

# 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*



*Bitan Kavanagh*

*So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you. And you shall say to them, 'This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips.'*

*Jeremiah 7:27-28*

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## THE HARTFORD CATHOLIC WORKER

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Hartford CT 06120; (860) 724-7066, doucot@sbcglobal.net and www.hartfordcatholicworker.org We are: Brian Kavanagh, Morlianna Evans, Sarah Karas, Angela Thomas, Jacqueline, Christopher, Micah and Ammon Allen-Doucot.

# WAR IN IRAQ: THREE YEARS, THREE LIVES

### *Christopher J. Doucot*

March 19<sup>th</sup> marks the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the war. Nearly 2500 American soldiers and perhaps 100,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed in the fighting. 16,500 American soldiers have been seriously injured, no figure is available for how many Iraqis have been seriously injured. And while dozens of Westerners have been kidnapped, their agonizing appeals for help broadcast world-wide, thousands of Iraqis have likewise been abducted with little notice paid to their suffering.

It is a terrible mess on all fronts. The infrastructure remains in tatters with electrical service as limited as it was before the war. With American forces and the Iraqi government unable to deliver on promises of security, sectarian militias are gaining power and popularity as the Iraqi people are desperate for street level safety. A hundred thousand American troops, British troops, the Iraqi army, sectarian militias, armed criminals, and a variety of armed groups fighting the American Occupation make for daily lethal chaos in the neighborhoods of Iraq.

I have been able to maintain some contact with three of my closer Iraqi friends. In their different ways they are struggling to survive and do what is best for their families.

### **Sattar**

I first met Sattar J. in Amman Jordan back in 1999. Sattar would drive our delegation the

hundreds of miles to Baghdad. Sattar is an engineer by training but due to the wars and sanctions he has never been an engineer by



*Maki Omsan Raji*

trade. Rather he has supported his family during the last ten years by ferrying people in

and out of Iraq. Some weeks he would make the 1000 mile round trip 3 times! Sattar was eminently patient with our demands on him.

He would faithfully take us to an Internally Displaced Persons camp every time we asked even though the sight of children living and playing amidst the sewage clearly pained him. When our government minders were not around he would give us more detail and more truth about what we were seeing and when the former government would ask him to spy on us he would resist saying he was just a driver.

During the war Sattar drove his family to a "safe" place outside of Baghdad and then returned to Baghdad to help with the victims. Despite having no medical training he went to a hospital and volunteered to help in any way. For days he spent 18 hours bringing the wounded to the hospital and at times even helping with emergency surgery.

Last Spring Sattar obtained a visa to enter the U.S. Sattar came to the US to explore possible business and/or educational opportunities. After deciding to apply for a Master's Degree in Engineering at Cooper Union in New York he returned home to make arrangements and apply for another visa. Over the summer Sattar was accepted at Cooper Union and was issued a single entry visa. A single entry visa means that during the two years of his study he will

not be able to return home to see his wife and young children because if he leaves the U.S. he will not be allowed to return. Sattar badly he misses his family. Families in his situation are not typically given visas because the U.S. fears that after completing their degree the students will not return home. Despite the dangers and uncertain future, Sattar loves his homeland and countrymen and is committed to returning to help rebuild his country.

Sattar's plans, and life, nearly ended early in September as he was on his way to the U.S. Ironically, he was a passenger in a GMC on the highway out of Baghdad when a pedestrian jumped in front of the vehicle. The GMC hit the man, swerved and rolled several times landing upside down. Sattar was badly injured. He had surgery in Baghdad but with his visa about to expire he decided to again leave for New York. He was not nearly healthy enough to travel and has since had more surgery. He now walks with a pronounced limp and often uses a cane. He is usually in pain.

He had kept his first visit to the US a secret out of fear for his family. When friends learned that he had been in the U.S. they were indignant with what they thought was a horrible decision. "Why in the world did you come back?" they asked. It never occurred to Sattar to abandon his family.

