

## A Manner of



# Speaking

by Bonnie Neugebauer

As I struggled with my choice: stamen shooting from flaming poppy petals, Scott posed like Davy Crockett at the water's edge, or the adorable and gluttonous baby pigs, Christina began sharing her photos with me. She had captured Puget Sound, mountains, clouds — vistas I hadn't even really taken in, although we had shared the same adventures. We were selecting our entries for the first ever Whoop Di Do Photo Contest — and struggling.

As a staff we had traveled to Lopez Island in the San Juan Islands for community building and pleasure — playing, cooking, relaxing together. One of the challenges was to capture the event for the Photo Contest. We all differed in the way we took our photos (Jonah had an unusual rolling maneuver and favored Sophie the dog and Roger focused on unusual inanimate objects). And since our perspectives and methods varied so much, it was difficult to make a choice for the contest that didn't involve categories — flowers and dogs and mountains all had equal billing.

In our conversation, Christina and Eve and I discussed how wonderful it is to experience something with others, adding other interests and perspectives to our individual perceptions. We all know that people see different things and that we all see the same things differently. Our photos were proof.

Several years ago my husband Roger and I were involved in negotiations with another couple. The process reached a difficult passage and we resorted to an intervention of sorts to get everything out there. Of course, Roger and I thought we were righteous in our perspective — and we had a right to those feelings. But what we hadn't really counted on was that the other couple, who saw the same "facts" and experiences totally differently — were just as righteous and entitled. We were all "right." It was a great lesson.

So often things are sorted into right and wrong, this and that, us and them, inside and outside. Responding to such scenarios involves choices between one or the other. How much richer our experiences are if the effort goes, not into selection, but into trying to see and understand something in a totally different way from our own way of seeing/being. With new ideas and impressions, new ways of seeing things, we can be changed.

Of course this brings up ideas of how we approach diversity — are we threatened by what and who is different, do we put up with differences; or do we seek out different ideas, different experiences, people who are different from us? Can we move from tolerance as a goal to a genuine open-hearted enjoyment and valuing and respect for what we have yet to discover?

It's such pleasure to go for a walk with a toddler who points out ants and dog poo and the sky. It's enriching to talk with an architect if you aren't one, with a Democrat if you're a Republican. It's amazing to try to get your head into the mind of someone whose experiences are very unlike your own.

There is safety in sameness, but a natural dulling of our senses and a shrinking of our lives is the price. Old people need young ones, men need women, fighters need peacemakers.

Back from the World Forum, I have renewed love and respect for all the people who come to this gathering, who are willing to just be themselves with others, who are willing to put themselves out there — to make mistakes and to be corrected and to be thereby enriched. The ways in which we are all the same form the core of our being; the ways we are different are life's treasure and delight.

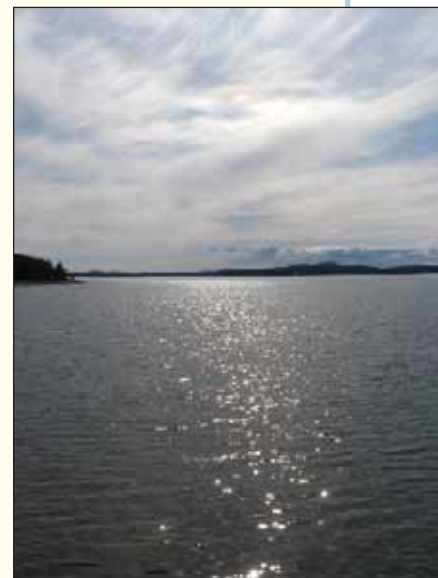
PHOTOGRAPH BY JONAH BAKER



And so, without further ado, we present the 2007 Whoop Di Do Photo Runners-Up:

- Jonah Baker (Sophie the dog) and
- Christina Mulligan (San Juan Islands)

Lori Allington's first place photo is too avant garde for publication!



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTINA MULLIGAN