

EXERCISES

Illinois Yearly Meeting of Friends (ILYM) met for Annual Sessions this year from June 16-20. The numbers grew from Wednesday through the weekend as Friends were able to adjust their schedules to attend many of the sessions. Gone are the days of the front lawn being filled by the horses and buggies. The acquisition of adjacent land provides additional parking for the numerous automobiles that now arrive from Missouri, Indiana, and Illinois. One Friend came all the way from Bolivia.

Friends experienced challenges of faith and action as they listened to the words of Sandra Tamari and Micah Bales on Wednesday night as they spoke of their spiritual journeys. Micah expressed his struggle with faith as he journeyed through his twenty seven years of challenges. Sandra was and continues to be moved by her witness of the struggles of the Palestinians.

The Faith and Practice Committee of Illinois Yearly Meeting presented about eleven new pages of text focusing on monthly meeting organization and structure. These pages were developed and approved after extensive consultation with monthly meetings.

On Thursday evening, Mary Pikul shared the dreams and hopeful expectations of the new Chicago Friends School to be opened in September. Sonia Tuma shared responses of the AFSC to economic difficulties and the refocusing and rebuilding they are doing in the areas of Peace Building, Immigrant Rights, and Justice. Emma Condori brought greetings and shared the story of Friends in Bolivia and their quest for education and the work of the Bolivian Quaker Education Fund.

It seems that the traditional Friday night dancing on the lawn brought out more Friends than ever before, both young and old. It was a beautiful evening but we could see the clouds gathering. Dancing and the watermelon feast were just completed when a severe storm hit and Friends quickly retreated into the meetinghouse.

The unusually large number of memorials and especially those of younger Friends made for a deeply spiritual session on Saturday morning. Long-time Friends will be greatly missed as the Yearly Meeting moves forward with its many children who will hopefully take their place in the leadership of ILYM.

Friends enjoyed viewing and using the new facilities on the west edge of our property, formerly known as the Mills property and now known as the Clear Creek House of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Several meetings were held there and Friends enjoyed the lovely view from the windows, the comfortable furniture and the air conditioning. Environmental Concerns Committee urged Friends to enjoy the prairie coming into bloom and the family of great horned owls. Many were lovingly concerned about the nest of barn swallows on the front porch, obviously agitated by the noise surrounding them.

Friends also appreciated the addition of the tent for meals. The lower level dining was more quiet as Friends divided their times between the two areas. Meals were delicious as usual, and help was always available to help disabled Friends carry their meals to the outside.

Mason George, a high-school-aged documentarian, presented to Friends his award-winning film, The Quake that Rocked the Midwest. Well received, disks of the documentary are available with all proceeds going to the Youth Oversight Committee of ILYM. The Young Friends spent Saturday afternoon at Starved Rock cleaning up trash on the grounds as their annual service project. The Adult Young Friends had been to Starved Rock the day before.

Children loved being here. Their exuberance and enthusiasm were enjoyed by everyone. Adults observed that they seemed to all look out for each other. A black cat added to most of the children's enjoyment. The playground equipment and the sandbox were especially appreciated by the children. They also enjoyed a hayride.

The wonderful array of speakers throughout the week culminated with the humorous yet spiritual talk on Saturday night by Phil Gulley, Quaker pastor and author. The annual Plummer Lecture was presented by Tom Paxson on Sunday morning.

The theme "Seeking and Sharing our Spiritual Home" was developed both through our interactions with the land and buildings and through our relationships with God and one another.