

HOSPITALITY

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Providing hospitality to the homeless and to those in prison, through Christ's love.
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

August 1991

"The Lame Shall Enter First"

When I was in college I studied many of Flannery O'Connor's short stories. Often she was required reading. I only knew of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker in an off-hand sort of way. When I moved to the Open Door, Dorothy Day became required reading, and we often turn to By Little and By Little, which is a collection of her writings. I found at the Open Door, too, a following of Flannery O'Connor. Many of us love her stories. I remember my first Thanksgiving at the Open Door. We sat in the kitchen, cooking and carving thousands of turkeys (*Thousands* might be an exaggeration. I admit that hyperbole is my favorite literary device, used at its best in Flannery O'Connor's stories.), and we read O'Connor stories to each other. Since then, "The Lame Shall Enter First" has become required reading for me.

Read in the context of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker, "The Lame Shall Enter First" is a perfect guide for those of us who believe that we are called by God to be followers of Jesus as we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoner. That sounds like a lofty calling, but Dorothy Day talks about it as a simple, mundane act, almost, it seems, worthless. Tongue in cheek, she compares discipleship to giving away an onion--not a gift that we usually receive and value highly.

In a piece called "Love is the Measure," Dorothy Day writes:

for
who is
the best
among
you that
one is
the



by Elizabeth
Dede

What we would like to do is change the world--make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended them to do. And, by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, of the poor, of the destitute--the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor in other words--we can, to a certain extent, change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever widening circle will reach around the world. We can give away an onion. We repeat, there is nothing that we can do but love, and dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as well as our friend.

There are dangers involved in trying to change the world. Most often what happens is our energy is misdirected, and rather than try to change the world, we try to change people. That seems to be easier. Instead of fighting for better conditions, where everyone would have good work at a living wage, we turn instead to the jobless person and tell them to go find work. If they would only get a job, all the world's problems would be solved, we seem to say as we drive by the soup line and yell, "Get a job!" Or rather than crying out unceasingly for the

(continued on page 2)

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910 Ponce de Leon

HOSPITALITY is published 11 times a year by The Open Door Community (PCUS), Inc., an Atlanta community of Christians called to ministry with the homeless poor and with prisoners, particularly those on death row.

Subscriptions are free. A newspaper request form is included in each issue. Manuscripts and letters are welcomed. Inclusive language editing is standard. For more information about the life and work of The Open Door and about others involved in ministry to Atlanta's homeless, please contact any of the following:

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Let Justice
flow down like
Water

(continued from page 1)

rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor, we scream that the winos and the alcoholics should be thrown in jail. And the biggest danger is that we forget to look at our own hearts, to know that we only have the power to change ourselves. When we begin to work on our own dark places, then we can start to change the world and make it a place where it's easier to get a job and stay sober.

Flannery O'Connor's story is a great one for us at the Open Door because it teaches that we all need to have our hearts enlarged, as Dorothy Day says. We can't just blame the bankers and the rich people or the right wing conservatives. Even liberal do-gooders have dangerously small hearts.

"The Lame Shall Enter First" is the story of a do-gooder, who learns too late that it is his own heart which is too small, and all of his good deeds amount to less than giving an onion. Sheppard is a widower with a young son named Norton, who seems to be an ordinary kid. He misses his mother, who has been dead for a year, and still cries for her, which Sheppard believes is selfish behavior, and unnatural grief for a child. He dislikes his own son and spends very little time with him. Sheppard thinks of Norton: "The boy's future was written in his face. He would be a banker. No, worse. He would operate a small loan company. All he wanted for the child was that he be good and unselfish, and neither seemed likely."

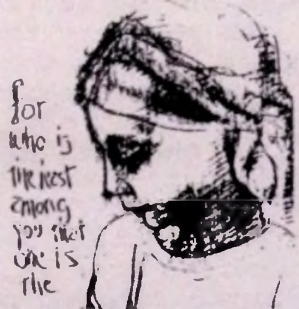
For all his emotional neglect of Norton, Sheppard is a good man. As his son says, "He's good. He helps people." Sheppard spends all the time that he's not spending with his own child as a volunteer coach for little league baseball and as a counselor for troubled youth at the juvenile detention center. One young kid he meets there is a bright 13-year-old named Rufus Johnson, who has an IQ of 140 and a club foot. He was raised by his grandfather--a primitive Baptist--so Rufus claims that he is possessed by Satan and does bad things because the "Devil has me in his power."

