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He rained manna upon them for food  
and gave them heavenly bread.  
Man ate the bread of angels,  
food he sent them in abundance.  
—Psalm 78

40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

August 3, 2009

Dear Friends of Unity Acres,

Forty years ago in March, a small group of men arrived in Orwell to take position of the old Oswego TB San. It is easy to imagine that it snowed that day, and that these men – cold and hungry – must have wondered, “Just where are we anyway, and what are we going to eat?” Perhaps, they grumbled to Father Ray, “Why did you take us away from the fleshpots of Gifford Street? And bring us out to this unknown place?”

It is equally easy to imagine Father McVey – not in the least worried – replying, “No problem! God will provide.”

For forty years, God has provided for the many and various needs of the men of Unity Acres through the faithful generosity of our benefactors. It is not less true today than it was in 1969, or 1979, or 1989.

Whenever the shelves of the pantry were bare, the last can of coffee opened, the balance in the checkbook alarmingly low, He has sent us manna from heaven in the form of donations received through the mail and in person; food, furniture, building supplies, coffee, laundry detergent, clothing, money. He has sent, as well, helpers, men and women ready to serve for an hour, for a week, a month, a year, or a lifetime.

Every year, during the summer, the men of Unity Acres host our Family Picnic. It is their – and our – way of extending to all our friends and donors a very grateful “Thank you for all you do.” It is a moment for all of us to extend hospitality to those whose generous sharing makes possible our day-to-day living. We hope to see many of you on the 16<sup>th</sup>

Steve Dickhout

*The Rest of Your Life, Part II*

I always wanted to be syndicated!

Hi, I'm back again. – Smile; remember that God loves you; why worry!

Several things have happened since we've last spoken. Peaches has gone, as I told you before. A new kitty has joined the family. “Vinnie!”

Vinnie is a character. Let me tell you how he got his name... About two weeks ago, our cook made Eggplant Parm. This is one of my favorites. Anyhow, I had to get up for something, and my dinner was on my table. In the blink of an eye, he was up and had eaten my Eggplant. “You're Italian,” I said. He just meowed and went back to the Parm. I had a friend back in Brooklyn who used to go crazy for Parm. His name was Vinnie. So Vinnie got his name.

As I shared previously, I had been very ill. In fact, I received the Last Rites (I come from the old school – they are still the Last Rites) twice. Father Jones anointed me, and everyone waited for my trip up “The Hill”.

Which leads me back to my original story. (I'm not sure how.)

Everyone, but One.

That One was God! – A miracle? Most assuredly.

I had talked about miracles; in fact, we talked about them some years back, but this happened to *me*. This, and a few other things.

I slipped into a coma. For sixty-one days I hung between two worlds. Friends came and went, and I wasn't aware. Doctors came and went..

I am, or rather was, a bit of a Doubting Thomas. I believed, but there was always a tad of ‘reservation.’”

I am here to tell you these reservations have been dashed to bits.

And here's why!!!

I found myself on a train! You know, those old time ones, like the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Limited. Anyhow, all of a sudden, I was at peace with all around me.

A peace I had not experienced before. A warmth, almost a glow, enveloped my entire body. Spread out before me was a city. This was the most beautiful city I had ever seen. It stretched for miles and ran down to ocean's edge. An ocean so beautiful and blue, it hurt my eyes to look upon it.

I was that day – or whatever the time frame was – I felt the true power of God. Right down to my core beliefs.

I believe God in His Infinite Wisdom and Compassion took this Doubting Thomas, and set his feet on a new path.

He has shown me! I cannot refute His Existence. I am here. Speaking to you. He has given me a new path. A new lease on life.

The scientific would call it an 'out of body' experience. I'm not a scientist, all I can say is I saw what I saw. Nothing more, nothing less.

As an addendum to this, I returned to the Acres. Returning to the Acres was uppermost in my mind.

The Acres is a very special place. More than just a housing unit for single men. It's almost as if it were ordained from God. It is my home.

Returning home, I felt a new exhilaration I had never felt before. The greens were greener, the air was sweeter, the warmth was more than just body warmth. It was a real home coming.

Let me tell you something. When I got off that bus, I was weak, physically speaking, as a kitten. The men here, every one of them, surrounded me. They cared for me with the brotherly love spoken of in the Bible.

Friends watched out for me. Joe, Bill R., Willy, Louie, John D., Henry. The staff, Laura, Peg, Father Jones, Mark, and his wife, Anne-Marie, Steve and even the Board. What a rich man I am!! This is very personal for me.

The Acres reaches down into my soul, and taps that certain spot. It took the shell of a man, and made a human being out of him.

The Acres has been doing this for me for nearly fifteen years. They gave me Life. It has shown me the real meaning of God's Love.

