

Fare Thee Well meets spiritual needs of some disenchanting church members

By VIVIAN HARROWER

HUNTINGTON — The green logs in the fireplace sputtered and finally caught fire sometime between the start and finish of an extended meditation as members of Fare Thee Well met Sunday at the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Watkins on Allencoit Road.

Fare Thee Well, the name taken by a group of some 50 people from Springfield to Pittsfield who meet regularly at the Watkins' home, is hard to define. Fare Thee Well is both a place in Huntington and, in old English, "a state of perfection, a state of consciousness," explained spiritual leader Floyd McAuslan of Worthington.

"Fare Thee Well is not the way, it is a way," McAuslan told his listeners who ringed the living room and spilled into the hallway. Kneeling on one knee on a braided rug in front of the fireplace, the former lay minister of the Norwich Hill Congregational Church invited participants to do away with the cross of suffering and doubt by uniting their will with that of God, "infinite intelligence," the Creator.

McAuslan, who was wearing a loose-fitting Indian-style shirt, returned over and over again to the metaphor of a seed contained in each person, capable of growing and blossoming.

He urged them to get in touch with the unity which pervades all things.

Members listed those who were sick or who had died. A young woman led the group in folk song, "Weave Me The Sunshine."

Ducking the labels associated with particular denominations, or religions, McAuslan in a conversation as the meeting broke up for coffee and tea, said the philosophies of many religions — Jewish, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu — are incorporated into his teaching. Fare Thee Well might best be defined as "a wholeness center," he said, adding that some people will refer to it as a church.

Some of those present that day had already attended formal worship services elsewhere; others said they had become disenchanting with a particular church and had found that Fare Thee Well met their spiritual needs.

Fare Thee Well began to take shape last summer, following the spring announcement by McAuslan that he would quit the Norwich Hill post. McAuslan, who works full time as produce manager at a supermarket said the decision to withdraw from that church as minister came to him suddenly. He had no thoughts at the time of forming a new group.

During the summer, McAuslan, some members of the Norwich Hill church, and others began meeting out-ofdoors on the Watkins' land. When cold weather came, they moved to the McAuslans' home, then to the Watkins' house. Wanting

to form a corporation, the group drew up a creed in order to meet state requirements for incorporation as a religious group. McAuslan said the creed was to be as "uncreedal" as possible, in that it was not to be dogmatic or exclusive.

The creed expresses the belief in "infinite intelligence as an ever-present power" and "daily a'onnement to draw closer to the perfection of God's creation," which "always has been and always will be." In her own words, Mrs. Watkins said the search for the spiritual life leads one into self-realization. You realize your own makeup and your intuitive creativity." It's a very "positive philosophy," she summed up.

No Labels

The philosophy of Fare Thee Well encompasses Christianity as well as other religions, Mrs. Watkins said, adding, "we are not labeling ourselves anything."

The weekly meetings are referred to by some as healing services, she said. Although the healing is primarily spiritual, it could help a person with physical ailments determine what course of action to take.

Plans are well underway for a structure to house Fare Thee Well. Selection of the site for the proposed building has an interesting background. McAuslan said he envisioned a place for the group to meet. Some time later he was shown a piece of land by James Watkins, the land matched the picture he had had in mind.

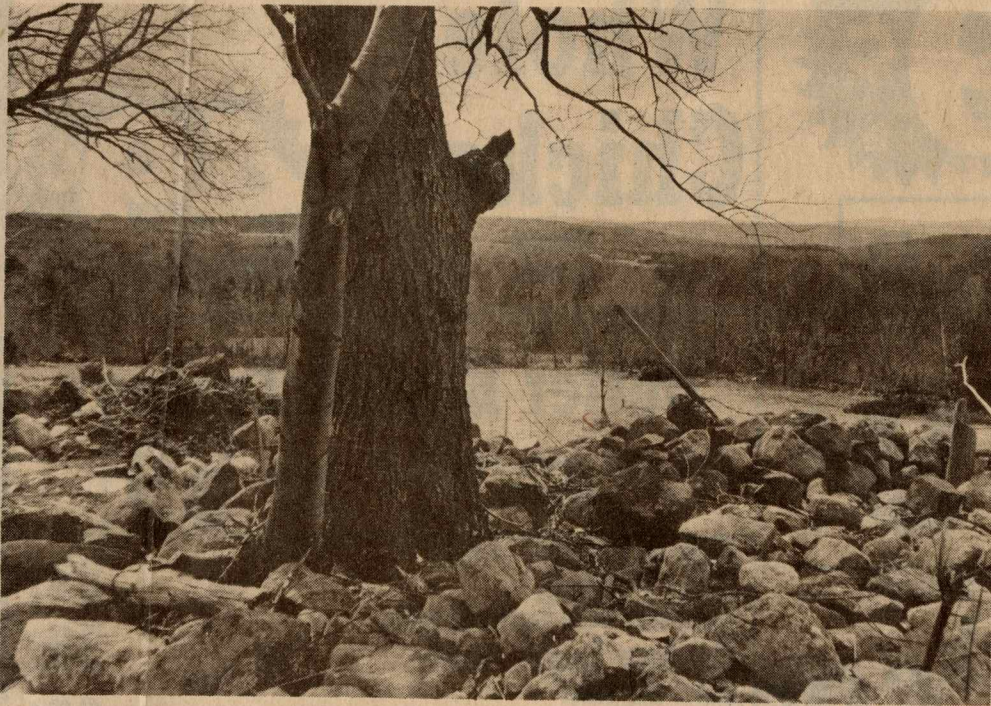
Independently of McAuslan, Roy Whitney, the head of a one-man design firm in Amherst called Drawing Power, then walked the land to determine the best location for a structure. Whitney, who is also a lecturer in physics at Smith College, discovered what he calls "high energy points" on the property. His ideas coincided with McAuslan's.

