

On Pilgrimage - April 1965

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The Catholic Worker, April 1965, 3, 5, 8.

Summary: Tender account of the death of a friend's father. Details of a long trip through the West and Midwest. Comments on the civil rights struggle, war in Vietnam, and farm labor issues. Visits Ammon Hennacy in Salt Lake City. (DDLW #825).

My winter pilgrimage to the West Coast began on February 1 and I returned to the East Coast on April 4th in time to write this column. Thank God, I will be home for Holy Week and can be in the midst of the Catholic Worker Community for that holy season, commemorating the death and resurrection of Jesus, a week of penance and a week of rejoicing too.

I wrote my last column while I was staying with the Allens in Tucson, Arizona. I was invited to speak to the Newman Club of the University (of which Jim Allen is vice president) by Michael Cuddihy and Philip Burnham. It was good to visit with Fritz Kaiser, Frances O'Brien, Dick Barber, and other old friends.

While I was there, Eileen Allen's father was dying, very old and changed since I had last seen him four years ago. He was smaller, as though dried up, like a seed about to be planted in the ground. He was dying peacefully, quietly, happily, in the midst of his family, with his grandchildren coming in to kiss him goodbye before they left for school each day, because they did not know whether he would be living on their return. Each day they pressed their sweet young faces to his and told him they loved him, and a little change in his face told them he heard them. He was anointed while I was there, and while Kim and Eileen knelt by the bedside in his room, the children and I sat outside in the long dining room where he had so often sat with them over the last eight years, and talked of death, and this great and mysterious fact of being born again into a new life, of which we know so little, except that we read in scripture that: **"eye hath not seen nor ear heard what God hath prepared for this who love him."** I told them what the priest told us on retreat: that if the child in the womb were asked if it wished to be born, it would say no, it was quite happy where it was, it knew nothing of any other life. And we too, savoring this life, grateful for it and to the Giver of it, felt quite naturally the same way about the future life, and dreaded the Gateway to it, especially when we were in health and in youth. The last anointing we were assured, took away the fear and the dread and prepared us for this journey.

The day I left Tucson the old man, who was in his eighties, died peacefully and painlessly, not long after we had said our morning prayers around his bed, and right after the children had left for school. Eileen, his only daughter, was with him, and Jim, her husband, was just returning from the bus station where he had let me off on my way to San Diego. When I called at the first rest stop, Eileen told me the news, and that Jim and her daughter, (and the little one yet unborn) were with her.

It was good to see Dick Barber again and visit the parish where he is working as secretary to a Spanish priest and living in two little rooms in back of a store. He needs more room so that others can work with him in that large area of Spanish speaking middle-class and poor ones, where certainly more mutual aid and more study of the problems of race and class conflict are needed. Tucson is surrounded by missile bases, just as San Antonio is surrounded by airfields, and the prosperity of the cities depends on these “deterrents,” these agents of man-made death which surrounds them. Everywhere attention was focused on Selma, Alabama, and there was great discussion, at least in intellectual circles, of the non-violence of the South and none at all of non-violence as a way to deal with world problems.

West Coast

At the invitation of Father Philip Straling I spoke at the Cardijn Center in San Diego, and I met there the young priest, Father Victor Salandini, of San Ysidro, California, whom I had met four years before in El Centro when I stopped on my way west to find out more about the lettuce strike which was going on in that great desert reclaimed by irrigation. Three of the San Francisco diocesan priests had been there and had prayed with and sung with the strikers, and for that work of mercy they had been rebuked by the San Diego diocesan authorities and their own chancery office and subsequently transferred to other sections of the diocese, and later still to other parts of the United States and Latin America. If young priests want to see the world, they have only to speak out in the agricultural conflict, which is still convulsing the West Coast.

Even more so this year with the repeal of the law permitting the importation of Mexican Labor, the **braceros**, who had lived in camps without family and were submissive “arms” of the growers. That is what the word **bracero** means. It is the local unemployed who are trying to work the crops this year, for the first time since the Second World War, when the braceros began to be imported in such great numbers, and now a subtle war is going on, with every attempt being made by the growers, the Associated Farmers, to make it appear that there is not enough local help to be had. Father Salandini, whose own family are growers, is already speaking out against the injustices practiced against the workers in the fields.

