

Unity Acres

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February 18, 2013

*Blessed are the sorrow-bearers
for they shall be comforted by
the one who bears the sorrow
of the world.*

Murphy Davis (Hospitality, October 2003)

Dear Friends of Unity Acres,

During the past several months, our community has experienced the sadness of the deaths of two of our residents and of several other members or close friends.

On the evening of October 5th, PAUL TRAVIS passed away quietly and peacefully at the Acres. Born in Grey, Maine, on March 13, 1943, Paul had been a resident of Unity Acres for at least the last 23 years, and very likely had been here several years longer than that.

During the late 1970s and through the mid-1990s the rooms in the Infirmary Building were designated for the use of our older and less ambulatory residents. When Father Jones, Peg and Steve began their involvement at Unity Acres in '91, Paul had already been for a long time one of the housemen in the Infirmary, along with Art Fikes. Paul and Art looked after the men confined to their rooms, helped with their personal care, and assisted them with their meals. Paul would set up tables in the Infirmary's small dining room and carry meals over from the kitchen, so that the men could enjoy eating together.

Later, Paul went to work in our kitchen – cooking and prepping food. He considered U.A. his home, even though he came and went at intervals over the years. He was missed while he was away, and we were always pleased to see him upon his return.

As time went on Paul remained full-time at Unity Acres, only leaving for medical appointments. Paul was noted for his kind and cheerful manner and his desire to help others. Paul also had a great love for animals, both wild and tame. Every day he would be seen going toward the creek with food to feed the birds and wild life.

Once Paul had received a terminal diagnosis by the medical staff at Upstate's oncology floor in July, Paul and Steve met with Sharon Westbrook, a social worker from Oswego County Hospice, to make arrangements for Paul's homecoming. We already knew Sharon from a previous case. And so it was a big comfort to have the involvement of someone so sympathetic and already familiar with our little community in Paul's return.

Paul loved everyone and everyone loved Paul. Bear was able to quickly pull together a group of men to prepare a vacant ground-floor room in the Annex which would be easier for Paul and his care-givers than the 2nd floor room in 'B' Building assigned to him until his recent hospitalization.

Meanwhile, a number of the men had signed up for 2 hour stints to stay with Paul or to help out with meals, medications, and overnight stays, agreeing to take on the responsibility of providing round-the-clock assistance, presence, and care: Bob Q, Rick B, Dave V, Keith C, Roger I, Tom H, Larry W, Henry G, Bob G, Fed L, Chuck F, Billy C, Don H and Mark B. This commitment was faithfully executed by the 14 until Paul's death almost 2 months later. Mark B

was in attendance the evening of Paul's death, and during the weeks prior to his death, Paul was never alone. Long, warm summer days and evenings, and into the night, Paul would be seen out sitting on the porch, enjoying the beautiful weather. Many of the men would stop by to visit or just say 'hi'. All his needs were met with competence and care by the team of men who had made that commitment. 'Old Red' and 'Midnight', two of our resident cats, were also Paul's constant companions. Midnight remained loyal to Paul even after he was confined to bed, insisted on coming to his room, keeping watch and remaining with Paul through his last moments.

Hospice nurses, Leslie Hartell, RN, and Patricia Chapman, RN, quickly became our friends as well as advisors and we looked forward to their weekly visits. As September progressed, Kathy and Carol (Hospice Home Health Aids) arrived daily to help Paul with his personal needs. Paul enjoyed the hour or two spent with these lovely, caring ladies. We cannot pay enough tribute to the whole Oswego County Hospice staff. Their compassion, kindness, and expertise will long be remembered.

We will be forever grateful to Oswego County Hospice for the opportunity of having Paul spend his final days at home and with us, and for their assistance to our resident care-givers and to Unity Acres' own volunteer RNs Loretta and Aleata.

Residents, staff and friends attended the funeral Mass celebrated by Father Jones in our Sacred Heart Chapel at Unity Acres on October 10th. Leslie Hartell and Sharon Westbrook were among the mourners who came to pay their respects. Paul's faithful caregivers attended and participated at Mass, placing the pall on the casket, paying tribute and acting as pall-bearers. Their devotion to Paul was very apparent and touching. Paul's body was laid to rest at Saint Martin de Porres Cemetery with the sun shining and feathered friends singing in the background as his friends bid him a fond farewell.

ROBERT ANGEL died in Oswego on December 28. He had been for several years a resident at MorningStar, formerly Sunrise Nursing Home. Bob was a native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and a graduate of Catholic University in 1964. Bob arrived in Orwell in 1979, joining a group of four or five men who were in those days attempting to establish a religious community at Unity Acres, with the object of assisting Father McVey and serving the men.

Bob was Unity Acres' resident scholar: his lively intelligence and wide-ranging interests led to many conversations on diverse subjects over the years: theology, World War II, languages, the wives of Henry VIII, Gengis Khan.... Bob loved classical music – especially opera – and reading, writing, conversations about politics. He had a keen, original sense of humor and loved to tell historical anecdotes, connecting in one tale disparate elements such as the Pilgrims' first Thanksgiving at Plymouth, Lady Godiva's famous ride, and the likely effects of variations in climate over the centuries upon each of the preceding.