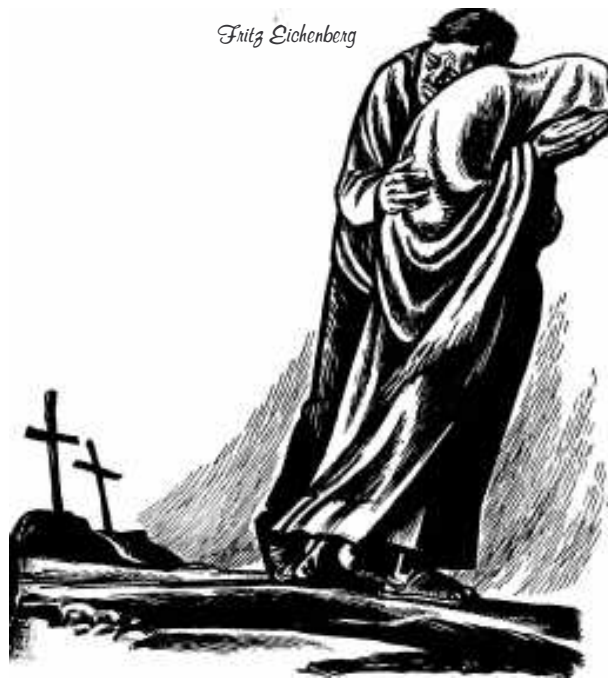
His family is much larger than those who share his blood and he will not abandon them. If the leaders of our nations (and churches) had the courage and compassion of Sattar war would be no more. If those who launched the missiles that filled the wards of Baghdad with bodies and the shoes of Sattar with blood could hear, see, feel and smell what they did they would tear their uniforms from their backs and beg forgiveness.

## Amal

Amal Alwan is a mother, a wife, a teacher, an artist and a refugee. During the sanctions era Amal supplemented her income by selling oil paintings she worked on while her children slept at night. Since the war this has been her sole source of income. Several of her American

friends (including me) have been selling her paintings and sending her money. She is currently renting an apartment in Amman Jordan where she is staying with her three children and husband. Last week she wrote asking if I had sold any paintings because she needs money.

During the war she fled to Syria with her



children. She returned to her Baghdad home in April 2004 and wrote to me:

My dear you know that I met awful life since I back from Syria, I found my home looted... I tried to get my job back as a teacher because I dismissed from Saddam's regime in 2002 because I'm not in Ba'ath party and when Saddam's regime ended I tried to get back but I met worse than Saddam, in the ministry [of Education] they told me if you are in Da'wa party we will get you back or you were out of Iraq we will get you back ...

What about the people in Iraq who suffer all Saddam's... crimes... lived with our fear, hunger and UN sanction. All that we suffered and now we haven't law to protect us... So now I haven't job. I tried to employ myself. I borrow some money from friends to open Internet cafe but before 3 weeks my partner has been shot and he now in hospital waiting to pull the [bullets] from his body. And before 10 days my brother in-law ( Sa'fa 's brother ) has been killed in the street... We found his body in

freezer of the hospital... So I'm now with out job or home, no security, no HOPE in this country. Therefore I'm trying to get visa to United States to get chance to me and my children. With my love and best wishes . Amal"

Amal's visa application has been repeatedly denied so she has decided to stay in Amman until it is safe to bring her children home. In October 2004 she wrote to me:

"I'm in Baghdad since 6 days because Safa was very sick and I have many problems in Baghdad I must solve them by myself... I want tell you the road between Amman and Baghdad is very dangerous and everyone on the bus was robbed... I didn't tell you that before, because you were busy and I don't want to bother you with my problems... Yesterday we met awful day. It looks like the real war. It will never stopped. Iraq became WILDERNESS LAND, and JUNGLE"

Late last year Amal was in Baghdad when 4 members of the Christian Peacemaker Team were kidnapped. Her brother Hassan was their driver and was also kidnapped. The day after the kidnapping Hassan was released and then arrested by the police who suspected he was involved in the kidnapping. Hassan was held for two months before being released. Hassan told Amal that while he was held by the kidnappers they asked him about Amal and her friendships with Americans and said she was a target for abduction. The CPT members are still being held. (for updates on their situation go to: [www.cpt.org](http://www.cpt.org)).

