



UNITY ACRES
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September 2004

Dear Friends of Unity Acres:

“Yea, tho I walk through the Valley...”, or so the old scripture goes. It seems fitting somehow. Every alcoholic knows that valley well. We've all experienced it.

The day was warm! A gentle breeze blew in off the Lake, and the sky was azure blue (poetic, aren't I?) I remember it like it was yesterday.

“The Acres.” I had learned about it a few days earlier from a fellow named Kevin. Father McVey and Kate had been laid to rest just a few months earlier. I had arrived in Syracuse from Hagerstown, Maryland. Being sober for some time at that point, well that is to say, I hadn't been drinking for quite a long time. Sobriety however was as elusive as the fabled unicorn. I was a very sick individual! Spiritually sick!! Bankrupt in all departments! Which, no doubt for an alcoholic, is the worse part of the disease of alcoholism. The bleakness that seeps into the very bane of existence. It is a void which nothing on Earth can fill. By the time I reached the Acres, I was well into that void.

So here I am standing on Jefferson Street in Pulaski, trying to figure what I had gotten myself into. As I look up, here comes this red mini-van, with a huge yellow smiley face on the hood. Climbing in, my first thoughts were: “Oh God, I'm on my way to a hippie commune.” (For an ex-Marine, hippie and commune were tantamount to being on Mars.) This soft-spoken guy named Steve was driving, and he didn't look like a hippie. (Not really.) He talked to me about a variety of things, and I could tell he was truly interested. Now that amazed me! It had been some time since anyone was interested in me, or my ideas. Little by little, the scorn, cynicism and genuine ‘nuttiness’ gave way.

That was quite a few years ago! My life is very different today. All the credit going to God, with a little credit going to Steve and the God-Mobile, Peggy, Bill Spurrier, and Father Jones. The Olympics had their dream team, and I had mine.

I am retired today, and was living in Bakersfield, California --I had a one bedroom apartment, and my own furniture (not bad for a guy who climbed into that van with one bag -- a small one at that!) -- until the Spring of 2003, when the spirit moved me to make a return to the Acres to serve in whatever capacity was needed. I've crossed the country twice more since then, and will be headed to California later today. But I hope to be returning to the Acres before the end of the year.

My sobriety is intact, for today. Most of all though, and most important, my commo line to God in fully functional.

There are no words adequate to express my gratitude and love for this place and its people. The Acres is a place where love lives. -- Dignity abides -- and lives are reborn.

Thank you seems so inadequate,
John Lusby

Please pray for the repose of PHILIP RICE, CLIFFORD WATROUS, BILL LEETZ and PAUL CHALOUX, all of whom died recently. Phil Rice was an old-time resident of the Acres, who had been away from here for many years. We received word through one of his friends that he was an impatient on the 8th floor of the VA in Syracuse, and not expected to live much longer. He expressed his wish to be buried in the Unity Acres Cemetery. When Phil died on August 14th, we made contact with his daughter in Cleveland, Ohio, and made the arrangements for Phil's burial. We also learned at that time that Phil had been living in Cleveland, New York prior to his last illness, and had been for a time a resident at Elsie Korvas' adult home in Cleveland, and had met Father Jones there several times during the period that George Granston was also living at Elsie's. Phil was buried here on August 17th. He was 69 years old. Cliff Watrous was also a Unity Acres old-timer, having first come to the Acres on December 17th, 1969. Cliff remained here, on and off, until the late 1990s. We don't remember the details very well, but Cliff re-surfaced after a time in the Pontiac, and re-connected with the Acres via Father Jones' regular visits. So we were quite aware that Cliff's health had been deteriorating during the past few years. Clifford died on the 17th at the Pontiac Nursing Home in Oswego. He was 83 years old. He was buried in our cemetery on August 20. Bill Leetz first came to the Acres on August 22, 1986 and he died at Lee Memorial Hospital in Fulton on August 22 -- the morning of our annual picnic at the Acres. Bill was a tireless worker, and spent many years as the laundry man, taking responsibility for laundering clothing and bed linens, towels, etc. for every living here at the Acres. He also handled maintenance and operation of our five boilers and several oil-fired hot water heaters. Many were the long, cold, damp winter nights that Bill spent trying to get the boilers operational in order to keep the rest of us warm and comfortable. Bill was especially remembered at Mass on our Picnic day. He was subsequently buried in our cemetery on August 26. Also on August 22, we received a telephone call from the sister of Paul Chaloux, Sister Marie, that her brother had died in July, and that he had wished to be buried here. His body was cremated and Paul's remains will be brought here for burial next spring. Paul came to the Acres in January 1994, and stayed here for a little more than one year. He was energized by Father McVey's vision for Unity Acres, and contributed his considerable talents in setting up a carpentry shop in the basement of the Brick Building. After leaving the Acres in 1995, Paul stayed in touch with us by way of occasional visits or phone calls. His last call was only weeks before his death. PAUL, PHIL, CLIFF, BILL, REST IN PEACE.

