

Personal Stories...



...and Miscellaneous Musings

This section contains personal stories, anecdotes, and miscellaneous entries that don't fit easily into one category. The entries are in alphabetical order by last name of contributors. Note that these authors may have entries in other sections of this history.

Lindsay Staubus Alger

I was a member of the church school starting when we were still on Bancroft Way and well remember our move to the beautiful new site overlooking the Bay. I include a short list of some of my happy memories:

1. Singing Christmas carols at the late night services on Christmas Eve and being given a candle to light in the front window of our house, which tied us to all of the other Unitarians in the world.
2. Marveling that the eternal flame was always burning even if you came by unexpectedly in the middle of the week.

3. Evening Youth Choir practice with Phyllis Wells and my friends, and performing Sunday morning on the steps at the front of the sanctuary.
4. Visiting multiple other places of worship from a Quaker Meeting House to a Greek Orthodox Church, from a Synagogue to a Buddhist Temple, all of which expanded my understanding of religion.
5. Receiving my World Bible upon “graduation” from church school, which I still have to this day over 45 years later.
6. Taking bread-baking classes in the Church kitchen from Frances McDaniels.
7. Church family dinners and watching productions, such as *H.M.S. Pinafore*, in the social hall.
8. Being exposed to people of varying viewpoints at church services. (Well do I remember Bobby Seale speaking to us.)
9. Meetings of the Youth Group when I was in high school.
10. My brother getting married on the patio just outside of the Fireside Room.

I have lived in Baltimore for the past 30 years and joined the Towson UU community where my children went to church school, so the tradition lives on.

Phyllis B. Bischof: UUCB Memories of the 1980s

In these years this church was a special refuge and sanctuary for those seeking to explore the life of the mind and the spirit. The Boekes brought diverse people together to seek for truth, for compassion, for meaning, for beauty.

As an Africanist, international and intercultural initiatives and programming at UUCB were central to my finding meaning and spiritual and intellectual nourishment here. The following were especially important to me:

1. Dr. Boeke’s translations of hymns of the Reverend Norbert Capek, including “Mother Spirit, Father Spirit,” live in our hearts. An annual highpoint was a Flower Communion, a service initiated by Dr. Capek (prior to his being incarcerated and killed by the Nazis) in his congregation in Prague, then the largest Unitarian congregation in the world.
2. Dr. Boeke’s sermons on the life and work of Francis David, Michael Servetus, and Martin Luther King, Howard Thurman; and on the courageous life and teachings of the

German Reverend Dietrich Bonhoeffer, imprisoned and executed for resisting Nazism and practicing his faith.

3. The establishment of a long-term relationship with Transylvanian Unitarians.
4. Participation by three Kenyan graduate students at UC Berkeley in a Sunday service: John Gathegi and Kinuthia Macharia, both Gikuyus; and Fenno Ogutu, a Luo.
5. A Shinto priest from Stockton, garbed in his white robe and tall black hat, clapped two boards together as he led worship in Sunday services.
6. Three exiled students from Tienanmen Square found refuge at UUCB in 1989. These students were helped by the Boekes, Lucile Green, and others to make new lives here in this country. Help ranged from at least one of the students serving as church custodian, providing assistance to them in finding and furnishing housing, and even hosting a karaoke /dance evening at the church as one way for them to meet UUCB members.

Social Justice. (1) In 1994 a memorial dedicated to Bay Area victims of violence was created from metal freed by melting down guns. A handsome Gunplow Monument stands on a rise across to the east from the church entrance. (2) Each year we celebrated Martin Luther King's birthday with a sermon focusing on an aspect of his life and ministry.

Music. We enjoyed weekly feasts of fabulous organ music by Sandra Soderlund. Andre Watts in 1994 played a superb benefit concert and used our sanctuary to record his music. Opera a la Carte offered enchanted evenings of fellowship at dinner while outstanding soloists serenaded diners.

