



THE SOWER

True justice is the harvest reaped by peacemakers
from seeds sown in the spirit of peace. James, 3:18

Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm, Maloy, Iowa Number 5, Winter, 2010-2011

Dear Friends,

The late fall frosts have largely ended our gardens' production. Horseradish was one of the last crops to come in (horseradish, traditionally, can only be harvested in months spelled with the letter "r") and ours is the hottest I have found anywhere. We are down to milking one goat for the winter with two does bred to come fresh in the spring.

Mark Kinney, who spent a lot of time in Maloy over the summer and fall and helped with the harvest and fixing the house for winter has acquired some land and an old house near his home in Omaha. We will especially miss him at our weekly Bible study sessions.

We dedicate this issue to our friend Chuck Trapkus, remembering him with love as we commemorate his death ten years ago on December 22. Chuck never lived with us in Maloy full time, but his frequent visits and his gentle but persistent challenges did much to form our little experiment in the Catholic Worker vision that began here 24 years ago. It is not too much to say that Chuck is at least a cofounder of Strangers and Guests.

I am writing letter this not from home in Maloy but from the offices of Voices for Creative Nonviolence in Chicago, preparing to travel even further east and expecting to arrive in Kabul, Afghanistan, on December 11.

Embarking on this journey brings Chuck's presence to mind as Chuck and I had made several similar trips to places in crisis together, to Palestine and Israel in 1992 and to Iraq in 1998. I will be missing his company, courage and good humor as I travel.

While I will miss my home especially being away at Christmas, I look forward to celebrating the Incarnation quietly and without the commercial and sentimental accretions that burden the day in our culture. The first Christmas, of course, came to a land suffering under foreign occupation. Keep our delegation in thought and prayer.

Please contact me if your church, school or community would care to have me come to speak of what I will see and the people that I will meet.

Betsy will be travelling, too, after my return, but not so far and in the opposite direction. In January she will be



Spinach and other greens survived several frosts under row cover, providing us with fresh salads though November

attending a national Catholic Worker farm gathering at Sheep Ranch, California, and then attending our daughter Clara's Master's recital at the University of Oregon in Eugene.

On page 7, you will read about our reprise "Craft Retreat" in February. Last year these retreats were occasions of great fun and serious working, learning the ways that make for justice and peace.

We are grateful for all who have ordered rugs and other hand-woven goods from our business, Maloy Weaving and those who are supporting us with their alms. Thanks, too, to all who have contributed to the expenses of our peace mission to Afghanistan.

My expect arrival home from Afghanistan is the afternoon of New Year's Eve. I expect to be jetlagged but physically present. If you are in the neighborhood, stop by in the evening to see in the new year. Let Betsy know to expect you.

To all we send our love and greetings, prayers for peace around the globe and in this land of ours that is bent on more war.

Brian

Making and Doing-

a reflection in memory of Chuck Trapkus

By Betsy Keenan

As a 17-year old freshman dance major at State University College at Brockport, NY, I was required to attend a performance of the Resident Dance Company and write about it. As the audience gathered and settled, the main curtain of the stage was open, dancers, in typical leotards and tights were warming up, stretching, doing little bits of personal rehearsal, in a natural, random-looking way, interacting casually as people who work together do. The dancers lined up and a run through of some unison movement, started then dispersed again into keeping warm and getting ready for something.

By then the audience was watching and wondering, "When will it start?" I was confused. Music started and the stage lights came up and soon the unison movement came again- Ah! Performance, but again the strong co-coordinated section diffused into disorganization, we might notice now, the same warm-ups and interactions. As the "together" phrase came a third time the lights faded; the music stopped. It was over.

As a student I was helpless to describe, define or interpret this. That paper may have been the most difficult thing I ever wrote. I had no conceptual framework or language to talk about experiencing dance as an audience member. I had worked hard for years to learn how to "do" dance, I knew nothing about the why or the what- about making a dance.