Sheppard--a secular humanist--scoffs at Rufus' hell-fire and brimstone and Bible-quoting ways. He believes that Rufus vandalizes homes because he wants to make up for his hideously deformed body, and he wants attention. So in a counseling session Sheppard tells Rufus, "There are a lot of things about yourself that I think I can explain to you." But, in fact, Rufus explains a lot of things to Sheppard about Sheppard.

After Rufus is released from juvenile hall, Sheppard arranges to have Rufus live with him and Norton. Sheppard wants to get on Rufus' good side, and he wants to punish Norton, who isn't the "good" son Sheppard would like him to be, so he makes a deal with Rufus that Rufus will teach Norton to share by living in their home, eating with them, staying in Norton's late mother's room, and wearing Norton's clothes. Sheppard's biggest plan is to get a new orthopedic shoe for Rufus. Then he would walk smoothly again, and be eternally grateful to Sheppard.

Rufus sulkily agrees to the deal, but then he tests Sheppard's patience in every

possible way. He shows no interest in the new shoe and refuses to wear it, claiming that he'll buy his own shoe when he wants one. Sheppard tries to interest Rufus in telescopes and microscopes, but after feigning interest, Rufus pushes them aside with some derogatory comment. In the meantime, Sheppard shows no interest in his own son Norton. Rufus does take great pleasure in reading the Bible to Norton, and explains the mysteries of heaven and hell to him. This infuriates Sheppard, who believes that the Bible is for simple, small-minded people; but then he decides that Norton is so empty-headed that the Bible can't hurt him. He only wishes that Rufus would give it up for greater things--like visions of trips to the moon.



Eventually Rufus' sullen ways get the better of Sheppard, and hatred for Rufus begins to develop in Sheppard's heart. Rufus continues to vandalize homes, but the police can't catch him. Playing with Sheppard, Rufus whines that the police are persecuting him, and Sheppard, wanting Rufus to like him, tries to pretend that he trusts Rufus. He tells the police to leave them alone. Finally, though, it becomes obvious that Rufus has been vandalizing the homes and playing on Sheppard's sympathy.

The revelation of Rufus' lying self fills Sheppard with repulsion. "A chill of hatred shook him. He hated the shoe, hated the foot, hated the boy. His face paled. Hatred choked him. He was aghast at himself." Sheppard's whole world begins to crumble around him. He believed that he could change Rufus and discovers that he is powerless. And because Rufus wouldn't conform to Sheppard's idea of a good person, Sheppard finds himself hating Rufus.

Unable to tolerate that much anger and hatred in himself, Sheppard says to Rufus, "I'm going to save you. The good will triumph." He repeats several times, "I'm going to save you." And finally, wishing that Rufus would leave, Sheppard says to him, "I'm not going to tell you to leave. I'm going to save you."

Filled with hatred for Rufus and self-loathing, Sheppard is sitting at home when the police come with Rufus, who has been caught breaking into a house. Rufus, seething and shouting all kinds of accusations at Sheppard, is taken off to jail, and Sheppard says to himself, "I have nothing to reproach myself with. I did more for him than I did for my own child." He heard his voice as if it were the voice of his accuser. He repeated the sentence silently."

Slowly, the revelation dawns upon Sheppard: he'd spent so much time trying to change Rufus, but he'd never looked at what he needed to change in himself.

His face drained of color. It became almost gray beneath the white halo of his hair. The sentence echoed in his mind, each syllable like a dull blow. His mouth twisted and he closed his eyes against the revelation. Norton's face rose before him, empty, forlorn, his left eye listing almost imperceptible toward the outer rim as if it could not bear a full view of grief. His heart constricted with a repulsion for himself so clear and intense that he gasped for breath. He had stuffed his own emptiness with good works like a glutton. He had ignored his own child to feed his vision of himself. He saw the clear-eyed Devil, the sounder of hearts, leering at him from the eyes of Johnson. His image of himself shrivelled until everything was black before him. He sat there paralyzed, aghast.

