably a very fruitful way to go. Better the idea of withdrawing from corporate influence — that is to say, living simply and locally.

J.W.: Are you aware of any international coalition building around bioregionalism?

K.S.: Yes. Peter Berg and the people at Planet Drum have taken that on as a kind of mission and there are bioregional groups in Japan. In fact the opposition to what the Olympics did there to destroy the ecosystem of that particular valley where the winter games were held was led by people who were explicitly bioregional.

Naturalist and Maine Guide Tom Seymour shares his expertise on local edible and medicinal plants with participants in the Penobscot Bay Marine Volunteers program, an effort sponsored by a partnership of state government and several non-profit organizations to cultivate local knowledge of the bay's marine ecology. Behind the volunteers, across the water is the General Alum complex, a chemical plant whose alleged negative impact on the bay's water quality has been a matter of contention with local conservation advocates.

Buffy Parker

J.W.: *Dwellers in the Land* seems to very clearly state the case for bioregionalism, but I'm wondering if you've changed or adjusted any of the views that are contained in it over the past 15 years?

K.S.: I don't think so. I used it recently in teaching a course in England and it stood up pretty well. If anything, I think it's going to be more and more relevant. I think it will be especially relevant when this global system collapses.

J.W.: Are you seeing that coming soon?

K.S.: Well, I have predicted that it will occur by 2020, by which time we will need books like that one and others by people who have been in the bioregional movement as guidelines for how to remake our life when it is no longer dominated by corporations and massive governments.

J.W.: Will those governments and corporations collapse because of having just used up resources?

K.S.: Partly that, but also the ecological disasters that will go along with that — from global warming to new diseases, to ozone layers vanishing and water drying up and forests being cut. The combination of those continuing crises will produce connected and multiple disasters.

J.W.: I guess Y2K is becoming a kind of warning bell for some people?

K.S.: Well, yeah, it is an expression of people's doubts and fears about this technology around us. But it's also being used opportunistically by people who want to raise issues of community and self-help and the like.

J.W.: Is that contrary to a bioregional perspective?

K.S.: Not at all, it's quite consistent. I'm just a little cynical about taking Y2K as the reason for doing this kind of organizing, since I don't believe that in fact all that much is going to happen when January comes around.

J.W.: But the ecological disaster is coming?

K.S.: Yes, that is going to come and I don't see any means of halting it, at least as long as corporations remain as powerful as they are. They will sow their own destruction, it seems quite clear to me.

J.W.: You say that bioregionalism taps a deeper wisdom that comes from the earth. And there are a lot of people yearning for a more grounded spiritual life. Do you think people will begin to shift to a bioregional perspective out of a simple desire to become more spiritually grounded?

K.S.: Well, I would say that maybe what I underplayed in *Dwellers in the Land* was the necessity for a spiritual basis for one's identity with the earth. In fact, I think if there's going to be any successful lives for us or even successful resistance to the corporate onslaught, it will come from people who have a spiritual identity with the earth.

That, of course, inevitably leads to a bioregional understanding. But I'm not sure how many people who are searching for spiritual answers are going in the direction of nature and the earth, as they ought to.

J.W.: I was really taken by your observation about how indigenous people sort themselves out tribally in a kind of bioregional way. So you can look at the tribes and where they are located and it pretty much follows bioregions. It seems to me that that would suggest that there is a real good reason for a person with a bioregional perspective to make alliances with native people.

K.S.: That has always been an important part of the bioregional movement. A good percentage of native people still retain perceptions out of their tribal experience that are identical with bioregionalism, though of course they use other words to describe it.

What I would say to progressives is that what you've left out of your politics all along is a spiritual understanding. And the spiritual understanding we ought to have is connected to that of the native populations, for whom the earth was a sacred goddess. TW

Of prayer and compost

by Holly Lyman Antolini

"Be All You Can Be!" dares the Army advertisement. "What an appropriate motto for the late 20th century in the U.S.!," I think to myself. Implicit in the message: grab all you can grab; don't let anyone stand in the way of your maximum potential for success; focus your energy on your own accomplishment.

I look out my window at the view of our farm, worn gently into my mind by long familiarity. Balm of Gilead trees, shattered with age and warmed with lichen, cut the sweep of meadow. Wind tosses the March snow, shimmering, into the sunstruck air. In the distance, beyond the leafless alder thicket, the river flashes. "Be all you can be." Now the voice is coming to me, not as the strident ad's challenge to some grandiose "self-actualization," but in the "still, small voice" which comes to us only in the wilderness, after the trappings of identity and security have been stripped away from us and our souls have been bared as the wind is now baring the meadow of snow. In that raw simplicity, the small voice woos us into trusting a potential which is to be life-giving not just to ourselves but to all of God's creation. It is a potential which may in fact demand the sacrifice of our own most obvious accumulation, success or accomplishment for its realization. "Be all you can be," by way of the Cross.

Unlike Abram and the Israelites, I have not had to travel far to find myself in the wilderness. The wilderness is my home: 66 acres of meadow and woodland on the St. George River in Cushing, Maine. I share it with my husband, two teenaged daughters, two dogs and a cat, not to mention an "honorary grandfather" whose home resides on our lower meadow. For the last six years, I have traveled away from it to serve a tiny congregation further up the coast, spending two and three days away weekly. In the press and shuffle of keeping up with that ministry and family and our local school board, the farm dropped into the background, a mere setting for all the scurrying around.

It wasn't until my sabbatical last fall, in the midst of a quiet moment under the oaks of the 6th century monastery of St. Kevin in Glendalough, Ireland, that the call of the still, small voice made itself heard. "Come back to the farm," said the voice, "It was given to you as a gift of ministry. Stay in it and pray in it. Learn whatever it can teach you about God and about your own humanity, about what is necessary for life and health and well-being and what is not. Cultivate food on its meadowland, using the organic re-

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sources the land offers. Cultivate its woodlot as a sustainable energy source. Look for other ways to produce your own energy. Your family and your farm are essential to your vocation. Ask them what life you may need to lose in order to save life, and find in them the grace to offer it. Be still there, and know that I am God. Compost your life!"

***Windy Clouds* by Eric Hopkins, 9/1995**

This was a startling call. To answer it meant moving "off the professional grid" in the sense of the "be all you can be" of ordained, parochial ministry in the Episcopal Church. No Church Pension Fund increase! No salary (and a third less family income)! No "preaching station!"

