

HOSPITALITY

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Providing hospitality to the homeless and to those in prison, through Christ's love.
910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA 30306-4212 * 404/874-9652

vol. 10, no. 6

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

June 1991



We need always to be thinking and writing about poverty, for if we are not among its victims its reality fades from us. We must talk about poverty, because people insulated by their own comfort lose sight of it.

And maybe no one can be told; maybe they will have to experience it. Or maybe it is a grace which they must pray for. We usually get what we pray for, and maybe we are afraid to pray for it. And yet I am convinced that it is the grace we most need in this age of crisis, this time when expenditures reach into the billions to defend "our American way of life." Maybe this defense itself will bring down upon us the poverty we are afraid to pray for.

--Dorothy Day (1897-1980), Founder of the Catholic Worker

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910 Ponce de Leon

HOSPITALITY is published 10 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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Circulation--Tim Nafziger, Phillip Williams, and a multitude of earthly hosts and guests

Subscriptions or change of address--Willie London



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Mental Health Takes an About Face

by Wilton Duckworth

Editor's note: "Duck" Duckworth is a faithful volunteer at the Open Door. He works in the soup kitchen on Wednesday, and if you come on Monday afternoon, you may be greeted by Duck at the front door. We are grateful for his contribution to Hospitality.

Through a quirk of Army miscalculations, I entered the armed forces as an accountant and came out a social worker. Instead of complaining, I found the change was more to my liking than expected.

The need for additional training was prompted by what I saw during the closing months of my drafted duty. At that time the victims of the Batan Death March were being cleared through Tripler Hospital on their return to the States. It was appalling to see what can happen to healthy bodies when the mind is subjected to inhumane treatment.

At the University of Illinois I was fortunate to do my field work with Dr. Richard Jenkins who was doing a follow-up study on members of the Batan Death March who were attending college under the G.I. Bill. Dr. Jenkins was a certified hypno-therapist who used this aid to psychotherapy because it had proved so successful immediately following the release of ex-prisoners from the infamous Japanese prison camp, St. Louis Thomas.

After WWII a humane world was beginning to see clearly a need for more than physical medicine in the treatment of sick people. In 1950, the Mental Health Association was formed using an idea germinated by Clifford Beers, a former mental patient and the founding father of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene.

During the '50's and well into the '60's, state and federal governments went gung-ho in a drive to clean up "snake pits," to open out-patient clinics, and to release the mentally ill from jails. Illinois, for example, even began the removal of children from adult wards in state hospitals, and placed them into specially designed and staffed units for emotionally disturbed children.

At the dedication of the Grace Abbott Children's Center in Peoria, Illinois, the sister of the Center's namesake, Edith Abbott, gave the dedicatory address. It ended with this plea, "God protect the children who are to become the future of this world. Let them live in a place where peoples of all nations, races, creeds, and religions work side-by-side in peace and harmony."

As the mental health movement grew and gained strength, community leaders taught that (1) mental illness, like any other

illness, could be cured if treated in its early stages; (2) mental illness could be prevented with proper community education and care; and (3) many of the people confined to state hospitals could be released to the community if they received adequate follow-up treatment.

We were on our way to a mentally healthy nation. Waging the war in behalf of the mentally ill became politically and socially popular. Campaigns were won by politicians, and social leaders gained another rung on the social ladder, just by crying the plight of patients in public psychiatric hospitals. Most mental health workers joined the politicians and social leaders, and later, the American Civil Liberties Union, in demanding that people in state hospitals be released if they were not under active psychiatric treatment.

State legislatures throughout the country saw this as a way of eliminating both responsibility for and the maintenance of state hospitals. And in so doing they also answered the public outcry for the release of untreated psychiatric patients.

As a result of this action, both the untreated and the untreatable were released. Many of these people who had spent most of their lives totally dependent on others for basic living, were given a bus ticket home and a note recommending that they make regular visits to the local mental health clinic.

It had been good and profitable to cry for "those poor people in snake pits," while they were still in state hospitals. When they were released to the community, however, the politicians and social leaders, who had worked so hard to "save" the mentally ill, found that ex-patients were no longer the political or social plums they had been while residents of state hospitals.

Former state hospital patients didn't "fit" into the nice little niches that would allow them to get lost in the work-a-day world of the community. Instead they were a very dependent group of people who had been given no preparation for community life before being released. This was a mass of human beings, many of whom didn't even know how to go to a store to buy a loaf of bread, who were literally dumped onto the streets of American communities.

The idea was that the people released from state hospitals were to get the help that they needed from community mental health clinics. But when you're totally dependent upon others for the basic process of daily living, you have to be motivated to use the clinic. And there were things more important than clinics to those who had been dumped into our communities.

In the rush to release these mentally ill people from "snake pits," three basic needs--food, clothing, and shelter--were virtually forgotten. The rationale was that ex-patients could live with their families, and that their families would provide these basic needs. Most of the people released from custodial wards, however, had no contact with family members, and the location or existence of their families was unknown.

