



Unity Acres

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Dear Friends of Unity Acres,

The Fall always brings memories of days gone by. At least it does for me. This year I became a member of the Unity Acres Board. A membership of significance to me. May 1969, I moved into the former Nurse's Building. At that point it was the only inhabitable building. I came to the Acres as a volunteer for the Summer. Didn't leave for over a year.

I met Father McVey as a seminarian two years before. He was providing housing for men on — I think Chester St? That summer I worked as a community organizer in St. Lucy's Parish. Ray was a priest's priest. He was like no one I had ever met. So motivated by 'the Spirit'. He lived his life inspired by the Holy Spirit. Everyone remembers 'no problem'. The summer of '67 my assignment wasn't directly connected to his ministry. We (seminarians assigned to various places) met every week for prayer, mass and then dinner. The culinary experience was one I never forgot — warm bread from Columbus Bakery, surplus Spam and cheese accompanied by a little vino. We all looked forward to the prayer and the meal like it was a four star restaurant. The camaraderie was intense and the learning, life changing. So when the notice went up on the board at Wadhams Hall advertising the summer assignment I quickly signed up. But I had no way of knowing where this would lead.

Ray got to the Acres sometime in April. By June, I think we had 10 men living there. In addition to me two graduates from Oswego volunteered through the Newman Center. They had visited during the year. Ray mentioned he needed help for the summer program and they agreed to stay for the summer. They were perfect candidates. Two young teachers. They designed the summer program. Arts/Crafts and trips to the beach along with games and other fun stuff. My initial job was to work with a few men to prepare the building for the kids to play and sleep. I had to get a bus drivers license to drive the 'Crazy Bus' every week to get the kids and return them to the city! After school ended in June we would pick up 20 kids on a Friday night at St. Lucy's and return them the following Friday. The kids had a ball, but were a lot of work to supervise and keep safe, especially at the beach.

It was an intense summer. One of my favorite memories is mornings with Roosevelt. I would rise relatively early and he was always up with the coffee on and at the ready cooking fantastic breakfasts. He and I would sit there along with Ray, rolling cigarettes and drinking coffee as all the men would slowly move through the dining room. It was a perfect way to see

the men, talk and get a sense of where they were and where the day was headed. The coffee pot was the proverbial 'water cooler'!

As the summer progressed we had a crisis. The pump simply wore out and the buildings had no water. Peter a grand guy, a wiz with everything mechanical. He diagnosed the problem. Simply the submersible pump was shot and we needed to replace it. The parts would take two to three weeks and we were running the camp and had 10 men living there along with the rest of us. Ray didn't want to suspend the program so Pete came up with the idea to damn the stream that still runs under the bridge, which was wooded at the time. If we damned the stream we could pump water into the mainline and keep the toilets running and showers running.

Fortunately my dad a contractor had equipment. I called him explaining the problem. He sent a high volume pump with fire hoses up from the city to pump the water. We then built a damn which pooled water for the pumps. And it worked! However, we also needed more water for drinking and cooking. The solution, which Ray came up with by virtue of the 'spirit' was to use the water from the spring up near the Salmon River Falls. (It is still there. I looked last time I was at the Acres.) I would drive the truck every morning to the spring which pours out on the side of the road and fill two huge barrels. I did that for three weeks until Pete and Ray got the pump going. Of course Father McVey firmly believed that without the 'Spirit' we would never have fixed the pump, built the damn or found the spring. Kind of like the miracle of the wine at the wedding in Cana?

I believe the Holy Spirit was onboard with the effort, just as It has been the past 52 years. How else would we still be here! As Ray would say, 'no problem' and 'the Spirit will provide'.

Amen, Bob Detor



Please pray for the happy repose of HAROLD CROUCH, who died in Syracuse on September 29, at the age of 67. Harold came to the Acres on Christmas Eve of 2019, and remained here for several months until mid-2020, when poor health necessitated his admission to Park Central Nursing Home, where he remained until his death. Harold's remains were cremated and he will be laid to rest later this fall, or in the spring of 2022, in our Saint Martin de Porres Cemetery.

Also please pray for the happy repose of DARYL LOVE, and for the consolation of Daryl's family. Daryl had been with us at the Acres on 2 or 3 occasions, for a few months at a time, beginning in the late 1990s, but was last at the Acres during the fall of 2008. We learned of his death from his daughter earlier this year. Bill, Loretta and Steve were able to attend Daryl's memorial service at North Syracuse Christian Church. Daryl was buried on October 28, at the veteran's cemetery in Bath, NY.