

THE HARTFORD CATHOLIC WORKER



ST. MARTIN DE PORRES HOUSE
ST. BRIGID HOUSE

What does God require but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly... Micah 6:8



When the toys were gone we left the camp with all the kids chasing behind the truck. It felt good to see the kids chasing after the balls and planes we threw from the back of the truck. People say I went to Derej and saved people, but I think differently... I might have contributed to the long hard period of work that needs to be done”

Micah Allen - Doucot

EASTER 2005

THE HARTFORD CATHOLIC WORKER

Established November 3, 1993

Volume 13 Number 2



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 and www.hartfordcatholicworker.org We are: Brian Kavanagh, Morlianna Evans, Sarah Karas, Jacqueline, Christopher, Micah and Ammon Allen-Doucot.



Reject sterile and violent ideologies. Renounce every form of extreme nationalism and intolerance. It is along these paths that the temptation to violence and war slowly but surely appears.

John Paul II



Humanity should question itself, once more, about the absurd and always unfair phenomenon of war, on whose stage of death and pain only remain standing the negotiating table that could and should have prevented it

John Paul II



"There were not sufficient reasons to unleash a war against Iraq. To say nothing of the fact that, given the new weapons that make possible destructions that go beyond the combatant groups, **today we should be asking ourselves if it is still licit to admit the very existence of a 'just war.'**"

- *Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, May 2, 2003.*

Social justice cannot be attained by violence. Violence kills what it intends to create.

John Paul II

HELPING A SLOWLY MOVING GOOD CAUSE

Christopher J. Doucot

We've heard from some who questioned our decision to have our 12 year old son Micah join me on our recent trip to Darfur, Sudan. Some argued that the situation was simply too dangerous; others said that the sight of the intense suffering we would encounter would surely be overwhelming for Micah and cause undue emotional trauma for him.

When we first announced that we were moving to the completely nonwhite and poor neighborhood where we've lived for the last 12 years we heard exactly the same concerns. When one church official said to us: "You're not going to raise your kids there are you? They won't be safe." Jackie responded by asking if this gentleman had expressed this same concern for all the non-white kids living in this same neighborhood.

I have no doubt that such concerns are nothing but well intentioned, but they still chafe me a bit. The fears expressed by these kind souls I suspect are the result of our minds extrapolating the fragments of information we have about Africa and urban America. With little first hand, everyday experience in these places to complete the picture our mind unconsciously uses the violent images broadcast over the nightly news and in movies to create a tableau of nonstop mayhem and uninterrupted gunfire.

Lurking in the shadows and magnifying this effect is the specter of racism; after all it is young black men with machine guns in the back of pickup trucks on a dusty African road or black teenage boys with bandannas on their heads and handguns tucked by their waists hanging on a street corner that are presented to us as the prototypical black male. Living here we have a fuller picture of the daily goings on

here. We know black men who are cooks and cops, single dads and fire fighters, retirees and photographers. We also know that there is beauty and peace here. Ghetto



flowers are no less fragrant than those in the 'burbs and ghetto children are no less precious. And so it is in Darfur.

In December when I first went to Nyala, Darfur I saw the armed men in pickup trucks but I got to know church workers, priests, taxi drivers, college students, restaurateurs and marketeers. The honest peace loving people of Nyala far outnumber the death squads.

In Nyala the darkness of the night sky is unparalleled offering the people there a

celestial window that has been closed in America since the advent of the electrical age. In Nyala the women are well springs of hope and hard work, even in the insane density of humanity in the camps where they struggle to feed their children.

During the dry season everything below our feet is a pallet of dusty khaki while above our heads is a serene sea of cerulean. Relieving this dichromatic landscape are the robust magenta, indigo, sapphire, scarlet, and saffron coverings that the women wear to protect themselves from the sun, wind and dust.

There is beauty even in the midst of the genocide. The women continue to adorn their feet with intricate designs of henna, with their clothing they continue to add beauty to an otherwise environs, they continue to teach their children and have children. They continue to add beauty to the world because to stop opens the door to despair; to stop is to take the first step towards death. To recognize and create beauty is to cling to hope. We hope because we know it is the Good that is eternal. If the people of Darfur are to survive this genocide they must cling to beauty and continue to hope and we must feed beauty and give them a reason to hope.

