

HOSPITALITY

Volume 6, No. 1

January 1987

Nonprofit
PAID
#1264
Atlanta, Ga.
30304

Address
Correction
Requested

Providing hospitality to the homeless & to those in prison, through Christ's love
910 Ponce de Leon Ave. N.E. Atlanta, Ga. 30306 404-874-9652

Five Years at 910

by Murphy Davis

Looking back, I realize that it was a matter of only a few months; but in the fall of 1981 the wait to move into our new home at 910 Ponce de Leon Avenue seemed interminable. When we spent the first night in the rambling 56 room building, some of the former occupants were still there.

We were just that anxious to get going. We had two years of work with homeless people under our belts, and five years of working with prisoners. So moved was our little community by the overwhelming need, that we had made the painful decision to move from Clifton Presbyterian Church (where Ed and I had been as pastors for six years and Rob and Carolyn Johnson were members) so that we could move in, so to speak, with our work and broaden our ministry with the homeless.

The old building was ideal. Formerly an apartment building, it felt more like a home than any of the abandoned churches or schoolhouses we had considered. And home was what we sought. Hospitality was the work that called us, and we wanted a place that could become home to us, our children, and the homeless women and men who would come for food, shelter, showers, and a friendly welcome.

And home it has been. It has been home for a few of us for five years. For others, one night; for still others, several months or several years.

We moved into Nine-Ten on December 16, 1981 with a sense of urgency. It was already good and cold, and Atlanta had precious little shelter available to the homeless. We wanted our new space to be ready as quickly as possible. We set about to get the old building cleaned up.

If we could have seen very far ahead, we never would have had the courage to begin. But God in her mercy never shows us everything at once; and so it is our task to just work along day to day.

It was a major excavation. We battled roaches and grime. When my parents arrived for a Christmas visit, I met them at the back door with a jug of Clorox and a mop. My greeting "Make yourself at home," had never rolled off my tongue with such specific intent.

But make themselves at home they did - with sleeves rolled up and scrub brushes in hand! When they left after Christmas, that guest room was scrubbed clean, liberally doused with boric acid (for the roaches), and ready to welcome the homeless couple we brought in the next day.

Thereafter we welcomed each guest with the understanding that cleaning a room was part of the deal! Antonio Guillermo, a cheerful Cuban man, was our first guest. His English was so broken that we understood little of what he said, but he scurried all over the house with a mop doing an heroic duty in the war on grime.

Our official opening was Christmas day. Patrick Burke and Gary Kaupmann, two Atlanta area chefs, had



volunteered to cook an elegant Christmas dinner for 100. Talk about a touch of class! The turkey and dressing were the finest; the hollandaise on the broccoli was perfect; the pumpkin pie had real whipped cream... What a day!

One by one the rooms filled up. We struggled, day by day, to create some levels of order and an atmosphere of trust.

On the last Saturday of January ('82) we opened our first regular soup kitchen. Friends from Jubilee

CONT. ON PAGE 2

FIVE YEARS CONT. FROM FRONT PAGE

Partners came to help, bringing some of the Cambodian refugees who were then living at Jubilee. As our tired and hungry friends filed through the door, the Cambodians stood agast. "Who are these people?" they asked in shock. "They are poor! Surely they cannot be Americans!"

In April we added Sunday to our regular soup kitchen schedule. In May we opened seven days a week. Since then, our kitchen has never closed, except for Thanksgiving day, when lots of other churches open up to serve a meal.

In January '83 we added on the Butler Street Breakfast. Ed Loring and Mary Himburg had been spending time in labor pools and were moved by watching so many people leave for a day of hard manual labor on an empty stomach. They started taking coffee and grits to the city labor pool on Coca Cola Place. But a city bureaucrat quickly declared that city property was no place to eat breakfast! We were "invited out" - only to meet a friendly welcome from Thomas Brown, the new pastor of the Butler Street CME Church. For four years now the grits, eggs, coffee, and oranges have traveled every morning from the Open Door kitchen to the basement of Butler Street CME. There the breakfast is served by Open Door and Butler St. folks to a growing line of homeless men, women and children.

The requests for a shower came early. So the hot water has run for these five years as a balm to many a dirty, aching body. How different people look as they leave with a clean body in fresh, clean clothes!

Sharing life with the homeless quickly led us to a greater awareness and deeper caring for their needs. We began to be moved to the streets for liturgy and action. In the fall, we've needed to mark the coming of cold weather and the certainty of death and disease for numbers of the homeless. In the spring, as most of the free shelters have closed, we've needed to join the homeless in an affirmation that shelter is not a seasonal need. It is impossible for us simply to serve soup and provide shelter without crying out that homelessness is a gross injustice and indictment of a society that has so much and yet will not make available the basic necessities of food and housing for so many of its people.

All along we have affirmed that our work with the homeless and our work with prisoners is the same work. The people we meet in prison and those on the streets are people for whom there simply is no room. The common denominators are poverty, unemployment, hunger, poor schooling... Our friends on the streets are condemned to death by neglect and exposure as surely as our friends on death row are condemned to death by judicial process.

Not long after we had begun our work on Ponce de Leon, a soup kitchen volunteer angrily took me aside and said, "You know, you could get a lot more support for your soup kitchen if you'd drop your work against the death penalty."

She was probably right. The death penalty pushes us to the limit. It calls into question our whole need to judge others and define the "good" people and the "bad" people. It raises for us the whole question of the hope and redemptive power that are entirely beyond our control.



HOSPITALITY is published 10 times a year by The Open Door Community (P.C.U.S.), 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:

Murphy Davis - Southern Prison Ministry Director
Ed Loring - Correspondence & Resident Volunteer
Co-ordinator
Helen McCrady - Administrative Assistant (Contributions & Mailing List Maintenance)
Joanne Solomon - Administrative Assistant (Volunteer Co-ordination, Hardwick Prison Trip)

Newspaper:

Editors - Elizabeth Dede, Mark Harper; Ed Loring
Manuscript Preparation - Helen McCrady
Layout - Paula Clegg, Mark Harper
Circulation - Dietrich Gerstner and a multitude of earthly hosts and guests.



The Sower

Susan MacMurdy

"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's Theory of Relativity to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermo-dynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

But the big questions aside, we have stuck with our friends on death row precisely for the same reason we hang in with the homeless: because they have become our friends. I've often heard volunteers say after coming to the soup kitchen, "When I met these folks face to face and shared food with them, they didn't seem like strangers to me anymore. I became less afraid." On death row it's been the same. The frightening thing to learn about people guilty of murder is not how different they are, but how much they are like the rest of us. When we learn that truth, we are faced with the hard task of meeting the murderer within ourselves. We are faced with the need that each of us has for mercy and forgiveness, a new start and fresh hope, reconciliation and healing.

But forgiveness and reconciliation and healing are not on the political agenda of our nation these days. So we have stood with our friends as they have been

prepared as ritual sacrifices for our corporate anger and frustration. They have been killed, one by one, in heartless, premeditated acts of violence. Smitty, Ivan, Alpha, Roosevelt, Van, John, Jerome: our friends. Human beings created in the image of God. Through them we have been gifted to know the life-giving power of God's forgiveness. The dignity and heart-breaking strength of each one has made me wonder how the rest of us could ever dare to consider giving up the struggle.

To think back over these five years is to struggle to take in an overwhelming series of events: sometimes exhilarating, sometimes crushing, sometimes numbing.

There has been an endless procession of people: people from the streets: people in prison and jail cells, people from churches: people from Brazil, Australia, Germany, Central America, Ireland, South Africa, Sri Lanka... People from everywhere. People coming with great needs, and people bringing great gifts.

The years have seen a series of failures: failure to love enough; failure to really address the needs of the homeless; failure to stop the execution of our friends in particular and the death penalty in general; failure to meet the expectations and needs of those who have come seeking community and a shared life and work; failure to admit our mistakes: failure to pray enough; failure to be kind, joyful...

