

Day After Day - July/August 1942

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Summary: Updates about Odell Waller's execution, the plight of Japanese-Americans in detention camps, the release of Panchelly, Woodworth, and Brown from Trenton Penitentiary, and the doings of various Catholic Workers such as Ossie Bondy, Peter Maurin, and Ade Bethune. Recounts her brushes with the FBI inquiring about conscientious objectors and the Office of Censorship, and shares her concern that the military has occupied land belonging to Catholic institutions. Gives the schedule of retreats, a description of Mott Street in oppressive Summer heat and various infestations, and an expression of gratitude to Nina Polcyn (Milwaukee) and Justine L'Esperance (Detroit) for their help. (DDLW #384).

Since the last issue of *The Catholic Worker* came out, almost two months ago, Odell Waller, the Negro sharecropper was put to death in the electric chair. All appeals for clemency were in vain. Perhaps those in authority thought that with Waller dead, the issue of the injustice would die with him. So many men are dying these days.

A Japanese correspondent (a young girl in college) writes the sad story of a little Japanese boy playing ball, and the ball rolling outside the fence of the stockade in which the Japanese were confined, and the shooting to death of this same little boy.

The Japanese in concentration camps are getting out mimeographed papers and one of the sheets warned its readers not to go near the fences any more.

Panchelly, Woodworth and Brown, the three seamen who were arrested in Hoboken on New Year's day, 1937, for getting into a fight with a longshoreman who afterwards accused them of robbing him of \$20, (which money was never found) and were sentenced to fifteen years in Trenton penitentiary, were released last month on parole. The Sister who sent Panchelly her stamp collection will be happy to hear this good news.

Letters and cards were received from O'Toole who works on a transport to Australia, and from Ossie Bondy, former head of the Windsor House of Hospitality who is now in England. We had not heard from O'Toole for some months so we thank God for his safety.

Another old friend of the paper, James McGovern, first mate of a tanker lost his life a few months ago. He leaves a wife and child.

During the month Chuck Larowe, brother of Dwight, who is head of our Catholic camp for C.O.'s, sailed for Egypt to drive an ambulance for the American Field Service.

Peter Maurin, theorist of the Green Revolution, spent the last month at Easton at Maryfarm. Now he is leaving for Our Lady of the Wayside Farm, at Avon, Ohio, where Bill Gauchat conducts a summer school at which Peter Maurin and Ade Bethune will teach. Peter will visit the Alcuin community at Danvers, New York, which the boys from the Philadelphia farm have joined, and the new farm outside of Rochester. Later in the summer he will take a trip through New England, so those friends and readers of the paper who wish a visit from Peter will please get in touch with us.

We have so many visits from FBI men who are making inquiries as to the sincerity of young Catholic men claiming the status of conscientious objectors that we all but wrote an editorial this month on "Love and the FBI." One government man acted as though he had never heard of the Sermon on the Mount, and the idea of loving one's enemies is strange to many of them. You come from an interview slightly dazed, not quite sure whether either of you knows what the other is talking about. These government men are supposed to inquire only as to the reliability and credibility of the men they are investigating, but to do this they seem to have to query you as to your beliefs, the work you are engaged in and the why and wherefore of it.

Letters also came during the month from the Office of Censorship in Washington. So far there is a bureau set up to impose only a voluntary censorship. It publishes

a Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press. Objection was made to our story on the Japanese, in the same issue, and to our calling attention (naming locations) of anti-aircraft nests on the west coast. The exchange of letters was pleasant, we apologized for our indiscretion in naming locations such as cities and monastery gardens by name, and they thanked us. But we are forced to repeat our protest at the presence of anti-aircraft batteries or some kind of camps along our waterfront, on the property of Catholic Institutions.

This charge was made during the Spanish Civil War—that Churches and Catholic Institutions were used as military centers and that is one reason why Churches were burned and priests put to death. Now again during a visit to a Catholic Institution along our East Coast, I find that six acres of the grounds have been taken by the War Department of the United States (at a rental of a dollar for the duration of the war) and that a small army encampment has been set up.

It is ten o'clock at night as I write, and very hot indeed. There is scarcely a breath of air stirring. These hot July nights people from the tenements round about sit late in the park. There is a special bench across the street in the little park, right under the shadow of the city jail, where the women from our house stop to refresh themselves before going into the close house.

The timeout is refreshing, one can see the sky, the moon and stars. The leaves of the plane trees have started to fall already and are carpeting the bare ground in back of the benches. "There's an Italian saying," quotes Mary, our neighbor, "with the fifteenth of August, say goodbye to summer."

The women's house is crowded now, sixteen of us, with three more in the country, including Eric. There are enough vegetables coming in from the farm to feed the women's house, but not enough for the men's, because of the breadline there.

There are thirty on the Easton farm, and the little camp on Staten Island has been packed with small boys, fifteen of them, for the past two weeks. Now they have gone home and four mothers with their children have taken their places.

Summer is a time of vacations, of visitors, of retreats for all the members of our groups. This summer all our friends are making their annual retreat at Pittsburgh and there will be none on the Easton farm until later in the fall, and then only for the group there. (The next retreat for women at Oakmount, Pa., is from August 2-9th^^ and that for men is from August 9-16. For further information, write Fr. Farina, St. Anthony's Village, Oakmount, Pa. Fr. J. J. Hugo gives the retreat.)

Visitors

We have much appreciated the help of Nina Polcyn of Milwaukee and Justine L'Esperance of the Detroit group this summer. It would have been hard sledding

but for them, what with the shortage of men. Larry Blum, seminarian from the Society of the Divine Word came for a brief visit and remained to help for a month, and Jack Thornton and Gerry Griffin are still with us though they will probably both be gone before another month is out.

The women visitors rejoiced over the new house on Bayard street, though Nina complained that she had been kept awake last night by a Communist meeting in a neighboring house where there was singing of the International and a discussion.

“Christ was the first communist” and

“What has that got to do with Lenin,” was all she heard of it in between snatches of sleep.

We have had our share of plagues this summer, to bring this account up to date. Rats as big as ground hogs, suddenly have infested the house, there have been fleas, cockroaches and bed bugs to an alarming degree. And the rain has poured down, in between heat waves, leaving everyone to steam and stew and itch. But there are traps and cats for the rats, and kerosene for the bugs, and in these poor neighborhoods, thank God, people live like gypsies out under the sky a good part of the summer. So I shall put this writing to one side, and go out into the stillness of the night, and sit on a bench under a plane tree across the street and looking up to the sky, say to the Lord, “I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of *Thy* house,” even if I do not care for my own.