I took Micah to Nyala to bring food to the people in the Derej camp for internally displaced persons because I don't want him to despair. Taking action is a tremendous antidote to despair. During our stay in Darfur Micah and I were able to deliver several tons of peanuts, rice, sugar, sorghum, dates, dried tomatoes, onions, a couple of hens, two slaughtered cows, a dozen tarps and 2 score of soccer balls to the people of Derej camp. In Derej we met Khaltouma Mohammed, a 34 year old mother of 7. She had just arrived in Derej after walking

(PLEASE SEE GOOD CAUSE, P4)

GOOD CAUSE, CONT.

and hitchhiking across the desert for 3 days. A week earlier the Janjaweed, with the support of the local police, burned her village. Women who ran were chased down and stripped naked. In a matter of minutes the village of Kora Besha ceased to exist. 14 men and boys were killed, all food and property were looted and 4,000 souls wandered into the barren expanse of dust and scrub- completely exposed to the harsh elements of nature and, ominously, the lethal elements of their government. Meeting Khaltouma and hearing her testimony has not left Micah emotionally scarred. Rather our patient listening to her witness and our modest effort to relieve her hunger has helped him to grow spiritually and morally.

In his journal Micah wrote *"We got to the edge of Derej, we unloaded the cow meat to the sheik and started giving out toys. It felt good to see the kids chase after the balls and planes we threw from the back of the truck. When the toys were gone we left the camp with all of the kids chasing behind the truck. It's hard to stand in the back of a pickup with 4-wheel drive on a bumpy desert road with 50 kids chasing you but the smiles on their faces are definitely worth it.... I think today was the best day of all even though I got sunburn. The best part was asking the woman what her family ate today and hearing her say "It was amazing, these people cam and brought rice, tomatoes, and onions and we all ate together." She didn't know it was us who brought the food."*



Jose Guadalupe Posada



PAUL LACHINE

"Knowing that tonight they went to bed with a full stomach and did not last night sparked some unheard of energy source inside of me that enabled me to see what I saw without having serious emotional damage although there was some at times. Hearing the laughter of the children and seeing the smiles on their faces filled me with joy as much as it did them. It is sometimes hard for me to be so far from home with my friends and family but I know that I am here helping a slowly moving good cause."

We refuse to surrender ourselves or our children to the debilitating ethos of fear which has overtaken our society. We are attempting to raise our sons to be disciples of the intrepid man from Galilee who said: **"Fear is useless, what is needed is faith."** (Luke 8:50), The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all quote Jesus commanding his disciples: **"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."** I did not want Micah to die looking to serve Jesus in Darfur. Rather, in embracing discipleship we hope to inoculate our boys from the tentacles of a parasitic life-style. Selfishness, violence, individualism and greed, are greater threats to eternal life than discipleship is to temporal life.

Of what good is it to know of the suffering of others if we are not going to do anything about it? The suffering in our world is so great and our communications so extensive it is not

possible to shield our children, nor ourselves, from the ugly brutality we often wreak upon each other. In my mind the more dangerous course of action is that of inaction. The bad feeling we have inside when we know of widespread suffering and succumb to paralysis in the face of overwhelming evil are the first pangs of spiritual suicide. To do nothing in response to genocide is to give up hope that we can uncover the Good and overcome evil. To do nothing is a tacit admission that evil is a force more powerful than us, that is- more powerful than the Good, because in the end that is what we are: Good. We are made Good and made to do Good. Evil prevails only when we cease to recognize what we are and fail to act on why we are alive.

The women of Darfur have not given up on hope, they have not given up on beauty. Like the petals of a sunflower serenading the bee, the women of Darfur with the majestic beauty of their vestments are calling us. Without the bee there would not be a next generation for the flower and without the flower the bee would not be able to feed her children. Without our involvement there may not be a next generation of African Darfurians and if we don't act we tell our children that Good cannot overcome evil, that beauty is only temporary and that hope is nothing but a cruel hoax.

(To read more from Micah's travel journal please go to: www.hartfordcatholicworker.org) 



THE POPE, SOLIDARITY, AND ME

Mary Erdmans Ph.D.