Yet St. Kevin himself set the example, his ministry at Glendalough beginning, so the legend says, with two years spent in silent prayer in a cave set high above the river on the north side of the valley. And so much about this call made sense. How long have I preached about the call to "lose" some of our material excesses in order to regain a sense of proportion in our relationships both in the human community and its surrounding community of nature? And how long have I twisted in discomfort as I did so, knowing that I had not dared substantially to undertake what I was recommending, and worse, knowing that I was dreading the loss of prerogatives that forfeiture seemed bound to include? Now the Holy Spirit was insisting: "Don't just preach this word; LIVE it."

There are other Christian precedents for this kind of call. In the Russian Orthodox Church, folk have long been called into *poustïnya*, a ministry in which they retreat into the woods to grow their own potatoes and pray, as the term, which means "desert" or "wilderness," suggests. Gradually, word of their presence gets around and others seek out the *poustïnniki* for spiritual counsel. The *poustïnnik's* is a life of quiet simplicity, not the ordered, vowed, communal life of the monasteries of the Western Church. Might this call be to a *poustïnya* (including family and computer!)?

In the Russian Orthodox Church, folk have long been called into poustïnya, *a ministry in which they retreat into the woods to grow their own potatoes and pray, as the term, which means "desert" or "wilderness," suggests.*

There is nothing very novel in all this. Many before me have sought to live simply, faithfully, devoting themselves to prayer. Many have sought to develop an environmentally sustainable style of life. Many have realized that their relationship with God is mediated to them crucially through their relationships with neighbors, and not just human neighbors but all living neighbors. As I prepare to leave my ministry at St. Brendan the Navigator, Stonington, in early June to begin this *poustïnya* of prayer and compost, I am grateful for the many other "saints" who have gone this way before me, and are traveling this way now, and whose wisdom will enrich and uphold me. May we all grow more faithful to the still, small voice, and learn to "be all we can be," for the world's sake. TW

At the point of no return?

by Lisa Duchene

Building a good fishing net is a mysterious art in motion, much like spinning a spider's web. There are little parts and pieces that each do a specific task in scooping fish off the bottom of the sea floor. If it's done wrong, the catch will be off, or the net may dig into the bottom deeper than it should.

"You've got to be able to imagine the net on the bottom of the ocean and what each section looks like," said Lendall Alexander, Jr., a third generation fisherman from a tiny Maine fishing village called Cundy's Harbor.

Alexander learned how the net works from his father and from other mentors on the sea. As he grew up, he never wanted to do anything else but fish. But during his lifetime the fishing way of life has changed so dramatically that his boys — Duane, 15 and Levi, 11 — may never need to know how a net is built.

Less than 25 years ago, the government encouraged the New England fishing fleet to power up. It did. Fishermen became very good at catching large amounts of fish and now the stocks of groundfish such as cod and flounders are crashing. There is no relief in sight, just more dismal news from scientists and more rules for fishermen.

It's not clear exactly when the balance of the sea began to get out of whack, but this is the generation of fishermen paying up and facing the loss of their way of life.

"The sea is covered with fishes," Giovanni Caboto, an Italian sailor, reportedly said of the Gulf of Maine just five years after Columbus' first voyage. There were so many codfish that the earlier generations of fishermen would row out in dories, never losing sight of land, and haul nets full of codfish into their boats by hand.

Today, at Vessel Services, Inc., a commercial fishing supply company in Portland, Me., there is a quote taped onto the cash register: "Will the last fisherman to leave the Gulf of Maine please shut out the light?"

Most fishing off New England takes place within about 200 miles of the coast, between the shore and the Continental Shelf. When the glaciers pulled away, they carved the sea floor of the Gulf of Maine into basins, valleys, ledges, ridges and underwater islands. That makes for many different kinds of bottom and many different areas for fish to live.

There are huge tides in the Gulf of Maine that mix up the sea and spread nutrients around the water column, making for a strong first step in the food chain. But from the beginning, people have changed the gulf — by changing the mix of species by fishing out ones that are commercially important over centuries; by changing the sea floor through trawling.

The decline occurring now goes back to the 19th century at least, according to Peter Foster Larsen of the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in Boothbay Harbor, Me. It's not the first time people have fished a species to the brink of where it can no longer support an industry, he says. First it was halibut, then it was redfish, river herring, striped bass. So in one respect the groundfish crisis is only the latest in a series.

But there are two factors that make this crisis different: First, the government is now mandated to protect fish stocks. Second, this problem is part of a worldwide fishing crisis — there aren't many new species anywhere to which fishermen can turn. Almost two-thirds of the world's 200 commercially important stocks have been either overfished or fished to the edge of what they can bear, according to a 1997 statement from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, huge factory trawlers — the name for ships that drag nets along the sea floor to catch fish — from the then-Soviet Union and Eastern European countries discovered these rich fishing grounds off the coast of New England. They would come so close you could see them from shore.

In 1976, Congress passed the

NEARLY EVERY ASPECT of the Gulf of Maine, from the status of specific stocks to the prognosis for an entire sea, is dogged by such descriptives as puzzling, poorly understood, mystifying.

Despite the uncertainty, a few things are clear: The arms race in fishing technology has reached the point of mutually assured destruction; the distrust between fishermen and fisheries managers has bred disaster; the hunting and gathering techniques that for centuries allowed this small body of water to feed a region cannot feed the world.

— editorial, *Bangor Daily News*, 8/29/98

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Magnuson Act that established a 200-mile limit and put regional fish councils in charge of making sure stocks were properly managed. Foreign boats were booted outside that line.

Scientists say that their studies of fish populations show that change. The index that indicates the general abundance of groundfish dropped by almost 70 percent between 1963 and 1974, "reflecting substantial increases in exploitation associated with the advent of distant-water fleets," wrote Steven Murawski and Frank Almeida in a 1998 report on the status of fish stocks off the Northeastern U.S.

The fish stocks recovered in the mid to late-1970s. But the American fleet was building up — the government was offering tax incentives for fishermen to buy bigger and better boats.

For years scientists warned fish managers that they were allowing too much fishing on the stocks. But the regional councils were unable to make tough political decisions.

Add to that the understanding and communication gap between scientists and fishermen. The two groups don't even have the same names for fish: a slimy, brown fatty fish with mouth so big it can swallow a basketball is called a "goosefish" aboard a scientific vessel and a "monkfish" aboard a commercial boat.

In the early 1990s an environmental group forced the government's hand when it sued it for failing to prevent overfishing. The consent decree from the lawsuit led to a set of rules that cut fishing in half.

Then, as stocks continued to decline, the government began putting tougher and tougher measures in place. In the early 1990s, there were no restrictions on fishing days. Now, most fishermen are limited to 88 days of fishing each year. The government has also stepped in and bought fishing vessels, closed huge portions of the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank and established daily limits on how much fish boats can catch.