The years have been an experiment in love. An experiment in learning how to love God, our suffering neighbors, each other. An experiment in weaning ourselves from the cultural addictions so that we might seek a life of freedom and resistance to death and oppression.

But when all is said and done, here we are after five years at Nine-Ten: weak, vulnerable, and precarious. We still wonder how we'll get the work done next week and where the money will come from to pay the bills. It often seems that we spend more time burying the dead, saying good-bye, and dealing with tragedy than celebrating any victories.

How strange it seems to affirm that this is precisely how God has gifted us. If we had somehow become a "successful" ministry, we surely would not have moved into such close familial ties with the poor.

We have had to be reminded again and again and again that any love shown through our ministry is simply because of God's grace. When put to the test, we fail as often as not. Again and again we must lay aside our selfishness, our brokenness, and seek healing.

The world says this is foolish. To accept vulnerability is stupid; to confess and seek forgiveness is wimpy. And certainly, left to our own devices, we would not accept this path.

But it is precisely our vulnerability, our precarity, our inability to see ahead, our instability and insecurity that are the gifts that keep us close to the poor. And it is among the poor that God comes to us in a distressing disguise!



The only ones who stay here are those of us who have to stay. As Jeff Dietrich once said of the Catholic Worker, this is "a place that no one would stay in unless they were very poor, or very insane, or very committed to the values of poverty and service." (I often think some combination of poverty, insanity, and/or commitment is helpful!)

It's been five years at Nine-Ten. If we could have seen ahead we never would have had the courage to begin! But how good it is. Life here is full of grace: laughter, singing, children playing, lots of food, people talking together, crying together, working together. The demons that hurt and divide by race, sex and class are challenged by our shared life and love for each other. And we learn, day by day, to forgive and accept forgiveness. It is so wonderful to get a taste of God's reign!

It's not at all like I thought it would be. But it is very good. And we are grateful.



WE WERE JUST SITTING THERE TALKING WHEN LINES OF PEOPLE BEGAN TO FORM, SAYING, "WE NEED BREAD." WE COULD NOT SAY, "GO, BE THOU FILLED." IF THERE WERE SIX SMALL LOAVES AND A FEW FISHES, WE HAD TO DIVIDE THEM. THERE WAS ALWAYS BREAD.

WE WERE JUST SITTING THERE TALKING AND PEOPLE MOVED IN ON US. LET THOSE WHO CAN TAKE IT, TAKE IT. SOME MOVED OUT AND THAT MADE ROOM FOR MORE. AND SOMEHOW THE WALLS EXPANDED...

IT WAS AS CASUAL AS ALL THAT, I OFTEN THINK. IT JUST CAME ABOUT. IT JUST HAPPENED.

I FOUND MYSELF, A BARREN WOMAN, THE JOYFUL MOTHER OF CHILDREN. IT IS NOT EASY ALWAYS TO BE JOYFUL, TO KEEP IN MIND THE DUTY OF DELIGHT.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT THING ABOUT THE CATHOLIC WORKER IS POVERTY, SOME SAY.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT THING IS COMMUNITY, OTHERS SAY. WE ARE NOT ALONE ANYMORE.

BUT THE FINAL WORD IS LOVE. AT TIMES IT HAS BEEN, IN THE WORDS OF FATHER ZOSSIMA, A HARSH AND DREADFUL THING, AND OUR VERY FAITH IN LOVE HAS BEEN TRIED THROUGH FIRE.

WE CANNOT LOVE GOD UNLESS WE LOVE EACH OTHER. WE KNOW GOD IN THE BREAKING OF BREAD, AND WE KNOW EACH OTHER IN THE BREAKING OF BREAD, AND WE ARE NOT ALONE ANYMORE. HEAVEN IS A BANQUET AND LIFE IS A BANQUET TOO, EVEN WITH A CRUST, WHERE THERE IS COMPANIONSHIP.

WE HAVE ALL KNOWN THE LONG LONELINESS AND WE HAVE LEARNED THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION IS LOVE AND THAT LOVE COMES WITH COMMUNITY.

IT ALL HAPPENED WHILE WE SAT THERE TALKING, AND IT IS STILL GOING ON.

DOROTHY DAY
THE LONG LONELINESS

Thank You, Rob

by Ed Loring

Thank you, Rob, for coming in 1977 to the Atlanta Presbytery Task Force on Evangelical Social Concerns. There we met, and as though the breath of the Holy Spirit pushed us toward each other, we reached across a table and grasped each other's hand. Shortly, thereafter, we shared Walter Brueggemann's reflection on Exodus 16. Do you remember how thrilled we were by the call to liberation at the hands of the gentle yet fire-filled Yaweh who brought us to a new diet in the wilderness? Yes, we began as brothers preparing for World Food Day with a shared secret in our hearts: food, diet, menu bring revolution in a wilderness land which seeks and cries for justice and broken bread. (Did we, then, standing by your shiny blue motorcycle in the parking lot see a twilight flash on our journey's path, revealing that a million bowls of soup and 783,421 bowls of boiling grits were before us?) We began sharing manna.

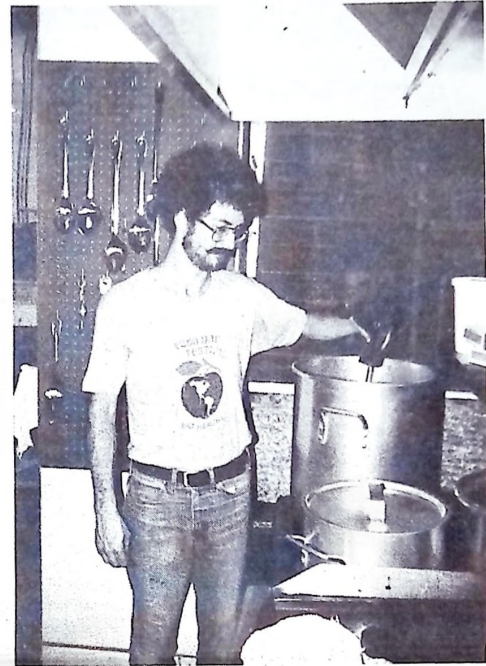
Thank you, Rob, for joining Clifton Presbyterian Church and for helping to lead that little band of clowns for Christ through waters that swirled about us and a sea that seemingly would not part. Remember how you arose in the eleventh hour of my despair and brought the broken bodies to a healing and reconciliation that today is a source of strength in that faithful and foolish congregation?

Thank you, Rob, for the crisis of your faith in 1979 when you, like saints and radicals before you, lay down the academic dream and the professional dream and took up the costly cross of obedience to another way. It was, and is, a way defined by servanthood, life-together, covenantal relationships and the biblical politics of life over death. It was, and is, a way defined by justice rooted in charity and mercy, a way demanding us to choose the side of the homeless and the prisoner. Your tears contained the waters of my own grief as well, and your shaking shoulders were signs of depth and stability for us all. Later that week we passed the pen, signed the covenant, and the Open Door Community was born.

Ah, Rob, my friend and brother, thank you for sharing childbirth. First little tiny Christina broke forth so unexpectedly that we barely caught our breath, and then her life was on the line for days. Remember how we wept and prayed? And Hannah, the opposite: three weeks late, big and fat and another girl. And you and I, all but simultaneously, began this fatherhood adventure. If there has ever been a fruit of our hopes and dreams of life together - I mean something so concrete that Satan's big air-powered sledge hammer could not even chip it - that is Christina's and Hannah's love. Want to see the biblical way in action anyone? Come visit and you shall see...



Rob Johnson



Thank you, Rob, servant of the hungry, friend of prisoners, leader of this small toe of the Body of Jesus Christ. You have told the truth to our friends who live in houses and have rooms in which to read as month after month you have lovingly edited Hospitality. Our paper is well-known and appreciated. It is a voice on behalf of the voiceless; it is a sign of survival and hope; it is an instrument of social change and a call to love and reconciliation among all peoples on behalf of the oppressed and prisoner. You have gifted us with this newspaper. Thank you, Rob.

