

THE HARTFORD CATHOLIC WORKER



ST. MARTIN DE PORRES HOUSE
ST. BRIGID HOUSE

"To construct a new society within the shell of the old." Peter Maurin



Brian Kavanagh

*Save me, O God, by your
name;
deliver me by your might.
O God, hear my prayer;
give ears to the words of
my mouth.*

*For the insolent have risen
against me, the ruthless seek
my life;
they set themselves before
you.*

*But I have you for my
helper;*

You uphold my life.

Psalms 54:1-6

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THE HARTFORD CATHOLIC WORKER

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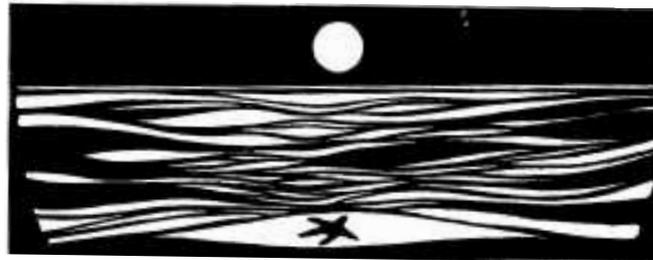
The Hartford Catholic Worker is published bimonthly by the St. Martin De Porres Catholic Worker community. We are a lay community of Catholics, and like minded friends, living in the north end of Hartford, working and praying for an end to violence and poverty. We are not a "tax-exempt" agency. We do not accept government funding. Our ability to house the homeless, feed the hungry, and work with the children depends on contributions from our readers. We are not paid. We can be reached at: 18 Clark St., Hartford CT 06120; (860) 724-7066, doucot@sbcglobal.net We are: Brian Kavanagh, Morlianna Evans, Jacqueline, Christopher, Micah and Ammon Allen-Doucot.

ST. MARTIN'S WISH LIST

- 🍲 Canned vegetables, tomato sauce, beef stew, peanut butter, jelly and tunafish
- 👉 Beds, dressers, pots and pans, and kitchen tables
- 👶 Help with the neighborhood kids on Monday afternoons.
- 👉 Help picking up furniture on Thursdays.
- 🙏 your continued prayers and financial support
- 😊 Please: no more egg cartons for 2 months. Thanks!

DEAR READERS,

Please note that we did not publish a **Christmas 2003** issue. Thus volume 11 had only 5 issues. We were unable to publish 6 issues last year due to a combination of financial shortfalls and a workload that was a bit too busy. Peace!



Meinrad Craighead

DREAM WORLD

Micah Allen-Doucot (age 10)
(for Helen Woodson)

This is a world where there is no more sorrow. What could be today is more seen for tomorrow. If you think you can be what your destined to be you can swim through the sand and then walk on the sea.

BLISS

Micah Allen-Doucot
(for Helen Woodson)

To live in a place where there's nothing but bliss. No hatred, no madness, just pure happiness.

St. Martin's Calendar

- ✦ Please join us on Tuesday, **March 2**, and **April 6** and **May 4** at **7:30 PM** for the celebration of Mass at St. Brigid House, 18 Clark St., Hartford. Refreshments and conversation follow Mass.
- ✍ Please join **Micki Allen** on **March 9** at **7:00** at St. Martin House as she reads from her new book *A Chip on My Shoulder*.
- ✕ Please join us on **Good Friday, April 9th** as we pray the Stations of the Cross at the Sub Base in Groton, CT. We will gather at the main gate of the base at 9:45 AM. For details call us at 724-7066.
- 🌐 Our vigil for an end to war continues on **Friday's from 11:30-12:30** outside the Federal Building on Main St. in Hartford. Please bring a sign and join our call for an end to the American military occupation of Iraq.
- 👤 Please join us for a roundtable discussion with organizers from the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride on Wednesday, **March 3** at **7:30**.
- 🌐 Please join us for our annual **earth day neighborhood cleanup** on **Saturday April 24** at **9:30 AM**. For this year's cleanup we will be joined by several hundred young Catholics from our the city. We are planning on cleaning a section of Keney park. A forgotten jewel in north Hartford planned by Frederick Law Olmstead which is home to deer, fox, hawks and more. Following the cleanup we will provide a barbecue lunch and host a game of soccer or flag football.

