

ARRANGING THE DETAILS OF OUR LEAVING

Working toward leaving a work is a delicate matter, requiring careful thought on the part of the ones leaving and those left! We made a decision to take a sabbatical for three months in the fall of 1978—beginning with a time for rest and reflection, but including visits to two geographic areas where we might want to live and work. The first area—Boston was more restful and reflective and included time for me to do the preliminary draft of a memoir; Washington, D.C. was chosen because of an opportunity to volunteer in an inner city ministry that would be a valuable learning experience for us.

Starting our Sabbatical with Rest and Reflection

Report back to the Board of Urban Life Center. September 29, 1978

Dear Bruce and Phyl and Jim and Kathy and Don and Scott and Norene and Jeannie and Phil and Ruth and Roger (Gee, there's a lot of you!)

I want each of you to know what a great idea sabbaticals are—if ever you have questioned the notion. Because I enjoyed working so much, it never occurred to me what great fun it would be not to! As a matter of fact, I worried a little bit about how I would react to all this leisure.

But that has been no problem and I can hardly believe more than a month has passed and how full that one month has been. Jan and Lucinda's wedding is a dim memory.

Most important of all, I have been able to write, to work on my book and make measurable progress, as well as work on several articles. It is becoming clear to me that a writing career can increasingly occupy my time and energies—something very comforting as I grow older. In fact, advancing age should only enhance my abilities.

I think most of you know that I've been weighing the prospects for my future for well over a year now; and that part of my need for a sabbatical was to put enough psychological distance between me and the Urban Life Center to allow me to freely choose among options.

I had come a long way in my thinking even before I left Chicago—over late spring and summer. This thinking intensified with the first month away and now I find myself so far along and sure that I have decided I need to write all of you now—and not wait until I return as planned. It is too hard not talking about my future plans with people I am so connected to.

The time has come for me to leave the Center in other capable hands. The decision feels as good as any I've made in my life. (And I used to dread this moment. So much has changed inside me over this important year.)

I like so much what we have done together—some of us for eight years. I like what the experience has done for me—what the association with each of you (yes, each) has contributed to my growth. I like what has happened to students—and in part, through me.

Now I can visualize others going beyond me—and that feels exciting. It is time for others to make the Center theirs in a way that will be uniquely possible as I go on to other things.

I will be back in January to continue my commitment through June¹. I assume that still sounds right to you.

The time in California with my parents was important. I was able to spend quality time with Dad, and say goodbye to him meaningfully. It is so easy for us to communicate and always has been. I found myself studying every feature of that frail and deteriorating body—the bony frame, the often-purple toes and fingers, the rotting teeth, the ways his brows would furrow upward when he didn't understand what was going on. I began to understand that photographer who recently published a book called *Gramps* that details with a camera the slow death of his grandfather by cancer. Some reviewers were offended by the book. But I can sympathize with the need to be there fully with someone's dying—to take it in.

Right now, it looks as though he has rallied. He goes home tomorrow. But whenever Dad talks about it, he means Home. And the doctor tells us it will likely not be long now—that home is a better place for him to be for his last days. I am not sure if I will go home for the funeral or not; I may be needed more later when mother begins making decisions about her future.

Meanwhile, we are continuing here in Massachusetts; we'll be skipping New York City, and heading straight to D. C. next weekend.

With affection for you all,
Eunice and Don

Volunteering at Community of Hope in Washington, D. C.

We framed this proposal to Community of Hope, run by the Nazarene Church

Purposes of involvement:

1. To continue rest/reflection begun earlier in the sabbatical
 - a. become acquainted with Washington as a parallel urban milieu with which to compare current Chicago experience in the art scene, the political environment, and Christian movements based here (like Sojourners)
 - b. to do research on issues which may occupy us in the future, such as what happens where classes and races meet in an attempt at community, and racism as a global issue, with particular emphasis on South Africa, using the resources of Library of Congress and groups involved in the racial struggle in Africa
 - c. to spend time personally with Tom Nees (director) and Jim Wallis (Sojourners), comparing notes as persons with intimate long-term leadership involvement in their respective ventures.
2. To continue my writing
3. To assist in the development of a structure for using volunteers and trainees within Community of Hope, with special attention to the processes of recruitment, selection, orientation and evaluation. We propose to do this by
 - a. Using the staff as resources for the initial plan (individual conferences)
 - b. Submitting ideas to the staff group for appraisal (staff meeting)
 - c. Doing any revision necessary, and committing the plan to writing, including possible forms, flyers, outlines, etc. with any degree of staff participation requested by them
 - d. Working with the staff on implementation to the extent which will guarantee that this plan will continue beyond our stay at Community of Hope. E.g., the plan should be workable immediately in the tutoring program, and in fact might be a "pilot" test of the plan's workability.
 - e. Anticipated time required: 20 hours a week
4. To initiate contact with Pat about the arts, and informally with street people (especially through improvisational jazz and poetry)
5. To be considered a part of Community of Hope to the extent of being included in staff meetings and to have opportunity to share in the "feel" of the ministry.