Thank you, Rob, for your trip to Nicaragua. Thank you, for your constant care and call in our lives that we keep our eyes not only on the streets of Atlanta - filled as they are with discarded and unwanted men and women, boys and girls - but on the streets of the cities and villages of our brown and blacks friends in Central America, too. Hate begets hate; violence brings more violence with an ever deepening bitterness. You remind us that this little country, which after the overthrow of Somoza immediately abolished the savage death penalty - is no more than an extension of the streets of Atlanta. Those forces which cry out to establish a vagrant-free zone or a safeguard zone or whatever they call it this week, are the same forces that bomb the campesinos in Nicaragua and burn the shanty towns of South Africa. Thank you, Rob, for teaching us that we are all one in this world that God loves so much that God gave us Jesus so that none on the streets and prisons, in the banks, at City Hall, the Pentagon or the Junta in Managua might perish but that we might enjoy life always - together!!!

And finally, thank you, Rob, for being a source of deep thankfulness and joy which resides way down in my bowels. You, my beloved brother, have taught me something of what it means "to drink from our own wells" as Bernard of Clairvaux says. You have given me that daily love and forgiveness and trust which is the foundation, the rock, upon which radical Christian Community is built. What a source of faith and joy this has been for all of us at the Open Door!

CONT. ON PAGE 5

You have stayed with us through the most terrible times that our lives have ever known: the rending of the fabric of common life; the periods when friends grew hostile (often not without reason and purpose) and neighbors have organized to end or limit our ministries, while others have wished to silence our voices or change the structures, agenda, dreams, and vocation of God's call for the Open Door. Thank you, Rob. Your long haul commitment and bearing the brunt of persecutions and rumors have been a source of life and maturity for me. How, through your witness and others like you, I want to disarm my own heart and bear the cross of Christ with ever-deepening radicality.

And, Rob, my teacher, how I thank you for giving me and all of us the joy of a glad heart and the light feet of angles dancing. You are poet and musician, you are clown and storyteller; you are silly and very funny. In the midst of our hard work and hurting lives we sing and shout and play and party. Thank you for your glee!!

Rob, we will miss you.

Sketches

by Rob Johnson

I have written a number of articles for this paper during its 32-issue history. A few were easy, ideas literally flowing onto the paper. Several were tedious, necessitating many rewrites. Most have been enjoyable, coming from my heart regardless of their quality. For when we began the Open Door Community as a Catholic Worker-style house of hospitality, I was eager to take seriously Peter Maurin's insistence that "clarification of thought" be an integral part of ministry with the homeless.

This article has clearly been the most difficult to start. I'm leaving the community. With others here the decision was to use this issue of *Hospitality* as a retrospective on our relatively short history, with an obvious focus on me. So I'm a bit self-conscious. In our issues to date we've actually said little about ourselves, focusing more on interpretations of the work we do. Thus, I suddenly feel like the wizard of Oz - having my screen pulled away and being exposed as the bald little man that I am (actually, accompanying photos and friends will quickly attest to my head of curly hair!)

Probably, the difficulty in summarizing my life in the Open Door grows from the simple, overwhelming magnitude and diversity of events and actors in the drama here. And you who read *Hospitality* are an even more diverse group. My fear - that some friends will be disappointed at things I don't share; others surprised by what I do; and too many totally indifferent. Naturally every writer wants her/his swan song to be the best.

What I finally settled on are the following sketches of some peak moments for me during the past six years. Times of humor, fear, joy, despair, surprise, anger, and hope have been resurfacing these past few weeks. Life here has been unquestionably intense; I'm hard-pressed to recall times of boredom.

HUMOR

A few years ago, one of our more temperamental homeless guests, Edward, gave the following response to me, explaining what he didn't like about living at 910 Ponce de Leon. "Rob, people here are too friendly. I am just plain tired of having to shake so many hands." This was the same person who complained incessantly about his roommate, Claude, an admittedly hard-to-get-along-with amputee in a wheel chair. Finally Edward stormed into the kitchen one afternoon. "Come here,"



Dietrich Gerstner

he hollered, "I want to show you evidence of how that man is deliberately trying to harass me: today there are wheelchair tracks across my bed spread." We loved Edward and were sad to see him eventually leave because of a requirement that all of us get tested for TB. A shot for him was the ultimate intrusion.

For the rest of us, living and working with the homeless and reaching out to people on death row creates such an ongoing level of low-grade stress that we eagerly look for intrusions of humor. For example, we've always had a room full of punners ready to pounce on the smallest opportunity. One day someone mentioned that our friend Will Campbell in Tennessee was continuing to look for innovative ways to get people ordained for the ministry (he's long been a critic of traditional seminary education). Within minutes, we were verbally drafting a catalog for the "Corn Cob School of Theology." That's the one where students are "outstanding in their fields," "plowing through their dense course load," constantly "generating fertile thoughts," until they can join the next "bumper crop" of graduates to "stalk" out into the real world and "harvest" the future for humanity, etc. etc. In fact, that pun-able topic still seems to sprout up about every two months or so.

Behavior itself has often been downright silly at the Open Door. Right now we are having a rash of food fights (always after I leave in the late afternoon). As I recall, the inaugural one came three years ago at Thanksgiving, of all days. That is the one day in the year, of course, that we close our soup kitchen. While the homeless attend other banquets around town, our household and friends have enjoyed a more intimate and, yes, formal feast. Somehow in 1983 we found our day blessed with many cans of whipped cream to accompany the marvelous pecan and pumpkin pies. To this day we argue about who started it....but....like a flash flood, John & Ryan Pickens, Jim Carter and I found ourselves in a fierce spraying battle. Everyone else dove out of the dining room into the hall. Within seconds (he'll claim minutes) I had completely covered Jim's glasses and he hollered "uncle." My daughter Christina still cowers on the rare occasions that I have a whipped cream can in my hand.

For the final funny, I must tell how we quickly put an end to monarchy at the Open Door. This needs a slight introduction: when we were starting the night shelter ministry at Clifton Presbyterian Church we at

times had contended with Ed Loring's regal-like strivings for glory. At one point, his office door was adorned with a placard, "The King." Well, sure enough, during our first winter at 910, Ed, the King, would occasionally emerge. Finally, on his March birthday we thought we'd give the king his due. As a lunch-time party began, we brought out a home-made crown and a broom for a scepter. Making Ed king for a day was all it took to retire that fantasy.



Rob Johnson

FEAR

Many dear friends have donated vehicles to our community. Without a doubt, my favorite was a small 1951 GMC bus lovingly shared by our Quaker friend, Dwight Ferguson. It was intended to help with transportation for prisoner families to Hardwick. Oh well. Several minor mechanical problems arose that kept that old classic from getting out of metro Atlanta. It was used regularly to go to church. And one weekend we drove north to Camp Chattahoochee for an outing. As we arrived, one of our women guests jumped out of the bus and insisted on being allowed to ride in the van for the ride home. I knew I hadn't driven that bad, but agreed to humor another paranoid person's whim.

One week later, just before another trip, I drove out of our yard, turned up Ponce de Leon Ave., and headed for the Exxon station a few blocks away. At the first traffic light I went to the brake and got nothing. I mean straight to the floor board. Fortunately, between luck and the hand brake I managed to get through the intersection and turn onto the one side street that preceded the steep hill down to the gas station. When I finally parked and climbed off, I saw to my horror that the right front wheel was literally about to fall off. With knees shaking, I walked back home, thinking all along, "What if this had happened an hour later while I had the bus filled with people heading for Central Presbyterian!" And later that afternoon, I learned that my "paranoid" woman passenger used to repair and drive buses with her ex-husband. She had earlier sensed the tell-tale signs of a deteriorating axle! Thanks for warning me!

I suppose the other fearful highlights would come from being in the midst of violence among the homeless. In retrospect it's been amazing how little of that there's been. I remember after our first month of opening Clifton Church for shelter an Emory University faculty member tried convincing us that we were utterly naive not to plan carefully what our responses would be to the inevitable flood of violence we were about to experience.