A HAJJ NOT TO MECCA BUT HOME.

Christopher Allen - Doucot

On the morning of Saturday January 17th Um Haider and Mostafa crossed the border of Jordan and entered into American military occupied Iraq. They were heading home, after 9 months in the US, to a "liberated" Iraq where people are afraid to be out after dark and American military helicopters buzz the skyline at low altitudes like giant mosquitoes carrying a venom (the weapons not the G.I.'s) worse than malaria or the West Nile Virus. Um Haider would soon see that while much has changed in Iraq, too much remains the same and some of what has changed has done so for the worse.

Our journey back began on a difficult note as we missed our flight due to a combination of a snafu by the counter agents at the airport, being flagged for extra security screening, and then being sent to customs by a TSA officer concerned about the money we were carrying. The TSA officer was a courteous and young guy and he offered to escort us to Customs in an effort to expedite things so we wouldn't miss the flight. While in Customs he told me he had recently returned from a tour of military duty in Iraq, in the same breath he noticed Mostafa's hand and asked what had happened. I explained the story of the bombing of their Basra neighborhood in 1999 and how Mostafa lost part of his hand and his brother to the blast. The TSA officer didn't respond immediately; but after a pause he related to mixed feelings of his participation in the war. His mind

and gut were in conflict. He had pledged an oath to defend the American Constitution and to obey his chain of command but in so doing I suspect his gut was telling him he had done something wrong. This young man now wrestles with the image of



kids like Mostafa while those who made the decision to send him off protect themselves by distance and blindness.

On Friday the 18th the people at the Royal Jordanian counter at O'Hare were dealing with a crush of pilgrims on the Hajj vying for every last seat on the flights to Amman. We had arrived at the airport hours before the rush hoping to get on the flight. Thankfully the people at RJ recognized their error of the previous evening and found three seats for us on an otherwise completely booked flight with a long waiting list. The flight to Amman was unremarkable except for the wonderful behavior of Mostafa on a crowded 14-hour flight.

Upon approaching the border with Iraq there are thousands of refugees living in tents set up by the UN High Commission

on Refugees. The refugees are Kurds, Iraqi's and Palestinians. Some are seen as collaborators with the former regime, others belonged to families, groups or political parties that are now facing retribution for one reason or another in a society that transformed from a police state to a lawless one overnight. After the typical wrangling on the Jordanian side of the border we drove across the quarter mile of "no man's land" with a fair amount of trepidation about who we would encounter. It turns out we met nobody in particular. On the Iraqi side of the border we were met by a handful of young Iraqi's. They looked at our passports but without computers or electricity they could not and did not check our identities. We traveled with several large duffel bags filled to the brim with clothing, school supplies and toys. We could have been carrying bodies, or gold or grenades for all the border agents knew; nonetheless the bags weren't even glanced at. The only sign of the American military presence at this arrival side of the Iraqi border were 4 G.I.'S who couldn't have been older than 25. We were through the Iraqi side of the border in 5 minutes. Welcome to liberated Iraq where anyone it seems can go with anything they want no visas, no searches, no security, and no wonder there are foreign fighters joining the resistance to the occupation.

From the border we headed east across a vast expanse of desert. This land is almost entirely uninhabited. Every hundred miles or so there will be a few shepherds and a herd of sheep and goats and a truck stop but otherwise the land is flat, treeless, and strewn with rocks as far as the eye can see in every direction. When the oil beneath this land runs out I can easily imagine massive wind and solar farms generating

(PLEASE SEE HAJ, P.4)

HAI, CONTINUED

clean electricity for the people of Iraq and perhaps beyond. During this drive more evidence of the new Iraq surfaces. For dozens of miles at a stretch high intensity electrical towers have been toppled and the cables looted. We pass an occasional rusted and bombed out vehicle and rough spots in the road where there may have been fighting. At one point we have to detour off the road and across the hard pan surface of the desert to go around a bridge that was bombed during the war.

The bridge is of simple construction. It spans a natural culvert in the desert. Workers have not managed to repair this bridge despite months of activity. A foreshadowing of what we will soon find in Baghdad and Basra.