In a few more years I could perform "Making and Doing" as the composer called this piece, that was my introduction to Modern Dance. I understood its structure of mingled predetermined and spontaneous sections, different at each performance, but the same in playing with the audience's attention, perception and the hint of freeing art from convention.

How I got from there- dancing in New York State to here, a Catholic Worker in Iowa is another story. This is about Making and Doing, Chuck Trapkus, craft retreats and why thinking about making and doing is important. Making and doing, as in art or craft, making and doing the Reign of God, the Beloved Community.

When I first met Chuck Trapkus in 1982, I had been with the Catholic Worker movement about 5 years and was living at the Davenport Catholic Worker. He was a young artist at the local newspaper engaged to a volunteer at the Rock Island CW whom I knew from the houses' common garden projects. He was part of "Bread for the



World", rode a bicycle instead of driving a car, helped with his parish's youth group, but I got the impression that the anarchism and radical analysis of the Catholic Worker was a little too weird for him at that point. He and Kim got married and went away to St. Louis for a year of volunteer work, with a structured community program for its workers.

On their return they bought a house, fixed it up and opened Dorothy Day House across the river in Rock Island. By 1984, as evidenced in The Dorothy Day House's newspaper, "The Catholic Activist," Chuck had been reading the likes of Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky and was growing more radical. Our lives became more and more entwined; praying for peace at the Rock Island Arsenal, gardening at St. Vincent's Center in Davenport and at Sugar Creek and in much "Clarification of Thought". In the summer of 1984 Kim and I were both pregnant, and in Easter week '85, our daughter Clara and their son Isaac



Betsy Keenan, at center, learning to make and do as a student of dance at State University College in Brockport, New York

were both baptized at a beautiful liturgy at the Davenport CW House with Fr. Roy Bourgeois presiding.

Like Dorothy Day, Chuck had a background in journalism. Putting out a newspaper was an important aspect of being Catholic Worker- for them- speaking prophetically on timely subjects- not just thank-yous, needs lists and touching hospitality stories. He was earnest in study and discussion of controversial topics and solicited many articles from people he argued with, as well as setting out his own views sometimes in cartoon form as well as in articles.

Singing was another form of communication Chuck embraced wholeheartedly. He learned to play guitar, determinedly worked his way through "Rise Up Singing," to familiarize himself with as many songs as possible, so they could be included the frequent house sing-alongs or at Sugar Creek gatherings. Then he collected and published his own pirate songbook of all the songs that people ever said "I can't believe it isn't in 'Rise up singing'".

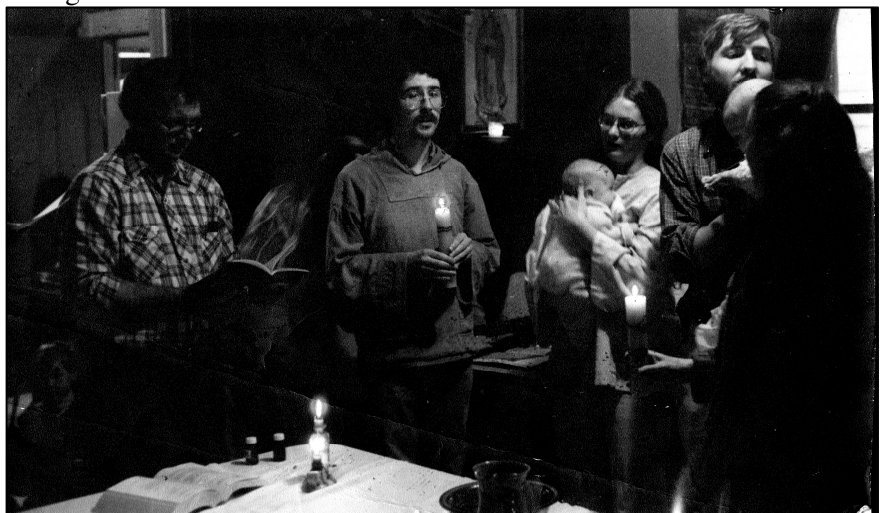
Perhaps from Peter Maurin, he found the influence of Eric Gill's ideas of work, art and craft, how labor has been dishonored, corrupted and turned to subhuman drudgery, rather than "love made visible". Wendell Berry

warned of the spiritual danger of turning homes, households from units of production into units of consumption. It was Chuck's mission and joy to turn back the clock on both these unfortunate developments, in his own way.