Imagine, if you can, the plight of this group of dependent people, who at least had a place to live, clothing, and food before they were released from state hospitals. Now they were alone in communities that didn't want them, communities that soon returned to the belief that "crazy" people should be in mental hospitals.

The return of ex-patients to their old hospitals, however, was virtually impossible. The old state hospitals had now become "treatment centers," and custodial or long-term-care was no longer available. One could be admitted to a treatment center "for evaluation," but after 72 hours, the patient was released to the community with a good supply of medication and instructions to report to the local mental health clinic when the supply of medication ran out.

Today, a new dimension has been added. With the cut of federal funds for mental health, what do you do with people who are a threat to themselves and to the community, particularly when the person or the family cannot afford psychiatric care?



We have gone back to the things we did over forty years ago. Adults are arrested, "for their protection and the protection of the community," and held in jail until a mental health evaluation is made. Then they are usually sent to a treatment center and released after a 72 hour evaluation with medication and an appointment with the local mental health clinic. Children are "protected" in juvenile detention centers. After an evaluation, they are either sent home under the supervision of a welfare agency, or to an adult treatment center for further evaluation.

We have been involved in several wars, police actions, and skirmishes since WWII, when a humane world began to see the need for a mentally healthy environment. Today the dream that mental illness can be cured if treated in its early stages, is the province of those who can afford psychiatric treatment. The dream that mental illness can be prevented by proper community education and care has proven to be a sad joke, because the people who fought for the mentally ill have shown that they really don't care. The untreated and untreatable were released from state hospitals to communities that didn't want them. For over two decades they have learned to live by their wits, and they are now leading the way for a whole new generation of the poor who must become street wise.

I wonder what Clifford Beers would say if he could see what has happened to his Mental Hygiene movement, or how Edith Abbott would feel about the plight of today's mentally ill children who do not live in a world where all nations, races, creeds, and religions work side-by-side in peace and harmony.

God's Plan: Wall Demolition

by Phoebe Smith

Editor's note: Phoebe Smith is a good friend of the Open Door Community who leads the Friday soup kitchen. The following piece is the text of a meditation she shared with us on Sunday, April 21.

It is good to come to the Open Door when I am not cooking soup. It is good to be reminded that we are also a church, a place where God speaks to us in many voices--voices that assure us of God's love for us and that call us to a lifestyle that is guided by God's value system rather than our culture's value system.

Sometimes we think that our world fulfills the vision that the poet William Butler Yeats saw when early in this century he wrote a famous poem called "The Second Coming." Yeats saw the world. . .

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre.
The falcon cannot hear the falconer.
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and
everywhere*

*The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the
worst*

Are full of passionate intensity.

Here at the church we are called to a different vision, a vision expressed by Paul in the Letter to the Christians at Ephesus. Hear Paul's words in Ephesians 1: 9-10:

For God has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of God's will, according to God's purpose which God set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Instead of things falling apart, flying out from a center that no longer holds, we are given a promise of unity, of coming together in Christ. That is God's purpose and plan.

However, the Apostle Paul, I think, understood how difficult it is to live into this promise of unity, how difficult it is to break down the walls that separate us as human beings--walls of difference. Paul deals with this issue in Chapter 2 of the letter written to the church at Ephesus, a letter that is also addressed to the church at the Open Door in Atlanta, Georgia.

In the beginning of Ephesians Paul has emphasized the amazing gift of God's grace--a gift we receive not because we have earned it or deserved it but "freely given us in Christ." Paul has also indicated that our response to this gift is faithfulness, and he gives thanks to God for the Ephesians, for their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love toward the saints. I, also, give thanks for you here at the Open Door, for your faith in the Lord Jesus and for your love that is so evident in this community.

In Chapter 2 Paul begins to spell out the character of the new society that God has created through Jesus Christ, and this new society is characterized by the breaking down of barriers. Here in a sense Paul quits preaching and goes to meddling when he speaks about the environment created by God for the new society. In this environment barriers are broken down in a way that shocks his listeners. He says:

In Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility between us.

Now, as I am sure you remember, in Paul's day Jews hated and despised Gentiles. Paul uses a vivid image for the new society to show that this hatred is killed and that a new unity has been created (Christ has "made us both one.") Paul says that Jesus "has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility," or as William Barclay translates: "the middle wall of the barrier between has been torn down." This is a picture from the Temple in Jerusalem, which consisted of a series of courts--each one a little higher than the one before--with the Temple itself in the inmost of the courts. From the outside in, the courts were in order: Court of the Gentiles, Court of the Women, Court of the Israelites (men), Court of the Priests, the Holy of Holies. Between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Women was a wall, like a screen of marble, beautifully sculptured. Tablets at intervals said in Greek and in Roman letters that if a Gentile proceeded any farther, they were liable to instant death.