On the outskirts of Baghdad we see more clear evidence of the "liberated" Iraq: new billboards along the highway median strip advertising all sorts of electronic devices and Italian furniture. (I am reminded that Um Haider had a home full of Italian furniture, which she sold of piece by piece during the sanctions era to buy food for her family.) The newness of the billboards is striking juxtaposed as they are between highway guardrails crushed by American tanks, which remain unrepaired.

The home of Um Haider's mother and 2 of her sisters (our first destination) is in the north end of Baghdad. During the war the women moved into this home because the home they were in was near the airport and the headquarters for the former Iraqi secret police and thus not a safe place to be.

We are traveling with a cell phone and a "Thuraya" satellite phone but we are unable to call the home for directions because the phone exchanges for Baghdad are still not operational. Nearly a year after the war people in Baghdad, who can afford to do so, are able to sit at an internet café and send emails via satellite around the

world, but they are unable to call across the city. Shortly after the war a telecommunications company was awarded the contract to replace Iraq's antiquated and largely destroyed phone system with a digital wireless system. All around Baghdad and Basra signs have appeared in the last two weeks advertising the latest cell phones in anticipation of the new system. Yet still the service is not available. A contact who does business with the telecommunications company reports that the system is ready to be operational but he reports that for an unknown reason the CPA is holding up it's inauguration. What remains is a capital city whose residents are unable to telephonically communicate with one another. Most NGO's in Iraq were given cell phones by the CPA; but these phones only work with each other. Similarly, businesspeople in Baghdad and some of the wealthy carry Thuraya satellite phones, but these too are able to only communicate with other Thuraya phones or with exchanges outside Iraq. Even when the new system comes on line it will be of little help to the vast majority of Iraqis who will remain too poor to access it. It remains to be seen if the promise of liberation will extend to the poor of society or if the "regime change" will have any impact on their lives beyond their freedom to protest the squalor and disrepair which their liberators are partially, if not largely, responsible for.

Driving through Baghdad today is a challenge and at times life risking experience. Due to wartime damage, looting, and sporadic electricity we did not encounter a single functional traffic signal. Few intersections were manned with Iraqi police and those that were were only a slightly more choreographed vehicular chaos. After asking for directions from folks on the street we finally found the street we were looking for though we were unsure of the house. Amazingly the first house Um Haider approached was her

mother's home. The gate opened to a shriek of joy as this matriarchy was reunited. While Um Haider was busy hugging her mother, sisters and niece American tanks rambled by at the end of the street.

Inside the home the TV. was on. The home, like thousands of other homes in today's Baghdad, has satellite television service. No longer does the television broadcast the state-sanctioned "news" and the ridiculous music video praising Saddam; the B-grade American movies, though, are still broadcast only now they are probably not pirated versions. The B.B.C. was broadcasting live footage of Palestinians, themselves an occupied people, nonviolently protesting the continued construction of Israel's apartheid wall through the West Bank. Before the power went out I thought the television had become a mirror into the future.

After a wonderful meal of grilled fish and doma (stuffed vegetables) I left Um Haider and Mostafa to be with their family in Baghdad until she contacted me that it was time for her to head to Basra. Traveling to my hotel I was taken by how much more run down and littered the streets of Baghdad are now than they were as recently as March, 2003. I drove past several government buildings that had been completely destroyed by the bombings and by several private offices that had been looted. The hotel district along the river between Abu



Donald David

Nuwas and Sadoun streets looks jarringly similar to parts of occupied Palestine. The Baghdad, Sheraton and Palestinian hotels are completely surrounded by 10-foot high concrete barriers and coils of razor wire. Abu Nuwas street, once one of the busiest in Baghdad, is now closed to vehicular traffic along this stretch. Inside the barriers are American soldiers and a Bradley fighting vehicle (a little tank). To enter this area and these hotels everyone and every bag is searched. This scene is repeated everywhere the Americans have set up bases, including in the dormitories of a university they seized thereby displacing the students.

