Watching Cars

By Cornelia Parkes

Sunday, October 18, was the Annual All-Meeting Meeting for Worship Outside Raytheon. Although the organizers tried to set up a compatible meeting for worship for Zoomers, it was a dismal experience for me. I couldn't hear or see anyone and was distracted by the passing cars. I arranged my screen to shut out the view of Raytheon and began to meditate on watching cars. Why was that keeping me from centering into worship?

I remembered the time, long ago now, that I traveled as an elder with Eden Grace to Intermountain Yearly Meeting at Ghost Ranch, NM, where she was the keynote speaker. This was early in her career as a public Quaker, before she became a missionary in Kenya. She has left us much too soon. I discovered an affinity with the yearly meeting clerk, one of those wonderful, but too rare Quaker connections. He told me he was a 10th generation native to New Mexico. I tried to figure that out. He said he had grown up in the mountains in what is now known as Los Alamos where his father was the head of a school for boys. The school was founded to teach boys how to live in and love nature. After the school was closed by the U.S. government, his father seemed to lose his purpose in life. He gave me a book by his late wife.

This book, *The House at Otowi Bridge* by Peggy Pond Church has the key to watching cars. This is the way I remember the story that I read several years ago. It's the story of a woman who owned an inn on the road to Los Alamos. In the early years, the scientists who were setting up the research facilities at Los Alamos would stop at her inn on their way to the mountains. They often enjoyed good food and long conversations. It was a busy time. One of the scientists who had chosen Los Alamos had in his youth hiked in those mountains and recalled how beautiful they were.

But when the work at Los Alamos began to expand, a new highway and bridge were built that bypassed the inn. No one stopped there anymore and the woman had to abandon it. She went to live with her nearest neighbors in an indigenous village on the hill. One of the elders would sit on the hillside watching the cars speed by on the highway. He would wonder why so many people had to go someplace so fast.

How can I ever understand the human mind! How can someone find the most beautiful place in the world and go there to build a doomsday machine?