Of course, central to any Catholic Worker House is food. Where there is community and hospitality there must be food. Chuck's early interest in issues of food shortage and distribution problems deepened into questions of health, nutrition, additives and where our food comes from. He labored at gardening, processing and preserving foods. For many years he was a vegetarian, ate no white sugar or white flour, and fasted every Friday. People who lived with him also remember him as a great cook- with legendary falafel, pasta meals with choices of freshly made pasta and multiple sauces to try, sugar free mulberry and pumpkin pies made with homemade crusts and fresh fruits and consumed with delight. I remember great veggie-burgers and homemade popsicles on steamy summer days.

Central to Chuck's life was making what we need. In a culture with so much waste, boundless materials are at hand that can be used. The years of human culture that have refined methods of fiber production, wood working, food processing in terms of efficiency and design and beauty- so much of this treasure trove is available to us through books. Chuck mined the information from the library and other artisans. He was eager to help people learn new skills. People who lived with him say he made them believe they could do these things- get an idea and make it happen. His "can do" attitude toward problem solving seems to have had special impact on young

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Father Roy Bourgeois, left, presiding at the baptism of Clara Keenan Terrell, center with her parents and Isaac Trapkus with Chuck and Kim on the right. Davenport Catholic Worker, 1985

4 You're already on page four — it's high time for answers to the important questions not answered by the first three pages of this rag. Questions like, "What is this Catholic Worker thing, anyway?" And "Where do they get their funding, now that the Soviet Union has collapsed?" And "What won't they print to fill space in their newspapers?" But instead, we offer

A CATHOLIC WORKER PRIMER

AN EMBARRASSINGLY SKEWED OVERVIEW OF CATHOLIC WORKER BASICS [by Chuck Traphus]

WE START WITH HISTORY

since that seems to be everyone's worst subject.

In 1933, everyone was still Depressed from 1929, WWII (not a web address) was on its way, and NYC was a hotbed of homelessness, unemployment, and the occasional radical.

Enter Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin (sort of rapeseed with foreign).

After two years of assorted classrooms at the University of Illinois,

Dorothy moved back to her native New York to take up with the wild Greenwich Village crowd and the likes of Eugene O'Neill. She wrote for comic papers, was arrested as a suffragette, and again as a radical, had an affair, an abortion, a short-term marriage, a motorcycle gang, a sex-change, and numerous other outrageous things, some of which I am making up. Her "common-law marriage" with Forster What's-His-Name ended when Dorothy converted to Catholicism and had their daughter Tamar baptized.

Peter Maurin was a couple decades older than Dorothy, the oldest of several dozen children in a peasant family from southern France. A former Christian Brother, he

had been arrested for vagrancy and again for hoboing, was into manual labor and Catholic social teaching and not bathing, and just couldn't stop talking. When Peter and Dorothy met in 1933, Peter's vision and Dorothy's typewriter collided to produce a radical Catholic newspaper. Peter wanted to call it The Catholic Radical (really) but Dorothy changed it to The Catholic Worker, no doubt unaware that one day Catholic Workers would note a common characteristic of many in the movement: "They're not Catholic and they don't work."

TIME FOR MATH

The paper went for a penny a copy — still does, despite some 67 years of inflation (and it remains the priciest of all CW papers at that). In 1933, the 2,500 copies cost \$57 to print. Figure it out. At 1¢ per, no ads, the Catholic Worker couldn't begin to pay for itself, and so began a proud tradition of insolvency that has energized and impoverished Catholic Worker Houses ever since.