Four years later came my biggest scare (to date). I was supervising the Butler Street breakfast early one morning when someone barged through the long line holding his bloody head and pleading to me to hide him in the church. "Some guy just cut me out there in the line...for no reason at all!" he cried. Quickly, I took him into a Sunday school room nearby, gave him a towel to help stop the bleeding, and then returned outside to find out what had happened. Just as I got to the door, a second person shoved his way past others and demanded to get a bag he'd left in the building. I became suspicious immediately, and started encouraging him to get back in line. He'd been drinking, was very agitated, and when he started making up more excuses for needing to get ahead in line, I suddenly asked, "Did you just cut someone out there in the line?"

"Who said I cut him! Let me see the one who says I cut him! Where is he?" And the short, stocky fellow pushed past me right into the dining room where we were about to serve. Now I was getting angry and afraid. I knew this man was dangerous, yet I had to maintain my authority in the midst of 125 hungry people. I also couldn't let him get near the injured man. So I stood right in front of Lucius (I later learned his name) and as calmly as I could, told him no one would be served until he left; that he wouldn't be served today; and that he had to leave.

Equally calmly, Lucius took both of his hands and put them over either side of my head and squeezed just a bit as he called me a few names. No one else moved. Did I want them to? If someone jumped at him, the knife could quickly emerge. If no one responded, how would I respond to his abuse?

Suddenly Lucius dropped his hands, turned on his heels, and left. Later, after I had taken the victim, Edward, to Grady, I learned that Lucius pulled his knife on a plain clothes cop in a park around noon-time and landed in jail.

JOY

I am an optimistic person. And I tend to be a happy person. Simple wonders can amaze me -- like a brilliant rainbow that shone one late afternoon when a nation-wide group of Christian communities gathered for a festival in the summer of 1984. I can still remember that rainbow. And music. The same festival featured a concert by Ken Medema. I cried for joy during one song that he composed on the spot from three words offered from those of us in the audience. Can you believe that someone yelled out the word "outhouse!" And he turned it into a ballad about homeless people being unable to find a restroom or shelter.

At other times, joy has come as a tremendous relief when an expected tragedy has been avoided. Executions, mostly. For example, Billy Neal Moore came within hours of being killed in the electric chair here in Georgia. Several of us affiliated with P.A.X. (People Against Executions) were in the office of the state's Attorney General. A black pastor, Marvin Morgan, was there offering to exchange his life for that of Billy Neal. Quite honestly, we were all just waiting to be arrested. But for hours we were allowed to sit in a waiting room. Five o'clock was coming. Surely as the building closed for the day, we'd be escorted to the Fulton County jail. Billy would be dead just after midnight.



And then an office door opened. An assistant came out and with just slightly hidden enthusiasm shared the news that Billy had been granted a stay! We jumped up, shook hands with the receptionist who had patiently endured the afternoon with us, and bounded out into the bright sunshine. A stay may not seem like much when you read about it in the papers, but for people close to the people about to die, a stay is JOY!!!

Finally, among all the wonderful gifts of time, and money, and food, and clothes, and visits, and calls, and letters that have brought us so much joy over the years there is one that still jumps out with joy. It was one of the first. One evening, when Carolyn, Ed, Murphy, and I were still living on Arizona Avenue and had just announced our intention to find a building for our new Catholic-worker-type ministry, our relatively new neighbors Anne and Gil Nicholson called up wanting to visit. They had recently moved near Clifton from "the suburbs," primarily because of their attraction to the congregation and its ministry to the homeless. To be honest, the four of us were anxious that Anne and Gil were going to be really upset that we were leaving just at the time that they were considering making a significant commitment to the church. You simply cannot fathom the awe and joy and then gratitude we felt that night when they presented us with a significant contribution for our proposed building purchase. From that night on we had no doubts that we would somehow raise the rest of the money to start our house of hospitality.

DESPAIR

I said from the beginning of this piece that life in this intentional Christian community has been intense. That's what we wanted. We have believed that discipleship does not offer tranquility. Every day, in some measure, Christ invites us to carry a cross... while also promising that life together will enable us to bear burdens as though they were light.

Yet for me the deepest despair in my life has come these past years as I've discovered how difficult it has been for Christians to live and work together. So many wonderful and fascinating people have come to the Open Door. Some have been downright weird! So many have left. Too many have left unhappy or sad. I wasn't expecting this six years ago. And obviously, by my leaving, I have been unable to be transformed in either of the two ways that allow one to live in this kind of community for the long haul - by enduring the constant turn-over or by learning how to minimize it.

The deepest despair came a year and a half ago when my wife Carolyn decided that she needed to find another place and another work to do. She was tired and angry and felt that leaving this community was the only alternative for her. I wanted to stay. I wanted someone to persuade her to stay or for everyone at the Open Door (including myself) to change so that she could remain. None of us could.

So our family moved, Carolyn found work with Habitat for Humanity in Atlanta, and I became an employee (vs. a covenant partner) of the Open Door. And my despair was gradually dissolved. As with most of the departures, resolution and reconciliation has emerged. Perhaps a fundamental promise for Christians is that even when you discover that your styles or agendas are different (necessitating a parting of the ways) you can still accept one another as brothers and sisters in the body.

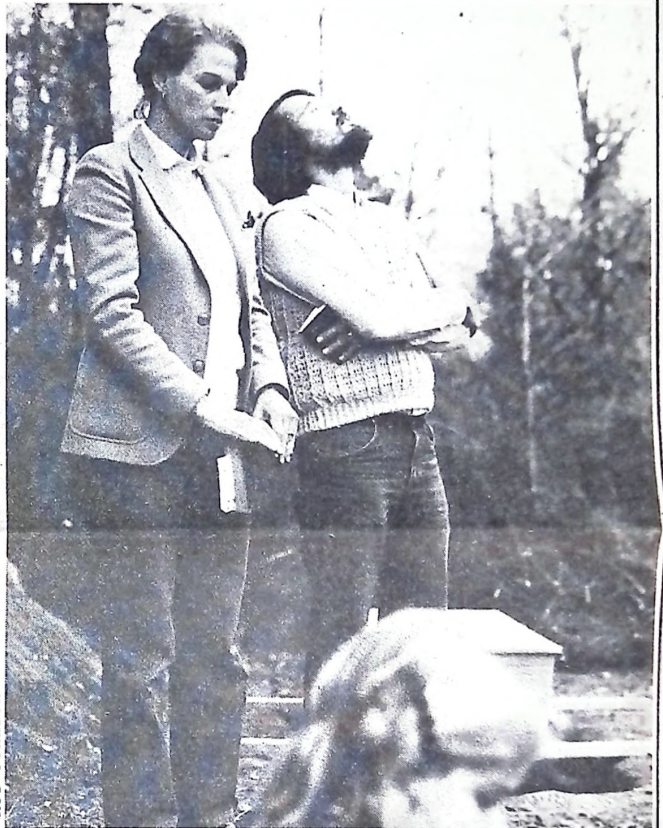
There is another arena of despair I'd like to share. But for these events reconciliation is not yet possible. Only the hope and reality of Christ's resurrection has been able to get me beyond this despair: that of the executions of friends on death row.

First, I must confess, that the emotion of anger has been most present for me as seven men, six of them black, have been electrocuted during my days at the Open Door. Many of those days, as I alluded to when mentioning Billy Neal Moore's reprieve, I have engaged in dramatic actions - even civil disobedience - to express a strong NO to killing. But after each death, there have been hours of despair.

For this sketch, I want to talk about a picture I took. It is shown on this page. It is a picture I have kept mostly to myself for 18 months: Ed, Murphy, and blurred in the foreground, their daughter Hannah. I took this during the funeral service for Alpha Stevens. He was killed by the state right around Easter of 1985. And like several of those we've known, Alpha asked for our community to help bury him at the Jubilee community in Comer, Georgia.

This picture expresses so much for me. Murphy bows down and inward in despair. Ed leans up and inward in supplication to a hope beyond. And Hannah sits on the ground, rooted in an innocence that overpowers the presence of death.

