

Unity Acres
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40th Anniversary

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September 16, 2008

Dear Friends of Unity Acres:

After several damp and rainy days, and a very windy Sunday night, we are enjoying a perfect, beautiful September evening. Returning from supper -- hot dogs and beans, squash and broccoli, and glancing out the window to the north, I see patches of blue through the clouds and past the tall straight Scotch Pines that tower many feet over the North Wing. A few hours later, and the sky is now perfectly clear: the blue dome of the heavens, reds and pink to the west, while the eastern sky is already becoming dark. The calendar says it is still summer, but crisp air and the leaves of the Sugar maples, ubiquitous in our Northern New York forests, say otherwise. Leaves which began changing colors for autumn several weeks ago are now starting to drop.

In preparation for the up-coming winter months, quite a lot of firewood has been cut and put away in the two firewood sheds that are located close to our out-door wood boiler. Additional firewood is stored away in what we still call the Hay Barn: the structure that had been put to use for hay storage during the years, not so long ago, when we were raising cattle at Unity Acres. Meanwhile, much of the vegetable garden has been harvested; the last of the corn stocks for instance have been cut and hauled away. The pepper plants, though, are still growing.



During the last several weeks, on the days when it has not been raining, several of the men have been working on repairing the roof on the North Wing. This is the long, low one-storey building just to the north of the Main Building, which houses our clothing room and other storage for various non-perishable goods donated to Unity Acres.

Last winter, shortly after a very heavy snow fall, several of the men were shoveling snow off of that building's nearly flat roof, when a foot went through a 'spongy' place in the plywood roof decking. This summer, upon further inspection, other feet (including this writer's!) went through other soft spots in the roof; so it was clear that repairs were necessary. The progress has been slowed a little by frequent rains, and by the need to revise plans as more and more rotten sections of plywood were discovered. In any event, we had rented a 20 yard dumpster for removal and disposal of several layers of rolled roofing, felt paper and rotten plywood and fascia board. Several hundred board-feet of pine 2x6's have been salvaged for use in future projects. The North Wing is now covered with blue and gray tarps, its roof stripped to the original tongue and groove decking, and with five and a half days of fine weather in the forecast, we anticipate completion of the project shortly.

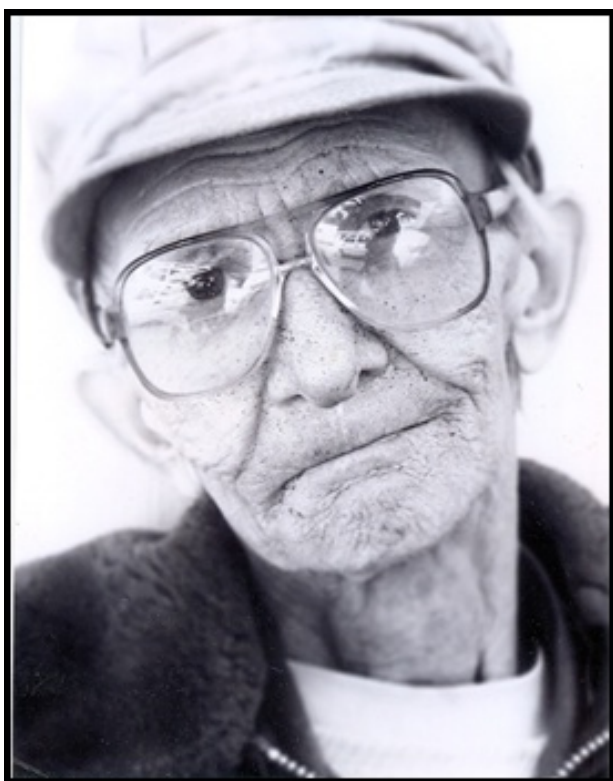
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One week ago, on September 5, at about 3:30 in the afternoon, one of Unity Acres' long-time residents, Arthur Fikes, passed very peacefully away. Art had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer during the mid-summer of 2006. He put up a good and brave fight against his disease. He had undergone extensive abdominal surgery in Rochester, followed by radiation and chemotherapy treatment which he received in Syracuse. By May of this year, however, it was clear that the cancer was still spreading and there was nothing to be done medically, so Art was admitted to hospice. In Oswego County, this is a service provided by the county's Health Department. Hospice allowed Art to remain at home, and in the midst of his friends, his community, his family, until the last 30 hours of his life. Early Thursday morning, having reached nearly the end of his sufferings, Art was taken by ambulance to Crouse Hospital, where he died the following afternoon.

Art first came to Unity Acres in 1985. He was from Little Falls, and used to return there for the occasional visit. He had resided at the Herkimer County Home until coming to Unity Acres. Always concerned with the well-being and comfort of others, Art helped with the care of our elderly and sick men residing in the Infirmary Building for several years. Art was well known and well liked in the local area, and for years kept up a regular schedule of walking or riding a bike -- rain or shine -- down the road to the store and the post-office in Richland, about a mile west of the Acres.

During the long months during which he traveled between Unity Acres and the offices of his several doctors, between Orwell and Rochester, Watertown and Syracuse, I had the occasion of spending many hours in the car with Art. He never complained. He never pitied himself. He was brave. He set a good example.

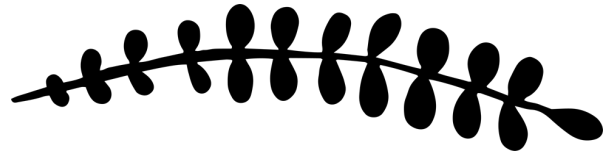
We would like to thank the doctors and nurses who helped Art during these last years: especially Dr. Ettinghausen, the surgeon who operated on Art in Rochester, Doctors Kotlove and Navone and Priscilla Nicotra, NP, and the entire staff at Hematology and



Oncology Associates in East Syracuse, whose professionalism and evident concern for Art as their patient never waned throughout the whole period of treatment. Lastly, we'd like to thank Vera Dunsmoor from the Hospice team whose compassionate involvement was instrumental in allowing Art to remain at home and to be kept comfortable here at the Acres.

Art's funeral was held in our little chapel here at Unity Acres on Thursday, September 11; his burial took place that same day in our Saint Martin de Porres Cemetery. We ask you to pray for Art's happy repose; that his soul, and the souls of all our departed brothers and sisters buried at Saint Martin de Porres, REST IN PEACE.

Steve Dickhout



September Prayer: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1)

Here, between brook and cemetery, peace and beauty abound, in sight and sound - perfect setting for prayer.

But the "real world" with its violence, noise and rushing, presents a real obstacle to prayer. We get distracted, weary, discouraged. And so we ask God's help to pray, which is itself a prayer.

Lord Jesus, You bid us to "pray always" (Luke 18:1), yet we so often find it so difficult to pray: "We do not know how we should pray" (Romans 8:26). Help us to know that Your Spirit "pleads for us in ways that words can not express" (Romans 8:26).

Send us Your Spirit, Lord, to teach us to pray. Let us experience prayer as a precious jewel of your love with many facets:

- A conversation with You, who always hear us: may we be still to listen to You.
- An act of praise of Your goodness and glory: "O God, how wonderful Your name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:1)
- An act of thanksgiving: "We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you." (Colossians 1:3)
- An act of contrition: "Be merciful to me, O God, in Your steadfast love ... remove my sin, and I will be clean." (Psalm 51: 1,7)
- An act of asking, with faith and trust, with perseverance: "He will hear His people, and listen to their prayer." (Psalm 102:17)

May we persevere in prayer in all circumstances: Lord, teach us, help us, to pray.

Father Robert Jones