Houses, you say??

Well, Peter's penchant for threes brought us:

- ① Round Table Discussions
- ② Houses of Hospitality
- ③ Farming Communes



as well as:

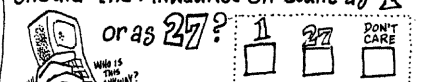
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|-------------------|---------------|
| ① CULT, | ① PRAYER, |
| ② CULTURE, and | ② ACTION, and |
| ③ CULTIVATION | ③ SACRIFICE |
| ① LITURGY, | |
| ② LITERATURE, and | |
| ③ AGRICULTURE | |

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| ① ROME, | ① BIG SHOTS, |
| ② REUNION, and | ② LITTLE SHOTS, and |
| ③ RECONSTRUCTION | ③ HOT SHOTS |

Of all these, houses of hospitality for the homeless, the transient, the unemployed, the hardcore Bohemians, seem the most accessible, and thus we have lots of 'em — maybe a hundred or more. Trouble is, some CW communities run more than one hospitality house, like, say, Milwaukee CW, which probably has their own suburb by now. Count each house separately and we can inflate our numbers most impressively. What do you think — should the Milwaukee CW count as 1 or as 257?



Call them up, at (414) 344-5745 and voice your opinion!



A LITTLE GEOGRAPHY NOW

Since the first CW house of hospitality burst on the NY scene, the movement has spread like bread mold. New houses



spring up like cockroaches at night;
old ones vanish
like coffee in
a Catholic
Worker pantry.

And cockroaches are
not exclusive to the U.S.—
that is, CW communities can be
found in Canada, Mexico,
England, Germany,
the Netherlands, New
Zealand, Australia,
and North Carolina.
(There are none, as far as
we know, in Vatican City.)
Of course, all these CWs are metric,
and therefore smaller.



SOCIAL STUDIES:

The Big Idea
behind the CW is
PERSONALISM:
being personally responsible for
everybody else's problems. The
word comes from another French guy,
Emmanuel Mounier, who would
be shocked to see what craziness
has been wrung out of that one
little word.

Beyond that, the CW is one of
the great indefinables of our time,
like God or electricity
or the Internet.

While many CWers run
houses of hospitality, many others
think they're CW snobs (in the
most polite sense of the word) and
embrace a broader vision of the
CW as a "Green Revolution,"
"a society where it is easier to be
good," "a path from where we are
to where we should be," even as their
"agronomic universities" are choking
from too many weeds and not
enough human contact. There
are those in the movement who think
pacifism is silly, or Catholicism



isn't much better than Satanism,
or gardening is best left to
migrant farm workers, or
cartoons have no place in a
respectable CW newspaper;
and generally a few sour
apples won't ruin the cider.
So when you hear
that the CW condemns usury or supports
unions or denounces computers or eats
wilted turnip greens, know that
the CW also possesses a
stubborn anarchist streak,
making generalizations
impossible. (That
doesn't stop some of us, however.)

If you say, for example,
that Personalism prevents
CWers from seeking tax-
exempt status and operating with
boards of directors and salaries and
insurance programs, you would be
right. But you would also be ignoring
the couple dozen CW
houses that have in-
corporated or are United
Way agencies or are in the
Fortune 500. After all, anybody
can call themselves a Catholic Worker;
there's no licensing or qualifying test
or membership card.

In this way, the CW
is like a big, some-
what dysfunctional
family. Some of whose members have
run off with the circus.

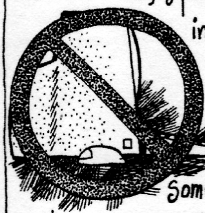
ART CLASS:

Peter was big on a
craft-based economy, — and he
didn't mean refrigerator magnets
and plywood lawn ornaments.
We must stay connected with
the work of our hands, avoid
becoming industrial slaves,
and write in short,
Choppy,



Free-verse lines
Like this.