Programming. In the late 1980s and early 1990s I served as program chair of the UUs for the UC Berkeley Luncheon Group, which met monthly at the Faculty Club to hear a speaker. We particularly enjoyed lectures by historian Leon Litwack, who shared the speech on civil rights he gave as president of the American Historical Society with us, folklorist Alan Dundes, who lectured on religious humor, and geographer Hilgard O'Reilly Sternberg, who spoke on environmental issues in the context of his lifelong research on the Amazon. Lilica and Kinsey Anderson were particularly active members of this group.

Magnificent Lawrence Lectures brought world-class intellectuals and spiritual leaders, including Linus Pauling and Howard Thurman, to speak on their passions, their work, and their worldviews.

Jim Burneo's homily as UUCB Board President honoring Dick Boeke summarized four points made by Dick at his farewell dinner in 1995: "He told us that he believed that religion is relationships, that his heart should be like a swinging door— swinging in and out to life, that this church, this place is a shrine and should be so honored and finally that the purpose of religion is kindness."

For the inspired leadership of Richard and Johanna Boeke I shall be forever grateful.

Lynne Cahoon: A Wedding at UUCB

We knew we wanted to get married—but where? John’s Baptist Church was way too Christian for me, but in 1965 a church seemed the appropriate place for a wedding. I had heard of Unitarianism and found the nearest address in the telephone book. When I walked into the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley, I was immediately struck by the beauty of the building and no crosses! I talked to the minister’s secretary, Maisie Newman. Mrs. Newman explained the procedure for wedding rentals. This included an interview/counseling session with the minister, the services of the organist, and flowers for the altar. There was a Flower Committee, which did the arranging. I could put in a color request, but the flower arrangement was up to them, and it stayed at the church. I went home to discuss what I had found with John. I was so enthusiastic about the lack of crosses that he said, “Sure.” It was fine with him.

We made an appointment to talk to Dr. Cope (in those days, no one called a minister by his first name—horrors!). When we got to the church, we were welcomed by Mrs. Newman: “Dr. Cope’s office is downstairs. We have what I call the COPERNICAN system to call him.” I think it was an intercom that went down to what is now the Meditation Room. Dr. Cope talked to us and gave us the option of writing our own vows. This was a new idea to me, and we loved it. He also told us about a toasting cup, not to break, as is the Jewish custom, but to keep. He told us to use it just for special occasions: anniversaries, the birth of a child, and important milestones. Then he said: “If ever you get into a difficult fight, one of you can bring out the cup. It can be a symbol between you. One of the most difficult things to do is saying that you are sorry to someone you love.” We are lucky that in 46 years we have only used our cup for happy occasions. On the day of the wedding, I changed into my dress in what is now Don Wollwage’s (Facilities Manager) office. Did you wonder how he rated a private bathroom? That used to be the Bride’s Room. John had chosen the music—Bach’s entire “Wedding Cantata,” played by Harold Hawley and sung by local soprano Carol Bogard. We said our vows—John was so romantic, I cried. And they all lived happily ever after.



Roger Dillahunt: Sharing My History at UUCB

I first ventured through the doors here at UUCB in 1977 nearly three and a half decades ago. My dear friend Dan Gensemer introduced me to Phyllis Wells, who was then choir director of UUCB.

I danced and choreographed for a dramatic oratorio “Jeanne d’arc” which was then being performed here by the choir, starring our very own Jean Lipton! Following the performance, I continued attending services on a regular basis and joined the choir. During 17 years with the choir I had the opportunity of working under wonderful directors, including Phyllis Wells, Simon Andrews, Jay Kawarsky, Eric Howe, and Edwin Barlow (during his two terms as director), and currently Bryan Baker after a nine-year break.

Over the years I have performed in numerous shows, sung and danced in countless Sunday services, fundraisers, numerous versions of “Opera a la Carte,” holiday festivals, Boar’s Head Feasts; and made occasional trips to sing at other churches and sister congregations, including my pilgrimage to Transylvania four years ago.