Amal and her family are trapped. They are afraid to go home. The nation largely responsible for their fear won't let them in. And they are not welcomed where they are. On Ash Wednesday Amal wrote to me

"before 6 days [my friend] Fat'hia [was shot]. Police got into her house and put her husband and her children in a room of her house and they shot her head twice they killed her. Why? till now we don't know ...Imagine how her husband and her children finding their mother swim[ming] in her blood

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## WAR CONT.

and her head bombed!!!! it is horrible thing!!! is there more than this terrorist in the world? Even if they want to kill her they must think of her children how they face their mother in this situation. God help us .

I'm sorry to bother you with my sadness. You know three days I was crying and trying to imagine the situation but I couldn't. And I saw myself if they kill me in front of my children how could they be after that? "

### Um Haider

I was in Iraq on the eve of war to get my friend Um Haider and her son Mostafa out of the country before the skies cried lead and fire. Um Haider spent several months in the U.S. seeking medical help for Mostafa, speaking about her life in Iraq and raising money to survive on after the war. In January 2004 I escorted them back and visited Iraq for the last time for the foreseeable future. I did not again have contact with Um Haider until February 2006 when I was able to reach her by telephone.

Um Haider has returned to her job teaching to 6<sup>th</sup> grade English at the school in her neighborhood. Prior to the war she earned about 5000 Iraqi Dinar a month. Today she is paid 386,000 Iraqi Dinar (\$262 US) a month. (Her husband, Salah, a veteran from the Iran-Iraq and first Gulf War, has rejoined the new Iraqi army and is paid 800,000 I.D. a month.) Um Haider and her family have moved from their spartan 2 story cement home into an apartment in the same neighborhood. Their monthly rent is 250,000 I.D.

I first met Um Haider in the summer of 1999 at the Basra Maternity and Pediatrics hospital. I was alone in a hallway when she approached me. She spoke to me in English asking about our purpose. Intrigued, she invited me and my delegation to visit her in her home. During this initial visit Um Haider shared for the first time the heartbreaking story she would repeat for dozens more delegations. Through sobs she told us how her son Haider was killed on January 25, 1999 by an American missile. Weeping she showed us little Mostafa's shorn hand and shrapnel pocked

buttocks.

During my prewar visits with Um Haider she would welcome us with tea and an apology as we would gather in a front room and sit on rugs on a concrete floor for our visit. Um Haider would embarrassingly apologize for not providing us with seats and then explain that over the years of sanctions she had sold the family car, the couches from Italy and finally the beds in order to supplement her family's monthly food rations. Today Um Haider tells me that her family all sleep in beds and the home has a sofa, a television, a stove and refrigerator, a heater and even a computer. She was giddy when she told me "now we can eat meat!"

While computers and meat were rarities in prewar Iraq, more rare were street crime and kidnappings. Um Haider reports that it is unsafe to leave her home after dark. Back in July Um Haider and her family were driving to Baghdad when their truck was attacked. A group of young men shot up the truck before Salah shot back causing the bandits to flee. During the attack the driver was shot in the head. Meanwhile Um Haider had shoved Mostafa to the floor and "when [she] turned [her] face [she] saw Hind (her 17 year old daughter) covered in blood and her lower cheek gone." Hind has since had a couple of operations and is recovering. Much of Hind's care has been provided by private hospitals since the public hospitals are completely overwhelmed caring for the daily victims of the Occupation and "insurgency".

Postwar Iraq is apparently full of stuff as the lifting of sanctions and wages has led to a torrent of consumer goods entering the country. But are t.v.s, computers, meat and the freedom to complain about the government a fair trade for the current danger in the streets?

There is a weariness and hesitance in Um Haider's voice when I ask her if things are better now than under Hussein. She said "we need a country of peace and love, with love [we can change our country]. We have money, we have oil... we need a new government... In some ways if [the US] says it is good for us. If

they leave now some kind of problems will come to us..." before adding: "a lot of people need America to leave Iraq."

When I ask her what kind of help Iraq needs from America she said that the U.S. Needs "to leave the country to give us the real freedom and the real democracy." When I ask her if she



Maki Omran Raji

has hope she can only reply "inshallah". Literally it means "God willing" but Iraqis often say "inshallah" when they are being polite and don't want to say "no".

