

Margaret Austin Center NEWS

FALL 2013



SUMMER RENOVATION

The dog days of summer means time for renewal at the Margaret Austin Center. Each summer MAC closes for July and we take the opportunity to tackle construction projects. This summer, it was a new roof and foundation repair for the Edgar House, the first structure erected on the property in the late 1960s. The new metal roof was funded by a generous donation from John Howard, one of MAC's founding board members. Contractor Steve Jackson of Artisan Builders managed the project, continuing his long history with MAC. Steve was part of the original crew that built the Edgar House in 1969, and last year he rebuilt the Zendo at cost.

When you next visit the Center, you'll notice something different about the walkway leading to the Zendo. It is

now lined with inscribed pavers commemorating people and organizations that hold a special place in our hearts. We'll continue to sell these commemorative pavers, with the proceeds funding the construction of a handicap-accessible ramp to the dining hall as well as continued Edgar House maintenance.



Pianist Linda Spitz-Daniel performing in the Zendo.

BENEFIT CONCERT RAISES BUILDING FUNDS FOR MAC

This spring, the beautiful new Zendo and the fields around the Margaret Austin Center rang with the vibrations of a grand piano as the Gurdjieff Foundation of Houston presented a program of the Gurdjieff/De Hartmann sacred music. The pianists were well known musicians of the Gurdjieff tradition and brought a meditative presence to the keyboard that enhanced the beauty of the hymns, der-vish dances, and prayers from ancient traditions.

Before and after the concert, we joined together in the dining hall and on the grounds to become acquainted and share our experiences with and impressions of music and sacred paths.

The Gurdjieff Foundation provided the concert as a fund-raising event for MAC, with all proceeds going to improvements to the iconic Edgar House.

Ralph Hodges, Gurdjieff Foundation



Edgar House in 1969

MAC'S ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY PROFILED IN CITE MAGAZINE

Cite, *The Architecture & Design Review of Houston*, showcased the Margaret Austin Center in its Spring 2013 issue. The 13-page article by Hank Hancock chronicles the story of Margaret Austin and Southcoast, a guerilla band of builders that transformed Margaret's farm into her retreat space in 1969. The article is a unique recounting of the early days of Margaret's farm, when teachers as legendary as Ram Dass and Stephen Levine came to teach under a pitched tent. Each time I look at the crazy pitch of the Edgar House, I appreciate the vision that is captured in this article. *Cite* article at: <http://citomag.org/2013/cite-91/>
Kathey Ferland



MY JOURNEY TO MAC

As I walked the labyrinth on a magnificent spring evening, I looked at a red barn in the distance at the top of a sloping green hill. It appeared to be surrounded by a mystical light of soft oranges, bright yellows and specks of purple—a crystal veil draping and wrapping around it like a present waiting to be claimed.

The visual in this moment triggered a memory of my first visit to the Margaret Austin Center when I attended a silent retreat. Both the experience and place were new to me. As I approached a winding dirt road off Highway 290, I saw a red barn and remembered the beautiful wildflowers. This day was almost identical to that first day. I drove until I came to an opening with a simple wooden sign that said *The Margaret Austin Center*. I pulled into the green pasture where cars were parked and saw, for the very first time, geometric-shaped gray buildings with beautiful purple glass. The color of the glass stood out because purple is my favorite color.

I saw tall green trees and rolling hills where grasses moved in the wind like waves on water. Among the trees and

blades of grass were wildflowers— violet, pink, yellow— and standing tall among them were beautiful bluebonnets and bright red Indian paintbrushes dancing in the wind to the same melody, carried by the gentle breeze. I noticed people walking quietly and contemplatively on the brick paths, appearing steeped in deep thought in their individual world but at the same time in a greater world— one where spiritual energy transcended time, space and physical location.

I saw an opening in a canopy of trees on the western edge of the property. Upon entering, I had a sense of being surrounded by a circular space of loving energy. I sat down on a fallen tree trunk and heard the sounds of animals, the buzzing of insects, the chirping of birds and the wind. I didn't feel fear. I felt at "home." After sitting for a time, I stepped back into the pasture and heard a lawn mower in the distance. I tried to avoid stepping on the tiny beautiful violet flowers that were smiling up at me, saying hello. I heard wind chimes made of wood and metal adding their melody to this incredible symphony of sound. Over the next five days, my awareness expanded in unimaginable ways. My first experience at MAC was in the 1990s. I have been back many times and experienced many sunrises and sunsets. This has been a place where I met myself in many ways for the first time.