Last December, fishery managers realized that the fleet was way ahead of schedule on catching the fishing year's quota of cod, while scientists reported that the cod population was at its lowest in 30 years. Managers decided to cut the cod catch by 80 percent. The New England Fishery Management Council cut the daily cod catch from 400 pounds to 200 pounds and closed new sections of the sea to fishing. There is also now a proposal to cut that daily catch even more and to require boats to tie up for a month at a time.

Less than 25 years ago, the government encouraged the New England fishing fleet to power up. It did. Fishermen became very good at catching large amounts of fish and now the stocks of groundfish such as cod and flounders are crashing. There is no relief in sight, just more dismal news from scientists and more rules for fishermen.

Fisherman Charles Saunders thinks it is just a matter of time before crashing stocks and more new rules force him out of the Gulf of Maine, so he has started to fish parts of Georges Bank. The difference? About a 20-hour commute — a steam of 100 miles aboard his 70-foot dragger, the Mary Ellen — before he even sets a net.

He also thinks it's just a matter of time before the fishermen are written off entirely. "They'd like to color us gone," he says grimly.

Once, there was talk of breeding cod in hatcheries and releasing them to the wild. But the fry were dying mysteriously. A scientist's study revealed a nutritional problem, but by the time the riddle was solved, says Saunders, who was then head of the Maine Fishermen's Cooperative Association, the backers of the project had lost interest.

What seems clear is that the marine ecosystem is changing. Last summer, state marine scientists who study the shrimp stocks began noticing a drop in water temperature.

Pollution is also part of the picture — non-point pollutions from spilled oil, air emissions and lawn fertilizers, but also pollution from specific points such as paper mills. Dioxin levels have been so high in Maine rivers that there are warnings on consuming too much freshwater fish. The effects of dioxin on marine fish have still to be studied.

The impact of lobstering may also be significant, Saunders says. "We're involved on this coast in a massive aquaculture effort to raise lobsters but in the process we're biologically loading the bays that would otherwise be nursery sanctuaries for the fish."

Saunders realizes this way of life is slipping away. Between cuts to days at sea and government boat buybacks, a form of "attrition" has taken a lot of power out of the New England fishing fleet. It used to be that on a fishing trip into the gulf he would see boats all the time. Now, he can go days without seeing any boats. TW

Nonviolence training needed in schools

In the wake of the school violence in Littleton, Colo., the Fellowship of Reconciliation joined Creative Response to Conflict (a school conflict resolution program) in calling for national implementation of peace education and conflict resolution in every school and community in the U.S.

According to Priscilla Prutzman of Creative Response to Conflict, conflict resolution skills include "learning communication skills, cooperation, learning to appreciate ourselves and others, learning to appreciate all kinds of cultures, learning to appreciate all students' differences, and creating an environment of safety and inclusion."

"This tragedy is no accident," said Neera Singh, FOR's Youth-Nonviolence trainer. "We live in a culture of violence."

"Violence is the major component of much of our entertainment industry," the FOR press release stated. "Our government is using massive violence to try to resolve the conflicts in Yugoslavia and Iraq, military training is promoted in many of our private and public schools, and the U.S. has become the largest exporter of military equipment in the world. Is it surprising that our children have learned to emulate their elders?"

A press release from Billy Graham in response to the tragedy asserted that "the problem is not guns — rather the hearts of people which need to be changed."

The children of the trees

"I'm constantly asked if I'm hopeful, and it's not an easy question to answer, except that there's no existence without hope," eco-theologian Thomas Berry said in an interview in *Parabola*. "I still work toward a healing of what's wrong, and to create a desirable future. I think constantly of the future of the children, and of the need for all children to go into the future as a single, sacred community. The children of the trees, the children of the birds, the children of the animals, the children of the insects — all children, including the human children, must go together into the future."

Military admits Y2K lies

The military has "acknowledged falsifying Y2K readiness reports," according to a recent issue of *Nukewatch Pathfinder*. "The Defense Special Weapons Agency (which is in charge of nuclear weapons security) has admitted it skipped mandatory tests on 60 percent of 'mission critical' computer systems and then claimed the systems were compliant. The office even failed to develop required contingency plans that would take effect in the event of a failure of critical systems. In November, the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee gave the Pentagon a D-minus grade on its Y2K progress."

A more excellent bread

The real issue confronting the church today is "whether the news of God's abundance can be trusted in the face of the story of scarcity," Walter Brueggemann writes in *The Christian Century*.

"According to the Nike story, whoever has the most shoes when he dies wins. The Nike story says there are no gifts to be given because there's no giver. We end up only with whatever we manage to get for ourselves. This story ends in despair. It gives us a present tense of anxiety, fear, greed and brutality. It produces child and wife abuse, indifference to the poor, the buildup of armaments, divisions between people, and environmental racism. It tells us not to care about anyone but ourselves — and it is the prevailing creed of American society.

"... What we know in the secret recesses of our hearts is that the story of scarcity is a tale of death. And the people of God counter this tale by witnessing to the manna. There is a more excellent bread than crass materialism."

Call for probe of Colombian murders

Following the murders of three American human rights workers in Colombia in March, the U'wa Defense Working Group released a statement calling for "a full investigation by the U.S. government and independent human rights observers into the deaths of our three colleagues.

"We call on the State Department to ensure that the possible role of paramilitary groups is fully investigated, and we call upon the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) to clarify their involvement, if any.

"The U'wa people's rights and ancestral land remain under threat from the proposed oil project [exploration by Occidental Petroleum which the activists had opposed]. ... The well sites in question fall within an area the U'wa consider their ancestral land.

"On several occasions last year, Terry [Freitas, one of those slain] reported being followed and observed by individuals believed to be associated with paramilitary activity. On the same trip, Terry was forced to sign a statement by the Colombian military, which essentially absolved the Colombian military of any responsibility for his safety. He interpreted this as an intimidation tactic.

The deaths of our friends underscore the need for immediate steps to peacefully end the escalating violence in oil regions and against human rights advocates in Colombia."

The statement quoted an U'wa statement of Aug., 1998, which asserted: "Today we feel that we're fighting a large and strong spirit that wants to beat us or force us to submit to a law contrary to that which Sira (God) established and wrote in our hearts, even before there was the sun and the moon. When faced with such a thing, we are left with no alternative other than to continue fighting on the side of the sky and earth and spirits or else disappear when the irrationality of the invader violates the most sacred of our laws."

Bringing creation into the church

by Heidi Shott

Maine has been called everyone's favorite other state, and people who spend just part of the year here don't like its quaintness mussed with. The weekly newspaper in my own mid-coast community is often filled with letters from people with out-of-state addresses who are appalled at the painting of telephone poles by children, the arrival of a fast-food restaurant, the occasional attempt at a miniature golf course.