(Mary Erdmans is a resident of Hartford. Her book *Opposite Poles* describes the experiences of Solidarity activists in Poland and Polish refugees in Chicago.)

I saw Pope John Paul II in Warsaw on a Sunday morning in 1987 along with a million other Poles. He was a tiny dot in the bubble of the pope mobile and then a blur of white on a far away altar. I could hear him better than I could see him, but I didn't understand Polish so I had no idea what he was saying.

I had arrived in Poland two nights prior, and had come primarily to learn the language but also to pass money to leaders of the outlawed Solidarity union who were now operating underground. The funds came from Polish refugees who, because they were union leaders in the *Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy* (Independent Self-Governing Trades Union known simply as *Solidarnosc* or Solidarity), were imprisoned after martial law was introduced in 1981 and then later fled to the United States.

The formation of this union coincided with the election of the Polish Pope in 1978 and was energized and legitimated by the actions of the Pope on his first visit to Poland in June 1979. Much to many peoples surprise (and delight), the communist government in Poland allowed the Pope to visit his homeland. Large public assemblies were usually illegal unless organized by the state, but that summer millions of Poles came together to hear the Pope say mass. One activist who was in Krakow at the time said, "It was the first time that I felt totally free in my own country. The Party, the police, the whole system ceased to exist. At this time the true Solidarity was born ... I felt when I was attending this biggest mass in the country, there were two million people present

singing, shouting, praying that we are brothers and sisters and that we are strong. We counted ourselves, we saw how many felt this way."

The Pope's presence made visible their strength in numbers, and his words legitimated their right to organize. He told them, from the pulpit, that workers had a right to form unions.

In August of 1980 the union came into being, only to be outlawed on December 13, 1981. It existed underground during the 1980s and funds were smuggled in from abroad to help the movement survive. Things got worse in Poland as the economy crumbled, the environment choked, and the media



manufactured only lies. In 1987, in an effort to mislead people into believing that things were normal, the government allowed the Pope to return. But they had one condition—No Solidarity banners, no protests, no demonstrations.

The Pope had been in Poland for a week already when I arrived in Warsaw. I had been watching his visit on television and saw not one banner, not one demonstration, not one indication that Solidarity was alive. While the union leaders were hanging on, I suspected the people were defeated. In the six long years since martial law, the poor economy and repressive state policies had made citizens less willing to support the outlawed union. At its peak in 1981 over one-third of the nation were members of Solidarity, roughly 10 million people. But by the mid-1980s, workers were afraid and unable to organize, citizens were afraid and could not afford to buy underground (*samizdat*) literature, and neighbors were afraid

and unwilling to associate with activists. One refugee told me, "they would not even look me in the eye when I was walking down the street."

On that Sunday morning in 1987, as I walked to the center square in Warsaw, passing military police standing on corners with rifles, I looked around for evidence—graffiti, buttons, banners—that Solidarity was still breathing. None found.

I stood in the crowd waiting for the Pope, listening to words I could not understand—lowered, hushed voices talking one-on-one. Suddenly the tone of the crowd changed. People were on their tippy toes, heads craned to the right, a finger pointed, and with my six foot frame towering over the heads of others I saw the pope mobile arrive. A shudder went through the crowd and me. He was here. We became silent. The pope climbed the steps to the altar.

And then, I felt a new motion in the crowd. Starting from the left, like a wave rippling through a baseball stadium, large banners were being raised around the perimeter. Two young men in front of me began to undress. One whipped off his tee-shirt and unwound the banner wrapped around his torso. The other unbuckled his belt and pulled out poles hidden down his pant legs. They assembled their banner, stepped apart and added their pro-Solidarity cry to the mosaic. Surrounding us, and greeting Pope John Paul, was evidence, colorful, billboard large, jubilant evidence that Solidarity, as one banner read "*Była, Jest, Bedzie* (Was, Is and Will Be). Yeah!

Workers have always had, have and will have the right to organize, the right to work with dignity, the right to share equally in the riches of production. Thank you Papa, and in solidarity with the workers of the world we salute you. Good bye. Ω

CONFESSIONS OF AN ECONOMIC HIT MAN : A REVIEW

Carlman Dewees

Confessions of an Economic Hit Man by John Perkins (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Nov 2004) may read like a suspense novel but it is a true insider story of an executive struggling with the moral issues of global capitalism. John Perkins tells the story of his personal weaknesses and how he finally broke free from the seductive privileges of his life as an Economic Hit Man, aka EHM (that is actually how he refers to himself). The book is illuminating in its review of U.S. foreign policy throwing back the curtain on the ruling Neo-Conservatives and their rhetoric of spreading "freedom."