On Sunday I awoke early and walked over to St. Rafael's Catholic Church for morning Mass. The 8AM Mass was celebrated in Arabic for a couple of dozen worshippers, mostly women including several orders of nuns. The church is across the river and perhaps a mile away as the crow flies from the main US compound. Early in the Mass the priest looked up and prayed "Kyrie Eleison" (Lord Have Mercy). In the next instant the church shook with the sound of a powerful blast. After a momentary pause the congregation stood back up and the priest continued "Christie Eleison" (Christ Have Mercy). The blast was a car bomb at the gates of the American compound. Two dozen Iraqis who worked inside were killed. Kyrie Eleison.

On Monday we departed to Basra before sunrise. Um Haider's husband Salah had earlier traveled to Baghdad and joined us for the trip. During the ride Mostafa was happily ensconced in the back seat between his parents. They chatted the entire 6 hours we drove in Arabic. I hope that in so doing Mostafa did not take notice of the conditions we drove past. For hundreds of miles the galvanized steel guardrails of the highway have been looted and not yet replaced. We passed by the rusting hulks of dozens of Iraqi artillery pieces, tanks and trucks. We also passed a few such American remnants of war. The geography of Iraq is defined by the historic Tigris and Euphrates rivers and thus land travel requires many bridges. It would seem that the Ameri-

cans had a field day on bridges as we went over several temporary one-lane bridges during our journey.

Several convoys of gasoline tankers with military escort passed us in the other direction. Iraq is not yet able to refine its own oil and is currently importing gas from Kuwait. This reality has created long lines and heated arguments at gas stations, which are also under armed protection, around the country. During our trip in from Jordan we also passed a good number of convoys bringing hundreds of new automobiles, consumer goods, grain, wire, pipes, and thousands of head of cattle into the country.

During the ride Sattar, our driver and dear friend, explained to me a little bit of the meaning and history of the Hajj. It has much to do with honoring the example of Abraham who was willing to submit to God's will under even the most trying of circumstances and who shunned the worship of idols which had infected the people. In Arabic hajj literally means "a resolve" as in "to resolve to some magnificent duty". Making the Hajj to Mecca is an obligation of all Moslems who are physically and financially able to do so. Um Haider was on a different sort of Hajj. She was a pilgrim returning to a dangerous and difficult existence "to resolve to the magnificent duty" of caring for her children who remained in Iraq while she was in the States.

The culture shock of traveling from the safety and abundance of the United States to the utter destitution of Basra is immense. Nobody goes out after dark in Basra beyond the small lighted area down town. People are being kidnapped off the street and ransomed for as little as \$2000. \$2000 for a human life!

Iraqi Shi'ia's returning from a generation of living in Iran have shot at the Christian owners of the city's few liquor stores. The Chaldean bishop reports that there are not significant worries about persecution of Christians yet there were three bullet holes in the steel gates to the church courtyard. Children as young as three and four can be found begging on the



streets. On the sidewalks are the prostrate bodies of other children "liberating" themselves from the liberation by picking their brains sniffing glue. Mounds of garbage left uncollected for months extend for blocks. The scent of festering rot hangs in the air. It will be a long time before freedom is something more than an abstract idea for the people of Basra, especially if the languid pace of reconstruction is not accelerated.

Arriving at Um Haider's home was obviously a momentous occasion for the family. Cheers of joy greeted her. Her sister-in-law grabbed her and wept in an extended embrace. Meanwhile Mostafa said a quick hello to his brother and sister and ran out the door to play in the street with his friends as if he had never left. Um Haider next saw her other surviving son and her teenaged daughter and hugged them both. Um Haider's daughter was not wearing the hijab. Her hair was dark and long and her cheeks full. Looking at her I imagined Um Haider as a younger woman, before her husband was traumatized fighting in 2 wars, before her nation was impoverished by sanctions, and before her son was killed by one of our bombs.

Before departing Iraq I watched an American movie on Iraqi TV. During a break a clip from the movie "Free Willy" was shown. In the clip the whale is leaping out of its pen, over a boy, and into the ocean and freedom.