I hope I can be buried at Jubilee with Alpha Stevens, Pop Campbell, Harold Wind and the others. In that place, despair is only fleeting.



Rob Johnson

SURPRISE

We've seen some pretty amazing things. Many surprises simply caught us off guard. For example, I remember as though it were yesterday the rainy night in 1980 when I first witnessed a person climbing out of a huge dumpster behind the Municipal Market downtown. I'd heard that such places actually were used for refuge...as well as refuse...but I was still shocked when I saw it. The young black man's pants legs were flecked with garbage....

The same surprise initially came when people had seizures in our soup kitchen. How had I gone thirty years without witnessing an epileptic seizure? Suddenly this was a weekly encounter.

More pleasant was the first time, as treasurer, that I opened an envelope and found a hundred dollar bill. Period. No note, no return address. As a matter of fact, over these years I have continued to feel both joy and a certain bit of surprise every time I've filled out information from a contributor's check onto a deposit slip. Only occasionally do I write the thank you notes we send out. But on the back of every check I've prepared for deposit I've written "Thank you!" Most times I've included the exclamation mark, reflective of the delightful surprise of so many generous, sustaining gifts.

And who would believe that Ralph Dukess would become the backbone of our soup kitchen! Ralph, one of our first guests at the Clifton Night Shelter in 1979, is our favorite "surprise story" among Open Door long-termers. After we moved to 910 Ponce de Leon we became instant neighbors of Ralph's favorite hang-out spot, Ray Lee's Blue Lantern Lounge. So we regularly hosted Ralph in our soup kitchen. Unfortunately we too-often had to turn him away from our dining room because of his intoxication. But eventually a less "experienced" resident volunteer, Mary Himburg, invited Ralph to come and live with us. "We'll wager he lasts less than a week," several of us thought, and probably said. Surprise!! He has spent more time in our dining room than anyone in our history to date. Most of Ralph's time in that room is spent consistently and lovingly setting up for soup kitchen and dinners.

ANGER

Well, if you want the truth, I was probably the most angry those times when I went to take a car that I had earlier signed out only to find that someone had taken it. "Who took it?!" I fumed more than once, stalking around the house looking for evidence. The interdependence of community living provides infinite opportunities for us to make mistakes. Y'all know what I mean - your basic "domestic squabbles" that at the moment seem like life or death matters. Sadly, anger hasn't always been worked through maturely or creatively. My sin has been too often holding my anger within and choosing distance rather than confrontation as a vehicle for resolution.

One day in April this year in Nicaragua I should have raged. Instead I fumed and got sick. Our Witness for Peace delegation was standing outside a small shack in the east-central village of Yolina. We'd been listening to fourteen year-old boys describe an attack by the contras four days earlier. Several of their kin and friends had been killed in the middle of the night. In my hands, I held a USA-made rifle left behind by the retreating terrorists. Under the remorse, grief, and embarrassment for the devastation that U.S. tax dollars were causing was deep anger for such an American export industry. I remember yearning to be able to take that gun back with me on the plane to Decatur, Georgia. I could see myself marching it into Representative Pat Swindall's office and proclaiming, "Look how far your murder weapon has wandered! We found it way out in the country side of Central America. It's got your and my finger prints on it! One of these ultimate days, something more binding than the World Court will take this rifle as evidence in our trial. What are we going to say, Pat?"

But that day in Yolina, my anger stayed too deep inside. By nightfall in Nueva Guinea I had a fever.



Rob Johnson



Wayne Martin

HOPE

One very special night three years ago I was putting my then four-year-old daughter Christina to bed. It had been a difficult week. Surprise, fear, despair, and anger had come with the Nuclear Train as it rolled through Georgia. During a thirty six hour period I had been on the phone alerting friends in the Metro Atlanta area. Several of us had driven to Alabama and witnessed the intrusion of an estimated 200 nuclear weapons into our state. Several times over several days Christina and I had talked about the train, what it carried, and why I was concerned.

In the dark, with our bed-time story read - that time when existential questions emerge from young, searching minds - suddenly there sprang this quiet question:

"Daddy, how many is 200 nuclear bombs?"

"Do you mean, how many is 200?"

"Yes."

"Well...let's see...why don't I count it out."

"OK!"

"You can count along, too...as far as you can."

"OK!"

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve,...(somewhere around sixty Christina got quiet)...ninety eight, ninety nine, one hundred, one hundred one, one hundred two, one hundred three,... one hundred twenty eight, one hundred twenty nine..."

About here my eyes got moist as I realized on another level what we were doing - counting the potential annihilation of thousands of other four-year-olds. But I kept on counting.

...one hundred forty, one hundred forty one, one hundred forty two, one hundred forty three,

"Daddy?"

"Yes, Christina?"

"I think that's enough. Two hundred nuclear bombs are going to be too much in this world. Can I go to sleep now?"

"Christina, I think that's a wonderful idea. Good night. And thank you for asking me how much 200 nuclear weapons are. I love you."

Friends, I have hope that Christina and Hannah, Gabriel and Adam, Susan and Neely, Ryan and Neal, Seth and Shannon, Katie, Sarah, and Will, Jennifer and the children dear to you will grow up advocating that 200 nuclear weapons in the world is absurd.

On another January night, earlier in our history, Bob and Phyllis Bevis, Bill Bolling, and Don Newby sat in a dimly lit room on Arizona Avenue with Carolyn, Murphy, Ed, and me. Bob, an "urban minister" who was always taking on more than one person could chew, had a crazy idea. "I think I know how we can keep Central Presbyterian Church open for a night shelter. I'll call 50 pastors and ask each one of them to come to Central with just one of their lay members and spend just one night in the shelter between now and March. I'm sure a few of them will agree to call a few other clergy friends. The need is so great and so urgent; I really believe that we can persuade enough people if we get them to commit to just one night."

"Ha!!" several of us thought. Fifty ministers spending a night with the homeless in 1980! Surely we should be basing our hopes elsewhere.

Well, Bob did it! The ministers did it! The lay people did it! Slowly but surely the homeless had some friends beyond the Salvation Army and Union Mission.

Yes, much of the friendship is tenuous. Some is still very shallow, if not exploitive. But the lessons learned together by the homeless and their no-longer-quite-so-new friends seem to be enduring ones. Maybe, just maybe, there is hope. Maybe, just maybe, we who are most wealthy in this world will seek more fully charity and justice for the least among us. Maybe, just maybe, there is hope that our search for justice for others will quiet our appetites for greed.

Maybe, just maybe, there is hope for a vital future for the Open Door Community - a broad network of friends I love so dearly. Maybe, just maybe, God will bless me all the days of my life, including the new and exciting ones just ahead.

Good night Open Door. And thank you for asking me how much my memories are. I love you.



Dietrich Gerstner

On January 14th, Rob Johnson will begin working full time with the Atlanta Community Food Bank (892-9822) developing a new project. "Modeled after several other programs, we will begin picking up excess prepared food from restaurants, caterers, hotels, and cafeterias and delivering it to feeding projects around the city." Rob is also serving this year on the board of Atlanta Clergy and Laity Concerned, continuing to develop responses to Central America, the Nuclear Train, and local racism. Carolyn Johnson is co-director of Habitat for Humanity in Atlanta (885-1415), building homes for low-income residents. Their home address is 1434 Miller Avenue NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30307. 404-525-6237.

Many Hats : The Hospitality of Rob Johnson

by Mark Harper

When I arrived at the Open Door on a cold day last January, there was an almost overwhelming, if not unusual, sense of busyness in the house. Weary women and men were in the hall looking for a better pair of shoes, while looking forward to a warm shower. Onions were being chopped in the kitchen. Soup was coming to a boil. And Rob Johnson was preparing another issue of Hospitality for print.