And read *Easy Essays*, by Peter Maurin.
Which is all about envisioning a computer-
free society, but since it was actually
written before computers, he had to use a
lot of veiled, symbolic language. But it's
in there, trust me.



Some CWers dip
candles, some weave
rugs, some bake bread,
some carve spoons,
and some answer the phone soothers
can do these things. Imagine
basing an economy on this.

IS IT TIME FOR RECESS YET?

Peter died in 1949, Dorothy in 1980;
we're on our own now. Other CW heavy-
weights include Ammon ("Arrest me")
Hemacy and Stanley
("It was a joke")
Vishnewski, both
of whom are dead
nowadays, and a
gaggle of live ones (you know
who you are).



There is a move afoot
to canonize Dorothy, of all people, and
when she gets wind of it she's going to split
her splenius, so to speak. It's not that her
reading of banned books or her association with
godless communists or her openness to women
priests disqualifies her from the Saintly Honor.
Rather, it's what Dorothy feared most:

DISMISSAL:

Take away her radicalism,
her selective "obedience" to
church authority, her willingness
to get arrested, her French
peasant mentor and sidekick,
and put this nice old lady way
up on a pedestal in your
dusty chapel and what have
you got? Beats me, but please don't label
it *the Catholic Worker*.
Thank you. Class dismissed.



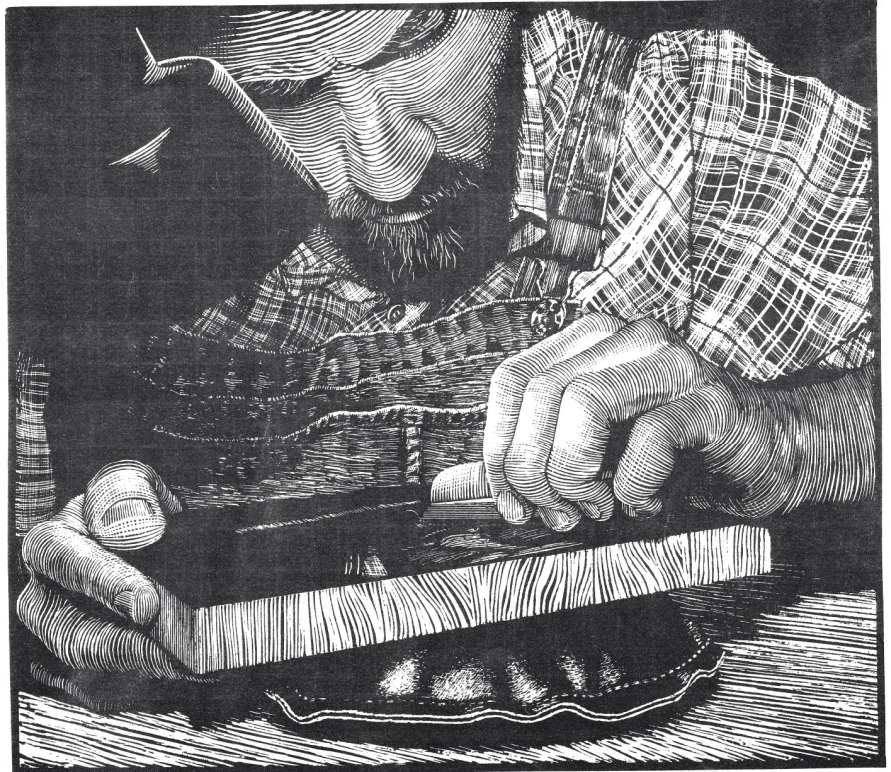
Making and Doing

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people. Our daughter Clara recalls that unlike other people he had no inhibition of moving from imagination to action- bringing new things into being.

A marathon project of Chuck's was his linen suit. He researched growing flax, and found seed that was adapted to our Midwestern climate and grew it. After harvesting, Chuck processed the flax, spun the fiber on a wheel that he built, wove cloth on a loom that he'd had also made and then sewed a shirt, apron and pants. (For more detail of this process, we could send you "Flax to linen: step by remarkable step" his booklet outlining this process.)