The cost of the war and Occupation is approaching \$250 billion and still Iraqis are not truly free. American troops will never be able to quell this insurrection. The longer our troops remain the longer the peace will be delayed. The American military presence in Iraq must immediately cease but we cannot morally turn our backs on the Iraqi people. The United States is largely, though not entirely, responsible for the destruction of Iraq. Accordingly we should be spending, or putting in escrow, billions of dollars for reconstruction rather than occupation. The true cost of this war cannot be measured in dollars spent, nor even in lives lost. The true cost of this war cannot ever be measured, for how can we quantify the loss of hope among the parents of Iraq that their children would come of age in a time of peace?Ω

# FRED PFEIL'S (1949-2005) CHALLENGE TO US ALL

## Tim Black

It has been nearly two months since my friend John [Fred] Pfeil died at the age of 56, victim of metastatic melanoma. As such, I have had some time to think about the many ways that I miss Fred, and about the lessons and inspiration we can all derive from his life.

Fred was born in Port Allegany, Pennsylvania on September 21, 1949 to Robert and the late Harriet Pfeil. Fred came to Hartford, Connecticut in 1985 to teach at Trinity College in the English Department. He was a prolific writer, the author of numerous works of nonfiction and fiction – including the 1994 Pushcart Award winning *What They Tell You to Forget*.

In Hartford, Fred will most likely be remembered for his tireless work in behalf of peace and social justice. It is from this work that I derive inspiration from his death. As Fred's neighbor and friend, I was privileged to have a window onto the life of this great man, a form of window peeking I suppose, that has left me – and I would humbly suggest any of us doing peace and social justice work – with a clear but challenging set of standards to live up by. I miss Fred's deep commitments to social justice and social change, but I also miss his daily presence in my life -- his gentle voice on my answering machine, his keen wit and sense of humor, our casual chats about politics, jazz, food, and film, and his determination to make everything and everyone around him just a little better.

My wife Mary and I met Fred the day we arrived in our moving truck. He rode up on his bicycle, tossed it in the grass, and said, "Hi, I'm Fred, need some help." For the next three and a half years, life percolated with Fred's unbounded energy and

creativity. We walked, talked, hiked, and ate our way through a life full of Fred's genius.

On Martin Luther King's birthday, we meditatively walked in front of the state capital in single-digit temperatures wearing signs with some of King's most profound



quotes (we in two hour shifts, Fred for 10 hours). When the war broke out, a large group of us closed down the federal building in Hartford, while Fred entertained us through a long day in a local jail with stories and even chain-gang songs when being led from the jail in leg-chains. When military recruitment billboards appeared, Fred assembled a group of folks to begin planning clever defacements of these obscenities carefully located in urban minority neighborhoods.

When the images of the Abu-Ghraib atrocity circulated through the world media, Fred hatched the idea of street theater in front of Hartford's Gold Building, the headquarters of United Technologies – Fred wearing the cape and hood of the Iraqi whose photograph had come to symbolize the shame of the U.S. government, while one of us in soldier garb and

the other in a Bush mask simulated the torture depicted in the photo.

When Fred was concerned that activism in Hartford needed a shot of theory to go along with its practice, he created the course "Life After Capitalism" at Trinity but arranged for members of the community to participate free of cost, with books provided. And I could go on.

This is the Fred that I so deeply miss. Who could ever fill these shoes, I wonder, or the emptiness that preoccupies so many of us who depended on Fred's energy and creativity in our greatest moments of fury and despair? But it is also here that I find the lessons that Fred's life provided, and hence, the inspiration to vigorously continue the project of social justice that began long before any of us were born and will continue long after we depart.

A mentor of sorts, Fred taught me many things, but there are two lessons that I cherish most and that I offer to others who have committed themselves to social justice. First, in retrospect, I realize that the reason I love and admire Fred so much is because he did not engage in social justice work to feel good about himself, but because he deeply felt the indignities of poverty, the inhumanity of capitalism, the defacement of racism, and the tragedies of sexism. He felt these things viscerally and emotionally and engaged them intellectually.

He cultivated moral outrage and made it fuel for the fire in his belly that always made him the first one out the door to confront power and injustice. But more to the

**(PLEASE SEE: FRED P.9)**

# ON TORTURE AND PILGRIMAGE

*Jacqueline Allen-Doucot*

When I left Hartford for my trip to Guantanamo, I had no idea that what I was embarking on was the age-old act of pilgrimage. A pilgrimage can be described as a long journey in search of a great moral significance undertaken to gain divine aid, as an act of thanksgiving or penance, or to demonstrate devotion.

