

The Leaves of Twin Oaks

NEWS OF THE OAKS

by Valerie

It's been an active last months here in our communal village (besides being practically on top of the epicentre of the largest earthquake the east coast has seen in 100 years):



Linus

Two babies were born this summer, **Linus** Rainer Thoreson (to **Kathryn** and **Casey**) and **Rosseyanka** Louise Zeigler (Rosa for short, to **Debbie** and **Alexis-X**). Everyone is enjoying watching them wriggle and smile and we are all getting good doses of baby therapy.



Rosa

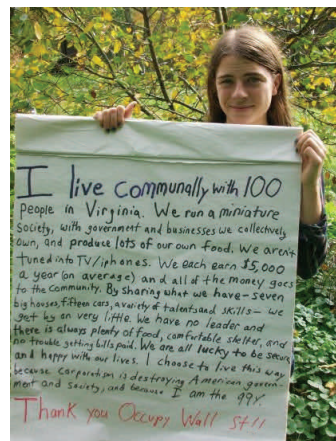
Other summer sightings included our neighbour's **emu** wandering through our yards, as it got loose and came to visit a few times. Our **Anniversary** celebration in June was low-key, but highlights from the Sharing Stage included Beatles songs sung in Yiddish (thanks to new member **Nina**), intern Ben from nearby Living Energy Farm with an awe-inspiring demonstration of circular breathing on a couple of different instruments, and the Twin Oaks belly-dancing troupe performing their usual amazing hip-gyrating, abs-rippling, Middle-Eastern magic.

In addition to growing babies, we grew and harvested 94 pounds of home-grown **ginger** from our hoop-house this year! Whether candied with sugar, pickled with vinegar or grated into stir-fries for supper, we are happy to bring a taste of pan-Asian cuisine to the Twin Oaks kitchen.

Other artistic pursuits included a series of **ballet classes**, taught by a Russian ballet dancer who was participating in our Three Week Visitor Program. The dining room was filled with a rotating cast of Oakers moving through plies, arabesques and our attempts at grand jetes. We've had two bands rehearsing and performing recently. One was the newly-formed "**Cover Crop**" which had a show at the Mother Earth News Festival in Pennsylvania. (and yes, their entire set consisted of cover songs).

On **Halloween** we rocked out to a performance by our very own **All Request Dance Band**, with up to 8 musicians on stage, 3 singers, and an expanded brass section including trumpet, cornet, alto sax and euphonium.

Politics are never far from the minds of many Oakers, and these last few months have been no exception. Internally, we had a couple of instances of "capitalism meets the commune". One of our hammock distributors began to feature our hammocks on the **Wal-Mart** website, which raised the ire of a number of members. After a discussion on the O&I board (one of our community decision-making forums), our hammocks management team arranged to have them removed from the site. And within the same two-week period, it came to light that our "candy-cane" hammocks (red and white striped) were being sold along with a navy blue pillow as an "**American Flag**" hammock set. This raised a similar response from some members, and again following a community-wide input period, we declined to make these for the company that was wanting them. Some members felt that in these difficult economic times, it made more sense to diversify our hammocks line and accept the account, and that since we are already making petrochemical-based fibre hammocks, these new venues and products weren't a much farther stretch, but in the end, the will of the group was that the slope is already slippery enough...



Outside of Twin Oaks, we've had several members participate in the "**Occupy**" movement, in New York City, Washington DC, Richmond and Charlottesville. In particular, **Sabrina** put herself forward as part of the 99% in an online photo essay in which she described her life at an "income-sharing intentional community in Virginia" and went on to describe the benefits of this style of living.

And a group of Twin Oakers are part of the "**Not On Our Fault Line**" anti-nuclear activist watch-dog group in Louisa, in response to the effects on the nuclear power plant near Twin Oaks as a result of the August 23rd Earthquake (with the charming acronym NOOFL). 🌿

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WHAT THE QUAKE!?

by Janel

August 23, 1:51pm

I was in the backyard of my residence when the unthinkable happened: the North Anna nuclear power plant, less than a dozen miles from Twin Oaks, exploded. At least, that's what I thought was happening when a roar as deep and fierce as an angry god's voice suddenly ripped through the forest. My jaw dropped as the building and surrounding trees began to shudder, nervously chattering like a mouth full of teeth. Seconds flew by and still the explosion continued. The sounds of smashing glass and distant screams began to pierce the monotonous boom, and a terrifying thought shot through my mind: *Is this the end?*

Moments later, the end did come. The end of what I'd learn was a 5.8-magnitude earthquake, that is!