I now serve as a volunteer caretaker, and one of my favorite activities is to look at the expressions on the faces of first-time visitors. As they enter the grounds and cross the wooden bridge leading to the labyrinth, my heart smiles because I know what they are feeling—wonderment. I watch as they gaze out in awe at fields of wildflowers; as they are greeted by beautiful black and orange butterflies who welcome them floating on the currents of the wind. As they approach the weather-worn blue bell hanging from a wooden bar, an occasional nut falls from the trees above and rings the bell with no help from human hands. The following words of greeting are posted on the bar that holds the bell.

*May basic goodness dawn;
May the confidence of goodness be eternal;
May goodness be all victorious;
May that goodness bring profound brilliant glory.*

As I watch their faces glow in the presence of this place, I know they will never be the same. They have been forever changed, as I was when I first experienced this space called the Margaret Austin Center.

Laura Ward Holliday, Houston, Texas

MAC OPEN HOUSE

OCTOBER 2012



Ed Rogers, John and Annette Eldridge



Pepper Mouser, Giselle Ostman and Tina Dismukes



Harvey Aronson (left), Anne Klein (right)



Cynthia Barklay, Sierra Edgar, Martha Edgar, Shirley King, Hanif Hekima



Brad Morris and Jackson Woodward shoveling at Jane Elioseff Memorial Tree Planting with Jim Tiebout, Jim & Naomi Rosborough



Howie Cohn and Marilyn Jones



Lex and Cathy Gillan, Ann Sieber, Khyber Daniel, Jack Sieber, and John Howard



Steve Jackson and Phil Buterbaugh



In the Dining Hall at the Open House October 2012



Lisa Powell-Watts, Patsy George Philipp



Cheryl Amelang of Brenham Music Academy and her children provided live music

GRATITUDE

The Margaret Austin Center thanks its many donors (as of June 28, 2013), whose generosity keeps the center growing and thriving into the future.



**In memory of
JANE ELIOSEFF**

William W. Bell
Nancy Cotton
Lynn Goode
Robert & Susan Hawkins
Marilyn Jones & Brad Morris
Vicki Jones & Robert Prall
Frank W. Kelley
Mark & Elizabeth Kilbride
Lynne Liverato
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In honor of

JEREMY HALE

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**In Honor Of
LABOR OF LOVE**

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Mary Yurkovich

* These are in-kind donations.

RETREAT SCHEDULE AT MARGARET AUSTIN CENTER

Upcoming Open Retreats

October 4-6

Rising Hearts Yoga with Hanif Hekima

Join us for a relaxing, peaceful weekend of Hatha & Raja Yoga. Students of all levels are welcome. Enjoy morning and evening yoga and meditation sessions, plenty of time to relax and reconnect with nature, and delicious health-conscious meals from one of the best retreat chefs in the country. Contact Hanif at neef73@yahoo.com

October 11-13

Yoga One Women's Retreat

For more information, contact Dana Sweet
713-443-6466

October 24-27

Insight Meditation with Lila Kate Wheeler

This retreat will focus on developing mindfulness and compassion, so that the joys and sorrows of life can be experienced with ever-increasing sensitivity, stability, and love. This retreat will be held in silence and is appropriate for both beginning and experienced meditators. Contact Marilyn Jones: 713-528-3905 or Brad Morris: brad_morris@usa.net

December 6-8

Yoga & Meditation with Charles MacInerney

Join one of Austin's most respected yoga teachers for a weekend of Hatha yoga, meditation, philosophy, and workshops on the Mind/Body Connection, Breath, Sense-Withdrawal, Improving Concentration, and the seven Chakras. Contact Charles at <http://www.yogateacher.com/text/retreats.html>

December 28, 2013 - January 4, 2014

Mariposa Sangha New Year Retreat with Shaila Catherine

Contact Kathey Ferland at katheyferland4@gmail.com

These dates are available for booking

Nov. 22-24, 2013		Dec. 13-15, 2013
Dec. 20-22, 2013		Jan. 10-12, 2014
Jan. 31-Feb. 2, 2014		Feb. 14-16, 2014
Mar. 14-16, 2014		Mar. 28-30, 2014
Apr. 4-6, 2014		

MORE OPEN HOUSE PHOTOS



Phil Buterbaugh , Kathey Ferland, Steve Jackson, and Naomi Rosborough



Chef Michel prepared the food



Jan Fox



Guests on the path to the Zendo at the Open House



Kathey Ferland
and Lisa Hoover

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to let us know if your address or email has changed
or if you want to be removed from the mailing list.**



New roof on the Edgar House