EMH is a term Perkins uses for executives pursuing private and public sector infrastructure projects created as informal U.S. public policies to weaken the sovereignty of foreign governments as means to access natural resources. In the 1960s, in response to the power of international oil companies, a group of countries formed OPEC, a cartel of oil-producing countries. Oil is important because it is a significant input cost for U.S. economy. Rapid oil price increases can create major shocks to the U.S. economy, threatening the capitalist system. For example, the 1973 oil embargo by OPEC created long lines at the gas pump and a full-blown policy obsession by the U.S. on protecting our oil dependence. During the early 1970s, the selling price of oil increased from \$1.39 to \$8.34 per barrel. The resulting "stagflation" in the 1970s, simultaneous inflation and high unemployment, was a painful lesson for U.S. policymakers. Perkins argues this was an issue on par with the Great Depression or the political humiliation of Vietnam.

Crisis has a way of focusing the mind. If foreign sovereign countries control oil prices, then how can the U.S. manage the greater instability of the capitalist system?

Perkins argues that EHM are the first line of defense in this "economic imperialist" struggle. In the 1970s, Perkins worked at an engineering and construction firm, making inflated macroeconomic forecasts



to justify "necessary" infrastructure projects that would largely benefit the upper class in resource rich "developing" countries. The developing countries would hire American engineering firms (today Bechtel and Halliburton with their well documented revolving door between government, business and international organizations). The countries would finance the massive projects accepting heavy debt loads. When these countries faced financial problem, the high debt level would force the countries to raise revenues through short-sighted policies to extract natural resources with the help of U.S. multinationals. Within this struggle indigenous populations are often marginalized.

If debts could not be repaid the U.S. often forgave debts in return for political

favours. The core belief of the system is the idea that every foreign leader is ultimately corruptible through temptations of greater wealth and power. Saudi Arabia was EMH's greatest success. The House of Saud would guarantee to maintain oil prices at acceptable levels and invest proceeds in U.S. securities. In return the US would keep them in power and lend to help the country build infrastructure that would further tie the Saudi Arabian economy to the success of the U.S. economy.

The second-line of defense are CIA operatives funding assassinations or staging political dissent to weaken the power of populist leaders who refuse to pursue reckless projects by taking on significant debt. Examples of the second line of defense include assassinations of incorruptible leaders like Roldos in Ecuador and Torrijos in Panama (both died in crashes) and staged political dissent against Chavez in Venezuela, the third largest supplier of oil to the U.S. in 2002 and the Western Hemisphere's largest proven oil reserves. Countries like Venezuela in Latin America continue to scare the U.S. with the combination of populist leaders and oil reserves.

The third line of defense is military invasion, which we witnessed in Panama in 1989 and Iraq in 2003. Sadly it is the very poorest Americans who send their children to die in foreign lands to support U.S. "economic empire." Meanwhile we cut our social safety net like unemployment

benefits, under-fund domestic social programs in the name of preventing "waste" and pretend all public schools provide an equal education. These invasions are often sold as in our national interest, meaning maintaining economic growth. The next time our President mentions spreading democracy and freedom around the world take a look for what is missing in the history books and how severely domestic policies are under-funded. It is important to recognize that U.S. policy has strategically focused on the supply side of oil equation rather than the admittedly more difficult political choice of trying to slow U.S. demand for oil through developing alternatives. Economists would argue that U.S. oil prices historically were too low to encourage consumers to conserve energy use or society to pursue higher levels of research of alternative energy sources. Bear in mind that many European countries have significantly higher gas taxes and hence prices which encourage lower oil consumption and wider use of public transportation. U.S. policies used to prevent oil supply shocks have evolved to some extent over the past 30 years. Insiders would argue that the project build-out model to gain access to oil that Perkins documents has changed with the World Bank currently dedicating more spending to soft investments like health and training. The important point is less the allocation of so called "aid" than the total dollars given relative to the size of a donor country's economy. On this account, the U.S. is an unconvincing global citizen, contrary to Bush's freedom rhetoric. CIA operations no doubt continue, most obviously seen in Latin America. Invasions, the most visible

technique, clearly continue much to the dismay of corporate interests who prefer a quieter method to undermine the sovereignty of a nation.