To many of us, a prediction of a coming mid-Atlantic earthquake (and a sizable one—a 5.8-magnitude quake releases about half the energy of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima) would have seemed preposterous just a day before. Even as a native Californian, I myself was clueless; the ominous sound of hundreds of miles of cold, hard East Coast crust rattling was like nothing I'd ever heard.

Yet despite some of our momentary lapses of logic, our collective response to the calamity was immediate and strong. As Oakers flooded the courtyard, our obvious outdoor meeting space, someone ticked off names from a member list. Groups formed to scour every Twin Oaks building for anyone who may have been injured. People with cell phones offered them to those without. Following a call to an Internet-equipped relative, someone would announce, "The earthquake was felt in New York—JFK is closed!" or "The epicenter was 1.5 MILES FROM HERE!" and people within earshot would gasp. A message board with pertinent information was set up against a tree. Even member I.P., typically absent from group situations, was sitting in the center of the crowd, bouncing baby Linus on his knee. The feeling of togetherness present in the courtyard that afternoon was profoundly comforting.

The Damage

In just under thirty minutes, we had confirmed that no one was missing or seriously hurt. There were some close calls—Austin was pummeled but miraculously unharmed by falling 5-gallon buckets in the warehouse; Kristen received a black eye when smacked in the face by the dining hall swinging doors—but, as many of us realized, the bodily harm experienced was nothing compared to what could have been had the earthquake occurred at night. Shattered

glass from picture frames and the contents of overhead shelves rained down on many a bed.

I was drifting around the courtyard, taking in the scene and listening nervously to thunderous sounds of aftershocks, when I looked inside one of the residences, TaChai. Dozens of books and toppled bookcases cluttered the floor, making entering the building almost impossible. A 50-gallon fish tank had crashed to the floor, leaving shards of glass, puddles of water and dead fish in its wake. Knickknacks that had once defined TaChai's adorably kitschy ambiance now lay broken on the barely-visible rug.

More nerve-racking still was the fear that our old buildings' foundations had been compromised. After all, Virginians don't usually construct with earthquakes in mind! In the main dining hall, the shattered remains of fallen spice jars that had nearly knocked out the dinner cook littered the tile floor, the milk dispenser had face-planted, and bloody tomato pulps from the interrupted food processing shift were strewn about. I groaned when I noticed the huge gash in the floor that ran from the silverware counter to the wall behind the steam table...

What Now?

Three months later, that gash is still there and MT's walls are still cracked. But we got lucky compared to some of our neighbors, whose broken chimneys and burst pipes demanded immediate attention they simply could not afford to give. (Red, one of our fix-it folks, has kindly done volunteer plumbing work for a neighbor or two since the quake.) Thanks to our pooled resources, we were able to instantaneously create new labor and money budgets—in this case, humorously named, "What the Quake?!"—to make sure that much of the damage could get taken care of right away.

We wish we could say that the memory of the quake is behind us, but as recently as December, aftershocks have continued to send jolts of adrenaline through our veins. Plus, fears that the earthquake may have adversely affected the North Anna Power Station resulted in the birth of "[Not On Our Fault Line](#)" (NOOFL) to demand that the reactors be retrofitted to new seismic standards. (Sadly, the un-retrofitted reactors recently restarted after nearly three months of being offline. NOOFL is still in action, however; they will host a debate on the safety of the North Anna plant.) All we can say at this point is that we hope the media forecasts are correct—that this quake was a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence!

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE QUAKE HIT?

compiled by Summer

A week after the earthquake I put up a paper asking people to jot down a little paragraph about what they were up to when the quake hit. Here's what some folks remembered:

"I was with Shua in his room in Kaweah. I had taken the day off because I had a bad headache all night and morning and was just starting to feel better. Suddenly there was a loud boom, like something had smashed into the building. My mind went blank, and I thought it would stop, but the sound continued, and the walls were shaking back and forth. Shua's shelf fell over and his mirror fell on me. We were holding each other and I was yelling and cursing. I was scared for my life. When it stopped we opened the door, and McCune yelled 'Get out of the building!' and we ran out."