Those of us who live here know that the troubles Maine faces weigh more heavily on issues like the cutting of our great Northern forest pitted against a sustainable timber industry and much-needed well-paying, skilled jobs; the concerns of growing sprawl in the smaller communities around our cities; the mysteries surrounding the lobster fishing industry like water temperature, too large a harvest, and the dimensions of the trap; the often poor quality of our air which has picked up the filth of the major Northeastern cities; and the sometimes erratic quality of our fresh water lakes, rivers and streams.

One alternative Maine license plate brightly decorated with a loon reads, "Maine: A Natural Treasure." No one questions the truth of such a statement whether you are native or transplant, summer person or vacationer. Many people would argue that the responsibility for ensuring that Maine stays that way lies with all people who consider it their own. We Christians are often confounded by the complicating factor that we don't own anything.

Pulpit Harbor Evening **by Eric Hopkins, 12/1995**

The notion of stewardship, environmental or otherwise, requires us to care for and nurture what belongs to God. Several years ago the Stewardship Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine recognized that the stewardship of the beautiful state we live in should be something Episcopalians become more aware of and concerned with, and hence, the Committee on Spirituality and the Environment was born.

But what to do? Episcopalians are busy people. Many are already active in the National and Maine Audubon Societies, the Nature Conservancy, scores of local watershed associations, the Gulf of Maine Foundation and many others. The committee has decided that advocacy is not the appropriate avenue for diocesan involvement, but that the church has a unique role to play. Committee co-chair Roger Smith of Manchester explains the mission of the group this way: "We feel the church has a different message. The environment is a spiritual issue, and we've concentrated on raising people's awareness that the environment is something Christians need to be concerned about. "

Some of the work the committee has engaged in is the development of Creation Cycle liturgies that are provided to Maine congregations for use on the seven Sundays between the Feast of St. Francis and the beginning of Advent. "We used the basic service and added lessons, collects, and readings that focus on the environment and our relationship to it. The liturgies are a way to draw attention to the emphasis on creation found in scripture." The group has

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also produced a Litany for Rogation Day to be used in a similar way.

Another method of drawing attention to the spiritual aspect of the environment has been by offering "Days of Reflection" in various regions of the diocese. In 1995 the committee brought Carla Berkedal from Seattle to consider the notion of "Living Simply." Berkedal founded the group Earth Ministries which has been a leader in environmental education and advocacy. Last month the committee sponsored a day of reflection at St. Bartholomew's in Yarmouth on Celtic Spirituality which has a long tradition of incorporating and celebrating the natural world in its spiritual vision.

In 1994 the diocesan convention charged the committee to draft a theological statement on earth stewardship. In addition to that task, the group decided to take the project on the road. Over the past several years members of the committee have led directed meditations at regional workshops where individual members of the diocese were encouraged to write their own theological statements about their place in nature and their responsibility as a steward of God's creation. A starting place for many people was the text from Roman 1:20: "Ever since the creation of the world, God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things God has made."

Libby Moore, a member of the committee, wrote in her statement, "When I am in the woods on the first warm day of spring and see the green of unfurling mayflowers that feeds my soul, and smell the old brown pine needles warming and hear the warblers calling for mates, I respond with love. My heart opens to the Creative Impulse present in that day, that made that day, and will be there after that day ends. I am in the Creation; I am of the Creator." Another participant wrote, "I have known all my life that since the natural world and the divine were inseparable, the environment needed to be treated with the same respect we try to give to God's human creations."

Maine Episcopalians are not alone in their desire to connect their faith and spirituality with environmental concern. In 1996 Tom Arter, a naturalist and nature photographer from Damariscotta and parishioner of St. Andrew's, Newcastle, read in the Maine Council of Churches (MCC) newsletter that one of their efforts involved spirituality and the environment. That piqued his interest and led him to call Tom Ewell, executive director of the MCC. Their discussions led to an event

"The church needs to bring a difference to the table. We are able to provide a theological basis for why we should be advocates of the environment."

— Roger Smith

celebrating the Damariscotta River watershed in February 1997. Since that time the MCC has developed a Spirituality and Earth Stewardship Program that has recently received a program grant from the United Church of Christ. Another watershed event focused on the Kennebec River is scheduled for June 13 at Vaughn Woods. The all-day event will include a nature walk, watershed education, and a celebration and thanksgiving service focusing on creation and what can be done to preserve Maine's watershed. As a part of its earth stewardship program, the council will continue to sponsor similar events in other parts of the state. Ewell, explained, "This effort enriches our spiritual lives by deepening our connections to the earth and to one another. Our series of watershed celebrations offers opportunities for Maine communities to come together to learn more about our local watersheds: why they are important to our spiritual, recreational, and economic lives and what, as stewards of the earth, we can do to preserve and protect them." The MCC program also provides access to a speakers' bureau for church and community talks by environmental experts, tips for contacting legislators and government officials about environmental legislation, and training for those seeking to facilitate public discussions on environmental concerns.

As a participant in the Maine Council of Churches effort, the diocesan Committee on Spirituality and the Environment continues to seek cooperation between various stakeholders in environmental stewardship. The group has worked with the Natural Resources Council and with the diocesan Committee on Indian Relations around the issues of the Penobscot River watershed and the Penobscot Tribe. Roger Smith says, "Cooperation is one of our goals. The Sierra Club and the National Environmental Trust of Maine have made contact with us to look toward collaboration. The church needs to bring a difference to the table. We are able to provide a theological basis for why we should be advocates of the environment."

Gil Birney, of St. Nicholas', Scarborough, makes a compelling theological case for taking environmental stewardship seriously. "In John's Gospel, when the risen Jesus meets Mary in the garden, she sees him as a gardener. The vocation given in Genesis is affirmed and empowered and offered to us all by the love which raised Jesus from the dead and raises us from lives of fear and self-centeredness to the life of love. In this love we struggle to cultivate relationship with one another and the whole earth as God's garden." TW

On being a woman bishop

by Denise M. Ackermann

***Living at the Edge: Sacrament and Solidarity in Leadership* by Penny Jamieson (London, Mowbray, 1997).**

Participating in the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion last year left me with a fantasy: I have been given the authority to draw up a list of prescribed readings for a gathering of bishops of my church. At the end of the course I examine them. Not simply for content, but in terms of the broadening and deepening of their understanding of their particular ministry. My head fills with titles of books on ministry, on the offices of the church, on spirituality and theology, novels and poetry. At this point the vision evaporates. Reality takes over. My fantasy crumbles as just another rather preposterous pipe dream.