Sometimes the revelation comes too late to avert tragedy and sadness. Sheppard runs upstairs to find Norton, to share his newly enlarged heart with his child, and finds that Norton has hanged himself from a beam in the attic.

The reason that I love fiction and continue to read, even though I am no longer an English major, is that fiction teaches me about myself. I can learn from Sheppard's revelation without having to experience Sheppard's tragedy. I don't have to lose my son in order to know that, like Sheppard, my heart is small and my soul is empty but stuffed with my plans for everybody's salvation except my own.

"Enlarge my heart, O God," is a necessary prayer at the Open Door because we are surrounded by people who are obviously broken and who definitely have problems. It is easy for us to want to change them and ignore the work on our own hearts. It is hard to remember that we are broken people, too.

Recently I took a two-week vacation from the Open Door. It is always hard for me to return to the noise of the city, and this time it was made more difficult because one of our homeless friends was on a drunken binge. She yelled and screamed, was obnoxious, and kept starting fights. When sober, she is kind, quiet, and gentle. I found myself hating her in her drunkenness, wishing she would go away.

Then I remembered O'Connor's story and realized that I can't change my homeless friend. I can't make her stop drinking. What I can do for her is very little. I can pray, "God enlarge my heart, soften this heart of stone, so that I will love my homeless sister. Help me to work hard to change the world so that she will have a home, and it will be easier for her to put down alcohol and stay sober. Help me to realize that when I give her a bowl of soup, I'm offering little more than an onion for which she owes me no debt of gratitude and no promise to do better next time. Help me to know my own brokenness and lameness because it is the broken and the lame who enter into your kingdom." ☐

Apartheid

In Our Front Yard

by Carol Schlicksup

We don't have to travel to South Africa to experience the evils of apartheid. We don't have to step beyond the front walk of the Open Door to taste the bitter bile of harassment. I can stand on our front porch and watch a police officer station himself at the foot of the stairs that lead to our front walk and door. We haven't asked for his presence, and his actions violate our hospitality and the human rights of our guests. His purpose is to move our friends, our guests, off the sidewalk and off the wall in front of our house. The wall is our property to be used by our friends, and the sidewalk is city property for the use of the citizens of Atlanta. Our guests, homeless people who have come for a shower, clean clothes, and a hot meal, are both our friends and citizens of this deeply divided city.

The officer mostly stands and stares at all those we have invited to share our home and the resources we receive from churches and individuals who want to reach out across the barriers that separate us. His stance, sunglasses, uniform, weapon and degrading manner of addressing people bring an atmosphere of fear, violence and separation to our home. The air is thick with oppression. The majority of our guests are African American men. They typify the 20,000 homeless people in Atlanta, 71% of which are African American males. They can't stand on a sidewalk or sit on a wall, but they have the right to be homeless and hungry. They have the right to work for minimum wage in the unregulated labor pools of Atlanta doing all the unsung, unpleasant jobs without which the city would collapse. Atlanta's system of apartheid lives!

If we didn't ask for this menacing police presence, who did, and why would anyone target us and our friends for such punishment? We see business establishments in the neighborhood and along the Ponce de Leon strip whose patrons stand on and often block the sidewalk. We live next door to an apartment house whose residents park their cars in such a way as to block public access to the street. It seems that the city of Atlanta has an officially sanctioned system that promotes one class and one race of people over others--apartheid.

The mayor of Atlanta, through the police department, has proposed what are being called the "nuisance ordinances" to be accepted into law by the City Council. These ordinances are presently being discussed by the Public Safety Committee. They forbid panhandling and make it a criminal act to sleep in an abandoned building. They support the racist, separatist system in this city

that has invaded even our front yard. Who will be arrested for panhandling? The Shriners or the Salvation Army? Certainly not! The poor are the target of this ordinance because those of us who have more than we need are threatened by the poor. Who will desperately seek shelter in abandoned buildings that are private property put to no creative public use? Tourists who have suites at the Mariott Marquis? Certainly not! The homeless poor are the target and the homeless poor in Atlanta are African Americans. Housing precedes equality! Let's build the affordable SRO housing that the City of Atlanta promised to build over a year ago during the occupation of the Imperial Hotel. Let's plan to house not hide the poor. Let's not tolerate apartheid in Atlanta. □