The insider account of global capitalism has clearly helped the sale of the book. Readers with a background in international policy or economics would likely wish for greater focus on facts than Perkins provides. None the less, Perkins' struggle of conscience is truly a timeless narrative. His story powerfully illustrates why no theory or dogma should suck the internal struggle from life and encourage us to subsist on unquestioned lives. Am I living my life or simply living my desires? Am I doing more good than harm? Am I bringing happiness to this life?

Executives and economists have become the new high priests of commerce. Statistics can tell stories that cannot be questioned by the masses. In the 1930s,

during the Great Depression, when capitalism was shaken and began to rise from the ashes remade and reformed, the great economist Keynes wrote, "The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist." The story points toward big questions of living and organizing society. Perkins achieves a thoroughly riveting account but his true purpose is to confess and search for his own redemption.

(Carman Dewees , 25, and holds a degree in economics. He currently works as an equity analyst at a Boston-based mutual fund company. He can be reached at cdewees@gmail.com.) Ω



Come, Holy spirit, take possession of our hearts and enkindle therein the fire of Your divine love. Send forth Your Spirit, and we will be created, and You will renew the face of the Earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, instructs the hearts of the faithful, grant by that same Holy Spirit, a right understanding of things, a love and relish for what is right and just, and the enjoyment of Your presence of us always. Amen

ON WINGS OF HOPE

Dennis Petruzzi

Many, many months ago, I promised Chris that I would write an article for this newsletter about our experiences in Haiti. Since then, Chris has been better about reminding me of that promise than I have been about keeping it.

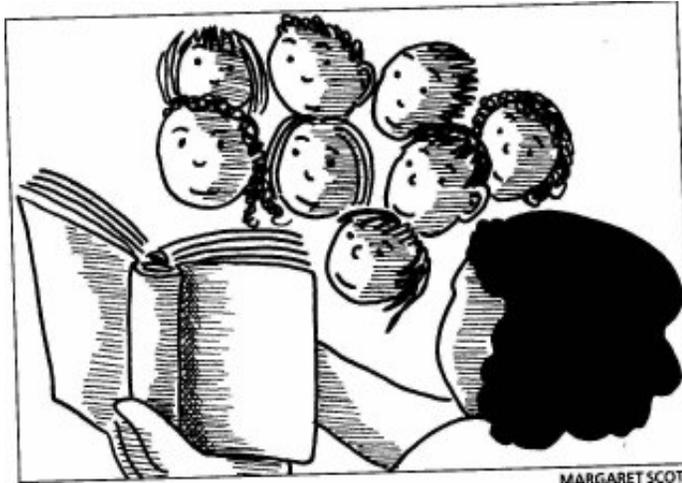
It wasn't that I didn't want to write it. I actually enjoy writing. It was that I was not certain that I could write about something that would inspire people. Everyone knows that Haiti is a poor country. What little infrastructure it has had is collapsing. The little government that has not already collapsed is ineffective and manipulated by internal corruption and the meddling self interest of a foreign government to the north. Education is limited and opportunities for work, even for those who are educated, are scarce. I could quote the infant mortality rates, the hunger and malnutrition statistics and the life expectancy of those who somehow survive childhood. But writing and reading an article like this would be more depressing than inspiring. Instead I'll tell you two stories. Both are true and both are about addressing Haiti's needs.

There are many orphanages in Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince. One of them, Wings of Hope, is home to severely handicapped children. Another, St. Joseph's Home for Boys, takes in street kids. When Wings of Hope was about to close because of lack of funding, the boys of St. Joseph pleaded with their director to merge the two orphanages. Unhampered by knowledge of budgets, floor plans and the logistics of doing so, the street kids promised that they would be the ones to take care of the handicapped children.

Some of the residents of Wings of Hope were so physically and mentally handi-

capped that they were confined to cribs for over 6 years. Many could neither walk nor speak. Such was the case with a boy named Soni who was afflicted with cerebral palsy.