The last time I passed by, four years ago, I was driving alone in an old Ford, the gift of Father Clement Kern of Detroit, and when I knocked on the poor rectory

of Father Victor's Mexican parish (I had been turned away from the other parish when I had asked to see the priest to talk of the strike), he welcomed me and invited me to lunch with him at the kitchen table, but he confessed on this 1965 meeting that he had thought I was "on the road," and looking for some kind of a hand-out! It was a poor Mexican parish of course, and I suppose I was expected to belong at the other parish on the other side of the tracks.

Tia Juana

San Ysidro is on the way south to Tia Juana, and there was a strike going on over the pitifully small wages. In Tia Juana, destitution was everywhere evident. There is a new order of sisters there, with a novitiate where young Mexican girls are trained to go out and work in these slum sections. Alice LaBarre, at whose house I stayed in San Diego, drove me there for a visit.

My next stop was up the coast at Santa Barbara, where I has been invited to speak by the Franciscan Brothers at the seminary at the old mission. It was too bad that I could not stop at Los Angeles, but already I was behind my schedule. The hardest part of these trips is that I am not able to accept all the invitations to visit old friends along the way. The Catholic Worker family, one might almost say the Catholic Worker community, has grown so over the years that one could spend a year on the road, and sometimes I think that is the way I will end my days, – just traveling around, but in a car next time so that I will not be dependent on bus schedules and can get off the beaten track more.

At Santa Barbara, Frater de Porres, some other brothers, Jo Miller and Eula Laucks met me at the crowded bus station and I was able to attend and speak at a panel meeting that night at a local high school, where a discussion of *Pacem in Terris* was taking place. It was just after the great meeting of world leaders held in New York to discuss the encyclical, which I had not been able to attend, and it was good to get a resume of that historical gathering. The next morning there was a glorious Mass at eleven at the chapel of the Brothers, where the singing of the introit, gradual, offertory and communion verses was accompanied by guitars and the entire congregation participated whole heartedly in the singing. Remembering the love St. Francis had for music, I could only think how he would have approved of this work of worship this day, this full-hearted assent to the truths of our faith. There was a meeting after the Mass, and a night meeting to and after the Sunday mass the next day, another lunch at the Brothers, and an informal meeting with them until three o'clock. That morning, Cardinal McIntyre was dedicating the newly built church at which we participated at the Mass. I waited to pay my respects and tell him I was happy to see him looking so well and vigorous. Our exchange was cordial and it was neither the time nor the place to speak of profound and urgent matters that face the Church today both at home and abroad. He knows how we feel about the undeclared war in Vietnam, the tortures and devastation going on there, so opposite to the works of mercy for which we have always stood. I had been invited to speak

after lunch on Monday at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara. The discussion in the morning had been about world law, about revision of the Constitution as well as the drafting of a world constitution, and I could only tell the assembled thinkers of “the law and order” one found in the slums, urban and rural. Truly one could say of law that like love in practice it is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to law for love in dreams. John Cogley, who has been with the Center for some time, introduced me. The night before, John and his wife Teddy had been guests with me at the Irving Laucks’ home, and we had had plenty of time to talk about the new generations and their attitudes about travel, about common memories, with no stress or strain over opposing positions or differing emphases.

After the lunch I went to see Miguel, the artist whose studio was near the Center, and was delighted and astonished to find that he was the same Miguel who had stayed with us at Maryfarm, Newburgh, some fifteen years before.

At three in the afternoon there was a demonstration and walk through a mile of streets in downtown Santa Barbara to the steps of the City Hall. I participated in the march and the speaking, the first time I had ever spoken outside. We were expressing our sympathy for Selma and entire South for the reception the demonstrations had received at the hands of the police on their first march towards Montgomery, and for the first deaths in that struggle, those of Jimmy Lee Jackson and James L. Reeb, the first a Negro and the second a white Unitarian minister.