Take A Stand-- Sit On A Wall

by Gladys Rustay



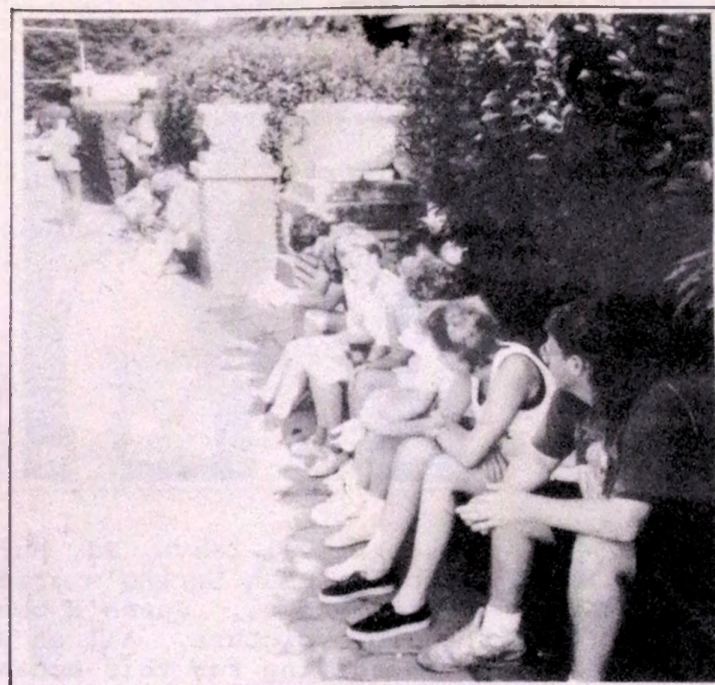
Friday morning some Open Door folks and friends sat on our wall.

Thursday, July 11, started as a normal house duty day for me until someone said there was a police officer out in front. Folks said that he had told people sitting on our wall in front that if they didn't move he would call the paddy wagon to come and get them. I checked this out. He repeated what he'd said and added that our friends could not even line up on the sidewalk for soup kitchen because it would block traffic. He remained around, projecting a most threatening presence.

I wonder why, in a city that is having financial problems, over \$80 per person is spent a day to keep a homeless person in jail when an \$8 supplement is all that's needed for one person per day if the city builds SRO's.

It would seem that people don't want to see the homeless, to be reminded that something is terribly wrong with our priorities in spending and in caring for our brothers and sisters in this country.

If you can support us on our "wall" project give us a call at 874-9652 or 876-6977.



Students from Blufton, Ohio who had come for a work week joined us on the wall. They were not arrested.



Our friend Peggy usually sits on our wall. You can decide whether you think she's blocking traffic or not.



Other friends who are usually on our wall before soup kitchen time.



nine-ten

by Gladys Rustay



NEELY LORING

While on sabbatical leave, Ed, Murphy, and Hannah attended Susan Loring's graduation from Norcross High School. Susan's brother Neely took the above picture. All of us at 910 join in Thanksgiving for this occasion.

On June 16, Murphy received the Petra Foundation Award in Boston. The award is set as a living memorial to Petra Shattuck. It's purpose is to recognize, encourage and support unsung individuals who are making distinctive contributions to human freedom. We wish we all could have been there to celebrate!

She was outside our door again Monday--yelling unintelligible words. It reminded me of Biblical times when those with demons roved about. But now. . . 1991. . . in Atlanta, Georgia in the richest country in the world. . . and in New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Los Angeles. . . . Where are you Jesus, to cast out the demons? You don't seem to be in our national policies, or state or local. . . or in our hearts.



On July 12, we had a Blues Barbeque to celebrate Jay Frazier's time at the Open Door. He is getting married to his long-time friend Janice Perry in August. Jay broke lots of new ground during his 5 1/2 years at the Open Door. He was the first African American to join the Leadership Team. While at the Open Door, Jay started back to school to learn to read. It was a holy experience when Jay read scripture aloud for the first time at our noon worship. Jay is a person who "speaks in pictures" and is a great storyteller. He has a gift, too, for knowing when people are hurting inside. We will miss you, friend and brother.