Early on the Boekes guided my thoughts and spiritual development, which helped in my decision to become a member and join this church and congregation. The same kindred guidance continually grows and develops under the inspirational ministerial leadership of the Reverends Barbara and Bill Hamilton-Holway. Their impressionable and amazing insight, continuity, sensitivity and sensibility are continuously reinforcing my renewed commitment as a Unitarian Universalist on my journey here.

Early on, I must admit that I found Unitarian Universalism to be far different than my upbringing as a Southern Baptist in Arkansas and Southern California. At first I was hesitant and somewhat taken aback since I found some of the practices to be strange and at times unsettling. But I continued moving forward on my journey and have found comfort and growth in our traditions and rituals, which I embrace and have made my life so full. The chalice lighting, floral arrangements, first warm morning greetings at the entrance by our ministers and various congregants at the entrance, Michael Ching’s (recent head usher) wonderful smile, our singing together songs of praise and listening in quiet contemplation to the choir, instrumentalists and soloists, story telling, dedication of our children, and our Doctors of Durability have all helped me venture deeper into my spiritual practice, awareness, and awakening. My service to this Church has included being a mentor for a youth in the Chrysalis Coming of Age program, canvassing, dance classes and workshops for Religious Education children, and bringing my passion for dance to multiple facets of church service. I have served as a temporary Board of Trustees member, seven years on the Intern Minister Committee, and currently am on the Nominating Committee. I am a recipient of the Flaming Chalice award.

Minerva Mendoza Friedman: My Memories of the Past in Relation to UUCB

I remember participating in some civil disobedience actions as part of my firm belief in peace and social justice. It was in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when there were demonstrations on college campuses, including UC Berkeley, against the war in Vietnam.

I attended meetings at the Berkeley Fellowship to discuss plans of actions. There were demonstrations over the Cambodia invasions and the Kent State student deaths. These student strikes and protests involved more than 4 million students, in the only nationwide student strike in U.S. history. Many UU members were involved due to our belief in social justice.

Leaving the Catholic Church was hard, as I was raised in this religion like most people in Panama, but I was ready to change my faith. I began as a Friend at the Berkeley Fellowship and then moved on to UUCB in the mid-eighties.

I am proud that as a Board member I volunteered and was chosen by the Board to chair the Centennial Committee for the church. Here is where I learned to work with a truly committed Minister, Dr. Boeke, as part of a team that supported all our efforts. There were many activities carried out during our centennial year in 1991: lunches, dinners and dances to name a few. We raised enough money to pay for the first pictorial directory, a special piano concert by Andre Watts (who volunteered the proceeds to UUCB), a worship service on the day of the centennial at the same church where UUCB began at UC Berkeley; a contest to design the logo of the centennial T-shirt; ethnic lunch celebrations—Cinco de Mayo, St. Patrick's Day, Santa Lucia; a Passover Seder; New Year's celebrations in December 1990 and December 1991; a Holly Faire; and a forum with Rabbi Michael Lerner on Peace and Social Justice in the Middle East. This all was done with the support of the church staff and many, many volunteers.

We began our traditional Thanksgiving dinners at the church, which has continued for more than twenty years serving our community.

Anne Greenwood: A Children's Chapel and Other Memories of Conversations with Judith Fabry

One Sunday at UUCB, probably when it was still First Unitarian Church of Berkeley (FUCB) and I was the Religious Education Director, Judith asked me if I would join her to present a chapel at Starr King School. I agreed, not fully understanding what was involved, but over the time we organized this, I got to hear Judy's reminiscences about the Children's Chapel at the original FUCB on the corner of Dana and Bancroft in Berkeley and her amazing faith journey, undertaken with Dr. Raymond Cope. She told me she had lobbied for the children's space, and

was finally able to get it built, with small pews and an organ (I think). She was very proud of it and also of her time spent supporting the Religious Education program. I have seen a picture of it, but I assume it is long ago dismantled.