This wall was familiar to Paul. When we read in Acts 21: 28,29 of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, which led to his final imprisonment and death, we find that some of the Jews have "stirred up the crowd" and accused him of bringing an Ephesian named Trophimus into the Temple beyond the wall. They cried out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching folk everywhere against the people and the law and this place; moreover he also brought Greeks into the temple, and he has defiled this holy place." This was an atrocious breach of religious propriety. In the same way, when members from this community took over the private property at the Imperial Hotel, that was an atrocious breach of economic propriety.

This, then, was the shocking news to the Jews: This dividing wall--which they considered inviolate--had been broken down by the radical action of God in Christ. Just so, walls that our society has considered inviolate are also being broken down.

This image has been renewed for us in a dramatic way. Few who saw it will ever forget the live pictures on TV of the Berlin Wall being broken down--the place where persons had been liable to instant death if they crossed the wall, a wall that we never dreamed in our lifetime would crumble. Paul says: "For he is our peace, who has made us both one" (Eph. 2:14). And as we see East and West Germans working out the difficult business of becoming one nation again, our hearts lift with the hope for peace, at least in that part of the world.

How does this happen, according to Paul? He says, "Jesus is our peace." The bond between people as disparate as the Jews and Gentiles were then is the common love of Jesus. That is the context in which the hostility is brought to an end. And the movement that climaxed with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall began in Lutheran Churches in East Germany.

We don't have to go as far back as the first century or as far away as Europe to find walls that separate. In our world in 1991, in Atlanta, Georgia, the differences are not so much between different nationalities, or different religions, as between the rich and the poor, between the comfortably sheltered and the homeless, often between the white and the black. And often when we talk about breaking down the barriers--the walls--between the rich and poor, we quit preaching and go to meddling.

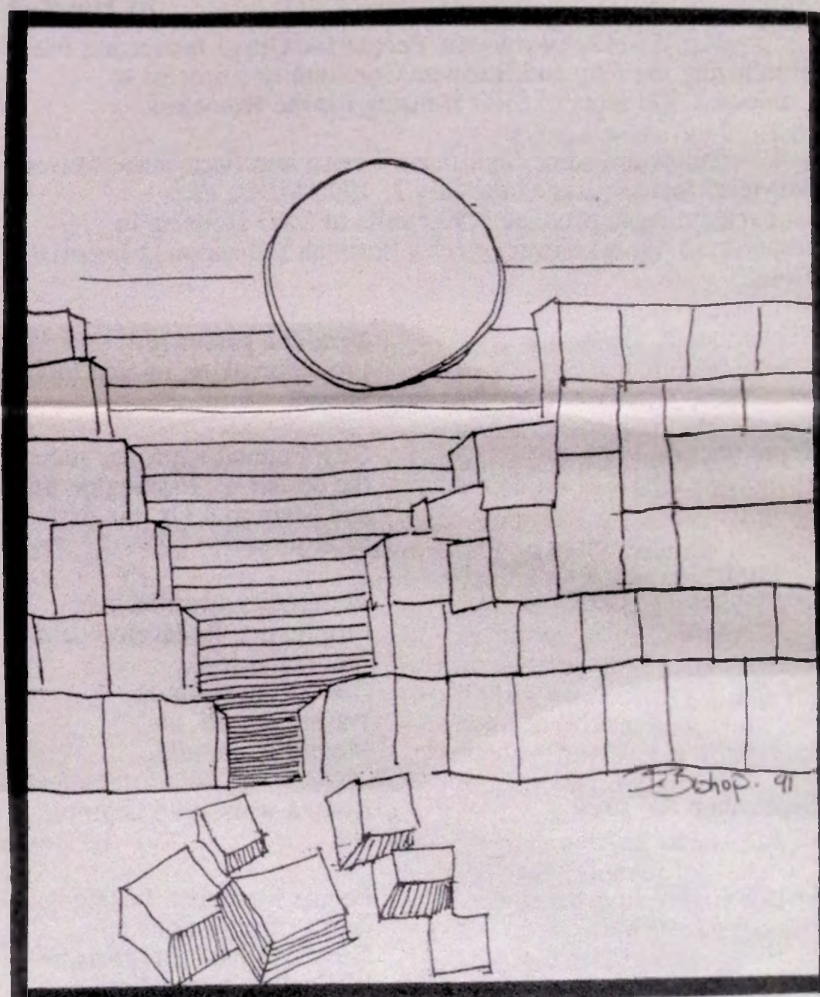
It is important to me to be part of the ministry of the Open Door because here I see being lived out in concrete ways the breaking down of these walls of hostility, I see people living into the mystery of God's will that in Christ all things and all people are united. The presence of the Open Door on Ponce de Leon is a concrete reminder to the church and to the community of the work of reconciliation to which we are called in Christ.