GLADYS RUSTAY

Jay enjoying the festivities at his farewell dinner.



GLADYS RUSTAY

Butch bringing in the wonderful barbeque.



GLADYS RUSTAY

James made DELICIOUS sweet potatoe pies from scratch.

More Than Just A Number

by Dick Rustay

Many volunteers come to the Open Door one, two or even four or five times, and then they don't return for various reasons. Others come once and then return again and again. Brenda Jones falls in the second category.

It was a year ago last July when I received a call from Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia. After having conversations with answering machines, receptionists and hearing, "Oh, you just missed her," Brenda and I finally reached each other. Agnes Scott College was hosting some minority high school students for a month. The purpose was to explore teaching as a profession. Brenda wanted a broad, enriching experience for the students so we arranged for groups to come on consecutive Sundays and help serve breakfast at the Open Door to our friends from the streets.



Brenda dishing out grits on Sunday morning.

They came and served. At the end of the month the high school students finished their project at Agnes Scott and the Open Door. But a strange thing happened. Brenda continued to come on Sunday mornings and help serve. She not only kept coming but when the Fall term began she recruited students, and they have been coming ever since.

When I asked Brenda why she had first called the Open Door, this was her answer:

I would pass the Open Door and see the people lined up waiting to eat in the soup kitchen. The interesting thing is that they were people who looked just like me. I thought it would be a good experience for the high school students.

It was Brenda who became hooked. "There was no way I could stop coming because I'm bonded with the guests who come to the soup kitchen--with their conversations, their smiles."

As she established a volunteer system for the Agnes Scott students she wanted students to see the world beyond Agnes Scott College. "When students first came to volunteer at the Open Door I'm sure they thought that this would look good on their resumes. They soon found something more profound. The soup kitchen guests were more than just a number. They were human beings. In serving they discovered the homeless problem was not something street people 'earned' or brought upon themselves. It was a problem of society."

As Brenda shared her thoughts with me on her volunteering she concluded, "During Holy Week I spent twenty-four hours on the streets with Open Door people. That experience will stay with me. I now stand with so many who share pain and homelessness. Everyone should have this experience." □



Brenda with Willie London after spending 24 hours on the street.

Celebrate Our Tenth Anniversary

You are saving December 5, 6, and 7 to celebrate the Open Door's tenth anniversary, aren't you?

If you have special stories to share, send them to us on 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper. We are making a scrapbook of reminiscences.

Absalom, My Son!

by Dick Underdahl-Peirce

Editor's note: The following article first appeared in The Other Side magazine. We are grateful for their permission to reprint it here. (The Other Side, 300 W. Apsley St., Philadelphia, PA 19144. Subscriptions are \$29.50.). Dick Underdahl-Peirce is a Presbyterian pastor in Minnesota.

It was late morning of the second day of waiting, and still the jury had not returned with a verdict. The hours blurred by as I sat in the courtroom mourning the climax of a nightmare.

Six months earlier, late Thanksgiving night, the anonymous phone call said that my oldest son, Abe, had been arrested for burglary and murder. In the next few days the ugly details surfaced: four young adults, high on grass and beer, burglarizing a home, beating and torturing to death an elderly, newly widowed, blind woman, and then stealing only a ten-dollar bill, a slab of frozen meat and her wedding band. One of those sick, senseless incidents of humanity gone berserk that fills the daily news--and now had become deathly personal.

Cushioned at first by shock, I stumbled through those early days, time and feelings filtered through slow motion movements of the mind. For years I had been watching him slowly self-destruct as he escaped into a twilight zone of alcohol, burglaries, and burned-out companions. My son, my son, why have you forsaken yourself?

An ancient story of another son came to mind. Absalom, embittered and isolated by injustice in his family, let this turn into a poison of vengeance and ambition. He aimed his destruction at his father; my own son aimed his at himself and society. I wept as David wept over the loss of his son: "O my son Absalom, my son! Would I had died instead of you. O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33)

The memory of my first jail visit to Abe ever burns in my soul. Gray expressionless walls move past worn church benches to merge into steel-framed, hardened glass. I wait in line with other frozen, expressionless faces, shove my ID into the crack in the wall, and shout my name for all the world to hear. The buzz and clang of electric security doors, the grim closed-in despair of the elevator. Then more doors, more shouting through security cracks--all this only to reach the waiting room.

