

# Unity Acres

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Dear Friends of Unity Acres Community,

We are trying to keep our promise of getting a Newsletter out to you at least every other month. We last wrote you on June 25 and it has been a busy time since and summer is coming to a close pretty quickly, Labor Day being right around the corner and The State Fair opening today.

We spoke to you in the June 25 letter about work that was planned for the summer and today the men arrived to begin the roof of the STAR building. The old roof is being removed and a new steel roof replacing it along with R-30 Insulation. When the roof is completed, the windows of that building will be replaced. Also new ceiling tiles will replace the present sagging ones. The walls will be painted, new flooring installed and the aging chairs replaced. Our hopes were that all of these improvements to our STAR building would be complete before our FALL FESTIVAL ON SEPTEMBER 21 but the weather hasn't been too cooperative. And so we will probably have a clever sign advising everyone that day reading something like "Please pardon our appearance, we are under construction". The day that the steel was delivered, measurements were being taken by another contractor to replace the windows on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors of "B" Building.

This week also saw a plumb line being dropped from the top of "B" Building down to a spot where a hole was dug, and filled with cement, to await yet another worker who will repair the damaged fire escape on the east side of "B" Building. The same procedure will take place on the west side for that fire escape. In the meantime, one of our men has been working diligently on the south side of "B" Building, scraping and preparing it for a fresh coat of white paint. The south side of the two story part of "C" Building, for years known as "The Infirmary" will receive new siding in September.

In addition to the above improvements, much has been done all summer with men cleaning the inside of the buildings hauling trash out to the waiting dumpster, as well as meticulous work done on the lawns and gardens.

Mowing and weed-eating since Spring; the vegetable garden in and we have been enjoying the fruits of their labor with corn, tomatoes, zucchini and summer squash. The flower gardens flourished with the yellow gold-finches thoroughly enjoying the sun flowers. We have been disappointed this year however when our Rose of Sharon bushes did not produce. Our 90 year old Ed Westman who passed away in June told us that he planted them 20 years ago and actually wanted them yanked out with the tractor this spring because he said they had died. We wonder if Ed's sudden demise in June somehow was connected with the end of his Rose of Sharon bushes!?

It has been almost a year since we have written about our losses due to death in our little community. **Joe Galante** was a jovial fellow who lived here for several years. He had been a cab

driver before coming to the Acres. Joe at one time was the main man in our Canteen doing short order cooking. He tended to other chores as he became more incapacitated with difficulty breathing. He eventually was on oxygen but even at that time he disburshed the toilet paper in C Bldg! On December 23, 2013 Joe went by ambulance to Oswego City Hospital with difficulty breathing. On the 27<sup>th</sup> he called and said they were keeping him at least until Monday, his lungs were bad as was his breathing. On December 30 he called and told the phone man that he was told that if anyone wanted to come and say good-bye, that he was dying. Father Jones immediately went to Oswego and anointed Joe and we received a call the next morning December 31 that Joe has passed on. Joe was buried this spring in our cemetery on the hill.

During the past two months we have mourned the death of three of our residents beginning with **Mark Ressler**. Mark had been with us since April 2003 and was a quiet man and hard worker. Before his illness, Mark was scrubbing pots and pans in the kitchen, plowing snow in the winter, mowing grass in the growing months, driving the tractor taking food to the pigs, sorting and distributing the mail and distributing the daily gratuity to the men. For some of that time, he was accompanied by his faithful companion, Cujo, who was an 11 year old border collie. Cujo's death two years ago was a difficult time for Mark and soon after began his illness. Since January when Mark was diagnosed with his terminal illness, he was in and out of University Hospital and when home he could be seen pulling the oxygen tank behind him, stopping for ice cream when other food no long appealed and sitting on the C Bldg. Porch. He was an inspiration during those final months as he never complained and tried to remain fiercely independent. Mark lost his battle Tuesday, June 3, 2014. His cremains are also up here in our cemetery.