- WREN



"I was in the living room in the women's SLG, planning the winter crops for the hoophouse. I remember the sensation of being violently shaken and the sight of about 7 shelves of books pouring off the wall. Subjectively, time slowed down. After what I thought was at least a minute I said, 'It's an earthquake, isn't it? We need to get out of here.' I grabbed my shoes and we ran out, over a 2 foot jumble of books on the floor. Louisa public library had to reshelve 3,000 books. We had 11,000."

- PAM

"I knew right away it was an earthquake. The French press pot (full) smashed onto the computer and the flat screen monitor topped forward. Lots of stuff was falling everywhere and it was super loud. When it stopped, I tried to save my work, but the network was down, of course. While I was trying to figure out what to do next, an aftershock hit so I shut down the computer and ran to the doorway."

- SUMMER

"I was in Llano office, and had just downloaded the PDF of a book that I was going to start indexing. I sent it to the printer and went to the bathroom, and then the building starts a'shakin' and a'quakin'. My first thought was that someone had backed a semi truck into the side of the building. My second thought was that the tofu hut construction crew had hit a gas line and the whole place had blown up. The thing that I will never forget was the sounds the earth made just after the the quake, standing in the courtyard listening to booming subterranean explosions all around, like an out-of-sight artillery barrage."

- EZRA



damage to cinderblock walls of MT

"Mere minutes leading up to...I was on Llano roof. I had just prepped the next section of painting, and was coming down to get paint, brush, and knee pads. As soon as I stepped off the ladder...Boom."

- ZANE

"I don't trust my memory, because I was hit on the head and got a black eye and a mild concussion. Later I discovered large bruises on myself that I don't know how they got there. I was inside the dining hall and ran outside. I panicked, and remember being truck twice. I thought there'd been a gas explosion and was concerned about my children. Losing bits of my memory makes it difficult to write about. I think it was a door that hit me twice, and when I was outside the building, Bmann picked me up and walked me away. I would get dizzy off and on all that day. I'm very lucky."

- KRISTEN



For more earthquake photos, check them out [here](#).

GIFTS FROM THE COMMUNE

An opportunity to give your family and friends special holiday gifts while supporting an egalitarian, income-sharing lifestyle at the same time! The following three communities from the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (thefec.org) offer various products that provide a variety of gift-giving options:

Twin Oaks Hammocks

Always fun to find under the tree (before being put up in one). Twin Oaks has been making hammocks for over 40 years. We have two general styles — our many colored Olefin rope hammock (including our premium Silkspun softer line) and our fabric bed hammocks which come in single layer and quilted models. Check us out online at twinoakshammocks.com and see the different styles and then place your order with our talented and charming desk staff at [800-688-8496](tel:800-688-8496). Plus, *Leaves* readers get **free shipping!**



Acorn



This holiday season, give the gift of garden seeds to your loved ones. Southern Exposure Seed Exchange is the community business of Acorn Community. We specialize in organic heirlooms and varieties adapted to the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast region. We offer over 700 varieties, including garden vegetables, medicinal and culinary herbs, flowers, seed potatoes, heirloom garlic, perennial onions, and woodland medicinals. We also have a variety of gardening supplies and resources available, including books and DVDs. For the beginner gardener, you might want to try our book Grow Your Own Food - Made Easy, and a seed sampling kit such as our Appalachian Mix or our Three Sisters Garden Package. For the more experienced gardener, we offer hard-to-find varieties and advanced gardening resources. To access our catalog or place an order, you can visit our website at southernexposure.com, or contact us through [phone](tel:800-688-8496) or [fax](mailto:info@southernexposure.com).

We wish you a happy holiday and a fruitful growing season.

Southern Exposure Seed Exchange

Phone: [\(540\) 894-9480](tel:540-894-9480)

Fax: [\(540\) 894-9481](tel:540-894-9481)

East Wind



Delicious and good for you! East Wind Nutbutters makes natural Cashew Butter, Almond Butter, Tahini and good-old-fashioned Peanut Butter to please your palate (and stick to it) this holiday season. To see the full selection and to place your order, visit their website at eastwindcrafts.com.

Also available are their [Utopian Rope Sandals](http://eastwindcrafts.com), made by East Winders in Missouri. These are offered in solid and two-toned colour styles.

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