(PLEASE SEE HAJ, P.8)

NONVIOLENT SOLDIER OF ISLAM: BADSHAH KHAN, A MAN TO MATCH HIS MOUNTAINS

BY EKNATH EASWARAN

reviewed by Aisha Muhammed

Islam and nonviolence. In the post 9/11 political climate the two words mix like water and oil. Starting from the premise that nonviolence is the heart of Islam, Easwaran excavates the vilified religion from under the rubble of sensational media representations in *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam*. In his account of Ghaffar Khan's life (born in 1890) and work he brings to light Islam's ideals of selfless service, faith and love, which pave the pathway to freedom.

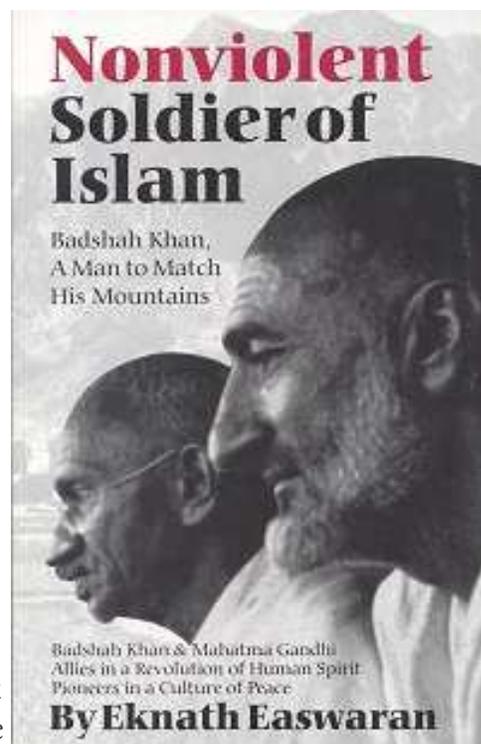
Easwaran's prose reads like a peacemaker's fairytale. Acting upon a deep commitment, Khan uplifts the impoverished Pathans, performing a miracle by teaching them nonviolence. The plot centers upon three additional actors: the villainous British Crown engaging in repressive action to secure India (the "jewel" of the Empire), Khan's companion Gandhi who empowers a nation through love in action, and the Pathans, the violent underdogs who experience a nonviolent metamorphosis as they resist British imperialism. The motive behind the Empire's efforts to secure the Frontier Province is simple- if the Pathan homeland, the gateway to India goes, so does India. Easwaran examines how the British ingeniously exploited *Badal*, the strict Pushtun code of revenge, to set in motion a vicious cycle of violence which kept the Pathans at each other's throats and prevented them from uniting against imperialism. Khan understood that Pathan violence, much like modern-day Islamic "terrorism" stemmed not from bloodlust,

but emerged as a consequence of imperialism, ignorance and custom. He was also aware that Pathans lived their short lives in contradiction, as the values of *Badal* and Islam opposed each other. These insights were at the core of Khan's mission to educate and empower his people by establishing schools in the villages dotting the Frontier.

Khan's biography is also the biography of the first nonviolent army in history, the Khudai Khitmatgars or "Servants of God," who took an oath to lay down their weapons and serve God by serving the community. Drawn from Khan's pool of graduates the red-shirted Khudai Khitmatgars proved to be a menace to British rule. The British feared a nonviolent Pathan more than a violent one because he was unpredictable and armed with a potent ideology.

Easwaran's account is striking in its powerful yet economic use of language to capture the dialectics of nonviolence: in captivity Khan discovers freedom, in a violent culture he nurtures a nonviolent army, in serving his community in an apolitical manner he induces significant political change. Also remarkable about the book is Easwaran's documentation of the influence of women in Khan's personal and political life. Encouraged by his mother, who supported his controversial choices, the empowerment of women became an essential part of Khan's nonviolence. Noting that women were rising up in India, Khan urged Pathan women to do the same, maintaining that complete freedom could not be won if women remained oppressed.

Despite Easwaran's tendency to romanticize Khan's life in parts of the



book, *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam*, deserves a contemporary reading not only because it reclaims Islam as a peace-loving religion, but because it corrects the misconceptions of nonviolence as passive resistance and a weapon of the weak. "True nonviolence did not issue from weakness but from strength. It was a matter of the powerful voluntarily withholding their power in a conflict, choosing to suffer for the sake of a principle rather than inflict suffering- even though they could." In light of current events to launch a nonviolent peace force, Easwaran's book provides a powerful case study. Modern-day peacemakers can learn from this concrete example of the transformative power of nonviolence, while using it to dispel criticism and doubt about its effectiveness in a time when violence is accepted as a natural component of conflicts. **Ω**

AMMON HENNACY

Ammon Allen-Doucot (age 9)

I chose to do a report on Ammon Hennacy because he's the man I was named after.