Mutually, then, we will agree that Community of Hope will offer us housing without cost for our time here, and help in getting minimal furnishing;

That Community of Hope will make some arrangement for supervising us and evaluating our work—making us accountable to one (or more) person(s) and clarifying our status among the Community of Hope family;

That we will indicate more exact arrival and departure dates a month in advance of each event.

That we will take responsibility for the tasks we undertake on the same basis as a paid staff person;

That adjustments in this general understanding be made with the full knowledge and agreement of both Community of Hope and us—so that our arrangement will be both clear and flexible, both organized and organic.

Mid-Course Reflection, November 14, 1978

From Eunice Schatz in Washington, D. C. to Urban Life Center Board

It is time for some news from the nation's capitol! Sometimes I find it hard to believe this is the seat of government. I walked to work today—a luxury afforded the residents of such a small town. I am still adjusting to the reduced distances, the accessibility of so much on foot.

First, let me wax eloquent on the joys and values, yes, the necessity of a sabbatical. I am ready to urge the board to take seriously the importance of making provision for staff to get entirely away (geographically and psychologically) for intervals of time fairly often. Getting fresh perspective and “the long view” are well worth the investment. I think this is more important than adding staff, raising salaries, or buying an IBM typewriter—which tells you how vital I think it is!

OVERCOMING CHICAGO-PHILIA

First of all, leaving the Midwest was important for me, and spending extensive portions of time in two other cities, Boston and Washington. I have been very limited in my concept of the urban environment, knowing only Chicago. And Chicago is very, very big—perhaps a little like New York, but not like many other cities. These eastern cities have felt like small town to me. Just in the matter of getting around—it takes so little time. Also, finding “the network”—

of artists, of educators, or solar energy freaks, or Christian communes, or black theater—is incredibly simpler in these smaller places. Even in Washington, with its diversity and complexity and many movements, the networks are fairly small and well known by each other. And I can walk from my house to Georgetown, or the White House, or the riot corridor within a few minutes.

One of our faculty friends told us that he felt we had a tendency to glamorize Chicago too much. Perhaps. At any rate, my own view was decidedly myopic. The request now from Ben Mehrling of Boston to establish some sort of affiliation with us as he begins a similar program of urban experience may be one way of overcoming incipient parochialism—and reaching out through this contact to a wider community. Also Jim Keith of Westmont Urban Program suggested that we urban program people get together to hash over common issues in the not-too-distant future.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ULC ENCOUNTER

I also have had occasion to think about the realistic outcomes of the Urban Life Center program. What a small segment of a person's life is touched by our efforts. And yet, over and over again, as I had contacts with individual former students, I had abundant evidence of the significance of their brief encounters with the Center's program and people: Judie Witbeck, Dick Pallotta, Carole Gabriele Peters, Jan Kliewer, Russ Smith, Mary Jo Bowman, Susan Heche, Mark Pedigo, and earlier—Neyci Hawkins, Ruth Kalter—all said in one way or another that the brevity of the experience does not match its depth.

In connection with this, my writing led me to a further observation. I was asked to write a history of Pioneer Girls' camping movement for the 40th anniversary issue of their magazine. In the process of putting the article together, it occurred to me that I have been involved in the Urban Life Center in a very similar phenomenon as my participation in camping—which was a crucial aspect of my personal and professional life in Pioneer Girls. Camp also was very brief in duration (one to two weeks for most campers), but it was very intense, very thoroughly planned and prepared for; the environment was critically important; and the small group living unit was an essential and formative element. The major difference between the two is in the environment—rural or urban.

When I realized all this, I was reminded again that a gift I want to continue giving in my life is this sensitivity to environments and skill in developing high impact compacted experiences, dense in learning value, and weighted heavily

with personal contact. It is not the only way to do this, for sure, but it is one element that has made the Urban Life Center effective and worthwhile.

LEARNING FROM A MIRROR OF THE ULC EXPERIENCE

My time in Washington with another “intense little group”—the Community of Hope—added another element to my perspective. In essence, it provided me with a mirror by which I could look at the Urban Life Center’s history more objectively.