Another scratched, discarded church bench--I wonder about the sanctuary where it once sat in invitation of worship for bright Sunday faces, another universe, it seems, from where I sit. I watch the others waiting: grim, expressionless faces hiding the torment, the embarrassment, the eerie fear of "being in this hole in the sky called jail." No matter what colors the walls, the carpet, everything here turns to gray.

Family members only allowed here--a part of me charged with crime. The guards, the walls convict me, hooking into my guilt and aloneness. In the middle of this tense, frozen pain, a young mother brings a waddling, grinning one-year-old boy wrapped in a bright blue snow suit, burbling pleasant sounds. But his fresh innocence quickly vanishes, soaking up the nervousness and the unreality that is visiting hour. Peace where there is no peace. Two thousand years ago a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes came into the midst of Herod's homicidal paranoia. Jericho's mountain bandits and Rome's oppressors. I was in prison and you visited me.

Finally it's my turn. The artificial distancing of glass wall and phone, the deeper walls of guilt and awkwardness, and the fifteen minutes allowed are gone before we've begun. Quickly back through the doors and halls. Out into the sun and air, breathing deep--slowly, too slowly, color returns to life. The visiting hour is over.

It was six months before Abe's case came to trial. Six months of eternity. An eternity of reliving a witches' brew of the past--the stewing of mangled memories, their poison now held back only by the need to survive and by my grasping for every glimpse of love and faith that came my way.

It was a public horror. Because of the senseless brutality, the media and community closely followed the story. I struggled with my guilt and shame, mingled with my love. The first night I wrote in my journal, "I'm ashamed--and then angry at my shame. It's happened. All that matters is facing my grief, living my love, and Abe." It was an attitude that I had to reach daily over the next six months.

The half-year gap between the arrest and trial was like being in the deceiving quiet eye of a storm. It was a bittersweet time. Bitter, as I tasted the venom in people's

(continued on page 10)



hearts. A child taunted my youngest daughter, "Your brother is a murderer, your brother is a murderer." Conversations overheard at the barber shop or doctor's office that he should be castrated or ripped to shreds. Some comments expressing shock that a pastor's son should do such a terrible thing.

Bittersweet--and thankfully the sweet was by far the stronger. The grace of God flowed around me in countless visits, letters and phone calls. "I don't know quite what to say at a time like this, but if there's anything I can do, let me know." Strange, no matter how brief or awkward the words of support, they were enough. On them I lived and breathed.

Skeletons quietly were dusted off as people told me of a friend or family member who had destroyed their lives or "but for the grace of God" easily could have. Knowing others had walked this way was support I desperately needed. There with the Grace of God went I.

Over the months I had been bothered by a pinched nerve in my neck and shoulder, a pain growing daily as the trial date neared. I was about to visit a doctor when a friend told me of the pain he saw in my eyes and pointed out that the pinched nerve had begun shortly after the phone call.

For six months I'd walled in the tears, shoulders braced against the storm. That night I took time to look and feel deep inside, and I cried. And cried. For two hours I cried, first alone, then in the arms of Ruth, my wife. When at last I stood up, my shoulders were loose, the pinched nerve gone.

I took time to be at every moment of the trial. Like attending a funeral, it brought home the concrete reality of what had happened. It was the only thing I could do to show Abe that I cared.

The evidence was built up piece by piece into an overpowering mountain. The terrible sick brutality of the slides of the ransacked home and bloodied victim made me think of the movie "Apocalypse Now" and the dying, guilt-ridden Kurtz's "the horror, the horror of it all!" I knew in theory that ordinary people can act in demonic ways. The horror of acts produced in war, the stories that come out of Guatemala, El Salvador--but to see my son a part of that! O Absalom, my son!

As the trial moved relentlessly to its foregone conclusion, I found time to reflect on the process of criminal justice. I was thankful that Abe had been tried in one of the less bad justice systems in the country. He had been assigned an able and hardworking attorney. The judge was fair. In a subjective world with ambiguous evidence and witnesses of varying degrees of trustworthiness, I felt that at least Abe had a fair trial.