Armed with only love, compassion, energy and belief in themselves, the street kids began to work with the kids from Wings of Hope. Remarkably the disabled children, long dismissed by caregivers as hopeless, began to improve in both their motor and communicative skills. Soni was



taught to walk. And after a while, he learned to walk so well that the street kids actually taught him to dance.

My wife Sue and I visited Wings of Hope one day and met many of the disabled residents and their young caregivers. Soni was not there that day. He was in Canada on tour with the dance troupe formed by the folks at the orphanage.

And by the way, the boy who could not speak now communicates in three languages.

The story of Soni may have been new to you. The second story may be more familiar. It comes from the gospel of Matthew (16, 14:21). In one of the few times in the gospels, Jesus is angry and frustrated with His followers.

A man came to Jesus and reported that he had brought his son to the disciples to be cured. His son had a demon that manifested as epilepsy and the man told

Jesus that His disciples could not cure the boy. Jesus cured the boy, and when the disciples asked why they could not drive the demon out, Jesus questioned the strength of their faith. It is then that He tells them if they had faith the size of a mustard seed they could move mountains.

Perhaps the disciples remembered that they were just fisherman and, after all, ordinary people. Perhaps they were afraid that curing the boy was too big a task for them and they were concerned about failure. Perhaps they felt that they were not ready or maybe had other challenges to address first.

Or perhaps they had not, up until that time, realized the power that faith in Jesus and acceptance of His Spirit gives to fisherman, street kids and to us all. We each can do the extraordinary in the name of Jesus, but so often we succumb to settling for the ordinary because we do not believe. That includes me.

As a result, some things that need to get done do not. The needs of countries like Haiti and the Sudan can be solved if enough people care to seize the power of their faith and act upon it. This may mean going to these places and working with the people, supporting organizations which are already there or insisting that our government do less harm and more good.

Most importantly, we need to remember that we are each called not only to act upon our faith in Jesus but also His faith in us.

(Dennis Petruzzi worships at St. Patrick's in Farmington and is on the board of directors for Hospice St. Joseph which runs a clinic among other ministries in Port Au Prince, Haiti) **Ω**

volunteers, and, as is our tradition, we feel obligated to feed lunch to everyone. We need someone, namely me and Jamie, to figure out if we have enough food, and then we have to prepare the food. We need to break out the hot dogs and the macaroni and cheese, and the canned vegetables and we need to start heating things up for lunch. Also, because of the rain, we can't eat outside, so we have to set up the second floor Arts and Crafts rooms for lunch, but those rooms are being used by about twenty kids and volunteers. And, to make matters worse, the inside stairs to the second floor have been freshly painted and are drying, so everything must be carried up the back porch stairs in the rain. The logistics are starting to worry me. My autonomic nervous system is in turmoil.

Just as I was becoming overwhelmed in the Kitchen, I heard a door slam out front, and I saw MaryLu getting out of her truck. MaryLu has been volunteering for the past six months, and she comes on most Saturdays. Among her many gifts, MaryLu is an excellent cook. She has brought bags and bags of food. Pork chops, macaroni salad she made at home, all the ingredients for a tossed salad, barbecue sauce, salad dressing, all the ingredients for ice cream banana splits for dessert. We step out of the way, and she seamlessly coordinates all of the lunch preparation for us. Not just by herself, but with great patience, she always enlists several of the kids to help her with tasks that she could do much quicker herself. And the kids respond to her, and love to work with her. Two of the girls who were asked to leave for bad behavior just two weeks ago, volunteer

right away, and they work all morning helping.

Now, my life is getting simpler, the calmness is returning. I can focus on just barbecuing the pork chops, and trying not to mess up the lunch MaryLu is putting together for us. As we are setting up the grill, out of the rain on the second floor back porch, I hear Gara and the UCONN athletes arriving. The kids react immediately. Jory and one of the athletes, Ann, lead a group of the kids out to the basketball court and choose up sides for a game, in the rain. I can't quite see the game from where I am



barbecuing, but I don't need to, because whenever Jory plays basketball, or any game for that matter, he always narrates a play by play with his big voice..."David tries a shot, awww its no good, but Logan gets the rebound, he dribbles up the court, Logan's double teamed, Logan, pass to Corey, pass to Corey. Corey shoots,...". And every once in a while I look over the rail of the porch and see the joy on Ann's face. And, as it turns out, Ann isn't just Ann, she's Ann Strother from the UCONN women's basketball team. But she's playing basketball, with our kids, behind the Green House, in the rain. She can't contain a smile as she

slaps hands with her teammates after passing to a back cutting Letiqua for a lay-up, or after finding Keyanna for an open shot. I never actually see her shoot the ball, but she shows the same joy I remember seeing on her face, on TV, as she and her team are winning NCAA championship games. And the kids are as excited as I ever remember seeing them.