The Community of Hope is younger, a bit smaller, but it is handling far more money, and more diverse activities. It is basically a church, first of all, and that fact influences a great many things. Yet, I found the similarities to the ULC striking, and sometimes disturbing. I went there expecting that the worshipping focus might be supplying an important element missing at the Urban Life Center. Therefore, the similarities were disturbing, and tended to reinforce my own non-churchy-ness. It often appeared to make very little difference, in other words. Perhaps I should not have been surprised. Also, all the evidence is not in. I have another month to go. I have a suspicion that my perspective will undergo yet another change with more exposure. We are just beginning to feel “grounded” here.

One reason we have not yet grasped the effect of this church-element is because we are not allowed inside fully. The organizing concept of the community is around Mission Groups composed of 6-10 persons, usually with a common focus of ministry. Short-term volunteers are not invited to share in these. The members adhere to certain “disciplines” (the “inward journey”) that include praying daily for one another and “being spiritually accountable” to each other (younger Christians meet with those farther along), and keeping a spiritual journal. We discovered a wide variance in actual adherence to these practices, however. There is considerable flexibility—partly stemming from the “street” constituency.

When I first discovered the difficulties of being included, of feeling “inside” the group, it brought home with great force both our recent experience in trying to include Norene and Scott effectively (and the feeling they had while “climbing over the wall”) as well as memories of the eight years of seeing people come and go, and being keenly aware of how tightly knit and groupy we always seemed from the outside. I saw my own part in creating this—something I wasn’t aware of at the time because of my own frequent feelings of being a bit outside, oddly enough. But I see it now—as I saw it reflected in

the Community of Hope. What I saw there was a fierce loyalty born out of the intense struggle for survival, and a subtle insistence on “equal dedication” from would-be volunteers and members. It’s very tough work, building a movement out of the rubble—literally, from the rubble, in their case—and there is little place for faint hearts, weak wills, or “take-the-fun-and-run” types. How well I remember similar attitudes that we held, especially in the early days of the Center. No one was so tough as we were!

Here in Washington, I got more in tune with the people who got crushed in such an atmosphere. There were a couple of divorces, some messy misunderstandings and splintering of effort (a second Wholistic Health Center is being developed just a few blocks away while the one at Community of Hope is yet in its infancy), and a number of persons who simply disappeared precipitously and never again made contact. I am finding here another group that needs reminding to laugh and enjoy—just as we have had to chide ourselves. The ludicrousness of the overly serious guilt-producing mentality is most clearly evidenced by the ability to create guilt about not having enough fun!)

Also, like the ULC, I see these persons here as some of the finest friends I ever expect to know. I feel privileged to know them—in just the same way I feel about the ULC board. I don’t feel harshly critical of them; rather I feel compassion, for they are a mirror. I see us in them.

What is challenging to me is to see myself as a Scott or Norene or Eglá—whoever—and then to work at being the kind of volunteer I sense the Community of Hope needs—something I have some feeling for now—“I’ve seen the it from both sides now,” as the song goes.

And I am learning a lot about volunteering. Probably much more than I am contributing by my work here (which was to help them develop their philosophy of volunteering, and develop structures which would enable them to use volunteers more flexibly and suitably). I don’t know that I have any startlingly new learnings to share—mainly it is good to be in this role and feel what it is like. I imagine many of you know what I mean. I could not have learned compassion and empathy as well in any other way I had to be one I recommend it highly for any paid professional who has volunteers working with him/her.

I'll confess to a very personal thing: it was really a hard experience for me to develop exciting ideas into a well-designed proposal. . .and not have others respond enthusiastically to some of the key concepts, and see the sheer brilliance and depth of my thinking (after so short an exposure to the Community of Hope!). Then a few days later to have the director/minister phone me in great excitement about an insight he had—which was point 6 of my proposal. I know, I know, I'm supposed to be pleased that he had either unconsciously made the idea his own, or at least hit upon it independently. But in all honesty, I do like to get credit for my cleverness. It would make me a better administrator if I were different. Perhaps this is one reason I find myself attracted to writing. Can I be forgiven this indulgence? At least I can confess it to you.

PERSONAL OUTCOMES

I've saved for last some of the personal outcomes of the sabbatical. I think I'd have to say that primarily the sabbatical provided me with an opportunity to do a personal overhaul of my motivations and goals—and the effects professionally will flow from that.

It is no secret that 1978 has been a year of change for me. And added to all of the existing factors of change came death—not unexpected, but always with at least some shock and pain. By my resignation from the Center, I am deliberately adding another dimension of change—an unknown future. The feeling of suspension this creates is sometimes exhausting and unbearable, at other times exciting and liberating. I ask myself why I have done this to myself. At the very least, I might have left some landmarks in place, certain stones unturned.