Sometimes this reminder of the dismantled walls is disturbing, indeed shocking, to those whose fear demands walls for protection. As we know, the space here at 910 has become a gathering place where some of 15 thousand poor and homeless people in Atlanta are visible. This visibility is very worrisome to some business people and residents of the neighborhood, and some of them are working to eliminate this reminder of the common humanity we share with our brothers and sisters on the street. They would like to erect walls between themselves and the homeless and poor of Atlanta. But another way in which Paul's prophetic message is true for our world today lies in the fact that we have no choice about the walls being gone.

I heard a wise and articulate justice on the New York Supreme Court interviewed on TV this week. Judge Warner, an African American, was questioned by Charlene Hunter-Gault, the first African American woman to graduate from the University of Georgia back in the sixties. She is now one of the regular anchorpersons on the public TV news program, the McNeil-Lehrer News Hour, and she does thoughtful, probing investigative reporting. She questioned Judge Warner about

solutions to the high murder rate among inner-city youth, particularly black males, and he answered: First, we must realize that it is not an inner-city problem; the problem belongs to all of us. People in other neighborhoods must stop thinking there are walls between them and the depressed areas of our cities. THE WALLS ARE NOT THERE.

Here at the Open Door we experience the absence of walls, and sometimes it is uncomfortable and sometimes it is threatening. I must confess, I think about germs when I shake hands with our guests coming through the door on Fridays. And I feel threatened when a guest brings some of the frustration and hostility of life on a hot and dangerous street into our dining room. I feel outraged when someone complains that the soup is too thin. (As you know, we take pride on Fridays in serving gourmet soup.) The wall between me and our guests--the distrust of one class for another--like the distrust of the Jew for a Gentile--is there.



But when our volunteer team gathers with residents in a circle to pray before we serve lunch, when we pray for the Holy Spirit to be present, for this small dining room to be a place of true hospitality, where people are fed not only in body but also in mind--through conversation--and in spirit--through fellowship, I am reminded that we are participating in God's work of removing walls, brick by brick. And when a guest asks me, as he leaves, to pray for him because he is going for a job interview, or when a woman and man ask for prayer to be able to cast off the addiction of alcohol, I am reminded that Jesus is at work at the Open Door making one new person out of rich and poor.

(continued on page 9)

The following quote is from an article in the March 1991 issue of Georgia Trend:

For all the power of the finished buildings in the Portman skyline, the eye stops on One Peachtree, soon to be one of the tallest office buildings in Atlanta. It is Portman's most expensive Atlanta building and--according to some views--completely unnecessary. For all his accomplishments as a developer and architect, One Peachtree is the one building that will either vindicate the Portman vision or be his undoing. He is building it, he insists, "for the sake of the city."

"For the Sake of the City"

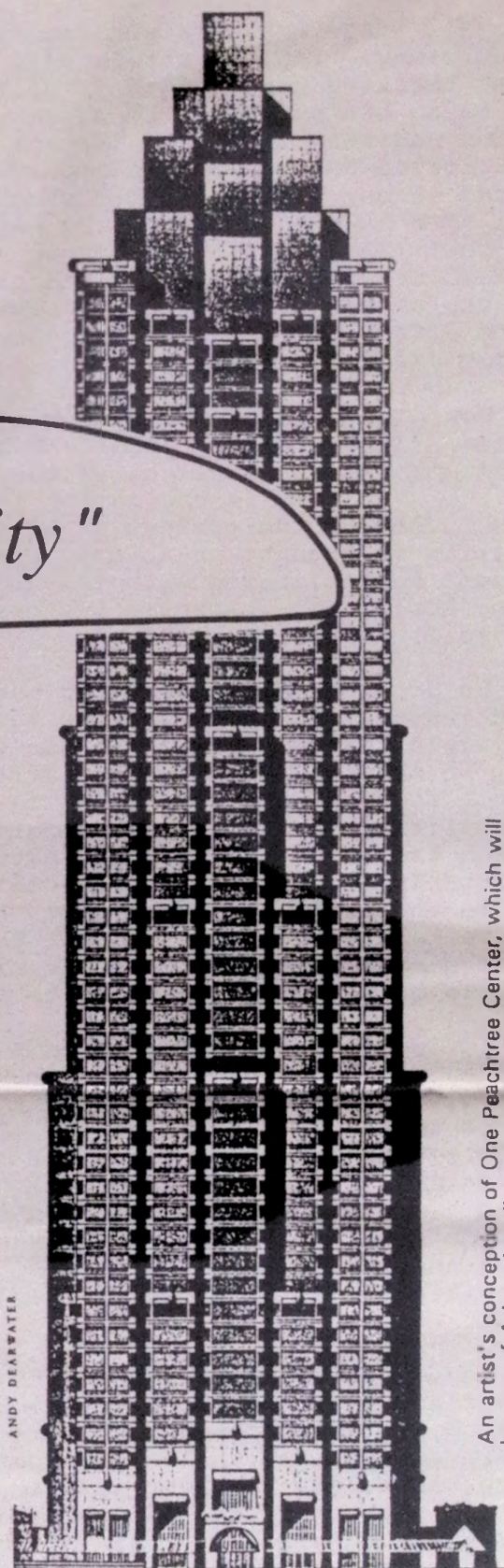
by Houston Wheeler

For the sake of the city, People for Urban Justice has been monitoring the City and Business Community's process to produce 3,500 units of SRO Housing for the Homeless.

