

## Candles of Hope – 2014



This year our 'traditional' Charlie Brown Christmas tree morphed into an altar of hopeful 'Light for Lima' as we join the worldwide vigil being held while our representatives meet at the COP 20 in Peru to negotiate the agenda for next year's crucial U.N. climate summit. In the background, we placed a subtle reminder of an ancient cousin, now extinct due to a dramatic climate change 65 million years ago.

Neil deGrasse Tyson, astrophysicist and host of COSMOS 2014, said this year "The dinosaurs didn't see that asteroid (that changed the climate) coming. What's our excuse?" He was referring to his previous remarks about today's human behavior, "We are dumping carbon dioxide into the atmosphere at a rate the Earth hasn't seen since the great climate catastrophes of the past....that led to mass extinctions."

Despite possible dire future scenarios, we remain hopeful because more and more people do see this one coming. Over this past year we encountered a growing number of caring and concerned people who have acknowledged the undeniable fact that we humans continue to burn ancient hydrocarbons and contribute to this existential problem of climate change as Dr. Tyson indicates. Yes, more and more people are asking "What can we do about it?" We'd like to share just a few of our year's experiences that keep hope alive:

### Gail's

### Gail's Reasons for Hope

Shortly after my 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday in February, I started a Facebook group **Calling Eco-Elders** designed to support and resource environmental activists; so far there are 25 elders from NV, CO, MD, ME, IO, NH, VT, MA, PA, CA, NY, Egypt, and Canada exchanging insights and encouragement about the future.

After **Chewing Sand** was released in April, my 'book tour' included presentations and book signings during which I shared my awe of Nature and concern over our changing climate to a number of audiences.

I've become a Fellow member of the International League of Conservation Writers – a great forum for environmentally oriented work. My Wayfarer essay on 'living simply' in New England was well received and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. I've also done nature retreats for Stillpoint Spiritual Center.

While spending the summer in Denver, I served as the guest minister at several UU congregations and 'preached' on Climate Conscience, and handed out dinosaurs to the children during the 'time for all ages.' In their faces I see my five precious grandchildren!!

I had the honor of spending an evening and early morning with the Great Climate March as it came through Denver: from college students to retired elders, these folks trekked 3,000 miles from CA to D.C, raising awareness of climate change and inspiring action.

In conjunction with the Sierra Club, I conducted a climate change workshop to coincide with the 400,000 strong People's Climate March held in New York in September. Vegas participants ranged in age from 11 to 70-something years. And so my commitment to leaving the planet habitable for my offspring and yours continues to grow each year.



## Milt's Reasons for Hope

Our personal journey became a small book this year. ***"Living without Fire: Just the Sun and Earth"*** describes one example of a bottom-up approach to mitigating climate change. Since we found it relatively easy to stop burning hydrocarbons for our energy needs by switching to zero emissions solar and geothermal, it seemed appropriate to share that experience.

At the request of a friend, retired NASA scientist, and now adjunct DU professor, I was invited to present an overview of ***Living without Fire*** to his class on climate change at the Life Long Learning Academy. The focus of my presentation was "What we can do about it (climate change)." The expressed interest and insightful questions by the 40 class attendees gave us a real sense of hope.

Of the many talks, seminars, hearings, demonstrations and tours we participated in this past year, Katherine Hayhoe's presentation at Boulder's Chautauqua was particularly hopeful. Dr. Hayhoe is a recognized climate scientist and devote Christian who advocates that all people of faith join together to become a force that helps mitigate climate change. Leaving our planet a better place for our children and all future generations is indeed a moral issue consistent with most, if not all, religious beliefs.

We took advantage of public tours through several local research centers [e.g. National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL); National Center for Atmospheric Research center (NCAR); National Ice Core Lab] that provided additional information about climate change and the

urgency of transitioning away from fossil fuel. These experts agree the path we are currently on is bleak; but they are quick to point out that because humans are causing this gradual change in global climate, humans can also stop it simply by transitioning to solar, wind, geothermal, hydro. That was hopeful.

In addition to a bottom-up approach, we continued to join with others as advocates for a top-down update of our complex social system. [Example: the grassroots Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL) are advocates for putting a price on carbon pollution so the market can help select cleaner energy solutions.]

We passed out CCL information at the local Juneteenth celebration in the heart of Denver this summer using a picture of Neil deGrasse Tyson and his message printed on a card with an attached miniature dinosaur. Kids loved the little dinosaurs; parents explained who Dr. Tyson is and perhaps thought more about climate change.

Gail suggested that we use the left-over dinosaurs for Halloween. This year, Trick or Treaters who came to our door were given a choice: a Snickers bar or a miniature dinosaur (with a picture of Dr. Tyson and his wisdom about the climate.) To our surprise the final tally at the end of the evening was Dinosaurs 20 – Snickers 8. For some reason that experience with our younger generation was also hopeful.

Reading Naomi Klein's ***This Changes Everything*** gives us a sobering perspective as well as hope we can change our social system to live sustainably.

Although there are infinite possible positive futures, the path many of us are on today is not one of those. But we are all in this together. We can and must change for the sake our children and theirs – there is every reason to be hopeful.

In closing, we invite you to set a while on the bench we 'sponsored' up on Dinosaur Ridge in the foothills west of Denver near the 100 million year old Eolambia dinosaur tracks. It's the one with a brass plaque inscribed:

***For pondering how our footprints today  
Might be viewed in a million tomorrows  
... Gail C.R. & Milt H.***