Like so many people in this city and around the country, I came to know Rob through the pages of this publication. Quite literally. On that busy January day, our little office area on the first floor was covered with the copy sheets, photographs, and various graphics that, somehow, would get pasted-up and mailed-out as a beautiful expression of this community's life together. With remarkable calm, Rob was overseeing this process and after we exchanged greetings, he remarked that "the printer is scheduled to pick this stuff up at nine in the morning. Could you do some proof-reading for me?" For me, the new kid on the block, this immediate invitation to share in the space and work of the Open Door family, this invitation to get my hands dirty, to assume the role of active participant rather than awkward observer, was a gift of true hospitality. Within an hour, and with a blue felt-tip marker in hand, I felt "at home."

While Rob wore an editor's hat often and well, other hats, perhaps not so familiar to Hospitality

readers, have been (and still are!) a part of his wardrobe. For Rob is also a wonderful pop-corn maker, haunted-house creator, aspiring juggler, and bus driver. His harmonica playing has lifted us up in worship, even as he has lifted his voice in powerful opposition to state-sanctioned murder. With his life and camera, he is a witness for justice on the streets of Atlanta and a witness for peace in Nicaragua. Whatever the context, and whatever the hat, Rob is a friend with a ready welcome for the many sojourners who pass this way.

The following reflections are from people who have shared in the sense of hospitality that not only serves to name the newspaper he has edited, but also characterizes Rob's very way of life.

Hannah Loring-Davis

At Halloween, Rob used to dress up like this devil - with these ugly devil teeth and everything. But Christina and I knew who he was, so we weren't really scared. And then he would make the basement real scary. He would take these pumpkins and carve them and make them into jack o' lanterns - and then he would put clothes on them and make them into these pumpkin people and sit 'em in a little rocking chair in the hall in the basement. Then he'd play this scary record with ghost sounds. He sure looked funny with that devil costume on.

A.B. Short

Rob's real competitive. You know that, don't you? We play raquetball a lot and I remember once, he was playing so hard that he played out of his shoes. No joke. He dove after a ball and left his right shoe behind. Then, a few points later, he went after another ball and came out of his left shoe. I still won the match though. With both shoes on.

Ann Connor

Well, Rob can make an impression. We were at the first Southern Life Communities meeting and everyone was sitting in a big circle. We went around the circle introducing ourselves, some folks being more serious than others. Finally we came to Rob and he said, "Hi, my name is Rob Johnson and I can do this." Then he got out of his chair and stood on his head. Everybody just broke up laughing.

Brenda Cantrell

In the short time I knew Rob here at the Open Door, I noticed how he had this tendency to do the unexpected. He was always so patient and kind when helping people off the streets, when they asked for clothes or other kinds of help. But then he had his moments when he got really wild. I'll never forget our community retreat at Camp Calvin when he jumped up on the table and performed his "Christian Strip-tease," singing "When I get to heaven, gonna take off my shoes, gonna walk all over God's heaven."

Willie Coleman

He's so quiet, you gotta watch him.

Ralph Dukes

I first met Rob Johnson when he was working over at Clifton Presbyterian Church night shelter with Ed and Murphy, and Miss Carolyn. I was one of the first to stay over there. Rob used to drive the van - an old red van, I think it was - down to Ol' Ray Lee's, this beer joint where I spent a whole heap of time. I'd be sittin' out on the foyer at the lounge there and ol' Rob would pull up and drive me over to Clifton. Every night. But you know, Rob is Rob. He's like me - just living day to day. He does the best he can with what he's got. Which is saying a lot. He helped get me on my feet. Anyway, four years later and I'm still here. I'm sober. A Texas sober. You know, four years instead of just one week.



Dietrich Gerstner

Helen McCrady

Rob is a peacemaker in the truest sense of the word. He begins "peacemaking" with each individual encounter he has and then carries that same spirit into the larger issues that face us. He is also a very giving person. A special example of this comes from Nicaragua. We were leaving a small village that had recently been attacked by the contras. It was a sad, shattering experience for us all. I heard harmonica music playing where we had just been. I looked at Rob and he admitted that he had given his 'G' harmonica to one of the fourteen year-old soldiers. "G por la guerra," he said. (La guerra is Spanish for war).



Rob Johnson



Dietrich Gerstner

John Cole Vodicka

Rob always strikes me as a wonderful, committed parent, particularly to his daughter Christina, but also to the other children in the community. His gentleness, and playfulness always seem to endear him to the kids who live and visit among us. Many times my son Gabriel would toddle into Rob's office and immediately peruse the contents of a file drawer, or punch on Rob's adding machine, or open a container of photo slides and dump them on the floor at Rob's feet. Or put the telephone on hold while Rob was in mid-conversation with someone. Despite these distractions - even annoying encounters - with Gabe, Rob always had a smile, a kind word, and even a minute-or-two, for Gabriel. Dee, Gabe and I will miss "Wob", as our son so affectionately calls him.

For Jerome Bowden

Anonymous

He discovered the beauty of nature and nurtured appreciation
for her quite by accident; so they said-
According to their sophisticated standards of worth,
he never understood a word he read;
He was judged unacceptable, thus disposable; because
he couldn't count, he couldn't qualify;
He made a mistake beyond forgiveness and for his wrong it would
be righted, should he die.

He was ignorant of Beethoven and Mozart, but he
could tell you of the lark and the dove;
He had never played bridge or sipped afternoon tea but
he could show you a prime example of love;
Maybe he didn't know that Dow Jones and Frito Lay
weren't partners in the chip industry;
He certainly could explain, as he proclaimed, the mystery
and majesty of sacred Calvary.

He was considerate and respectful, yet seldom was it
when the proper credit was given;
A dozen of his peers, amidst the barbaric cheers,
decided that his life was no longer fit for living.
'Execute! Execute!' was the impassioned cry from a
group of mentally inept and emotionally unaware
If you pressed them individually not a one cares to-
or dares to - defend the electric chair.

Was his brain too small or his skin too dark? Or was
it because he didn't fit on a social chart
They weren't concerned about his potential for the future
or what he would do with another start;
Some live and some don't. I reckon it has to do
with the past you had and the company you keep;
It's a hell of a lot of difference when your family
comes from the better side of Wall Street.

For those who are not, life can be a topsy-turvy
hurley-burley meshing of sorrow and pain;
Equity and justice are determined by your accomplishments
in the areas of fortune and fame;
Who you are and who you ain't are weights in their
unbalanced scale of injustice;
Only the foolish and the fiendish attempt to make
this senseless system make sense.

For his last meal he asked that he be served a small
measure of mercy and compassion;
They claimed to have lost the recipe when they
moved from truth to reason and ration;
They substituted three artificial apologies - the kind
that's free of sodium, calcium, and regret;
The books had been audited and as the public applauded
he was ordered to pay his debt.

I spoke with him the night before the day he was
removed to the chamber and promptly killed;
He warned me not to be confused by their sermons- his
death was not desired by God, nor was it willed.
Christ was holy indeed, He placed a particular value on
each and every one of his brothers and sisters;
Now they diminish and distort; our modern scholars and
prophets are old-fashioned Bible-twisters.

They exalted their authority, the power granted by
those august men beneath the gold dome;
They tried to hide their sin as they connected
the conductors to my friend Jerome.
They hoped to conceal their consciences beneath
the controversy, then escape through the sizzle and snap.
They justified their action and satisfied the public
by assuring that he was in his well-deserved hell.

CONT. ON PAGE 12

You reported that he was retarded; you supported
with stories of lawn mowers and wine;
which clearly demonstrated the cruelty of the irony:
they were criminals actively engaged in crime;
I often wonder if this Supreme Court of fools has
donated thought to Jerome's passing away;
I wonder, too, when God asks why they murdered
him, just what they will say.

He did stay in the headlines longer than most;
I figured it to be his rock 'n' roll appeal;
There was the international call for amnesty, a plea
for humanity and humility to be made real.
They joined a corps of local champions that wanted
justice, tempered with mercy, to be shown;
And each one felt his own failure and her own
depressions the day they executed Jerome.