Ammon Hennacy was born July 24, 1893 in Nigley, Ohio. He died in 1970.

In World War One he refused to cooperate with the draft. The draft is when the government forces young men into the army. He refused because he didn't believe in war or killing. He was sentenced to five years in prison but only spent two years in prison- one in isolation where he had nothing but a Bible.

He read the entire Bible and decided to become a Christian. When he left jail he created the One Man Revolution and then lived the One Man Revolution. He became a vegetarian and got a minimum wage job picking cotton and other field work. He didn't pay taxes because half of the government's money went to war. He thought of himself as a Christian anarchist.

He said an anarchist was someone who did not need some cop to tell him what to do. In 1952 Ammon Hennacy joined Dorothy Day and the New York Catholic Worker community. He went to a Catholic Church, became a Catholic and Dorothy Day became his Godmother.

He sold *Catholic Worker* newspapers and did protests against war. After fifteen years he left the church because too many priests and bishops supported war. He remained a good Christian, just not a church member.

He moved to Salt Lake City and started Joe Hill House of Hospitality where he took in homeless people. Every August 6th he would fast to atone for the atomic bomb drop-pings. On January 11, 1970

Ammon had a heart attack while protesting the Death Penalty. He died three days later. Ω



THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS JOB

Jimmy Higgins

What job is most hazardous to a worker's health? If you work in a mine, or with dangerous chemicals, or even on a fishing boat, it could be argued that those jobs put you most at risk.

But Luz Ortiz and Hector Castro will tell you that in Colombia, being a trade unionist is the most dangerous job of all. Of the more than 200 union activists who died last year, six out of every seven were Colombian, targeted by right-wing paramilitary groups.

Luz and Hector visited our union office in Hartford a while back. They came to the United States for their own protection, and to educate us about conditions in their country. At least 1500 trade unionists have been murdered in Colombia over the last decade.

Both Hector and Luz had been kidnapped by paramilitaries, physically abused, and eventually released. Hector is an electrician by trade; Luz was a community services worker who is putting a daughter through nursing school.

As pressure from IMF and World Bank policies

have threatened jobs, unions have protested. That's when Alvaro Uribe's government goes into action. The Colombian army provides protections for U.S. companies like ExxonMobil. And paramilitaries take on the "dirty work" that the government won't openly do.

Coca Cola workers in Carepa found this out when the right wing "United Self-Defense Forces" (AUC) killed a union officer there, and ransacked the union office. After that, the AUC demanded all workers quit the union or be killed. They did.

Today, activists like Luz and Hector are promoting the campaign to pressure Coke. The company says it has no ties to paramilitary groups,

noting that it has recently been dropped from a lawsuit on the matter. But there is little doubt that Coke has benefited from the terror visited upon their workers.

To find out more, visit, www.killercoke.org. If by mistake you type "com" instead of "org" you will get Coke's side of the story. Ω



*"If we pay them starvation wages—
why do they need a lunch break?"*

A CHIP ON MY SHOULDER

BY MICKEY "G.I" O'REILLY, ALLEN

reviewed by *Tim Quinn*

Mickey Allen has written a story about her experiences as a young World War II Army nurse in North Africa and Italy and as a peace activist more recently. In the spirit of Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, *A Chip on My Shoulder* is a touching, often hilarious, and always page turning memoir about the absurdities of war and the conflicts that arise when individual conscience rubs against the grain of military thinking and bureaucracy.

The title, *A Chip on My Shoulder* is really a metaphor for the thread that runs through the book and the writer's life: the inability to just go along and get along and stay quiet in the face of injustice. Whether being threatened with demotion for refusing to put a General's request ahead of a more in need of care enlisted man or being threatened with arrest for refusing to move at a nuclear weapons protest, the writer speaks out and takes a stand regardless of the consequences.

