

## **Our Stories—Clare Sartori and Art Stein**

Both Clare Sartori and Art Stein are soft-spoken and both have a calm demeanor that is reflective of the values they share. They are deeply spiritual and the search for peace and harmony both internally and within the world guides their lives.

Clare likes to tell the story of their first encounter. After spending two years in the Peace Corps in Benin, she arrived at the University of Rhode Island in 1988 ready to begin her graduate studies. Professor Stein had a reputation as an innovative educator. He had developed the first class focused on nonviolence and peace building offered at URI and he had co-facilitated a year-long Honors Colloquium, “Creativity and the Human Spirit,” held in 1977-78. Towards the end of a yoga class they attended independently, the instructor asked participants to pair up and, placing your hands on the back of your partner, breathe with them. Evidently a powerful connection was made in those shared breaths between Clare and her partner; Clare and Art were married in 1992.

After graduation, Clare worked as a school psychologist for several years before returning to graduate school in 2004 to become a Family and Marriage Therapist. She feels privileged to do this work, honored that people share their lives with her. Art’s career at URI has been long and distinguished; his achievements and awards are numerous—Professor of the Year for one. He is a cofounder of the Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies and has authored books on the theme of bridging the divide found in religious and ethnic groups. While officially retired, as Professor Emeritus, Art continues to be involved at URI.

Art, who was raised in the Jewish faith, has spent his life exploring other religions as well—a life quest that Clare shared. He has been a facilitator and given presentations at five of the six modern day Parliaments of the World’s Religions held in Chicago, Cape Town, Barcelona, Melbourne and Salt Lake City. The Parliaments celebrate the ethical common ground shared by the world’s religious and spiritual traditions. Attendees at the Parliaments are committed to the dignity and welfare of every person and they explore ways to pursue a just and sustainable future for all peoples of the world. Presenters have included Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela and many others.

Clare was raised as a Catholic and credits early exposure to the intellectually stimulating conversation of her parents with seminarians as laying the foundation for her personal commitment to peace and justice. She attended services at the Catholic Church on campus, joining a peace group at the Catholic Center. She and Art really enjoyed services they attended at UUCSC when the church was meeting at St. Augustine’s on the URI campus. It was in her role as chair of the Interfaith Council that Clare developed a respect for several members of the UUCSC. They both were touched by the hard work and commitment of UUCSC members like Linda Whyte Burrell, Carole Driver, Russell Stokes and Linda and Gene Jackim. Clare was impressed with how outspoken (but not proselytizing) they all were about their shared liberal ideology. Clare and Art maintain close friendships with members of other traditions such as the Baha’i, Buddhist, Jewish and American Friends Service Committee.

Many years ago Rev. Betty Kornitzer led an exercise meant to help congregants identify their passions. Each person was given several sticky notes and was instructed to attach each note to one of the signs that were posted about the sanctuary. Clare identified her passions as being children and singing and decided it was time to act on those passions. Though Art has two daughters from his previous marriage, Art and Clare have no grandchildren. After some thought, Clare approached Amber Kelly Collins who was soon to give birth to twins and offered to be a support person. Amber gratefully agreed and thus began a wonderful relationship in which Clare spent Tuesday mornings with Amber and her growing family. Sometimes she just held a baby while Amber had a moment to herself. As the family grew, Clare continued to be involved with them and she and Art have both been enriched immeasurably by this experience. Art enjoyed his role as zayda (grandfather in Yiddish) during a Hanukkah play with the kids during service. He has since shaved off the beard grown for that role.

Clare joined the choir when Michael Galib took over as the Music Director and often feels transported by the music. Art rarely misses a Sunday—he loves the music as well as the conversations that he engages in during coffee hour.

Covid 19 Update:

Clare continues to work, meeting with clients online. She participates in the Clear Heart Buddhist Sangha's online meetings and joins the UUCSC choir online rehearsal. She walks every week with a group of retired teachers, in person and safely distanced. Art attends a weekly peace and justice Zoom gathering and remains in close contact with the staff of URI's Nonviolence and Peace Studies. They have adjusted to Covid restrictions.

*Elizabeth Donovan, October 2020*