Six others died before him in the state and it is
feared that more lives will be destroyed.
It's a difficult burden to bear, it's worse when the
would-be mourners are relieved and overjoyed
The churches of Christ act as though contact will
cause embarrassment, shame, and (maybe) a social disease;
They will love you if you are bright and if you are
warm, and if you are cuddly, if you please.

For memories that won't die and dreams that won't be
born, may we pause for all others with Jerome;
May we remember his attitude as we forget
the bitterness that has chosen our hearts as home
May we show him that we're still fighting, and
that there will always be someone trying
To convince the world that there's more to life
than death and more to death than dying.

*Jerome Bowden was executed by the State of Georgia
on June 24, 1986.*



Letter from a Friend

Sunday, October 19

Dear Open Door Community,

How I miss you! As you learned from George, the forces of existentialism were at work when, halfway into my training in Boston, an opening came up in the Springfield office of the Public Defender. It seemed too fateful a twist of events not to take the offer. And, while I might have enjoyed a couple or several months breather before beginning "work", I am enthused and energized to finally be working at what it is I went to law school for-- as painful and irrelevant a process as it was I am glad I did it. Defending poor people accused of crimes is an enormous challenge. There are so many things operating against you: the law itself; the mentality of the judges and prosecutors, clerks and marshalls; the vicious cycle of poverty and the criminal justice non-system.... I do know one thing already, though: I feel comfortable with the challenge. I am humbled by my clients but determined to fight for them. That's one thing that doesn't change from place to place. The people I am appointed to represent are poor, Black or Hispanic mostly, without hope and in a revolving door of various controlling institutions. When they are on the outside, the welfare institution and capitalist class structure we so readily embrace control them; when they are on the inside, in prisons or jails, it is the "correctional" system and the courts that are in control.

You know, in a way, fighting for poor people who are confronted with the criminal justice system is a bit like being given permission to do all the things you've been taught to hold back on. I can mouth-off, plot and scheme against the evil forces of the prosecution and be encouraged to do so! That is one thing that the Massachusetts Public Defender System stresses: fight and fight hard for your client. It is very reaffirming.

The biggest personal challenge I know I will face is trying to be human, and compassionate with each and every person I represent. I have just finished my second week and already I have a case-load of 20.

You know, it's funny being in the Northeast after three years in Atlanta. While the population of Springfield is about 20% Black, I have yet to see one Black attorney in the courthouse.... There aren't even any tokens in the DA's office - or ours for that matter - in the private bar. So far, the only black face I've seen in the courthouse is a probation officer -- that is, other than in the cage they hold the prisoners in.

One nice thing happened my first day in Springfield! Two Sundays ago my friend David Hoose and his partner Arthur Serota (who has just returned from a year in South Africa) along with two local Black African activists, organized an anti-Apartheid rally. Both Mandela's and Bishop Tutu's daughters spoke, along with the local politicians (who were there for show), a few impressive local Black ministers, and the NAACP folk. The most exciting part of the day was to be among the crowd marching down to City Hall. Springfield's population is shy of 200,000 yet there were a good 2500 folks of all colors and ages marching. I know that the issue of apartheid is a "safe" one for folks to rally around, but it is nevertheless encouraging to know there is some spirit alive and well in this dark day and age.

Supposedly there is a dynamo of a nun who leads the crusade for the homeless here. I plan to go over to her soup kitchen next week and see how I can become involved. Being alone is very good for the soul. There is a lot more time to reflect, to read, to be with others that are in need. I hope to be able to stay in the shelters and soup kitchens on a regular basis.

George told me about your rally in Central City Park to mark the beginning of yet another year of not enough beds! I am so glad that Jack Boger got to address the crowd. It must have been a thrill for him after his day with his other audiences (i.e. the U.S. Supreme Court).

Oh, I wanted to tell you about the two prisons I have been in thus far.... Deer Island in Boston is the worst. A real pit. Old, crumbling; guards who are so



resentful of how they are treated that they take it out directly on the men. There was nothing in an attempt to hide how gross and despairing the place was. There were so many broken windows in the segregation unit that it was as if it was raining on the inside. I can only imagine that it is unbearable when snow comes. The cells were about 6 x 6, damp and dark... the only light was a single bulb on the wall outside between two cells.

The local jail (also serves as a prison) was as old as Deer Island but much better maintained and not quite so oppressive. Also, the guards that I have encountered so far here are actually decent, so that's encouraging.

I hope Hannah's birthday was happy. How is she doing? Please give my love to all in the household. I miss everyone. I am going to try and get to Atlanta for Christmas.

Love to you,

Colleen

P.S. My thoughts and prayers are always with you and your work.

Grace and peaces of mail

Dear Ed et. al.,

Your latest issue of Hospitality arrived just as I was reading another in a series of letters-to-the-editor in the New Orleans Times-Picayune denouncing our soup kitchen at Felicite. The degree of bitterness many feel towards homeless people and their allies never ceases to shock me. In the past week we have been descended upon by state and city inspectors. Our phones have mysteriously gone dead. A city councilman has promised to work to "close down the soup kitchens and the bars" in the Felicite neighborhood. Still, the people come - not only the homeless and hungry - but others, too-giving us money, giving us food, keeping us strong. And Hospitality comes, letting us know there are many like us and some who have been at it a long, long time.

Peace - take care,

David Billings
New Orleans, LA

CONT. ON PAGE 14

MAIL CONT. FROM PAGE 13

Candidasa, Bali
10/29/86

Dear Ed,

As a gallant advocate of public toilets for street people, you will, I feel sure, appreciate the enclosed news clip.

To date we have walked the streets and ridden the public transport (jitneys) of Manila for two days; ditto Hong Kong's streets, buses and ferries for one day; and walked the streets and beaches of Bali for one week. Both poverty and friendly faces abound (hand in hand more often than not) in Manila and in Bali. Our brief stop in Hong Kong was mainly a visit to the very crowded commercial area of small shops and offices.

I believe an Open Door Community of some form is needed in almost every block in Manila and in Bali.

Religion in Bali is all over the place as almost all Balinese practice their form of Hinduism with daily family offerings of food and flowers to the gods; and frequent religious holidays are celebrated in the temples and in the streets with fancy ceremonial processions, music, dance, drama, and ritual.

Much love to Murphy, to
Alice, and to the entire
Open Door Community,

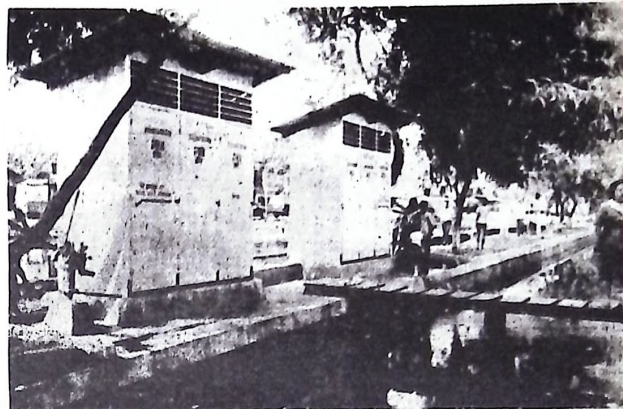
Joe Taylor

Dear Friends,

This Thanksgiving Day, as with every Thanksgiving for the past four years, holds a special significance - a significance beyond the general appreciation for life - that embodies the word "hospitality".

Four years ago I faced the grim prospect of receiving the death penalty. Through the efforts of Murphy Davis, several sources were made available to my attorney and me that, otherwise, would have left us without a solid foundation on which to mount a viable defense. Aside from the resources, several individuals made their presence known at my trial whom I later learned to be from the Jubilee Community, just down the road from where I was being tried. Those who have faced such dismal situations in life know the feeling of gratitude for a smile, a pat on the back, and an assurance that there is someone, even a stranger, who is standing nearby.

The jury returned with a sentence of life. Perhaps it was a good attorney who made the difference; perhaps



Two slum areas given public toilets

JAKARTA (JP): Residents of two slum areas here have been provided with public toilets built by the government as part of a campaign aimed at promoting hygiene and clean environment.