Pilgrimages were once even considered punishments for crimes (due to hardship of the journey and penitential garb, no doubt). At one time during the Crusades they were rife with graft and corruption. Pilgrimages were so popular that St John Chrysostom found it necessary to explain that there was "need for none to cross the seas or fare upon a long journey; let each of us at home invoke earnestly and He will hear our prayer" To live, said Dorothy Day was to be on pilgrimage.

None of these lofty thoughts swirled thru my brain as I prepared for my trip. I found myself consumed by endless tasks: writing a leaflet and letter to friends and family, shopping and scrounging for first aid and camping items. This had to be done while trying to shake off a three week long cold bug amid lots of information gathering, praying, and the normal chaos of life at the Worker. By the week before the trip I had made myself rather crazed, had the worst fight of my married life with my beloved husband, and due to stress and lack of sleep was not a fun person to be around. Two days before the trip, I confessed to my spiritual director that I was terrified but convinced that God was calling me to go. So, go I went. As soon as I met my two traveling companions Anna and Pat at JFK my fears left me and I fell into the spirit of the journey.

From the moment we reached Cuba I felt a change in my heart. Part of it was being immersed in a totally different place. Havana was like stepping back into another time. But there was something else. Perhaps it has something to do with what Thic Nhat Hahn calls "the miracle of



mindfulness". This would be the opposite of my normal state of monkey mind. For once the to do lists and chores and tasks were set aside I felt like I was able to live and "be" completely in the moment. That intensity would stay with me for the entire trip. It would even follow me home for a time.

The first day in Santiago was virtually consumed with endless meetings, making banners, and trying to prayerfully respond to the news that the Cuban government would not allow us to march to Guantanamo. All of us were anxious to begin our march. What would they allow on our tourist passport? We were told we could walk around. The next morning, we had liturgy, strapped on our backpacks

and walked more than 10 miles toward Guantanamo.

It was an intense experience. At our stops for rest along the highway we read accounts of some of the 250 or so men and boys being held in the torture camp. We prayed with heavy hearts our friends from the Christian Peacemaker Team being held hostage in Iraq (one of who is a Catholic Worker from Toronto). To walk and pray for hours a day... what a gift. For me, it was important to be able to feel that the walking would be an act of penance for the torture that is being committed in our name. That first night we were able to set up our tents in the backyard of a kind family. While their 8 year old Jose made me very homesick for Micah and Ammon, his joy, curiosity and friendliness towards the strangers in his

yard was what overwhelmed me as I lay in my tent that night. All my life I had been told the Cuban people are our enemy. How many of the people our country has deemed enemies are in fact remarkable loving people fully prepared to be our friends? How many would our fears keep us from ever meeting?

Sleep was sketchy; as were the toilet arrangements, but all of the discomforts (that are what marks a pilgrimage) did nothing to detract from our energy and the drive to reach Guantanamo. I was astonished to wake up every day energized and eager to keep walking.

One of my greatest fears before the trip was being unable to keep up with the group. We walked past farming coopera-



tives, schools, through towns and areas of vast rolling hills.

By the 4th full day of marching along, the Cuban government let us know that we would be able to continue the trip all the way to the Cuban military gate. We were also allowed to pull out our banners and leaflets. This was no small miracle, and most of us considered it to be the results of prayer and the persuasive powers of personalism. We walked for hours at a time sometimes singing or talking quietly, sometimes for long periods in silence. I tried to keep my mind focused on the prisoners, especially the hunger strikers. I tried to imagine that they might have heard that we were on the way, that we might actually be let in, or that someone so hopeless that they were willing to starve themselves to death to end their suffering might take hope. At times it felt overwhelming to contemplate the great suffering of those being detained and tortured, especially the stories of the children held. At those times I thought as I walked how it must have been for the Apostles to walk.... in a foreign land, not sure about where their next meal might come from, whether the person walking towards them was friendly, asking for directions when they were lost, seemingly on a journey that made them appear to be fools.