Judith gave me a small wooden cross on a cord after that service at Starr King, which amazed me. I thought she was Jewish. She told me it was given to her by Dr. Cope as she struggled to sort out her own feelings about being Christian and her own background. Her husband, Joe Fabry, and I share the same birthday, November 6. Perhaps Judy felt a special connection to me in my role as RE director. I was also the same age as one of her children, Wendy, who had been tragically murdered. The large copper plaque that hangs in the Fireside Room with the interconnected willow trees and one stump represents that family loss. The Fabrys were a rich and wonderful addition to this congregation. Joe, with his wisdom, writing, Logotherapy and humor; Judy with her crafts, stories and dedication; both of them with their warmth and hospitality—hosting and nurturing a neighborhood cluster group that still exists!

Joe and Judith were on the first trip Dr. Boeke led to our Partner Church in Transylvania in 1990. During the few hours they were in the village they managed to connect with a young girl and her widowed mother, and began to send them money to help with her fatherless plight. The Fabrys are both still remembered by the people there for their generosity and caring. And I am glad to recall some of the times they touched my life.

Jeanne Griffith

Remembering the 21-year ministry of the Rev. Richard Boeke and his wife and co-minister Johanna, with gratitude for his compassion, brilliant sermons, devotion to social justice, international understanding, and the pursuit of world peace among religions. His accomplishments were life changing, and enduring to many congregants. Jopie's warmth and ministerial skills are long remembered. In this year of celebration, their parts in this church's history have an important place. In faith, hope, and love, Jeanne Griffith.

Margaret Gudmundsson: Remembering the Searchlight

I remember seeing the searchlight in the parking lot, and looking for and seeing the light in the night sky. My kids also were young so I don't remember attending the "rally." I believe it was probably in May of 1970 and billed as a "Prayer Vigil" to differentiate this anti-war protest from what was happening on the UC Berkeley campus, which was at the height of the protests where they shut down the school and it was "reconstituted." This was during the revelation of the bombing in Cambodia.

Dorothy Herzberg: Tuesday Potlucks

I remember Dick Boeke liked to cook. I believe he might have started the Tuesday night potlucks, every other Tuesday. He would pull leftovers out of the refrigerator or bring something and create soups, or whatever. He loved doing it and also creating programs, such as a United Nations Day program, or a visiting speaker. When Paul Sawyer retired from the Fellowship, we had an evening with him.

Erda Labuhn: Explanation of Unitarianism (from 1976)

I have been asked to explain Unitarianism in a few short sentences. Well....

Without depending upon dogma, theology, holy writs, liturgy or demiurgy, but without closing off the possibility of any kind of mumbo-jumbo or idiosyncrasy that anybody wishes, Unitarianism recognizes the absolute necessity of man's responsibility to his fellow man, provided it doesn't include washing the dishes. In its eagerness not to miss anything of any value whatever, in no matter what regard, Unitarianism acknowledges fully the supremacy of science, while understanding the usefulness of Tarot cards. It remains open-minded about flying saucers, Indian rope climbers, the current President and ESP, while maintaining every right to be skeptical about everything not readily explainable pragmatically to the last degree. Not to close off any avenue, Unitarianism is carrying on an investigation into Transactional Meditation. Unitarianism feels a little uncomfortable talking about Adam or Eve, Jahweh or Satan, angels or demons, Heaven or Hell; but it also must be clearly understood that it wishes them all well. Making room in its portmanteau for ectoplasm, transcendentalism, transubstantiation and reincarnation, Unitarianism welcomes exploration into any polysyllabic, controversial, inflammatory, unsubstantiated kind of mess—more or less. Believing in the essential goodness of man and his ability constantly to improve, though conceding such momentary aberrations as Harvard economists, Orange County, any former administration, nuclear power plants, and Swiss bank accounts, Unitarians can get used to anything in small amounts. Because of Jefferson, Emerson, Thoreau, Albert Schweitzer's daughter, former President Nixon's former Attorney General, Transylvania and Count Dracula, Unitarianism is international. And above all else, Unitarianism is completely rational.