*Please pray for the happy repose of the soul of David Nattress, who died in Oswego Hospital on July 10. Dave came to Unity Acres in 1989, and remained here for most of the next ten years. Upon first arrival, he worked in the kitchen, but was later on served as one of the watchmen, who patrol the buildings and grounds, during the night-time hours, attempting to assure the safety and security of the men. Dave left the Acres around 1999 or 2000, moving to Pulaski, and eventually taking an apartment at Springbrook, a senior citizens' building where several of our former residents have settled. Dave's last move was to the Pontiac Nursing Home in Oswego late last year. He was a talented artist, and a photographer, and used to sign his works 'Adrian', a sort of alter ego, Dave's middle name.*

*Dave's funeral took place in our Sacred Heart Chapel on July 16, and Dave's remains were buried at our Saint Martin de Porres Cemetery.*

### **Rest in Peace.**

Part III will be about the Acres. In all of its glory. And there is so much. There is a quote from Ezekiel that makes sense:

*Also the Word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of Man, behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke.*

Well, it is time to get back to Vinnie. He is hovering by the window, meowing. (Time to feed him – his stomach overrides everything else.)

Love in Christ

Johnny

## August 'Picnic' Prayer Thanks to God for 40 Years of "Loaves and Fishes"

"God will give a home to the lonely."

— *Psalm 6.*

Gracious God, we thank You, for 40 years You have given a home to the "Lonely."

"I have heard the grumbling of the (people). Tell them: 'You shall eat... and... have your fill.'" Thank You, God, for patience with our grumbling, You have told us, for 40 years, that we would eat. And we have had our fill of Your provision.

"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish... But what good are these for so many?" — *John 6:9.* Through 40 years, O God, we have so often faced what appeared to be not nearly enough. But You used the generosity of people, like the boy, to provide for all that we have needed. "Thanks be to You, O God!"

"The TB San (was) five buildings and 136 acres of land... A small group moved (in) and started to work. It was a wreck, inside and out... They wondered how they would pay... When it was needed, the money appeared." — *No Problem, the Story of Father Ray McVey and Unity Acres.* P. 52.

From the "wreck" of abandoned buildings and grounds, 40 years of loving work and care have transformed this place. It is now a place of beauty and security, comfort and peace. Of lovely grounds and gardens, of cared-for buildings that provide "a home for the lonely."

This has been our 40 years of history, O God, wondering how we would pay, persevere, provide, not only money and material, but people who care and share. You have sent them, O God, to help in countless ways, provided for all the needs of all the men, in body, mind and spirit. We thank You, O God!

"So they collected them, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat." — *John 6:13.*

How marvelous is your care for us. Through the prayers, the works, the giving and sharing, of friends, supporters, the men and volunteers, we have for 40 years, received more than enough. As we give thanks to God, we pray. Help us to remember, to trust, to share. Bless all who have been part of this 40 years of miracles of love and grace. Amen.

Father Robert Jones

# Projects: Summer and Fall 2009

*Objectives: Enhanced Safety and Comfort,  
Increased Energy-Efficiency*

The following projects are on our 'to do' list before winter.

- Install another layer of insulation in the Infirmary Building attic in order to bring the total thickness to more than 12 inches. Currently there is about 8" of insulation thickness.
- Frame-in and sheet rock a large room on the second floor of the Infirmary. The room currently has a drop ceiling with poor insulating properties.
- Replace the double doors to the main entrance of 'B' Building. The existing doors are non-repairable, and rusted out at the bottom. The replacement would allow us to open both doors, and will improve access to the ground floor. This will be especially helpful for ambulance calls and during calling hours and funeral masses.
- Repair the chimneys on the 'A' and 'B' Buildings. The 'A' Building chimney repair will require complicated scaffolding or a 135' boom to do the job safely. Pricing and availability of the necessary equipment is now being sought out.
- Repair the 'B' Building ramp foundation.

Projects that are completed or currently in progress:

- A new double-bay stainless steel sink and faucet has been installed for the dishwasher soak and rinse sections in our kitchen. The old sink leaked and could not be repaired.
- A new door, complete with casing and framing (fabricated on-site), has been installed for the 'B' Building 3rd Floor exit.
- Three additional picnic tables have been built for this month's picnic.
- The 'Star' Building is the 4,800 square foot pre-fab metal structure which contains our kitchen, dining hall and gaming room. Late last year we noticed rust forming on the metal roof. The entire roof has been coated with a fibred aluminum roof-coating.
- New pine clapboard siding is being put up on the east side Infirmary porch. Our plan is to replace as much siding on the east and south sides of the Infirmary as time, weather, and supplies will permit. The existing siding is a pressed board type, and has become deteriorated.
- Resident rooms are being refurbished: ceiling repairs, paint and tile flooring.

It should be noted that all of the planned and completed projects have been, or will be, accomplished by men who reside here. We do not plan on hiring any outside contractors. Thanks go to Gary T., Ed D., Sparky, Mark C., Steve D., Mark D., Ron K., John S., and Mike W. This list does not include all the others who lend their specific talents which allow the Acres to run so smoothly. God Bless,

Mark Baker