I can only say I have done what I wanted to do at each step along the way. I chose to share leadership with Scott and Norene, and I am not sorry. I chose to take a sabbatical, and its value to me is inestimable (I can never repay you for this gift). I chose to terminate my full-time active involvement in the Center (note the carefully chosen wording) because, in essence, I had left, and I knew I genuinely wanted to go. I have never wavered from that, though I tested it several times "to make sure."

The results of all those choices, plus the external events shaping my life this year over which I had no control, has been a time of immense unsettledness. . .a shifting of the foundations.

So I need you no longer as my board member colleagues, but as my friends. My fondest hope is that I shall leave the Center with your blessing and interested encouragement, and that as I am available you will often welcome me back to share your burdens and merriment as—of all things—a volunteer, who has learned a bit more about how to be one.

In December, I wrote again, with new insights and experiences to share:

Hi to you all.

Just got back from the “bread run.” Today it was with Isaac and Bill. We go over to Ottenberg’s Bakery, and fill a van (literally wall to wall) with day-old (week-old?) bread and rolls for the poor of Belmont Street. On the way we talked about things like. . .

Isaac tells me that the safest place to be in case of nuclear or enemy attack is Lorton Reformatory. He was describing the mock raid staged here some years back to see how fast they could clear our government offices and get people to shelter, and he was in Lorton and saw the whole operation—Lorton being the shelter! Then he launched into a discussion about Einstein and how smart he was. (I also learned that Einstein never wore socks because socks get holes in them if you wear them, and they don’t if you don’t, if you follow me.) Isaac enjoys jazz and poetry, and he and Don have jammed and read together on occasion. He’s one of the nice parts about being here.

I have been feeling different degrees of homesick for a couple of weeks now. Now it is becoming a reality that we will actually start driving back on Sunday by a very circuitous route through the south. That is, IF our car engine gets rebuilt by then. We feel fortunate that one of the guys here at Community of Hope reliably and inexpensively repairs car engines, among other skills. I have also taken advantage of their wholistic health services here, got a complete physical along with the psychological and spiritual approach that makes it wholistic. It was most helpful for someone like me at this time of change in my life—which is always associated with health.

My perspective on things here, and on the whole issue of COMMUNITY keeps on changing and expanding. Something occurred two weeks ago that made a special impact on me. I can even call it “a historic moment” and I felt part of it for a variety of reasons. Let me explain a bit:

Ever since Don and I touched base here we have been amazed that two groups like Community of Hope and Sojourners working so near each other geographically and with similar goals and vision could have virtually no contact.

You know Don and me—we are great “connectors” and we talked to both Tom Nees (COH) and Jim Wallis (Sojourners) about the other with characteristic enthusiasm. What we learned, over time, was that each had been very busy in their own concerns as a community, and just had not taken the time to relate, plus there was a crucial difference in approach that created a bit of suspicion and standoffishness, and even a shade of antagonism or rivalry.

This fall, Sojourners went through some disillusionment with their involvement with Community for Creative Non-Violence in the matter of creating a community land trust. In the process of working through this difficult problem, they came to Tom at Community of Hope, and John (COH’s attorney), for counsel and sharing.

Then two weeks ago, six persons set aside time to be together, to forge a plan for moving closer together—first to know each other on a personal level, and then to covenant together and take a (political) stand over the issue of housing in the 14th Street Corridor area.

The way in which they went about the coming together had all the elements that make something fully satisfying—sound analysis of problems, a gentle humble spirit toward each other and the community they are a part of, a sense of humor, a sharpness in asking each other good questions, a willingness to learn from each other and not stay ingrown in one set solution (e.g., the land trust approach).

COH has age and experience to offer, plus some well-built relationships with governmental entities. Sojourners offers the energy of youth, experience in direct action and confrontation, and is more sophisticated in their political and sociological analysis. They also have more people, and they live right in the community. (Some of COH principals commute from the suburbs.)

Both have “earned the right to be heard” by the people on the street. Both have an array of support services being offered to people (health care, day care, legal aid, tutoring) making them credible in the area of housing. Both

base their ministries and action on a support base of committed individuals bound together for spiritual/Christian reasons (i.e., a church).

In a time when so many Christian groups split apart or ignore each other (or worse, compete with each other), it was encouraging to see these two strong individualistic groups coming together. There was some “melting” going on, I am sure, and one felt the warmth as well as the strength involved in the joint commitment. Both the personal and political elements were there, in balance. I think their covenant, when it emerges, may give them sticking power to hold the line on real estate speculation in this area where other attempts have failed. Washington is rapidly gentrifying right now. There is some indication already that both groups are a force to be reckoned with when a realtor or speculator buys/sells or contemplates developing a parcel of land.