Below are some Significant Events and Facts since Mayor Maynard Jackson signed the July 2, 1990 Memo of Understanding to produce 3,500 units of SRO Housing in response to our take-over of John Portman's abandoned Imperial Hotel:

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| September 1, 1990 | Deadline passes for groundbreaking of first SRO project. |
| September 4, 1990 | City Council approves site at the corner of Washington St. and Memorial Dr. for first SRO project. |
| September 17, 1990 | Tax credits awarded to Progressive Redevelopment, Inc. (PRI) for first SRO project at Washington St. and Memorial Dr. site. |
| September 18, 1990 | Atlanta wins 1996 Olympic bid. |
| October 1990 | People for Urban Justice learns of objections by Central Atlanta Progress to PRI's design specifications of first SRO project at Washington St. site. |
| October 18, 1990 | PUJ meets with Joe Martin, president of CAP, to solicit his support for the first SRO project. |
| October 25, 1990 | First meeting of the SRO Advisory Committee. Adopts the Memo of Understanding as guideline. Committee hears of conflict between CAP and PRI. |
| November 1, 1990 | Second meeting of the SRO Advisory Committee. Learns that tax credits will |

ANDY DEARWATER



An artist's conception of One Peachtree Center, which will be one of Atlanta's tallest office buildings when it is completed in 1992.

be switched to a second site near the corner of Memorial and Pryor St. (where the present Welcome House shelter is located).

November 20, 1990

PUJ meets with Joe Martin at CAP to discuss the importance of permanent financing for SRO's and affordable housing in the city, especially through the Atlanta Equity Fund.

November 21, 1990

Fourth meeting of the SRO Advisory Committee. Requested that Shirley Franklin set up a meeting for the committee with the mayor before the end of the year.

December 6, 1990

Fifth meeting of the SRO Advisory Committee. It was discovered that the city could not acquire the property occupied by the liquor store next to Welcome House shelter. There was also a question about the availability of the existing Welcome House Shelter land for this project. At the earliest the committee is looking at a May 1991, groundbreaking.

January 8, 1991

Mayor Maynard Jackson urges the city's business leaders to fully fund the Atlanta Equity Fund, a private pool of funds for low-income rental housing.

January 7 & 14, 1991

Atlanta City Council and Mayor amend the zoning ordinance to require a special use permit for SRO's. There was no consultation with the SRO Advisory Committee on this issue, as called for in the Memo of Understanding.



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January 19, 1991

Seventh meeting of the SRO Advisory Committee. Received draft of the city's proposed SRO production program. Several members of the committee and PUJ strongly objected to the proposal because it segregates specific homeless populations and does not address the overwhelming need of SRO housing for single men as called for in the Memo of Understanding.

January 28, 1991

PUJ sends a letter to the members of the SRO Advisory Committee, responding to the city's proposed SRO production program.

February 6, 1991

PUJ meets with Scott Carlson (City Commissioner

February 7, 1991

of Housing) to discuss the the city's proposed SRO production program.

March 19, 1991

Eighth meeting of the SRO Advisory Committee. As reported by PRI, permanent financing has not been found for the new Welcome House SRO project. Committee sends a letter to the mayor outlining what it sees to be its purpose using the Memo of Understanding as a guideline and also requests a meeting with him before the end of the month.

Nine-month anniversary of the occupation of the Imperial Hotel.

Seven and a half months past the promised groundbreaking deadline for the first SRO project.

PUJ holds a press conference in front of the Imperial Hotel, marches to City Hall to protest the non-production of SRO Housing.

April 2, 1991

SRO Advisory Committee finally meets with Mayor Maynard Jackson. Mayor reaffirms his commitment to produce 3,500 units of SRO housing.

April 15, 1991

Article in the Atlanta Business Chronicle reports that, so far, only six local corporations have made commitments to the Atlanta Equity Fund, which would provide private-sector funding of low and moderate income housing.

April 23, 1991

Twelfth meeting of the SRO Advisory Committee. Permanent financing is still not in place for the Welcome House SRO project.

April 29, 1991

Atlanta City Council Development Committee criticizes the City's proposed site for the Welcome House SRO because of the liquor store adjacent to the site.

June 18, 1991

One year anniversary of the takeover and occupation of the Imperial Hotel.

One conclusion can be drawn for sure from all these facts and events: the City and Business Community have other priorities which dominate the Atlanta scene. Olympic venues, the Georgia Dome Stadium, and office towers like One Peachtree Center are constructed with City and Corporate support, while housing for the poor is non-existent and stalled for lack of leadership.