But I do recognize its origins. First, I have seen too many bishops who, overwhelmed (if not overly impressed) with the responsibilities of their office, are rendered impotent to seize the opportunities and the challenges offered to them. Second, they lie in my own experience of the power of the written word. Third, I believe in learning as a life-long process. Consequently, I long for all the clergy to have time off and the space to read, think and meditate.

This is exactly what Penny Jamieson, the first woman in the Anglican Communion to become a diocesan bishop, did. On holiday at a small settlement on the North Otago coast of New Zealand, with time to reflect on her understanding of the church, she explored her experience of the episcopacy. Her experience of being a woman, and thus an outsider, who has become an insider, is clearly reflected in the title of this absorbing book, *Living at the Edge*.

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This work is not an apologia for women bishops. It is also more than simply a reflection on the office of a bishop. It is a book which is deeply concerned with the nature of the church. But it is still more. It bears the mark of spiritual wrestling, of trust in prayer and of the celebration of faith. Never sentimental or pious, the author comes across as a truly prayerful bishop. For anyone who loves the church despite its obvious shortcomings, this book offers much food for thought. Its themes are significant and appropriate, and the author's struggles with the challenges of the office of bishop are unfeigned and candid.

This work is not an apologia for women bishops. It is also more than simply a reflection on the office of a bishop. It is a book which is deeply concerned with the nature of the church.

Understanding the nature of power is central to exploring the episcopacy — a recurring theme of this book. After looking generally at the diffused nature of power as well as its inevitability, Jamieson explores power in the church. On her election as bishop she realized that she would have to come to terms with the perceptions of power related to the office of bishop as well as the particularity of being a woman in that position. Many women are confronted with the ambivalent nature of assuming and exercising formal power. "Spiritual power," writes Jamieson, "is the power to influence others through one's own being — by example, by kindness, by wisdom, by love, and above all through prayer. Institutional power, it is said, has to do with ambition and exercising control, while spiritual power, on the other hand, has to do with surrendering control." This ambivalence of, on the one hand, being a woman who has authority and power by virtue of her office, and on the other, knowing that true power lies in powerlessness and surrender to God, runs through this work.

Jamieson proceeds to discuss the responsibilities and challenges of leadership in the church through the lenses of "discerning," "caring" and "holding." Her reflections take place within the reality of the Anglican church in New Zealand's unique constitutional recognition of its three cultural strands: those of the Maori, the Pakeha (successors of the colonists) and the people from the Pacific countries. Holding the unity of the mission of the church in the face of diversity is not easy, but Jamieson believes that it is possible when the basis of unity is found in love as exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ.

I particularly liked the chapter devoted to ethics. Bishops, by virtue of the authority of their office, often have to make ethical judgments which affect the life of the church. Such judgments are based on an analysis of the ethical demands of a particular situation. Christian ethics derive from discernment, nourished by prayer and undergirded by sound analysis of the context. Here Christian feminist ethics prove to be helpful. Jamieson comments that "the raw material for feminist ethics is the lives and experiences of women" (p.90). As such, feminist ethics are more relational than conventional ethics. This emphasis on relationships, our relationship with ourselves, with others and with God, makes for an ethical approach that is intensely humane,

generous and open. Questions of poverty and the unequal distribution of resources, sexual ethics, clerical ethics, the ethics of human relationships in marriage and same-sex relations, then cease to be a string of "thou shalt nots" and instead became integral to the ongoing struggle to become truly human people living in a web of relationships.

Against the backdrop of an ethic of relationship Jamieson tackles the thorny question of authority in leadership. The need for authority is undisputed. The challenge is to exercise authority in a proper way. Women with authority have to deal with cultural prejudices which are unfriendly to the idea of women in leadership positions. However, relational authority, backed by a relational ethic, becomes authority which is exercised in mutuality. This kind of authority fits in comfortably with the notion that leadership is itself a gift, a charism just like any other, given for the building up of the whole Body of Christ. Viewed in this way leadership is a sacrament. This is a powerful argument against the temptation to abuse positions of leadership and to confuse authority with power as dominance. I trust that at some future date, Jamieson will explore the role of the bishop in facilitating the diverse gifts of the people of God as the means of creating and sustaining a lively participatory community of faith.

The three weeks spent at Lambeth with over 800 bishops was a mixed experience. There were times when I despaired for my church. I heard a great deal of theological nonsense and cultural prejudice from bishops who confused power and politics with calling and true authority. I was also encouraged by other bishops who, like Jamieson, continue to wrestle with the temptations and the challenges of their particular office. Jamieson's book would be pretty near the top of my list of prescribed readings. For those of us who are not bishops, it combines theological reflection with experience in a manner which is both readable and exciting.

Favoring justice over lying fallow

by Richard Shimpfky

Many reports have circulated about the annual winter meeting of the Episcopal Church's bishops last March at which the bishops said they would try to steer next year's General Convention away from legislative confrontation on the "hot-button" issues of gay/lesbian marriage and ordination. Frank T. Griswold, the church's presiding bishop, says he hopes that, in the spirit of the biblical Jubilee, General Convention 2000 will provide plenty of time for "lying fallow" in pursuit of "a less urgent decision-making process." Witness board member Richard Shimpfky, Bishop of the Diocese of El Camino Real in California, offered this reflection following the bishops' gathering:

The conference reflected the growing mood in the church to avoid confrontational posture, especially legislative posture. I was a little shocked to hear even some of our women call for less General Convention legislation — even fewer General Conventions. The "legislative hot-button" is, of course, homosexuality, but 25 years ago it was the ordination of women. I wondered if these women actually believe that, if in 1976 the church had eschewed legislation, as now suggested, there would be any women in the House of Bishops today.

Justice is justice, be it women's place or the place of homosexual persons in the large room God has called Anglicans to uphold. I fear the House isn't clear enough about our call to the active life in Christ.

God does not intend us as a monastic community; we host monastic communities and the church of leaven, salt and seed. The awful things going on in our prisons, the Matthew Shepherds and Billy Jack Gaithers who are being murdered, the curse of the nation's growing support of organized gambling, the pitiful plight of farm workers — these things can't take second place to lying fallow. We have to tend to our spiritual needs while fighting the good fight; we are a public church by way of our establishment beginnings, a church with a mission responsibility to the whole society.

As I read the Bible, justice is propelled by the jarring rush-in events of the Holy Spirit within the body politic of the People of God.

As I read the Bible, justice is propelled by the jarring rush-in events of the Holy Spirit within the body politic of the People of God. The widow in her injustice knocks urgently upon the door and the Spirit will not quit until she has her due! Confrontation, no, but courage in daring speech is called for in our corporate conversation and debate.