Our annual outdoor Mass and Picnic is being praised as one of the best. We are so proud of the many efforts that went into this wonderful day. On Thursday August 12 we were concerned that so much had to be done and it was only ten days before the Picnic. During those next ten days, our men came forward and everywhere you looked there was scrubbing, floor stripping, waxing, polishing, painting, lawn mowing, weed-eating, list making, van trips for food pick-ups, power washing, trash pick-up, grounds cleaning, room cleaning, bathrooms scrubbed and painted, the Chapel polished and floor waxed, window polishing. Sandwiches were handed out to us for lunch so that the dining room floor could be stripped and waxed and the chairs power washed. Supper was served at the doorway so as not to bring anything onto the freshly waxed floor. By Friday evening, August 20, everything was clean and shining. Now we were all concerned about carrying grass or dirt in on our feet. Saturday and more sweeping and wiping down a few more finger prints. The big day arrived, the sun was shining as well as our buildings and grounds and our guests would soon be here.

“Come to the feast of heaven & earth! Come to the table of plenty! God will provide for all that we need, here at the table of plenty”. Dave Danboise of St. Michael’s Church in Central Square leads us in the opening song of our outdoor Mass concelebrated by Fathers Bob Jones and Ted Sizing and approximately 185 participants/congregants gathered on the manicured front lawn of “B” Building with backdrop of Hollyhocks and Rose of Sharon, under clear blue sunny sky. From the prophet Zephaniah “Sing and shout for joy, people of Israel...and from Paul’s letter to the Philippians, we “thank God for you every time we pray for all of you”, you our benefactors and supporters. Matthew’s Gospel of the Loaves and Fishes further describes life here at the Acres. Peace Songs, then Janice sings “In The Garden”, and we close this spirit filled Mass with “Lord of Glory”..... “God pastures his flock among the wild flowers and leads them to the mountain of his love.... Leaping the mountains, bounding the hills, see how our God has come to meet us....”

After Mass we all gather in our lovely Dining Room to partake of a Banquet lovingly prepared by our kitchen men and others who have come forward to help with this bountiful meal as described in Matthew’s Gospel of the Loaves and Fishes!

Our men appreciate what all you our supporters do to help keep their home here at the Acres, and this Picnic is their way of saying thank-you to each and every one of you.

Peg McCarthy

September 2004 Prayer

“May the goodness of the Lord be upon us, and give success to the work of our hands...”

Psalm 90, 17

God our Creator, it is your will that we accept the duty of work. In your kindness may the work we begin bring us growth in this life and help to extend the Kingdom of Christ.

---Mass for the Blessing of Human Labor

We thank you, God, if we have been able to work. We pray for those unable. We pray for just working conditions for all, and end to the sweatshops and all forms of unjust labor. We ask you, Lord, to give all people gainful employment. Help the many whose work has been suddenly, brutally terminated. Give success, O God, to the work of our hands! Amen

Father Robert Jones