The Homeless Man

--A Spiritual Litmus

by Jim Beaty

Editor's note: Jim Beaty is co-director of Atlanta's Task Force for the Homeless and is committed to the struggle for justice for all people. We are grateful that he shared the following piece with Hospitality.

The homeless mother and her hungry children quite naturally tug at our hearts. They even move us to action. And when mean-spirited hostility against homelessness surfaces, advocates are quick to talk about families and women and children. But what about the homeless man? Have we overlooked him? His pre-natal care, his pre-schooling and his inadequate education prove his neglect. Where is the American dream for him?

Our male-oriented, male dominated society views the homeless man as an outcast who deserves little if any sympathy. We often draw conclusions that are both negative and false. We think "male" and words like "strength," "breadwinner," "head of the house," "provider," "success," and "security," come to mind. We may think of our fathers whom we revere, or of our heavenly "Father" whom we worship. However, when an adult male fails to meet the standards set down by the advertising industry of the ME generation, he becomes suspect. For instance, a man who cannot provide for his family in America is less than a man.

These rigid molds have been so deeply ensconced in our psyches that we have bought them, and they apply to all men, homeless or housed. But the homeless man caught in the vice-grip of soap-opera mentality becomes not only the object of our suspicion but also the target of our disdain. He's automatically questioned. "Why aren't you working?" "Why don't you just get a job?" "What's wrong with you that got you like this?"

We advocates for the homeless have learned over the years that the homeless man is the most neglected and most forgotten person in the homeless community. We shelter and house everybody before we try to house the homeless man. The very presence of the male is forbidden in some shelters. And our government has for years refused Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to children where the father is present.

Along with our suspicions and fears of homeless men, we ironically guarantee their presence. Believe it or not, many people in our society have a need for them. We want them around, but we want them only in certain places. We don't want them in our neighborhoods, but we need them in our labor pools at five in the morning. We don't want them in our churches, mosques, or synagogues,

but we want them in our minimum wage work. We don't want them in sight of the International Olympic Committee or the Democratic Convention delegates. But drudging at hard labor on the construction site or loading newspapers in outlying counties is quite satisfactory. We don't want them in our slick buildings, but working as janitors after hours for \$4.00 an hour suits well our purposes. We need homeless men to sustain fat, corporate contracts with many rat-infested, drug-filled labor pools. We don't want them in Woodruff Park or Underground Atlanta, but we are in no rush to help them locate. We don't want them in City Hall, County Buildings, or the Gold Dome, but drug pushers welcome their earned pittance in the shadows of these monuments of justice.



During the Exodus saga a Pharaoh, "who knew not Joseph," feared the growing numbers of Hebrew males. Although this Pharaoh and his forbears had enslaved these folks as laborers, he feared their numbers. He gave commands. Moses was spared, but male children were slaughtered from one end of the Jewish encampment to the other. Centuries later another murderer, Herod the King, butchered babies in an attempt to get one little boy, Jesus of Nazareth. These widespread deaths symbolize all too clearly the removal of a whole society of males in our nation. And these are our own sons, citizens of the United States of America, born under our flag and constitution with every promise that the republic could give. We respond, "We've killed no one. Everyone in America has an equal opportunity." Technically, we may not have committed murder, but if quality of life is a standard, we tread in harm's way.

The presence of homeless men, from coast to coast, cries out to uncover our sensitivity, to judge our greed, to scrutinize our democracy, to question our officials, and to bemoan our business ethics.

Will we ever again be a community where well-being is experienced by the many as well as by the few, by the whole community as well as by the privileged, by the hungry as well as the fat? Will our representatives represent?



I see first-hand some sharing within the homeless community. I know a bridge dweller who gave his blankets to some of his buddies the coldest night of the year. Imagine if the well-heeled men in the corporate and religious communities were to share all they have. Why everyone would thrive with plenty to spare! God has given us a spiritual litmus: it's our brothers who have nothing. Perhaps we might consider feeding the five thousand before we lose the opportunity. The stranger in our midst may be the saving opportunity for a far too opulent, over-fed land. Sodom and Gomorrah received its severest judgement not for its sexual behavior but for failing to accommodate the strangers in its midst. And as the writer of Hebrews warns, we may be entertaining angels unawares. Check your litmus paper the next time you think about a homeless man.

Celebration!



We had donuts and cocoa to celebrate the remodeling of our public bathroom.

Paul says that Jesus is creating in himself "one new person in place of the two." The "new" person is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither rich nor poor, neither black nor white because these categories are transcended. The word Paul uses for "new" is *kainos*, which means not new in time, but new in quality--a new quality of thing that did not exist before. The Jews don't turn into Gentiles, nor the Gentiles into Jews. Christ produces a new kind of person out of both, a person who is willing--through Jesus Christ--to chip away at the wall. For us, the unity Jesus achieves does not blot out all racial characteristics or cultural characteristics. But Jesus brings us together and produces a new kind of person who is willing to chip away at the wall.