But Chuck wasn't just about Work- it was as important to him to make our own fun, as to make our own food-healthy food and healthy fun. It was hard on him when we moved to Maloy, especially as it happened when the Quad-Cities community was fractured in a number of ways. Along with his sons Isaac and Paul, he was the one



person who kept visiting us regularly, even 10 years after we had moved here (and was still trying to convince us to move back). Here he built the fantastic tree house, made marionettes, tried out new board games (he made his own) as well as playing card games, Scrabble, legos, gilli-danda and flying kites. Our daily life in Maloy was enhanced by his work, the spice rack and honey pot in the kitchen, the cold frame in the garden, the spool rack and shuttles by the loom.



Chuck, at right, constructing a tree house in Maloy with Elijah on the roof and Clara peeking out the window

Some people viewed Chuck as a John the Baptist figure- with a stark critique of our society, consumerism, technology and nationalism, but he lived with great joy- lots of laughter and fun. He enjoyed every minute of doing things and experienced and shared a spirituality of creative work because he saw the connectedness of things. He made us believe we could do extraordinary things by reaching for this connectedness in the everyday things.

Chuck was dedicated to community, but at times very lonely. People who lived with him spoke of his flexibility, that he valued others' input, bringing them into decision making. Chuck was especially gifted and needed very little sleep. Still it is hard to imagine all he accomplished. Much of much of this was done in community- a community that always was open to

welcoming the stranger, one that held each one accountable.

In Chuck's life the more extraordinary projects, and peace pilgrimages to Iraq and Israel were framed among more common tasks. Not a prophet in the wilderness, he helped an elderly neighbor, shoveled snow, went to concerts and movies and sang with an *a cappella* group, "Elvis on Velvet." Chuck reviewed audio books and his illustrations appeared in many books and magazines.

10 years ago, on December 21, the sudden end of a life so vibrant stunned all Chuck's wide circle of friends

and family. In the bitter dark of the year we mourned, we gathered, sang and prayed, comforted one another and many walked to the flagpole of the Rock Island Arsenal Administration building to pray for peace again. I realized we had a great gift in knowing and being influenced by Chuck and a responsibility to pass it on. Our craft retreat is an aspect of that. We hope to promote that atmosphere of applying our intelligence and skills to the basics of life. What are we waiting for to make a here and now that is creative and sustaining? We can choose to make not buy, recycle rather than consume and we can share an abundant life, full of joy.

I haven't told the story of Chuck's life, or a single Chuck story- though there are dozens of great ones. Much more will be said, by others I hope, and the memories kept alive. So much thanks to Steve Woolford, Lenore Yarger, Elizabeth Russell and Clara K Terrell for sharing their memories and reflections with me as I thought about Chuck's influence. Their words are here too.

Drawings with this article by Chuck Trapkus



Craft retreat returns!

February 17-22, 2011

Again we offer a rich blend of learning, sharing, making useful things and celebration. Many of last year's crafters say they felt recharged and refreshed by their craft retreat.

Tentative schedule:

Thursday: Arrival, organizing, planning and loom set-up
Friday: basket weaving class, rag preparation and weaving
Saturday: window quilts, cheese making, candle dipping
Sunday: Worship, relaxation,, folk dancing and singing.
Monday: Soap shop field trip, weaving continues.
Tuesday: Scripture study, clean-up,

Space is limited- please contact Betsy to reserve a spot



Eric Gill

Christ always seeks the straw of the most desolate cribs to make his Bethlehem. It is good that somewhere in this world there are some who know that Christ is born. There were only a few shepherds at the first Bethlehem, and it is the same now. The ox and ass understood more of the first Christmas than the high priests. And it is the same way today.

Thomas Merton

THE SOWER

Strangers and Guests

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