The relentless onslaught of memories was given a reprieve when the jury at long last returned to the courtroom. In pain, even tears, they gave the verdict: guilty of one count of second degree murder and another count of first degree murder. My head said it was fair, just; my heart was numb beyond speech.

Just before receiving his sentence, in the terrible silence of the courtroom, Abe turned to tell us how sorry he was for "dishonoring us" and how he didn't think he could ever be forgiven for what he had done. Tears streamed unchecked, as I silently cried, "I love you! You're my son! There is nothing for me to forgive!"

Suddenly I realized how much more true that must be for God. To ask forgiveness really is for my sake, not God's. Asking God to forgive is just the other side of the coin of learning to forgive myself.

And now the sentence, mandatory by state law: imprisonment for life. His opportunity for parole doesn't come until after the year 2000. He leaves the free world at the age of twenty-one, not to return until the twenty-first century. It could have been worse. In a number of states the penalty would have been death.

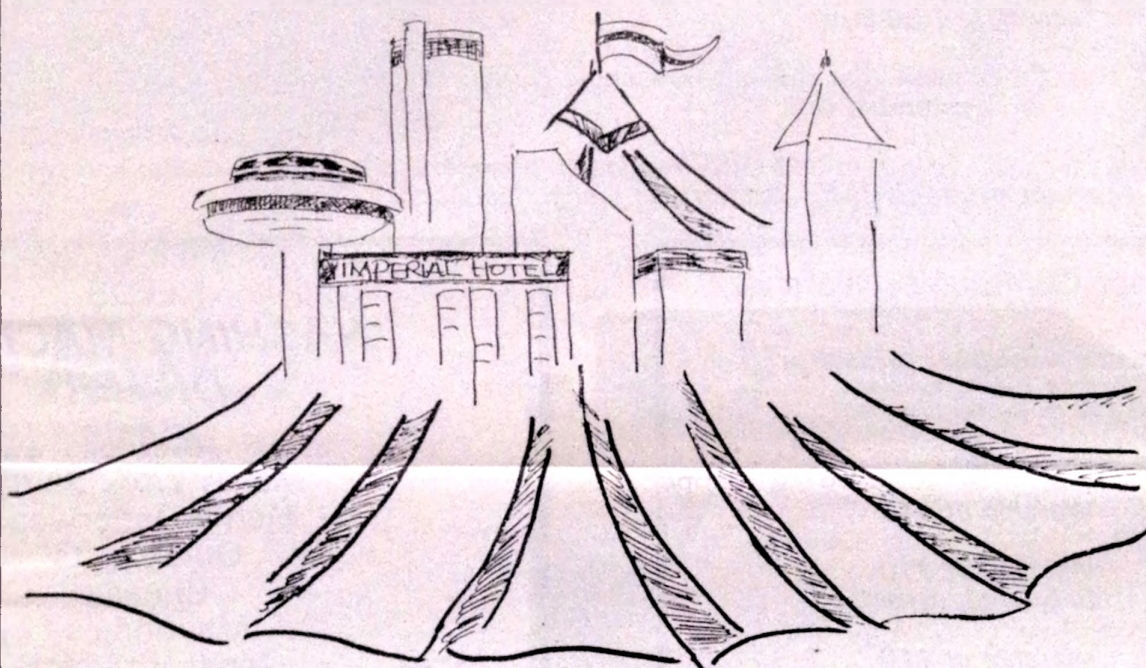
As I walked from the courtroom to the elevators, a woman who had sat through the trial came up to me. She wondered if this terrible incident might have been prevented if Minnesota had followed the trends of other states and adopted the death penalty. I could only tell her "no," that no one had intended the murder, that most murders are not coolly, rationally planned, and study after study shows that only the likelihood of being caught seems to help deter crime. Besides, I don't want myself or society to stoop to the level of the murderers. A quiet voice echoed in my mind, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace."

Months later, as I write this, the sharp agony of those days mercifully is beginning to recede. I visit Abe in his modern super-security prison and, like the Walrus and the Carpenter, we "talk of many things: of shoes and ships and sealing wax / of cabbages and kings." The conversations can't hide the reality of life in suspended animation, meaning and hope mostly drained away.