Paul told the Gentile Christians: Jesus has brought "the hostility to an end" (Eph. 2:16). "And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Parent. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the Household of God" (Eph. 2:18,19).

Members of the same family, not strangers or sojourners. The words Paul used were very real to his first audiences of Ephesians. The word for "stranger" is *xenos*--literally "foreigner". In every Greek city *xenoi* resided, and their life was not easy. They were regarded with suspicion and dislike. (We get the word *xenophobic* from this root, meaning "fear of foreigners.") The rootless people on Ponce are often regarded as *xenoi*. The other word, *paroikos*, "sojourner," was used for a person even more out of place in the community. He or she was a resident alien who paid a tax for the privilege of existing in a land which was not their own. The word *pariah* has the same root.

Paul says that God does not make people into foreigners or resident aliens. The world does that. God creates a building, a hospitable place, where the Spirit of Christ can dwell and where all people can meet in that spirit. 910 Ponce de Leon is such a place, and I thank God for it.



Coming Soon. . .

The Open Door will be ten years old in December!

Keep your calendars clear December 5-8, 1991, for celebrations!

The Olympic Stadium

by Gene Fergerson

Editor's note: Gene Fergerson is a long-time friend of the Open Door and activist in Atlanta. He has worked in the Peoplestown neighborhood for justice and peace and serves the larger community through Emmaus House. We welcome Gene to our pages even as we join him in the struggle for fairness and liberation in this city.

Many of us who live in the Peoplestown, Mechanicsville, Summerhill and surrounding neighborhoods say that Atlanta's hosting the 1996 World Olympics is a giant step. However, it is a disturbing giant step. We believe racism and prejudice control the hearts and minds of the Olympic Authority proposal to build the Olympic Stadium in our neighborhood.

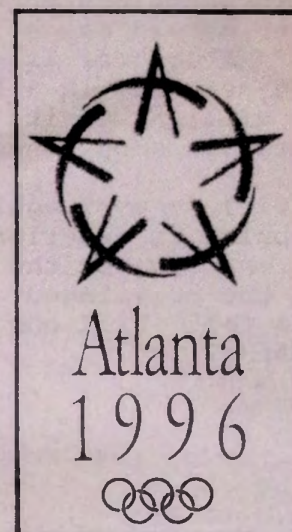
As residents, we have substantial reason to be alarmed. The Olympic Stadium will be across the street from the Atlanta Fulton County Stadium. In 1966, we watched the bulldozers tear down more than 5,400 houses to build the Atlanta Fulton County Stadium. In 1967, we watched the Federally funded Urban Renewal Program (Model Cities) add to the statistics of housing displacement in our neighborhoods. The Model Cities Program promised neighborhood residents new houses, business opportunities and employment.

We see there have been other construction projects which helped destroy African American poor and working class neighborhoods. In 1967, the Atlanta Civic Center construction project destroyed the Buttermilk Bottom Neighborhood, uprooting more than 3,500 homes of poor and working class African Americans. In 1976, construction of the World Congress Center destroyed the Lightening Neighborhood. In 1983, the widening of the I-75/85 expressway destroyed about 200 apartments in two public housing complexes. Almost 100 of these apartments came from our Capitol Homes Community.

It is important to mention that money and resources always have been taken from poor and working class neighborhoods and have created a separate and unequal living situation. In 1980, the City Government closed our neighborhood parks along with several others to pay off the Fulton County Stadium debt of the Atlanta Braves. In 1988, Mayor Andrew Young, with the support of the Atlanta City Council, took more than 6 million dollars that had been allocated for low income, affordable housing to help fund the new Underground Redevelopment Project.

There is nothing easier than satisfying the demands of the power structure while impoverishing the neighborhood. On November 28, 1990, we as residents held a public hearing in order to request that our neighborhood not be the Olympic Stadium site. At that hearing, John Leak, then Vice President of the downtown business organization Central Atlanta Progress told us

Giant Step



we had no chance of stopping the stadium from being built in our neighborhood. We have to realize that when a certain movement occurs in the community with the support of a certain level of leadership, some things are going to happen; some things are going to change. We also recognize that some are going to be unhappy--always!

On October 9, 1991, unhappy voices from a predominately white middle/upper income neighborhood in DeKalb's Blackburn Park said to the Atlanta Olympic Authority "No Olympic Tennis Complex venue in our Neighborhood!" And their request was granted. The Atlanta Olympic Authority President Billy Payne said of the switch that the tennis complex was unique and it was unlikely that the other major venues would be moved. We witnessed this prompt response to the white community request, while we were told "the world is bigger than any of us as individuals" when we made our request.