One final observation: I heard so many references to the bishops being the leadership of the church. True, but only one-half of this church's leadership. In 30 years I don't remember a time in this church more tending toward hierarchy. It does not bode well, I think, to forget that the General Convention is the single magisterium in our most democratic polity. Probably the Genral Convention should meet more — not less — in this moment in the church's ongoing life of mutual ministry and leadership among the four orders, for the sake of her mission. My deep conviction is that only through focus on mission can the church's problems be contextualized and moved beyond.

TV offers illusion of war

by Norman Solomon

While bombs keep exploding in Yugoslavia, a fierce media war is raging on television.

The real war has little to do with the images squeezed into the TV frame. On the ground, in Yugoslavia, the situation is all about terror, anguish and death. On the screen, the coverage is far from traumatic for the viewing public — despite the myth that television brings the horrors of war into our living rooms.

A war "is among the biggest things that can ever happen to a nation or people, devastating families, blasting away the roofs and walls," media critic Mark Crispin Miller wrote many years ago. But TV viewers "see it compressed and miniaturized on a sturdy little piece of furniture, which stands and shines at the very center of our household."

TV news programs sometimes claim to be showing us what war is all about, but that's an absurd pretense. While television "may confront us with the facts of death, bereavement, mutilation," Miller commented, "it immediately cancels out the memory of that suffering, replacing its own pictures of despair with a commercial, upbeat and inexhaustibly bright."

In the all-out propaganda war now underway, the Clinton administration's strategists have played catch-up. "The problem is they didn't start the communications until the bombs started falling," says Marlin Fitzwater, who spoke for President Bush during the Gulf War. "That's not enough time to convince the nation of a course of action."

Top U.S. officials have made up for lost time — blitzing the media with endless briefings, grainy bomb-site videos and live TV interviews as the missiles continue to fly. Even after it became clear that the NATO bombardment was greatly intensifying the humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo decried by the White House, the warriors in Washington were sticking to their very big guns. As the second week of bombing began, just about the only worry they seemed willing to acknowledge involved a possible shortage of cruise missiles.

TV news programs sometimes claim to be showing us what war is all about, but that's an absurd pretense.

Meanwhile, the *Financial Times* reported last Wednesday, both the U.S. and Yugoslav governments have a stake in downplaying the carnage from the bombing. "The citizens of the NATO alliance cannot see the Serbs that their aircraft have killed," the British newspaper noted. "Serbia's state-run television, while showing ruined civilian homes, shields its viewers from bloodied corpses that might spread panic among an already highly strung population."

Traditionally, American television networks like to show U.S. bombers taking off but decline to show what the bombs on board end up doing to human beings. So, American firepower appears to be wondrous but fairly bloodless.

As for history, ancient and recent, it is usually rendered murky by the TV networks. The latest coverage has run true to form. "Distortion of important background by Western broadcasters, whether intentional or not, has also helped NATO's cause," the *Financial Times* observed.

"The stated aims of NATO's bombing campaign have also been muddied, by both heads of government and the Western media," the newspaper added. "A common phrase heard on the lips of correspondents of CNN ... is 'forcing Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to return to the negotiating table.' Yet Madeleine Albright, U.S. Secretary of State, and Robin Cook, British foreign minister, made it clear after the breakdown of peace talks ... that the autonomy deal offered by the West — and signed by the Kosovo Albanians — was no longer negotiable. There was in reality no table to return to."

Skewed facts and selected images on television make it easier to accept — or even applaud — the bombs funded by our tax dollars and dropped in our names.

The bombing has brought about the collapse of internal opposition to the Yugoslav regime, opposition that was previously quite strong. NATO has done what Milosevic had been unable to accomplish on his own — decimate the ranks of Serbians resisting his tyranny. Even now, the tragic realities of that process are getting little mention in American news media. TW

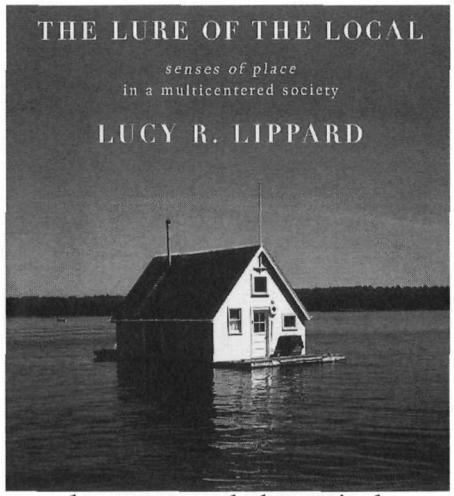
Norman Solomon's new book, *The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media*, has just been published by Common Courage Press.

Keeping Watch

The lure of the local

by Gloria House Manana

***The Lure of the Local* by Lucy R. Lippard, The New Press, N.Y., 1997.**



The Lure of the Local explores the meaning of place in our lives, the significance of our emotional and imaginary attachments to sites of the natural environment and to specific structures and artifacts. For the author, the local, the Maine of her childhood, is "an anchor [in her] driftings," an organizing focus for her preoccupation with the spatial dialectics of center, the experience of rootedness in a place, and movement to and from centers — which characterizes the lives of millions of Americans.

The author points out that "most people do not have the time or inclination to ponder the meaning of place," and scholars have only just begun to give it serious consideration. The emerging multidisciplinary field of spatial studies is only a couple of decades old, and still struggling to find its own language and theoretical constructs, frustrated by the extent to which spatial experiences remain for most people in a category of "taken for granted," unconscious or unexamined.

However, if you love drives into the country because it seems your eyes rejoice in the green of the landscape; if you languish over photos of the houses and rituals of your childhood; if you plan annual trips to your hometown, treasure weathered doors, fences and rusted implements of unknown usage; or fantasize about the people who built the 19th-century farmhouses you pass on the highway; and if you have taken time to ponder why a particular site or geographical area elicits powerful emotions in you, this book will intrigue and delight you. The author has provided a cultural and political grounding for such feelings and experiences in her reflections on the issues of personal, group and national identity, in her references to the important thinkers in this field, in her demonstration of the way places become repositories of specific histories, and in her vision of the significance our sense of place could have in the constructing of communities of the future.

Lippard writes that the examples of art included in her book serve as models, "providing one or more facets of the potential for a local art that would merge with and/or illuminate a place." One effect of this multi-layered approach is that the reader comes away with a newly trained eye for reading the environment.