Scott Merrick

When we returned from Italy in 1956, after my two years as a Fulbright Scholar in Venice, Terry decided that our twins, Thea and Lea, should be exposed to some churchly learning. Her brother and wife, Graeme and Pat Welch, had begun attending the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley which, incidentally, was then very close to where they lived on Bancroft. The church in Kensington had just been built so they started there and Terry decided we should too. So, after having not been in a church service for years (I was raised in a community church run by the Presbyterians in Strasburg, CO, I was persuaded to go. Naturally, I joined the choir, led by Phyllis Wells. After a couple of months, Ray Cope asked

me to become the chair of the Music Committee and I accepted. I believe there was such a committee already but it was inactive. (*See the Appendices for “Merrick’s List of Events,” music events that Scott was involved in.*)

Elaine Miller: Memories of Church

Malvina Reynolds singing “Little Boxes” from the pulpit (during a church service I believe) in the 1970s.

Arthur Hill, the church organist when Phyllis Wells was the choir director (1960s–early 1970s?). He was tall, thin, with long thin fingers, had long salt-and-pepper grey hair, sharp features, smiled and laughed easily but was reserved. He and Jaime Allen once came to our house for dinner. I was impressed with the way he could play the piano. My sisters and I would give him the most complicated pieces of sheet music we could find (lots of black notes, not much white paper showing on the page, big chords and many sharps and flats) and he could just play it by sight. Arthur said something laughingly/semi-annoyed about how Jaime left dishes in the sink without running water into them. They were partners.

Overheard in the Social Hall after church: Congregation member #1: “You’re smoking near the baby; you shouldn’t smoke near the baby!” Congregation member #2: “It’s good for him— it’ll toughen him up.” [*Elaine’s sister Luana Pohlman adds: “After church I used to play outside in front because of the cigarette smoke inside. I wanted to get away from all the smoke.”*]

My 4th grade Sunday school teacher was Marian Diamond (world-renowned professor at UC Berkeley, in brain anatomy and functioning). I liked her because she was cheerful, positive, affirming, and interesting. We talked about different religions. Our classroom was in a room in the basement under the choir room. We got to paint and decorate the room. We painted it yellow and hung fabric on the door. The room is used for storage now.

Luana Pohlman: Memories of Church

I think I remember Dad [*Bill Ulp*] bringing us up to the church to fly kites on the church property before the church was built.

The choir was very important in our lives. I remember Mom and Dad hiring babysitters so they could go up to the church for choir practice. Later on the choir put on musicals, the first one I saw was *HMS Pinafore* and I was completely enthralled by the performance of Carl Hunter, the lead soprano, Myrna Woodhead, Buttercup, Marcia Frendel, Captain John James, First Lord Scott Merrick and others. The singing, costuming, and all the effort put forth by all those involved were amazing. Later on I joined the choir in my early twenties and participated in a few of the musicals, one of which was *Iolanthe*. Phyllis Wells was director of the choir at the time and people called her our fearless leader.

I remember having fun church picnics at Live Oak Park. One of the things that impressed me was the barbershop quartet that entertained us (Scott Merrick, William Ulp, Bob Landwehr, Jeff White, and occasional substitutes).

I remember the summer programs the church did for a few years where we would celebrate a different culture each summer by learning different things about the culture through cooking and sewing projects: the Summer Workshop in International Living.

At Christmas time we had a wonderful brass quartet that would play, and Dr. Cope had a tradition of giving the children (I think) a red votive candle to light at 7:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve. That along with the Messiah Sing, seeing Sundar Shadi's Christmas display on Arlington Ave, and the Christmas Eve candlelight service made Christmas time very special.

Fern Roberts-Labuhn: Joining the Church

When we moved from Detroit, Michigan in 1952 to Berkeley, California, I was 5 ½ years old. Unable to find a more open church, we joined the Methodist Church below the Marin Circle almost into Albany. I hated it.

The main thing I remember was having to memorize prayers; the only one I still remember was "Our Father Who Art in Heaven...." I was a different animal and luckily so were my parents. A friend of Mom's [*Erda Labuhn*] told them of the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley, located on Bancroft and Dana.