Today, the dream for affordable housing for the poor African American working class is more dismal than ever; and there is no formidable opposition by our elected officials to protect us from encroaching development. In fact, there are business organized neighborhood leaders and groups to persuade us as residents that the stadium will bring developmental gains to our neighborhood.

We as residents heard many of the same arguments during the first stadium site plan and construction. Nothing was specific nor did they have a monitoring mechanism established to insure us residents of any gains.

Now we hear talk of the Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority hinting at potential gain for themselves. Their September 25, 1990 Quarterly Meeting Report included that they purchase 50 acres of land to the east of the existing stadium. They suggested that Winston Parker work on the acquisition of land. The impact of their purchasing 50 acres of land will be a lasting negative effect and destruction of the Summerhill Neighborhood and residents.

We call upon all Atlantans and people of good will to join us in our request to defend single neighborhoods against housing displacement and other internal dangers, such as poverty, gentrification, and high levels of unemployment.

Grace and Peaces of Mail

To the Editor of Hospitality:

The Ponce de Leon Task Force commends the resolution of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta which was published in the February 1991 issue of Hospitality. Their commitment to "honestly address human need and not retreat from it" matches the credo of the Ponce de Leon Task Force (PTF). While there are differences between our methods, the PTF is quick to point out that it also wishes to see an end to the needless suffering of all who live along Ponce de Leon Avenue.

The PTF walks a thin line between serving the neighborhoods and businesses which it represents and responding to the problems in the most mature way. Most of the people represented by the PTF would like to see all the homeless spread out throughout the city instead of being congregated along Ponce de Leon. These neighborhoods have a long-standing tradition of being tolerant of the "diversity" along the corridor. Unfortunately, many of the people living here have reached their breaking point. I quote from some of the responses to our recent survey:

"Why not place the homeless near the Governor's Mansion."

"The 'homeless' are responsible for the crime and need to be run out of the neighborhood."

"I am fed up with the 'homeless', and with the many all-powerful 'homeless advocates' who wield a hell of a lot more clout than those of us paying property tax."

The PTF must answer to these people. They want us to act. Fortunately, the PTF has heard from others who have solutions that are perhaps more appropriate:

"Optimally, a facility offering food/shelter should require some rehabilitation."

"I hope strongly that the services provided are appropriate to the population they serve."

"There are several categories of homeless."

"The homeless in some way must be encouraged to help themselves."

"The homeless will 'live' where the services are."

On the point of honestly addressing human needs, the PTF challenges the members of the Presbytery to explore what the true needs are. The PTF feels that rehabilitation for substance abusers is sorely lacking. This is based on not only our own observation and research, but is also supported by more than 80% of those responding to our survey (most responses not supporting rehabilitation were unsure--complete results are available

upon request). Furthermore, out of the forty-six organizations in the Ponce Corridor providing for the disadvantaged, the few that offer rehabilitation have the greatest support of the neighborhoods.

By all of us rising to meet the challenge of honestly addressing human need, we can satisfy both your calling and our responsibility to the neighborhoods and businesses we represent. The Presbytery will contribute to the long-term salvation of many dejected and extorted individuals. The PTF can implement a solution that will work for neighbors and businesses. The suffering will end for ALL--not just those that are hungry today.

The PTF must also respond to your statement that the Open Door, Druid Hills Church, and others are under attack from neighborhood associations. This is an incorrect statement. No neighborhood association that the PTF is aware of has made any proclamation, resolution, or other written document in favor of or against any organization providing services to the poor. Individual persons (who have every right to their opinion) exist who would love for all of this to just go away. Many see the Open Door as a focal point for their frustration. This is not the position of either the neighborhood associations or the PTF. We cannot speak for the City of Atlanta.

The PTF will always seek constructive solutions. The rehabilitation mentioned in this letter is only one of the ways we can work together. We must focus on our points of agreement rather than our points of difference if we are going to accomplish anything.

Sincerely,

Jett Marks
Communications Chair & Virginia-Highland
Representative, Ponce de Leon Task Force

Dear Friends at Open Door,

Here is a donation from my 87-year-old mom, who lives with me. I've got her interested in reading about the homeless and needy. She has started to see a whole picture of need she did not know before.

Thank you.

God's Peace, Joy, and Love in Christ,

Doris Wanket
Columbia, SC



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 & 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 & 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--Monday-Saturday, 9am-noon.

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

WEEKEND RETREATS--Four times each year (for our household & volunteers/supporters), June-28-30.

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.

NEEDS

Gas Kitchen Stove
Refrigerator
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
Couches
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.

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.

Open Door Community Worship

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

Join us!

| | |
|---------|--|
| May 26 | Worship at 910 Don Beisswenger, Preaching |
| June 2 | Worship at 910 Music Night |
| June 9 | Worship at 910 Al Winn, Preaching |
| June 16 | Worship at 910 Clinton Marsh, Preaching |
| June 23 | Worship at 910 Leroy Wright, Preaching |
| June 30 | Retreat at Dayspring Farm |

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

Join us!