The book has an unusual, engaging multidimensional structure: The reader is carried along by the flow of cultural and philosophical discourse, which is the main text, while the author's personal narrative of the lore and history of Maine floats above (literally at the top of the page); then there are the photographs of landscapes, art works, art installations in museums and other public spaces that seem to balloon the experience out past the pages, evoking the reader's own memories and associations. The reader's eyes move up and down and over these pages, connecting the layers of words and images at will.

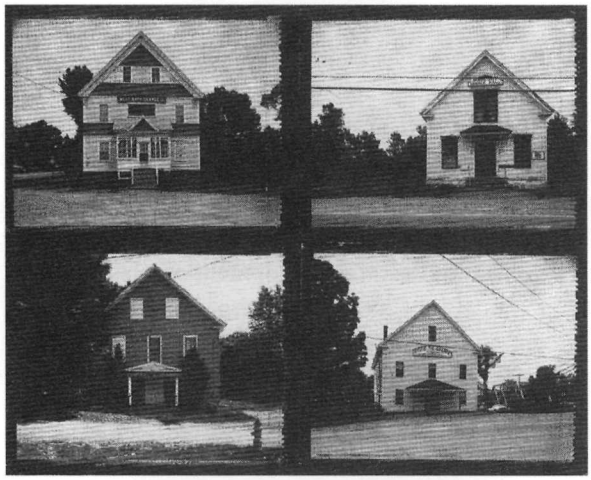
In organizing the book in this manner, the author has integrated her "lived experience" in Maine with a broader attempt to theorize about

review

Gloria House Manana is a contributing editor and poetry editor for *The Witness*, and author of T*ower and Dungeon: A Study of Place and Power in American Culture*, Detroit, Casa de Unidad Press, 1991.

spatial experience, and she has illustrated the crucial role artists may serve by creating works that help us achieve positive relationships with our specific living spaces. Lippard writes that the examples of art included in her book serve as models, "providing one or more facets of the potential for a local art that would merge with and/or illuminate a place." One effect of this multi-layered approach is that the reader comes away with a newly trained eye for reading the environment and analyzing our interaction with it.

Lippard's readiness to include all cultural perspectives in her analyses is an extraordinary and commendable aspect of her work. Her book demonstrates multicultural study at its best. Here we find scholars and artists of a multitude of backgrounds presented as equals, the operative criterion being the relevance of their work to the issues at hand. Lippard knows all the key European and EuroAmerican contributors to the field, from French philosopher Michel Foucault, who could be called the father of spatial studies, to culture critic Raymond Williams, to planners Kevin Lynch and Delores Hayden, as well as lesser known, but innovative geographer William Bunge. Lippard presents these "stars" of the hegemonic center in the company of scholars who have been marginalized traditionally, such as Native American historian and attorney Vine Deloria, African American professor and prolific culture critic bell hooks, Yi-Fu Tuan, a spatial studies pioneer, Chicana writer and professor Gloria Anzaldua, Native American literary critic Paula Gunn Allen and many others, thus dismantling the center/margin paradigm in favor of a multicentered orientation — the absolutely essential stance as we enter the new millennium, one that has been brilliantly argued for by Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his book, *Moving the Center*.



Rose Marasco, Grange Hall Exteriors, detail from the 60-image series "Ritual and Community: The Maine Grange," 1990-91, sponsored by Maine Humanities Council, University of Southern Maine, and the Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Me. The Grange, or Patrons of Husbandry, is an agriculturally-based secret society founded in 1867, open to both men and women and once enjoying a national membership of over one million. The Grange hall was the center of the community, site of social, educational and cultural events as well as debates, public suppers and games, cooking, needlework and art contests. In 1887, Maine had the largest Grange membership nationwide; it peaked in the 1940s and today stands at 11,000, with some communities increasingly active [*Lure of the Local*, p. 148-149].

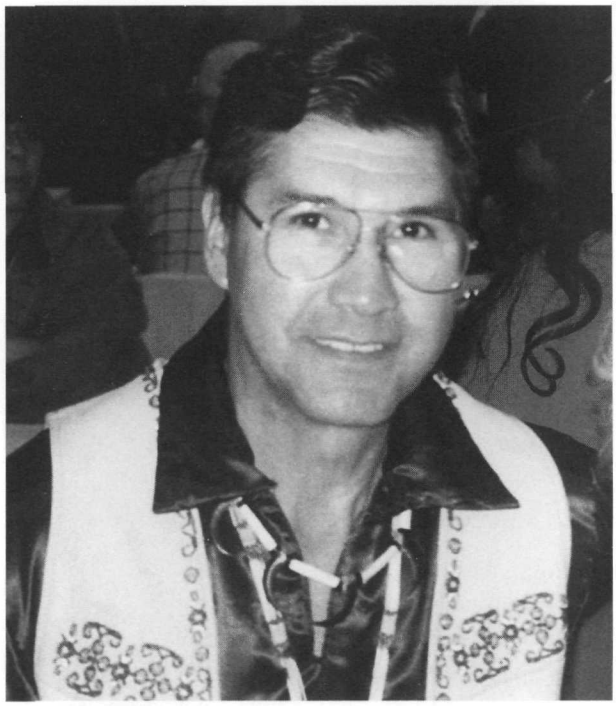
I have never seen a comparable breadth of cross-cultural familiarity, respect and inclusiveness in an American cultural writer of EuroAmerican descent. For example, comparing the aesthetic assumptions of Native American and EuroAmerican filmmakers, Lippard insightfully explains how a Native American artist is likely to perceive and relate to the land according to beliefs about its sacredness, its natural patterns and rhythms. A film by such an artist might mirror the cyclical or circular nature of those patterns and rhythms, producing an art form very different from the linear narratives characteristic of European aesthetics. Good sign for the future of cultural studies and cross-cultural politics in the U.S.

Lippard points out in the book's final section, entitled "Entering the Big Picture": "Nothing that excludes the places of people of color, women, lesbians, gays or working people can be called universal or healing. Before we can find the whole, we must know and respect the parts." She appears to have worked over long years to understand the parts of our national cultural/racial mosaic, the diversity of ways we interpret place, and to envision how we could collaborate to protect and nurture each other and the environment, upon which we are utterly dependent. TW

New *Witness* development/ marketing director

This month Wes Todd begins work full-time as our director of development and marketing. He succeeds Karen Bota, who has been our very able part-time promotional consultant for several years.

Todd has 18 years of experience in publishing. He and his family live in Thomaston, Me.



Butch Phillips

"One of the main reasons why we're fighting this battle so strongly is, what's the sense of having the right to fish if we can't eat the fish?"

'The river is our lifeblood'

by Marianne Arbogast

Growing up on Indian Island in the Penobscot River in Maine, Ruben (Butch) Phillips enjoyed a close relationship with the river which shares the name of his Penobscot tribe. "I swam in it every day in the summer," Phillips recalls. "I ate fish from it and drank it."