I remember the first moment we went there and met the minister and his wife, Dr. Raymond J. Cope and Marian. Dr. Cope came up to us before the service; and when he graciously took my hand in both of his and said how glad he was to meet me, the warmth and love poured through his hands clasping mine, and to this day it makes me cry to remember and still feel the total acceptance of me as an individual and a whole human being even at eight years old. We all felt we were home.

Like my father [*Dick Labuhn*] I never have believed in a god, but from that day on, Dad and I were hooked. We never felt wrong for our belief. It was never an issue. I definitely have developed the Unitarian Universalist ideals where education, love, acceptance of differences, and nonviolence are my deep-seated values.

Marian Cope taught one of the children's Sunday School classes upstairs and across the street in the YMCA building. Maisie Newman was the church secretary and handled everything with class.

I knew I was in the right church when one of the volunteer teachers was a local science teacher and read a story from the Bible and to illustrate the story he set up a volcano and made it erupt all over the table. Education is the key!

In 1954 my parents and I (aged 8) joined Dr. and Marian Cope on a protest march down Shattuck Avenue singing "We Shall Overcome" supporting Dr. King in his fight for Black freedom and human rights. The five of us were at the front of the crowd. I felt very proud of us all. And I have a newspaper article to prove it.

Kendra Smith: UUCB History Bits

The first church-sponsored event I remember was memorable, in 1985 I believe. It was a Shinto purification ceremony that took place in some wild place, all Manzanita and live oaks and a racing, tumbling stream swollen by snowmelt. The handful of us who participated—Sheila Kennedy and George Williams are the only ones I recall, with the Rev. Richard Boeke as leader—brought sleeping bags and slept in cabins. There was a central lodge, with a great stone fireplace, around which we hovered because it was cold, that damp penetrating spring cold we get in California. Those of us who were hardy enough, most of us, hiked down a rocky trail to a place in the river that had what I will call a waterfall, though it wasn't very high. A stout rope had been strung across the river here. We stripped, or mostly stripped, and put on white sheet-like garments. Then one by one we went into the river, stopping where the water or heavy spray covered us. Here we clapped our hands three times to summon the *kami* and (as I vaguely recall) said some words of appreciation for water. We had the rope to hold on to, but in addition there was a sturdy young man to help us over the slippery rocks. I don't know whether I was purified or not, but it was exhilarating and to my surprise I felt warm, even before I got into dry clothes. Sharing an ordeal, even so minor an ordeal as this, is bonding; and even though I was new to everyone, there was deep sharing around the fire afterward. I would do it again if I could.

This Shinto practice reflected the Rev. Boeke's interest in bridging religions and cultures, which was expressed through IARF (International Association for Religious Freedom) and many other ways. He had a vision of creating in this great university center a west coast version of the Center for the Study of World Religions that is affiliated with Harvard. The hope for a donor who would fund a center of that magnitude dwindled, but a committee called West/East was formed. Alas, I can recall three of the names on that committee, none of them currently in the church, but not the fourth name—names slip away at age 88. The committee sponsored a few lectures at the Graduate Theological Union. I met quite a few times with the then president of GTU who never unequivocally ruled out a chair in comparative religions at GTU, but I eventually concluded there was not a corresponding interest in that quarter—so this bit of history is what scientists call a negative experiment.

UUCB has, in general been very hospitable to Buddhism. I don't recall the year that I first taught a class in insight meditation (vipassana), perhaps 1993. A couple of daytime meditation groups spun off of these classes. Only one, for women, exists now; and the constituency has changed. The group has an annual weekend retreat at a retreat center offered by the Vedanta Society of San Francisco. The groups were especially meaningful for two persons who had gotten terminal diagnoses. Both came to the group, in one case with his oxygen tank, within days of their sad deaths. The second year that I taught a class my own daughter died, and Donna Davis and Isabel Mather took over the teaching for a few weeks. The group was an important support for me then, and again when one of my granddaughters was murdered in Tahiti. I should add that I felt a lot of support in the entire church, but I'm still moved when I think of those who meditated silently with me.