Oakland House

There has been a House of Hospitality in Oakland for some time, but I had never visited it and was looking forward to seeing it. Bob and Susan Callagy gave me hospitality and took the time to drive me around. They had written some of the letters appearing in the CW about the work out there, and seem to have a complete overall feeling for it. They are another example of how a family, given the temperament, the health and the energy necessary, can take care of work, family duties and such an apostolate as this at the same time. There are five children and enough other young families in the movement so that they babysit and exchange hospitality.

The children go to a progressive school in which the parents too take active part. Perhaps they will write some time of the school, its beginnings, aims and make up. Callagy, as everyone calls him, was in the Marines in the Korean War, and he said that on the wall of the barracks there was the slogan, “**Better a small war than no war at all.**” The indoctrination they received was that it was war for its own sake, war to make men, not to destroy them, or rather to make them by showing them their power to destroy. That seemed to be the kind of schooling they received. We were talking about the present war and wondering if the men involved knew what they were fighting for. Callagy told of

the tanks of napalm on low-flying planes, or spraying the jellied gasoline on the defenseless. It clung to skin and clothes and could not be put out or brushed off, but it burned until skin itself dropped off. And of course in this last month there has been the use of nauseating gas, and tear gas, and the gas which brings about diarrhea and chest pains and disables the opponent, man, woman and child so that they are incapable of fighting."They get them young in the Marines, "Callagy said,"seventeen, eighteen, before they know what anything is about."

One peace offensive which Callagy has engaged in was the rebuilding of a church in Mississippi last summer. He and four others drove in a pickup truck and with their tools, a good record player and plenty of symphonies and folk music, they rebuilt the church to the sound of music, in five days, if I remember rightly. "Someone asked if they had not been afraid, but five stalwart carpenters with tools in their hands, tools for construction, not destruction, filled with the strength and joy of youth, to the tune of great music, would be formidable adversaries. The symbol of Mississippi, a college student in Texas said, was the pickup truck, with a three-shot-gun-carrying rack behind the driver across the window, and no license plates on the car. At night of course, with dimmed lights. I saw many of them while I was there for two weeks.

I visited Mike Gold and his wife Elizabeth and was glad to hear that she was helping in one of the tutoring programs at the Oakland House. I spoke at the House of Hospitality where Hugh Madden presides. He is too militant to be another St. Francis, too gregarious to be another St. Benedict Joseph Labre, but partakes of the virtues of both. My talk there could go on only until nine since a crowd of men were waiting to unroll their bedding and go to sleep on the floor. Many of them knew the old Industrial Workers of the World halls and agreed with me when I spoke of the need for such mutual aid, such centers run by the men themselves. Susan Callagy, Dorothy Kaufman and others collect food from the markets and keep the soup kettle full. It is never so much a problem of food as of housing and warmth.

When I finished speaking at the place I went across the street to the women and children's center, which is in an old frame building, more than half a century old, with a few stores and tenants upstairs, and a large yard in back and to one side. It was big enough for a clothes center and for the mothers to gather together for sewing and for children's painting classes. Several of the families have the children home for dinner every week or so, and other times the mothers.

It is a solid Negro neighborhood, extending for five miles around. There is certainly a good group that make up the Catholic Worker crowd in Oakland and Berkeley and I'd like to mention all their names, but my notes are in another suitcase sent ahead of me and not yet reclaimed.

The next day I spoke at the University of California at Berkeley, on the famous campus where there has been so much stir these last months, some of it caused by a few who seem to distract attention from the real issues by their own craving for attention. I did not feel that I could cope with such a crowd as the one

that throngs the square at noon each day (although Ammon Hennacy was quite happy to take them on), a crowd which can go from speaker to speaker as they do in Union Square. Instead I had the use of one of the halls and there was quiet enough to sense the deep concern of the students in regard to the problems which confront us in the South, on the West Coast and in Vietnam.

Stockton

The next morning, Carol and Frances Gorgen (with their baby) drove Mary Lathrop and me to Stockton, over the smooth green hills where flocks of sheep grazed, and into the city of Stockton, where the agricultural workers congregate and where the buses are always crowded with migrants going up and down the long valley for work. Last time I was west, I had gone at 4 a.m. to the center of town with Andy Aerano, one of the organizers, to see the shape up, the trucks, the government agencies who were registering these workers in the fields. Mary Lathrop had herself shipped out from here to work in the fields and was familiar with the whole set-up. Last year she wrote stories about it for the **CW**.