As the walking increased (and the food decreased) we were given the grace of feeling solidarity with the many people in the world who go to bed hungry, or who sleep cold and in hard places. It was a good feeling to relish eating a fresh orange, and sad for me to note how often I take for granted the vast variety and quantity of food available in my community back home. I was especially humbled by the stark simplicity of many of the houses we passed. I realized that we at the Hartford Catholic Worker have a long way to go before we can speak about voluntary poverty.

Finally we found ourselves at the last Cuban military checkpoint. The closest

anyone could get to the prisoners in detention without the permission of the US Government. First we hung our banners along the fence. After we set up our tents to begin fasting and vigiling around the clock. We called the base repeatedly to ask permission to perform the most basic work of mercy to visit the imprisoned. They turned deaf ears to our plea, as they have



to the pleas of the Red Cross, the United Nations and millions around the world calling upon them to restore human rights, dignity and due process to the prisoners.

Even though the base denied us

permission to visit, I still consider my pilgrimage to Guantanamo to have been. a remarkable spiritual journey. When we talk about building the Kindom of God, we know that we are talking about looking at the long haul and that it does no good to talk in terms of successes or failures. It is hard to speak to that as the clock for the hunger strikers clicks consistently towards their death.

Being part of a group of people who did everything in their power to bring mercy to a place of great suffering was an honor. It has left me in an altered state of sorts. I keep with me the mindfulness of my connection to those our government surely treats as the "least of our brothers". I know that since Christ told us that whatever we do to them, we are in fact doing to Christ. I have been blessed to feel the presence of Christ in and thru them. As Lent begins I keep that presence as part of my Lenten observance. I know that I will never be the same, and pray that the transformation I felt at the Gates of Guantanamo will never allow me to stop working and praying for an end to torture. I keep my eyes on the prize...that Easter morning when the body of Christ is Risen, and every one of us on earth Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and Jew will be one. Ω

## St. Martin's Calendar

- ◆ Please join us on **Tuesday, April 4, May 2 and June 6 at 7:30 PM** for the celebration of Mass at St. Brigid House, 18 Clark St., Hartford.
- † Please join us on Good Friday April 14 at 10 AM to pray the Stations of the Cross at the Sub Base. We will gather in the parking lot of Pleasant Valley Elementary School on Pleasant Valley Rd, Groton and process to the Sub Base. For more information call us at 724-7066 or Stephen Kobasa at (203) 777-3849.
- ✂ Please join us on **Saturday, April 22** for a work party at the farm in Voluntown. Call Mary at 860-376-1072 for details.
- 🌍 Please join us on **Saturday, April 29 at 9:00 AM** for our annual Earth Day activities. We will clean the neighborhood, plant a tree, have a cookout and play a game of soccer or flag football. If you are a youth group leader this would be a great opportunity for your kids to do some service and have fun while building bridges with kids from this neighborhood.

## NOTES CONT.

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about ten children went and the student athletes have expressed interest in possibly becoming Saturday regular volunteers.

Speaking of which, we have an amazing group of women that cook for us on Saturdays (and yes I do mean to brag). They HOOK UP the food! Mary Lou, Edna, Eula and most recently, Carol, have taken Saturday lunch to a whole new level. All of us, the children, and volunteers gather on the second floor and eat full home cooked nutritious meals on white and green striped table cloths with center pieces and brand new dishes, glasses and silverware to match. Our friend Jane Tate has initiated a once a month birthday cake celebration for each birthday that happened in that month and Carol has been baking desserts for after the meals even making a special batch of sugar free cookies for one of our children that is pre-diabetic. Thank you ladies you know we love you!

I have been working on an independent film about two women whom have moved through their lives with a strong sense of community and fellowship. Frances Crowe and Juanita Nelson have been active in the peace movement for over fifty years and I, along with Mary Novak from the Voluntown Peace Trust (VPT), are attempting to document their experiences through a series of interviews over the next few months. I am very excited about this project and am very grateful for Mary's assistance and guidance as well as our friend Marion Mollin's help with the research stage of the production. I joke around and say that I am only making this film so as to have an excuse to hang around these women but it's secretly true. They are both extraordinarily inspiring in their attempts to live creatively and

consciously while making manifest their philosophy of nonviolence. So hopefully at some point there will be a film screening at the Green House and Brian wants to go to Tribeca with me as my umbrella carrier but we will have to see about that!