And like all good memoirs, it is a story that

transcends the storyteller. While this well paced story, filled with one liners that would make Oscar Wilde laugh out loud, is ostensibly O'Reilly's personal story about her experiences in the war and the peace movement, it is much more than that. It is really the story of one of the best aspects of the human spirit, the conscience that speaks out, the voice that won't be quieted, the dissenter that cries foul, and dares to point out that the Emperor has no clothes.

The book chronicles the three years O'Reilly spent caring for wounded soldiers during the war and the considerable trouble she found herself in for transgressions as small as refusing to salute a superior officer, and as big as telling a General he could wait his turn for chow after she was through feeding the wounded men. As an exceptionally driven and talented nurse who cared deeply for the men in her charge, O'Reilly's seeming inability to go by the book and act like regular Army was often overlooked by superiors who understood her value to the men. Never the one to suffer fools gladly,

O'Reilly writes about the four General's she met, often with disastrous results.

After raising a family of nine children that chip on O'Reilly's shoulder returns with a vengeance. Her years in the peace movement, innumerable arrests, and moving accounts of jail time are told with wit and insight and humor. I can't even count the number of times I laughed out loud while reading this book. The only flaw in an otherwise exceptional book is the writer leaves the reader wanting more! O'Reilly started out writing a story about one army nurses experience during the war and ended up writing something much bigger, a story about speaking truth to power, a story about that which is perhaps one of the best parts of what it means to be human.

(Join the author at St. Martin House on Tuesday, March 9 at 7:00 for readings and conversation. *A Chip On My Shoulder* is available from the author for \$15, please call: 956-2668)Ω



HAI CONTINUED

There is no dialogue during the spot but it ends with the message in block letters: "Welcome to Freedom". I am doubtful that is a sentiment resonating with Um Haider today.

When I left Um Haider she was not despondent over her situation. Rather she

expressed thanks to God for protecting her family during the war and thanks to all the people in the States who helped her and supported her during her stay. She has completed her special hajj; she is back with her family. Now it is our turn to make a hajj; to be pilgrims for an honest peace, true freedom, and an expeditious reconstruction of Iraq. We must

travel to our Congressional offices to lobby for change, our houses of worship to pray for better understanding, and our weapons factories to demand disarmament. We must also journey inside ourselves to question what does freedom actually mean and how can we help bring about a free and nonviolent world. Ω

THE GREEN HOUSE

Mimi Ingraham

The green house is a place where people grow. The children of the neighborhood thrive because they are loved unconditionally. And they love so freely in return, or just because they love, even the more hard bitten ones are not so hard bitten.

The children have fun and learn and help out and teach us and make us laugh and sometimes cry. When they require discipline it is done in a respectful way. We volunteers learn from our mentors Jackie, Chris, Brian, Morliana, and not so long ago, Kate. And we learn from each other and reach deep into own hearts and souls. We have different gifts and talents that come together for a common cause, the children and all the adults who come by. And we learn that no interaction is too small. We are loved by the community to the point of them considering us extended community. We love them the same way and each other more and more.

Many precious things happen at the green house every day. With the children there are so many to recount, which doesn't detract from their value. And the adults—well I remember tenderly two things that happened the day we way put together and distributed the Christmas food. The first was lining up bags of onions and potatoes in straight lines in the cold with Morliana, and how much fun we had joking and laughing together. It was hard to make the rows straight! And my heart was full.



The second was when one of the women from the neighborhood came back to help out. We had a wonderful time talking about food in general. The piece de resistance was when she told me in great detail how she prepares collard greens, with such care. I decided I'd better shape up. This was an interaction that was "not too small."

I think of Jackie's article about the waiting women. We have said to each other, it is about "being there." Sometimes we don't actually have to do anything but listen and be gentle and ask more about their pain— and care.

Since being at The Catholic Worker I have a different world view. Whether it be exposure to voluntary poverty, which helps me to reassess my own values and priorities, or talking with the two Georges about their work for peace and equality and justice throughout the world. And seeing through Chris and Jackie and Brian's eyes all the injustice and inequality right here, and how it is time for me to do much more about it. And I have been inspired to read up on Radical Christianity and about living the gospel message. Now there has to be a next step for me.