Yet as I look back I find that my own faith is all the stronger. A vision emerges that finds its strength from pain--from the pain of loneliness; from my life shattering and then stumbling back toward sunlight; from the frequent return of pain which humbles and turns me to a quieter world inside me; from the reminder how fragile is the flower of life.

What then is the vision that flows from pain? I'm not sure I know. But I find a glimpse in the words of Isaiah. "Ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried. . . . He was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed" (53:4-5). It's a vision of freedom to feel--to feel laughter, pain, anger, loneliness, love. It's a vision of a quiet center deep within me, where I am touched by a loving Presence. "Through his wounds I am healed." □

"But I, the Lord your God who led you out of Egypt, I will make you live in tents again, as you did when I came to you in the desert." (Hoshea 12:9)



FESTIVAL OF SHELTERS

IN DOWNTOWN ATLANTA

Join The Open Door Community
for a 24-hour portion of the
FESTIVAL OF SHELTERS or
for daily worship at 5:00PM.

Sunday, Sept. 29--Friday, Oct. 6

The Festival of Shelters is a celebration of joy and also a reminder to the people of God that it was in the wilderness when they were homeless that the Lord came to them.

We celebrate the Festival of Shelters today in temporary shelters to remind us that it is too easy to forget our frailness. It is too easy to forget that God alone is the source of our strength. It is too easy to forget the homeless people that roam the streets of Atlanta, this country, and the world.

We celebrate the Festival of Shelters to recall that "God bends down to see. . . the earth. God raises the poor from the dust. God lifts the needy from their misery" (Psalm 113:7). We return to the wilderness for renewal and to let God's way be our way.

For more information, and for specific location, call us at the Open Door:
874-9652 or 876-6977.

WE ARE OPEN. . .

Monday through Saturday, telephones are answered from 9:00am until noon, from 1:30 until 6:00pm, and from 7:00 until 8:30pm. The building is open from 9:00am until 8:30pm those days. (Both phone and door are not answered during our lunch break from noon until 1:30.) Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. On Sunday we are open from 7:00am until noon. Sunday afternoon our door is answered until 5:00pm.

OUR MINISTRY. . .

SOUP KITCHEN--Wednesday-Saturday, 11am-12 noon

SUNDAY BREAKFAST--Sunday morning at 910, 7:15am

BUTLER ST. CME BREAKFAST--Monday-Friday, 6:15am

SHOWERS AND CHANGE OF CLOTHES--Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9-11am
(Be sure to call; schedule varies)

USE OF PHONE--Monday-Saturday, 9am-noon, 1:30pm-5pm

SHELTER REQUESTS--Wednesday-Friday, 9am-noon

BIBLE STUDY--Alternate Tuesdays, 7:30-9pm

WEEKEND RETREATS--Four times each year (for our household & volunteers/supporters),
September 6-8

Our Hospitality Ministries include: visitation and letter-writing to prisoners, anti-death penalty advocacy, advocacy for the homeless, medical services, and daily worship and weekly Eucharist.

Open Door Community Worship

*We gather for worship and Eucharist at
5:00pm on Sunday evenings
followed by supper together.*

Join us!

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| August 4 | Worship at 910 |
| August 11 | Worship at 910
Bob Reno, preaching |
| August 18 | Worship at 910
Agnes Norfleet, preaching |
| August 25 | Worship at 910
Music Night |

Four times each year the Community has a weekend retreat outside the city. This replaces our evening worship at 910 Ponce de Leon Ave.



MOVING?

When you change your address, please let us know as soon as possible. Print your complete old and new addresses on a card and attach a copy of your mailing label. It takes longer to make the correct change without this information. Please send to Willie London at the Open Door.

NEEDS **WASHING MACHINE DRYER**

JEANS

Men's Work Shirts

Men's Underwear

Quick Grits

Cheese

Mayonnaise

Multi-Vitamins

MARTA Tokens

Men's Large Shoes (12-14)

Coffee

Non-Aerosol Deodorant

10-SPEED BICYCLES

Carpet

Easy Chairs

Laundry Detergent

Home Computer

From 11am til 1:30pm, Monday through Saturday, our attention is focused on serving the soup kitchen and household lunch. As much as we appreciate your coming, this is a difficult time for us to receive donations. When you can come before 11:00 or after 1:30, it would be helpful.