Lunchtime is upon us. The basketball game has cleared out the Second floor, allowing the volunteers to set the lunch tables. Everyone pitches in to quickly carry the food up the back stairs. The kids wash their hands. All forty kids and volunteers manage to squeeze into the lunchrooms. Before we eat, we join hands, and take turns saying one thing aloud that we are thankful for, and then we are ready.

MaryLu's lunch and dessert are served. I didn't mess up the pork chops, at least nobody is complaining. After lunch, the volunteers lead the kids in sweeping and mopping the floors, and washing the dishes, and before I know it, everyone has left and I'm ready to go as well.

As I'm locking up, I can't help but think of the grace of this Green House. Just as the need for such a community house was fully recognized, this house became available. It was renovated with very little money, but with spontaneous gifts of materials and with many hours of volunteer labor. Now, people are drawn to it from all directions. They stop by every day to drop off donations of food and clothes and furniture. And, I've seen the community of kids and volunteers using the Green House grow as well. As needs arise, volunteers mysteriously materialize, at the perfect time, with just the right skills. And it occurs to me that this was a pretty good Saturday, and I really should stop worrying so much. Ω

Notes from De Porres House

Stephen Dahlem

I'll have to say, in all honesty, I was a little anxious when I arrived this morning. Actually, quite anxious. Chris and his son Micah are still in Darfur in Africa, and our community is always on edge when Chris is away, in a dangerous part of the world, bearing witness for us all. But, that was only part of it. All of the full-time Catholic Worker staff were going to be meeting and working at the Volun-town property today, so the Saturday part-time volunteers were, for the first time, going to be running the morning program by ourselves. Running with scissors as it were. That responsibility was weighing heavily, and I was busy figuring out, in my obsessive-compulsive way, the countless things that were about to go wrong.

I was the first person to arrive, and, of course, was able to convince myself, at least for a moment, that no other volunteers were coming today. But, right on schedule, as they always do, the other regular volunteers, Jamie, Octo, and Jory arrived. Seeing and talking to them made me feel calm, but, unfortunately, that calmness lasted only a moment. Right away, we had our first major challenge of the morning. The weather, which had been cold and overcast, was getting even worse. It was starting to

rain very hard.

Rain on Saturday morning can easily spell disaster. It means twenty-five or more fully energized kids inside



our small house. If we have any hope of maintaining order, it means we need lots of volunteers for one-on-one games and activities. Either that or we need to turn away some of our kids, and we've never been able to do that. Limiting the number of kids often sounds like a good idea when the volunteers are talking before the kids arrive, but the notion always seems to collapse when the first extra child appears, standing on the front steps in the rain. Exceptions were going to be made; we were definitely not going to be turning anyone away today. We were going to need more volunteers.

Almost on cue, Julia and three other of our high school volunteers knocked on the front door. Julia has been volunteering for a month now. She has quickly learned our routine and lately she has taken to bringing some of her friends with her as well. They were perfect for what we needed this morning.

Then the phone rang. Gara, a graduate student at UCONN, wanted to come and bring four or five student athletes from her Husky Sports program. This is really good news. Gara's group of college athletes is mostly women, and our young girls are starving for strong positive role models. Beyond that, they always bring positive energy, and the connections they make with the kids occur instantaneously, and are profound to see. Today they are electing to take time out of their Spring break weekend to drive to North Hartford to visit us. Our day is looking better and better.

Then our second big challenge of the morning presents itself. It occurs to me that we have a lot of kids, and a lot of

(SEE NOTES P.9)

18 Clark St.
Hartford, CT 06120
(860) 724-7066

Place Label Here, Please