On Saturday morning, June 21 our 90 year old **Ed Westman** was taken to St. Joseph's Hospital not feeling very well. We actually thought he would be back home by evening. Instead on Monday June 23 we were informed that Ed was in ICU and dying. Father Jones and Peg rushed down to the hospital and Father anointed Ed and they called Steve who came right along with Bob Quinn who were with Ed as he passed on to his eternal reward.

Ed Westman was our oldest resident having reached the age of 90 in September and enjoyed a special Mass in his honor followed by a big birthday party in the dining room. He had come to Unity Acres back in the early 70's in the beginning of the Acres with Father McVey. He was born in Ireland in Barranaghs, County Offaly September 29, 1923. During his many years here at Unity Acres, Ed planted and tended to vegetable and flower gardens, especially his potato garden every year as well as the beautiful sun flowers, roses of sharon, hollyhocks and many other flowering plants. He could be seen daily riding his bicycle into Pulaski and Richland although he did stop the trip to Pulaski this year. Also Ed was in our Chapel daily either at Mass or silently praying his Rosary. To say Ed will be missed here is an understatement. Ed was a part of Unity Acres practically from the beginning and leaves a huge void here. We celebrated Ed's life on Sunday June 29 and he was buried in our St. Martin de Porres Cemetery that Monday.

At 2 o'clock in the morning of July 9, 2014 we were awakened by a phone call advising us that a former resident **Mark McDonald** had died suddenly in Rome NY. Mark had left the Acres in April for work as a taxi driver in Rome and had hoped to return in the winter as he had done previous times before. When Mark was here, he did beautiful carpentry work. This past spring he replaced the counters in our kitchen, put in cabinets in one of our staff rooms and did many, many other handy jobs. A couple of years ago Mark was the main worker installing new windows in B Bldg and helping also with the window installation in A Bldg. He was also one of our drivers. Mark was a quiet man who went about his work without any fanfare. He was a gentleman and many friends and his family

came to his funeral here in our Sacred Heart Chapel and his burial here in our St. Martin de Porres Cemetery.

A former resident **John McDonald** stopped in to say hello one day in June and was in hopes of returning to the Acres and was suffering from a form of emphysema. We enjoyed a friendly visit with John and gave him a ride back to the Syracuse V.A. Sadly we read in the newspaper a few short weeks later that John had died on July 8, 2014.

**Charles “Charlie” Doxtator** came to the Acres back in August 2011. His sisters Sarah and Euna brought him and we began a lovely friendship with these folks. They are of Mohawk descent and had been good friends with our Bear Foote. Shortly after Charlie’s arrival we were saddened over the death of their dear sister Sarah. He was in pretty frail health when coming here but hung in there and stayed with us until sometime in 2013 when he left to get his own apartment, but Charlie died in his home on April 3 of this year.

**Dennis Murray** was a resident here at the Acres back in the 90’s. While here he worked in our kitchen having been a pretty good cook. During the past many years however, Dennis was a resident of Rosewood Nursing Home where Father Jones visited him often. We learned of Dennis’ death at Rosewood a few months ago.

And another former resident **Lew Schreiber** was here back in 1991 when we first came to the Acres. He was a delightful man seen daily in the Rec Room playing cards, especially double solitaire. Lew also shared more than one game of horseshoes with us. After a few years, Lew’s health failed and he finally lived in Vale Haven in Oswego for many years where Father Jones visited him as well as Pontiac Nursing Home where he spent his final days and died June 16, 2013 and is buried here in our St. Martin de Porres Cemetery.

*We commend these men, O Lord, to your mercy and love. We pray welcome them into Your and their eternal home. It will be a place of light, refreshment and peace. “I heard a voice from heaven say ‘write this: Blessed are those who die in the Lord’”. “Yes”, said the Spirit, “Let them rest from their labors, for their (good) works go with them”. Rev. 14:13*

LABOR DAY PRAYER - DIGNITY OF LABOR: *“And so the whole Universe was completed. By the 7<sup>th</sup> day, God finished His work, and rested.:*

Gen 2:1