Nineteen or twenty years ago Congress passed an act permitting one thousand Tibetan refugees, from India or Nepal where they were stateless, to come to the U.S. if they had sponsors. Lucille Green and I both sponsored, taking some into our homes while they began to adapt to our ways. A Tibet Committee was formed to welcome the Tibetans and help them in a number of ways. On the Dalai Lama's advice they had come singly, leaving families to come later (in some cases 5–6

years later), and they were lonely. The church gave them a place large enough to bring their community of refugees together, where they could cook traditional food, and sing and dance traditional songs and dances. They also wanted desperately to earn money, to pay for their families to join them. They were able to do this with a sort of fair or bazaar, and by cooking some after-service lunches. If I try to recall who was on the committee I might slight someone, but Paul Rogers and Penelope Johnson were very active in addition to Lucille Green and me.

There is some unfortunate history here. On the sixth or seventh time they rented the church for a Tibetan get-together, some of their teenagers got badly out of hand (as teenagers from a different culture tend to do when the old social controls are not in place). These kids damaged a door and did some other damage, as well as littering the parking lot. A couple of committee members were required to be there as long as the party continued, but we were asleep (literally, for me) on the job. Church members were justifiably angry. The Tibetans, deeply ashamed, asked to have one more event in the church. This time they hired a couple of off-duty police to supervise, and everything was left in good order. It's all part of our history! UUCB can take some satisfaction, though, in having helped Tibetans become acculturated. Many have been able to send their children to college and on to professions, and some have managed to buy houses.

You will get more of our history with the two young men who escaped from China after the 1989 protests (and a third young man who came later) from others. However, because of my involvement with them I got a call from a UUCB church member, whose name (again) I can't recall. She lived in Hiller Highlands and escaped the fire by walking out with nothing but the clothes on her back. The Rev. Jopie Boeke gave this woman some of Jopie's own clothes, and other church members helped as they could. I have her pretty face in mind, and maybe if I look through the old directory I will find her. Because we had gotten to know each other in connection with the Tienanmen Square escapees, she called and asked me if I could house a middle-aged Chinese man who was a government official, in the country to purchase timber for China. He had spoken out against the government's violent reprisals, and needed a safe house where he could hide. He was afraid that he would either be abducted and returned to China and prison, or "accidentally" hit by a car. When I agreed that I could hide this man, because I lived in the hills then and no one could see into our house unless they walked up 35 steps and peered into windows, she put some Chinese students studying here in touch with me. I was never given my clandestine houseguest's real name, only a very common pseudonym, Mr. Wong. I was told that if anyone telephoned to ask for him I should feign ignorance. I did get a telephone call and someone asking for Mr. _____. It all seemed so unreal, so made for TV, that—this is embarrassing—I started to giggle. Then the caller identified himself as the grad student who had brought the man, and apologized for his own forgetfulness. Mr. "Wong" didn't speak English, so we used sign language and his translator computer. My husband speaks only a rural, regional dialect and no Mandarin. When the sun started going down, Mr. "Wong" would draw all the draperies, so no one could look in. After a few weeks, asylum was obtained for him. And after a month or so, a thank you card with no name or return address arrived. It was postmarked with the city I thought he had gone to. Just see what an ecumenically minded Unitarian church can get one into.

Phyllis Whiteman: Singles Club and Yoga Class

It all started for me with the Singles Club. Norm Smith and Pat Malango started the club in the mid-seventies, ran it for a couple of years, and turned it over to Bob Vinther. He ran it for a couple of years. It was during this time that I met Richard and, in a few months, I realized that we would spend the rest of our lives together. So in the summer of 1978, I volunteered to teach a yoga class at the church as a thank you for providing a meeting place. It was in June 1978 that I started the yoga class. I was only going to do that for the summer, but everyone in the class persuaded me to continue. That is how it started and it has been an ongoing class ever since.

Richard and I ran the Singles Club from 1982 to 1986. It was doing really well and when Richard and I got married, we did not think we should be doing it anymore, so we turned it over to someone else. Unfortunately the club did not survive.