Chris has been raising awareness about the genocide happening in the Sudan, which seems to have been lost in the media shuffle, through speaking at various synagogues, churches, and schools throughout Connecticut. He also met with



Senator Chris Dodd's office and Congresspersons John Larson and Nancy Johnson in order to bring to their attention the continuing genocide, which has resulted in over 400,000 deaths to date with many more predicted to come. We are very proud of Micalah who went to the Sudan last year with his father and has also been speaking at churches and schools about his experience. Speaking in front of a crowd can be challenging especially for a 12-year-old however he has gracefully risen to the challenge.

Well what can I say, Princess Di has done it again! She wined and dined us all at her annual fundraising spaghetti dinner where we had tons (and I mean tons) of delicious food, hours of dancing, and good

times with friends. As a result of everyone's efforts we were able to raise funds for our Camp Ahimsa. Thank you to all who came out for your support and company. And thank-you to the VFW of Windsor for their space, and Wilson Congregational church for their support. And a special thanks to Patty G., Joanne and John, Joe the Barber and Princess Di for all their hard work.

We need all the pasta we can get because these past weeks have been freezing! Thankfully Brian, Chris, Angela, and Matt (of VPT) have been working to heat our house with their "urban guerilla wood recovery" by collecting the remnants of fallen trees around the city. We are half way through our wood and are hoping to make it through this winter.

Jose is now coming to the house only on Saturdays because he is now going to a school in the south end of Hartford, which he seems to be enjoying a lot. We do miss his joyful energy during the week and so it is a treat to have him all day Saturday.

We recently had a guest, Yolanda, staying with us while she looked for a new apartment. She was staying in an apartment with her partner but had to leave because he was abusing her. She had already spent her monthly check on the rent and so she needed to wait for her new check to come in before she could find another place. At times it was challenging to accommodate her needs especially since we are not trained social workers or psychologists, however she had a warm bed to stay in and food to eat and lots of arts and crafts to keep her busy, which she loved doing. She was very good at crocheting and constantly was working on a clothing or decoration project. We wish her luck with her new apartment!

Morliana is very busy with her school work so much so that I hardly ever see her

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and the third floor is getting lonely. We would like to congratulate her on her recent acceptance to Central Connecticut State University. Oh, and by the way, if anyone ever needs their hair braided she is the chick to call.

Jackie and Brian were arrested in front of the White House on Ash Wednesday protesting the use of torture in all forms

and by all peoples. Jackie recently returned from a trip to Cuba where she and twenty five other peace activists marched from Santiago, Cuba to Guantanamo Bay as a witness against the injustices and torture being done there in the name of the American people. Since then she has been interviewed on several radio shows and participated on a panel discussion at Central Connecticut State University

about the atrocities happening to the prisoners in Guantanamo and speaking out against the terrorism of the United States government.

Wow! And I believe that that about wraps up the house news for this issue. Once again, this is Sarah coming to you (a) live from the Green House, thank you for tuning in and until next time continue to work for peace with justice and love! Ω

## FRED PFEIL CONT.

point, Fred never went to bed feeling good about himself because he did social justice work. This is a malady that people of power and privilege too easily fall into in order to assuage their guilt, or to live in a world of abysmal inequities and still get a good night sleep. Not Fred – he went to bed disturbed and he woke up disturbed.

And he made sure he remained disturbed. He did so by going to the prisons to do nonviolent work and looking into the eyes of the most dispossessed and marginalized groups in our society, by sitting all night in Hartford apartment lobbies wracked by political and economic neglect and taken over by ruthless, bottom-line, corporate-style drug posses, and by sitting outside the prison gates and bearing witness, while the state of Connecticut injected a lethal dose of sodium thiopental into veins of Michael Ross.

Fred accepted the burden of feeling life's injustices so that he could completely commit himself to eradicating them. But following this logic and its metaphor, it also meant that Fred never got a good night sleep.

This is the burden that he accepted and the standard that he has challenged us all to rise to. It places social justice work in a vital context – this is not about feeling good about ourselves or creating safe and self-gratifying identities, it is about changing the world and not resting until, well, until we have no other choice.