Don has been spending time with Sojourners, especially with the people on the magazine devoted to the arts. In his own work, he is moving out of poetry as a sole form of expression and into some visual stuff—design, drawings. How I love this. His visual art has always been more accessible than his poetry. He can tell you himself, when we return, how this has occurred. We are both excited about this.

Being in Boston contributed to the change. We are not sure why. Nor do we know clearly the reasons why we plan to move there in the spring. (God knows I didn’t need to add another score onto my “stress scale”!) But there have been inviting indications certainly. We have an apartment saved for us at a ridiculously low rent. And there are some interesting people/movements we are getting in touch with. I have learned well how to ferret out resources—and it is fun using those skills in a new environment. We are currently most attracted to the Community for Justice (not to be confused with the group Roger Dewey heads called Christians for Urban Justice, though there may be informal linkages established)—a group of persons now living in Quincy, but considering moving closer into central Boston where three buildings have been given them. We also enjoyed meeting and talking with Doug Hall who heads up seminary urban internships for Gordon Conwell Seminary, and who is on sabbatical this year writing a book about the philosophical base for urban ministry. He is one of the most thoughtful unique persons I have ever known. (You are used to my hyperbole, but I intend by that description to indicate that he is one of those “winners” with me. . . on a wave length I can relate to and which stretches me further than I have gone.)

I know you will have questions about this decision/move, but they must wait for face-to-face dialogue. Until then you will have to guess about the answers!

How the Board Responded to Our Resignation

I kept in my files my thank you to the Board for the way they responded to my resignation. In part, I wrote:

You are most generous and thoughtful. Everything you discussed feels wonderfully right to me. In other words, it makes sense to me to terminate as director on December 31, then fulfill some very specific tasks in connection with the interterm in January. . .

I am very pleased that you plan some sort of "Rites of Passage" for us all too. This is a fine classy organization we are part of and I know I will be proud of the way we achieve this transition. . .

The Last Touch: Afterword

In January of 1979, Don and I took on as our final responsibility the direction of the popular "J-term" where students from the colleges we served applied to spend a "month in the city" under our care.

I have a few jottings in my journal from that epochal experience—epochal, in part, because of the extraordinarily cold weather that descended on the city—changing our experience.

January 2:

The cold depresses me.

And exhilarates.

It makes me angry—impatient. The car won't start. The one in front won't move. It takes so long to get anywhere

I want to curl up inside.

Or feel the fresh air without having it sting.

I plough into a snowdrift with abandon, because I am thoroughly encased in boots and woolen scarves and hats and mittens and sweaters and coats.

I can slow down. . .watch the people. . .and wait for spring.

Why is J-term in January? I am frustrated that physical inconvenience may keep students from seeing Chicago's beauty and zest. But the cold will also expose them to hunger, and tears, and the shivering nakedness of the poor.

What will I see his term that I have never seen before, veteran of Chicago and January terms that I am.

I will open my eyes and look, and wait to see.

January 6:

Mr. Reynolds is a licensed "second hand dealer" on Maxwell Street. If he were a junk dealer, he'd have been pushed out. He's proud of outwitting his enemies who would be rid of the sprawling mass of assorted and nondescript objects at his place.

He's 72 and been in business since 1923—at first farther east, till the Dan Ryan highway came through and removed him. A Jewish woman sold him the premises he now occupies for \$20,000. "I don't take anything from anybody," (meaning welfare) he told us proudly. "I have to work every day to make it."

He referred to his lack of education to explain why he is working at this business. I instantly wished he didn't have the inflated regard for academic certification. Surely he too is educated. As Bill would say, he has a PhD in life.

He compares with the Sears Tower security guard who described in minute detail the meaning of the Calder mobile, then talked of the chairman of the Sears board's penchant for pendulums. Both men minutely examine the persons and objects around them and lift them to drama.

January 9:

What does it mean that in the midst of this term, I am completing Biko? I am deeply stirred by what I read, and am in fear of paralysis. I will have to deal with this in the course of the days and weeks ahead.

(I was also reading Race Riot by William Tuttle, and Black Chicago: Making of a Ghetto.)

January 22:

I have passed through hatred and paralysis and hysteria this month. Strong, strong feelings.

Yesterday at church "Abide With Me" came through to soothe and comfort, reminding me that God is an answer for me. I smile to write that. Fortunately we (He and I) know what that means for me.

Grace of God that has given me students so responsive, so self-directed and energetic, never flagging—during this dark month—dark for me at any rate.