During his younger years, Bob served in the Dining Hall, waiting on tables, bringing meals to the men. In those days, our kitchen served 100+ meals, not counting seconds, at each sitting, and Bob had for a long time the greatest seniority in this frequently thankless task.

Bob had a great love of the Eucharist, and rarely, if ever missed Mass. Bob had been a regular lector at Mass for years until his eyesight began to fail, but continued to serve in various ways for a long time: at every Mass, he would casually (more truthfully: not so casually) peer over his right shoulder to take 'Census' for each day's Mass.

Failing health took Bob away from the Acres, in April 2006. He had improved for a happy period between late Spring 2007 until early 2010 when he was able to return closer to the Acres, residing during those years at Maple Manor, an Adult Home about one and a half miles from the Acres, in Richland. John and Debbie Carnes were instrumental during that time in bringing Bob to the Acres for Sunday Mass whenever it was at all possible for Bob to travel, and they would

often remain with Bob through the dinner hour after Mass so Bob could share a weekly meal with his community members here. Sadly, as his health worsened, it was necessary for him to return to Nursing Home care in Oswego. John and Debbie continued their visits with Bob, and kept us informed of his condition to the end of his life. In this, they were joined by Mary Ann Hogan who visited Bob and read to him, and kept us up-to-date by way of emails to Peg. [Thanks so much to all of you for your care for our Bob!]

Bob's funeral Mass was celebrated January 2 at the Acres. Bob had left instructions: Bach's '*Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*' for the prelude, and other hymns, as well as readings were specified. During the calling hours the previous evening, at Mass, and after Mass, stories were shared, with much laughter. I think Bob, with his great laughing soul, would be pleased. He will be buried at Saint Martin de Porres Cemetery during the spring.

We would ask you to remember Paul and Bob in your prayers, and several of our friends as well who died during the late summer and fall of 2012 and who had served our community or had been involved in the life of the Acres in various capacities: WILLIAM WAELDER, MARK WAELDER, REV. THEODORE SIZING, MARY MAPLES, JOHN MAHONEY, and DANNY HUGHES.

During September, as our Paul was approaching his death, the Waelder family were burdened with heavy sorrows. Bill and Mark Waelder were brothers, and the sons of Patricia and the late William Waelder. Bill and Mark's parents were among the very first supporters of the idea of Unity Acres, and members of the Waelder have continued involvement with the Unity Acres community since the 1960s. Bill died unexpectedly on September 9th, and Mark on the 26th. Mark had been a member of our board of directors and had served for two years as the president of our board. We extend our sympathies to Pat, to Kris (Bill's wife) and to Karen (Mark's wife), to their children and brothers and sisters and many nieces and nephews.

A week following Mark's death, we received word that our longtime friend and supporter Father Ted Sizing had died at Loretta's Cunningham Facility. Father Ted had been struggling with an illness for sometime but kept his cheerful disposition and smile during that entire time. Father Ted goes back to the beginning with Father McVey as they were both at Saint Lucy's in the late sixties. He was a right hand to Father McVey all those years until Father McVey died, and with Unity Acres until his illness prevented him from participating the past three to four years. To Jerry, Bruce and Beverly and their families, we extend our sympathy and consolation.

During those months this past fall while we suffered the passing of our own Paul, Bill and Mark, and Father Ted, we watched as our dear longtime friend and supporter Mary Maples struggled with terminal illness. Mary's final days were spent at Francis House and Mary died on November 23rd. Her life was celebrated Saturday, December 1st following the funeral of another supporter and good friend, John Mahoney. Both Mary's and John's funerals were celebrated at Saint Lucy's Church in Syracuse. Also on December 1st was the funeral of Danny Hughes, in Lebanon, NY. Danny was an old family friend of Steve and his parents, and during the last 10 years paid regular annual visits to 'catch up' with Steve and his mother and the news here at the Acres. And so to Mary's family, to John's and to the Hughes family, the sympathy and consolation of the Unity Acres Community.

"O Merciful Savior, send his angels to conduct Thy departed servants to a place of refreshment, light and peace." AMEN.

Finally, please keep our own Father Jones in your thoughts and prayers: he has been suffering from compression fractures in his lower spine for some time, and as the result of a fall in early February fractured his pelvis. He was taken to Saint Joe's for treatment and was subsequently admitted to the Manor in Oswego for physical therapy and recuperation. We are looking forward to his return to the Acres during the next few weeks.

Loretta, Peg, Steve

Christmas Mass at Unity Acres, 2012

"And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart."

-- Luke 2, 19 (Mass at Christmas)

It was Christmas morning, Mass scheduled for 11 AM. It seemed that I, a victim of fractures, might be unable to preside. I could not stand at the Altar. But with the help of many good people, a chair and card table enabled me to celebrate Mass after all. A Christmas gift! Our beautiful chapel, with its manger scene, bathed in gentle blue light, sent the message of Peace, another Christmas gift! Best of all, the congregation was alive and involved with extra singers: Mary Agnes led us in with 'O Come All Ye Faithful', Happy Birthday, Jesus! As I sat through out at the card table made Altar, and consecrated the hosts -- Jesus, born that night in a stable, Jesus, born this day, at this table, a Christmas gift! This was our Christmas -- so may it always be. May we, with Mary, 'keep these things' in mind, and 'reflect on them' in our hearts. Thank you, Jesus, and may He bless all of you.

Father Robert Jones