At the time, Phillips had no reason to suspect that these activities were dangerous. "It wasn't until about 1959 or so that we started to see warnings, 'Don't swim in the river.' And then later, in the 1970s or 1980s, came warnings saying, 'Don't eat the fish.'"

The threat came from dioxin, a byproduct of the use of chlorine by paper mills on the banks of the Penobscot. "The Penobscot have a very high incidence of death by cancer," Phillips says. "We don't know why, but a lot of things point to the river. The Lincoln Pulp and Paper Mill is 30 miles above Indian Island and the effluent goes out into the Penobscot River. Dioxin is a cancer-causing agent."

For the Penobscot people — whose reservation is comprised of all the islands in the Penobscot River — the poisoning of the river is felt as a physical and spiritual assault.

"The river is our lifeblood," Phillips says. "We live in the Penobscot River, and it's been that way for thousands of years — this is our ancestral homeland. The river was our highway, the way we got from one place to another. We received our sustenance from the river. The river and the land surrounding it is not only the source of our physical well-being — it's our spiritual center, our heart, as well. We believe that the land has given us life, and we should not only protect it, but enhance its life, so that the bond with the land will survive into the next generation."

Phillips has a long history of leadership around issues affecting the Penobscot people. He served as one of four negotiators for the Penobscot nation in the Maine Indian Land Claims Negotiations, which led to federal recognition of the Penobscot Nation and their territory in 1980. He has also served as lieutenant governor of the Penobscot Nation, tribal representative to the state legislature, chairman of the tribal Fish and Game Committee, and a member of the Hydro Review Committee (a.k.a. the "damn dam committee," Phillips says) which reviews the re-licensing of dams on the river. While lieutenant governor, he was awarded a grant for a video project which produced the documentary, "Penobscot: The People and Their River."

The story of the past century and a half has been a story of disregard for the Penobscot River, Phillips explains. "Over the past 150 years, our people have seen a tremendous change in the Penobscot River, first due to the lumbering operations that started around the 1830s or 1840s. We saw an increase of traffic on the river due to the driving of logs down the river to the sawmills. Then, to improve the log driving, they started building dams on all the major tributaries through the river, raising the water and blocking our means of transportation up and down the river. Later the

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

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dams were built bigger and more permanent for hydro-generation.

"A community sprang up around the Penobscot, and with the community came the pollution from municipal waste, and then from the paper mills.

"These dams and this pollution drastically affected our sustenance through fishing. The salmon, shad and alewives came up our rivers in abundance, and we fished for them and dried them and used them for sustenance all winter long. With the coming of the dams, which were built without any fish passage means, the runs of salmon and shad and alewives stopped to the point where they were practically extinct.

"There was a tremendous change on the Penobscot River and, of course, that had a tremendous change on the Penobscot people. It changed us not only physically but spiritually as well."

The dawn of Indian rights movements in the 1970s brought a spiritual reawakening, Phillips says. "Probably because of national movements by Indian groups, and the land claims settlement in 1980, more people started coming back to our reservation," he says. "More people were rekindling interest in the old ways."

Part of the rekindling involved a return to spiritual practices that had been suppressed by Christian suspicion of native traditions. Phillips, who grew up Roman Catholic, says that during his childhood it would have been "unheard of" to take part in ceremonies honoring ancestors or traditional worship.

"Here was this school on an Indian reservation, all Indian kids, and there was nothing Indian about that school at all, with the exception of one picture hanging on the wall of a Mohawk nun, Kateri Tekakwitha — but we never knew anything about her. Every other picture was of George Washington, the pope, the bishop. There was nothing indigenous — you didn't speak the language, you didn't talk about Indian issues."

Today, the same school — where Phillips' wife teaches — is a changed place.

"Everything in it is Indian," he says. "You walk in the building and the tribal seal is in the floor tiles. There are totem poles and Indian artwork and baskets. The water fountain has 'water' written in Penobscot over it."

While Phillips notes that many of the Penobscot people have integrated Christian faith with ancient traditions, he finds his own spiritual home in traditional Penobscot religion.

"I think of myself as a traditional person — however, I don't flaunt it, I don't preach it," he says.

"When we pray, we are actually giving thanks to all our relations, all mother earth and all the creatures."

"The traditional ways were very personal. It was really a way of living. The very basis of Indian spirituality is having a deep connection with the land. When we pray, we are actually giving thanks to all our relations, all mother earth and all the creatures."

Phillips spends much of his time outdoors, and is currently engaged in building a traditional birchbark canoe, using a process revived by his nephew, Barry Dana, after decades of disuse. Eighteen years ago Phillips' nephew began a new tradition that has become a significant yearly event: a Labor Day weekend run along the river from Indian Island to Mount Katahdin, where the Penobscot River begins.

"Katahdin sits right in the center of our land," Phillips says. "It has always been the sacred place in our land. Always."

The "Katahdin 100" is "a spiritual run to the mountain," Phillips explains. Some participants run the entire distance, while others canoe 60 miles and then run the final 40. Phillips is currently involved in a dispute with the authorities of Baxter State Park, to convince the authorities to waive fees at Katahdin Stream Campground, where the run ends.

"We're not asking a whole lot, but just that on that particular weekend we be allowed to go there without any fee to complete our run and do our spiritual exercises. They agreed to work with us to find a solution, and since then we have looked at a couple of sites that the park authorities are possibly willing to designate as a special site for the spiritual use of native people."

Phillips sees some signs of hope for the future of the Penobscot River, but takes a pragmatic view of limitations.

"We'd like to have the Penobscot River back the way it was 150 years ago — free-flowing, no dam — but that's not realistic. The dams are there and they're not going to go away. We have attempted and in some cases succeeded in having fish passages put in, where the fish can easily go up over the dams. And we have mitigated downstream passage of fish as well, so they can come back out into the ocean after they've spawned, instead of going through the turbines in the powerhouse and being all chewed up and killed.

"The major issue today is that the Lincoln Pulp and Paper Mill continues to dump dioxin into the river. They say it's at an undetectable amount, but we say any amount of poisons in that river is unacceptable."

The Penobscot nation has water quality specialists who monitor the river, analyzing water samples and reporting on their findings to the state.

"We have aboriginal rights to fish in the Penobscot River — we never ceded that right to anyone," Phillips says. "But one of the main reasons why we're fighting this battle so strongly is, what's the sense of having the right if we can't eat the fish? I would like to see the river cleaned up to the point where we can once again swim in the river and once again eat fish out of the river." TW

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