Energy points are determined by intuition, explained Whitney, who holds a Ph.D. in physics. "One has the feeling it's the right place; the energies are right there, for say, a temple." Whitney used the word "temple" in the sense of any religious structure, he said, adding that extensive writings suggest that Stonehenge, some of the great Gothic cathedrals, and the City of Jerusalem were built on their particular sites because of the high energies generated there. Structures then "enhance" such a spot, he continued.

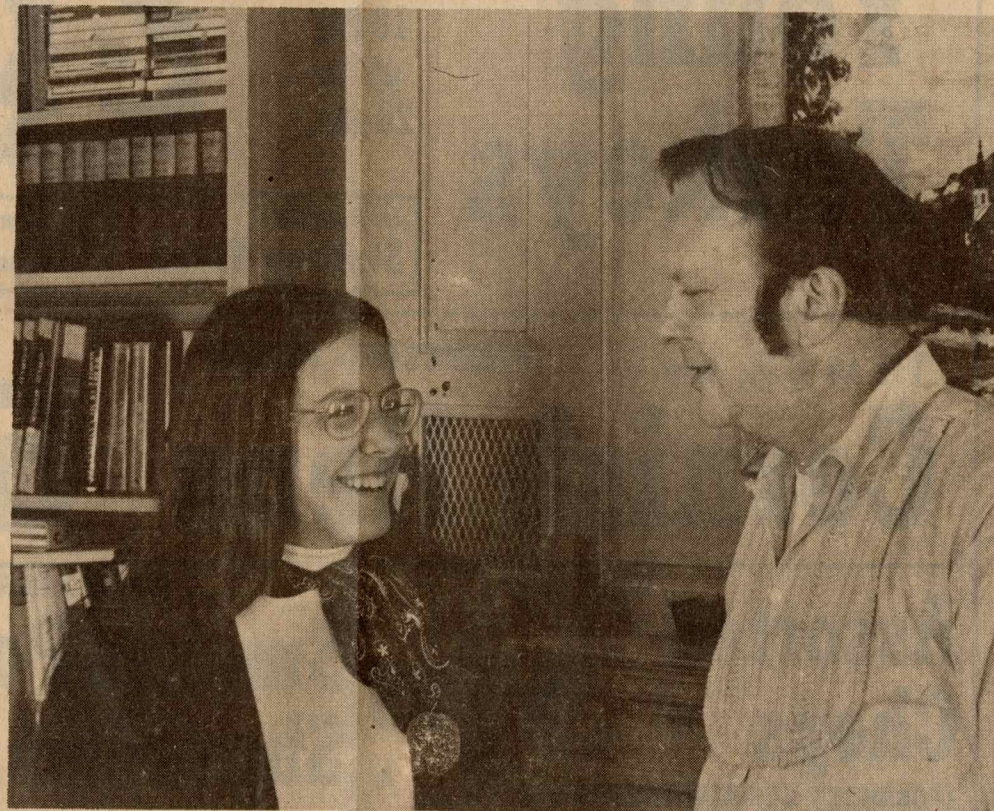
Any piece of land, or even a room, has points where the energy is higher than others, but some spots are particularly high in energy, Whitney said.

The physicist, who is not a member of Fare Thee Well although he is in sympathy with the group, said his designs for a three-story building composed of a series of rectangles will have to be translated into structural plans by an architect. Fare Thee Well could be the first building designed by Whitney to be actually built.

The group hopes to begin building this summer.



THE SITE of a proposed structure to house the 'wholeness center' on 20 acres of land off Route 66. The scenic spot was selected because of its high 'energy points.'



SPIRITUAL LEADER Floyd McAuslan chats with Susan Moses after a gathering of Fare Thee Well in Huntington.