I had a beautiful experience on 1/4/04 at Mass at St. Michael's, sitting with Jackie and Micah, and Kijaun, with other community and extended community reassuringly close by. As always there the greeting before Mass knocked my socks off. Everyone greets everyone in the church or ,as I sometimes say, "works the room"! 'Works the room with joy and exuberance. It is so infectious. It is love. And the music! And there was the moment at the end of Mass, when petitions were coming from the faith community, when an extended member of our community stood up and made a petition which was so startling and beautiful that I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt what I have really known all along—that I am part of something so ineffably great because it is a place where love always wins out. Ω

NOTES CONT.

Wendell Berry ever since I lived in Voluntown in the late 80's. He speaks to the beauty of the land, wisdom of sustainable agriculture and the healing of souls through our connection with God via nature. I leave you with these words, and the hope that our prayers for a place of

peace in the country are answered.
From *The Satisfactions of The Mad Farmer*
...The bodies of children, joy free,
without the dread of their spending,
surprised at nightfall to be weary;
...The work of feeding and clothing and housing,
done with more than enough knowledge,
and with more than enough love,

by those who do not have to be told;
...What I know of Spirit is astir
in the world. The god I have always
expected
to appear at the wood's edge, beckoning,
I have always expected to be
a great relisher of this world, its good
grown immortal in his mind." Ω

Notes from De Porres House

Jacqueline Allen-Doucot

It's February 2nd, Candlemas Day and the feast of our patron St. Brigid. Today was a cold but beautifully sunny day. On Tuesday Chris returned from 2 weeks in Iraq riding in on the tail of a storm which dumped 8 inches of snow on us. He came back in his usual high gear: "the newsletter should be at the printers by Monday.... did the 3rd floor porch get shoveled off after the last storm?... For Brian who woke up 2 or 3 times a night to put wood on the fire during the ultra cold snap and make sure the faucets were dripping, and for myself, who tried hard not to let Micah and Ammon see how little sleep I was getting it was only our deep abiding love for Chris that kept us from strangling him. Our 2 weeks of stress vanished with the realization that our "master and commander" had returned home! With his thick, scruffy and mostly grey beard we almost didn't recognize him. Chris was happy to report that Um Haider and Mostafa had been safely returned home.

He was also able to visit Hebron in the West Bank to spend time with Marwa and Sahar. Aside from occasional headaches Marwa seems to be completely healed of her bullet wound. No small miracle!! We would love to have her come back to go to high school here. If anyone has any ideas on that please let us know.

There has been some good news around



here for a change. Our roof has been repaired. Thank-you to the good folks of Old St. Andrew's and all of you co-celebrators that came to our 10th anniversary bash to dance, drink home brew and put money in the roof repair can. Another happy note: our girl Mo Evans made the Dean's list this past semester. For those of you who believe that the Catholic Worker is an organization developed to separate people from their money... we are hoping to host a spaghetti dinner, beer and dance bash in April or May to raise some tuition money for Mo-Mo.

Chris has finally been able to have surgery on his bum knee. We thank Dr. John O'Brien of Hartford Orthopedic Surgeons for donating his services and

Bishop Rosazza for getting St. Francis Hospital to donate their services. Chris had some cartilage trimmed and a bone spur removed. He also has a torn ligament that he will need to deal with. Because he can't move furniture for a while we'd really need some help in the pick ups department. We also can't seem to find anyone willing to volunteer for our after-school program on Mondays.

The other major project the Hartford Catholic Worker is taking on is the new Voluntown Peace Trust. In August we learned that Equity Trust, Inc., owner of the property where our summer camp has been run for most of the last ten years, needed to sell the Voluntown property and relocate. The Hartford Catholic Worker is spearheading a campaign to establish a nonprofit land trust to hold the property. In this way we can ensure that the summer camp location will always be available to us. Also, if we are successful in obtaining the property the retreat space and conference center will be made available to peace and justice groups and to low income people and groups. If anyone is interested in helping out with a donation or a no interest loan please contact me (Jackie) at the Catholic Worker. We will be forming a capital campaign committee in the coming weeks with the hope of raising \$200,000.

I have been a big fan of poet and farmer

(SEE NOTES P.9)

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