These toilets, measure one by three meters and are made of opaque fiberg-

lass with waterproofed roofs (picture), were inaugurated by the wife of Jakarta governor, Mrs. Soeprapto, in a simple ceremony here Saturday.

These facilities, a revised version of toilets built by the city sanitation agency on river banks in the popu-

lous areas like Jl. Hayam Wuruk and Jl. Gajahmada, are located in West and Central Jakarta.

Six of the nine toilets are located on the Krukut river bank, Tambora, a densely populated sub-district in West Jakarta and three others are on the Ciliwung river bank, Pegangsaan, a slum area in Central

Jakarta. Each unit has three compartments which are equipped with squat toilets.

To prevent river pollution, the toilets, which cost Rp 500,000 per unit, is provided with a hand pump and a septic tank.

it was Ms. Davis' efforts; perhaps it was those from Jubilee Community; or perhaps it was "just the will of God." But God operates through people, and it was the unselfish, combined efforts of strangers that, I believe, made all the difference between life and death. Several weeks later I met Ms. Davis for the first and last time since. How could one adequately express the gratitude I felt towards this stranger?

So, when Thanksgiving comes around, I associate the word "hospitality" with the day. I think of the Indians who helped the Pilgrims survive their first winter - offering the Pilgrims life when they were facing death. I think of how easily things could have turned out differently for me, how easily I could have been forced to join the many others still facing death.

Yes, I have much to be thankful for, as anyone does who has been touched by the generosity of those involved with the Hospitality newsletter and associated groups.

Thank you for so very much.

R.R. Soto
PO Box 256
Mt. Vernon, GA 30445

Open Door Schedule

WE ARE OPEN...

Monday through Saturday, telephones are answered from 9:00 am until 6:00 pm and from 7:15 pm to 8:30 pm. The building is open from 9:00 am until 8:30 pm those days. (Both phone & door are not answered during our lunch break from 12:15-1:00.) Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. On Sunday we are closed until 1:00 pm. Please do not make unscheduled drop-offs of clothing, food, etc. on Sunday mornings. Sunday afternoon our phones and door are answered from 1:00 until 5:00 pm

OUR MINISTRY...

SOUP KITCHEN - Monday-Saturday, 11-12 noon; Sunday 3-4pm

BUTLER ST. CME BREAKFAST - Monday-Friday 7:30-8:30 am SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHES - Monday, Wednesday,

Friday - 9:00 - 11:00 am (Be sure to call-- schedule varies) USE OF PHONE - Monday-Saturday, 9am - 4pm.

SHELTER REQUESTS - Monday-Saturday 9am - noon.

BIBLE STUDY - Alternate Wednesdays 7:30 - 9:00 (call for winter schedule)

ALL-DAY RETREATS - Every 6th Sunday (for our household & volunteers/supporters) - Feb. 21 & 22

Saying "No"

to the Vagrant Free Zone

by Elizabeth Dede

During the week before Christmas, the Open Door Community, joined by some of our homeless sisters and brothers and other advocates for the homeless, marched through the streets of Atlanta to protest a downtown business group's proposed "vagrant free zone." In the near future, the city plans to close Plaza Park - a park that is "home" for many of our homeless friends - and, by enforcing public drunkenness and loitering laws more strictly, to effectively remove homeless people from the streets of downtown Atlanta. No plans have been made to provide a new park or to offer much-needed downtown shelter and low-income housing for the homeless of this city.

At Christmas we must remember that there was no room in the inn for Jesus. Nobody welcomed God's child, the Prince of Peace, our brother and our savior. With this in mind, we grow appalled as this culture continues to deny living room for God's children. Therefore, on Christmas Eve, and in necessary contrast to the gaudy Christmas tree which adorned Rich's department store, our group of witnesses for justice carried a life-size black crucifix down the city's "spine" along Peachtree Street. In as bold a way as we could, we sought to symbolize that just as the world's denial of Christ at his birth led to his death, our city's denial of dignity to our homeless friends leads to their daily crucifixion.

We will continue to march through the streets of Atlanta until a new park opens to replace Plaza Park; until homes are provided for the homeless; until this city welcomes and makes room for all its citizens. Please join us. Say NO to the "vagrant free zone." Call 874-9652 or 876-6977 for more information.



Photos: Dietrich Gerstner

An Open Letter to Andrew Young

Mayor Andrew Young
Mayor's Office
68 Mitchell St.
Atlanta, GA 30335

Thursday, December 11, 1986

Dear Mayor Young,

This morning I was dismayed to read in The Atlanta Constitution's "Young Endorses 'Safeguard Zone' Proposed for Downtown" that you had reversed the stand for the rights of humanity which you had taken a week earlier. Your endorsement of a "proposed 'safeguard zone' in downtown Atlanta in which police would step up efforts against panhandlers and vagrants" is, in fact, an endorsement of efforts to deny the human rights of our homeless brothers and sisters.

This news was especially painful to me as I read the appointed scripture text (Isaiah 32:1-8) for Thursday, December 11, 1986 in The Biblical Witness to Peacemaking: 1986-1987, published by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Allow me to share this text with you:

Some day there will be a mayor who rules with integrity, and national leaders who govern with justice. Each of them will be like a shelter from the wind and a place to hide from storms. They will be like streams flowing in a desert, like the shadow of a giant rock in a barren land. Their eyes and ears will be open to the needs of the people. They will not be impatient any longer, but they will act with understanding and will say what they mean. No one will think that a fool is honorable or say that a scoundrel is honest. Fools speak foolishly and think up evil things to do. What they do and what they say are an insult to the Lord, and they never feed the hungry or give thirsty people anything to drink. Stupid people are evil and do evil things; they plot to ruin the poor with lies and to keep them from getting their rights. But honorable people act honestly and stand firm for what is right (Isaiah 32:1-8, Good News Bible).



Dietrich Gerstner

Newspaper Requests - If you or a friend would like to receive HOSPITALITY, please fill in this form and return to Ed Loring at the Open Door Community, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30306

Name _____
Street _____
City, State, Zip _____

I long for the day when Atlanta is led by a mayor who rules with integrity. Your position has lost all integrity. Initially, you claimed, "Everyone has a right to be in the streets. As long as they're not violating anyone else's rights, I don't think you can interfere with them. Providing more housing is the only acceptable means of removal." These are honorable statements. Your equivocations quoted today are unjust and dishonest. "As soon as we can agree on some language and figure out a method of getting the money, I think we can move in every direction we're talking about," is a statement devoid of meaning. To quibble with words in the way that members of the Central Area Study have is foolishness. They "stressed that they are not calling for a 'vagrant-free zone,' a term used in some media reports, but want to 'create a safe area-- particularly in this area that is so economically important.'" The truth is that you and the business leaders of Atlanta view our suffering homeless brothers and sisters as "vagrants" who will upset the economic importance of this area. You are plotting to ruin the poor with lies and to keep them from getting their rights. The poor, who have a right to be on the streets, also have a right to homes and jobs.

Stop insulting the Lord; feed the hungry and give thirsty people something to drink! Be honorable, act honestly, and stand firm for what is right!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Dede
910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE
Atlanta, GA 30306

Open Door Community Worship

5:00 - 6:30 pm

Sundays

Followed by supper together

We gather each Sunday for worship, prayer and the Lord's Supper. We invite you to join us.

Every 6th Sunday the Community has a full day retreat outside the city. This replaces our evening worship at 910 Ponce de Leon Ave.

- Jan. 11 Community Retreat
Camp Cherokee
- Jan. 18 Worship at 910
- Jan. 25 Worship at 910
- Feb. 1 Worship at 910
- Feb. 8 Worship at 910
- Feb. 15 Worship at 910
- Feb. 22 Community Retreat
Camp Cherokee

NEEDS

HAMS - TURKEYS - MAYONNAISE - CHEESE

COFFEE (DRIP GRIND)

DISPOSABLE RAZORS

KNIT HATS

SOCKS

UNDERWEAR

MEN'S COATS