The second lesson that I derive from Fred's life has to do with his extraordinary attentiveness to others. Fred's wife Elli told me that

when Fred went to a party he made it a point to connect with everyone there – to find out what was truly going on in their lives. If he left before finishing his rounds, she said Fred felt that he had failed.

Simply put, Fred was the kindest, most compassionate man – and the gender is important here – that I have ever met. And I don't intend this observation as a cliché. Fred had this unusual capacity to shine on people – to make them feel special.

He did this one summer when my cognitively impaired brother visited. At a backdoor barbecue, my brother would disappear to the margins to smoke cigarettes whenever the demands of interaction became too much for him. Turning my head from the grill, I noticed that Fred had found my brother on the periphery, was smoking with him, and had my brother doubled over in belly laughs.

After that party, my brother never stopped talking about "his buddy Fred." When Fred was first diagnosed, my brother, with limited writing skills, nonetheless, sent Fred a card and a brief note expressing his sorrow. Fred, amidst the pain and agony of his radiation and chemotherapy treatment, promptly sat down and wrote back. To this day, that letter sits on my brother's bed table.

That was Fred – his reservoir of empathy and compassion was extraordinary. But it was only the few months before Fred's death that I realized this was not some personality imprint that had been left on him from his formative years.

As Fred's last gift to a group of us, he invited us to participate in a meditation group that enabled me to see not only how Buddhism

had shaped his life and his character, but to realize that Fred's capacity for love and kindness, for empathy and compassion was something that he worked hard at everyday. He cultivated it, just like he cultivated the fire in his belly. And these are the principles and standards that Fred leaves with us.

He was devoted to transforming the world as much as he was to transforming himself, and not a moment went by in which he was not working on one or the other. But these are not easy standards to live up to – they require courage, devotion, and hard work.

A lifetime of restless sleep and selfless engagement is not an easy prescription, especially for those of us who live on the privileged side of the divide in America surrounded by so many self-indulgences and manufactured pleasures.

We may indeed fall short of Fred's yardstick; nonetheless, I am certain of one thing – if each and everyone of us were to live the way Fred Pfeil did, the world tomorrow would not look like the world today. Ω



# Notes From De Porres House

Sarah Karas

Hello all! This is Sarah Karas coming to you (a)live from the Hartford Catholic Worker and I am happy to report that I have been here for a year and am still around to tell the tale! I am so very grateful for the many friendships that have taken shape and the lessons I have learned during this year's journey in living in community.

I often think about this word "community" and am easily overwhelmed by its implications; sharing, participation, fellowship. The concept of community seems to be foreign within the context of a society that values individualism and material wealth and sustains those values through propagating fear. Often times we will have folks volunteer here or come seeking assistance and are confused by the realization that we are a group of people who live and work with one another in intentional community. They will pause and look around at the homey atmosphere (comfy furniture, food cooking on the stove, people hanging out talking) and then say, "so, you all live here?" It would seem that they were expecting a more formal, office-like space that is often associated with "outreach" organizations or state provided aid offices.

But even though the Catholic Worker initially seems foreign and somewhat illogical within U.S. standards of career and family success there is something about it that is addicting and draws



David Klein

people in. Something that makes complete sense. I suspect that it is this notion of community and all that that implies that speaks to us as human beings- that hunger for communion in a world where it is lacking.

It is so great to witness the community that has formed as a result of our ministry with children. There is a tangible sense of fellowship that has

formed through the practice of sharing the space of the Green House with one another and intentionally making an effort to reach beyond our individual selves. We have a regular group of children that attend our after school tutoring program and have been working extremely hard with our volunteers. Angela has been diligently working with the children and expanding their daily repertoire by bring them on trips to the movies, museums, poetry readings, and UCONN games as well as filling out applications for local magnet school programs. We have had a great time working with Jennie Bruening and the Husky sports program that brings UCONN athletes

to our house to work with our neighborhood children. They also host an after school sports program at the Anderson Center in Hartford and have been very generous in giving us tickets to this season's men's and women's basketball games. This past Saturday they facilitated a day trip to UCONN to watch a women's hockey game in which

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