We had a luncheon meeting that day with some of the young priests serving their internship in pastoral theology with Father Alan McCoy at St. Mary's. Here is another parish like that of Father Kern's in Detroit, where two of the Catholic Worker Houses are situated: St. Francis House and St. Martha House.

In Father Alan's parish there are a breadline, showers, clinic – all kinds of social services – not to speak of the superlative service of a **cursillo** movement. **Cursillo** is a retreat (made only once for the lifetime) which results in community, a retreat given by priests and laymen and fortified by prayers of communities all around, a course which results in conversions, rather a turning to God with the whole heart and soul and mind and strength. Community means that the **cursillistas** keep in touch with each other and help each other in any way they can. It all began as a retreat for the Spanish-speaking, originating in the island of Majorca, and was brought here to the Southwest by airmen who came to learn to fly jets. Strange beginnings!

To Salt Lake City

After another meeting that night with some of the parishioners, we had a good night at the David Brewers out on Eight Mile Road in their delightful octagonal house set in the middle of a wide valley of utter flatness, covered over by the blue bowl of the sky. I set out the next morning after Mass by train to Salt Lake City to see for the first time Ammon Hennacy's Joe Hill House of Hospitality and St. Joseph's Refuge. Ammon faithfully and dutifully has both names on a big sign on the front of his house, which was described in the last issues by Peter Lumsden, who came to take care of it for six weeks while Ammon was traveling on the West Coast and speaking up and down California. (I met Peter Lumsden

in California a few days before). Mary Lathrop, who helped Ammon start the house a few years ago, painted murals on the walls of the original house, which was a store-front on Postoffice Place, and helped support it by her work. She painted pictures not only of the execution of Joe Hill, the labor martyr of I.W.W. fame, song writer for the Wobblies and a legend the labor movement; but also of the Holy Family, of which St. Joseph was the protector.

Ammon was there when I arrived after a thirty-six-hour trip. Peter Lumsden had gone on to Oakland and I had seen him there, and I understood that, on his way home he was going to pick up Murphy Dowouis, half Irish and half French, or Cajun as Ammon always calls him in his column. Both Cajun and Utah Phillips, also a folk singer, played and sang at my meeting that night at the Newman Club at the university. There were a number of priests present and a good gathering of students. Ammon circulated the **Catholic Worker** and his literature against capital punishment, but he had no more books to sell. There are none left of the first edition, and he has five hundred dollars worth of orders for more picked up on his speaking trip. But the printer won't print more until he has more money, and Ammon already owes him \$1,500. He has not charged enough for the book; \$3 does not cover the cost of the book, and the mailing adds up to a lot. His friends should all be sending him offerings to help balance the books.

Pat Rusk had been staying in the house helping, and she was setting out with me the next morning, but she was going to New York via St. Louis. Just as we were leaving another young woman arrived. Ammon is the exceptional person who can attract both female and male admirers by the horde, and his own faithfulness to friendship is rewarded by theirs to him.

A Long Trek

By now it was cold again and I was glad of my warm coat, which I had carried through the heat of Mississippi, Texas, Arizona and California. There was snow everywhere, and a blizzard as we sped over the roads of the state of Nebraska, narrows roads, and every time a trailer truck passed us there was a great cloud of snow impeding our vision – mine and the driver's – since I was sitting on the front seat. Windows on either side of the bus were all frozen up and mud and snow-splashed and one could see nothing. It was good to be in front speeding through the night on the way to Minnesota.

This too was a thirty-six-hour trip, and I was happy when I arrived in snowbound Minneapolis to find Michael Humphrey, his wife Mary, his brother-in-law and his sister Susan waiting for me to drive me the sixty miles to St. Cloud. I was amazed at the drifts, in some places sixteen feet high, which I saw around the houses where the wind had piled it. At the Humphrey place the narrow walk was hard to get through with a suitcase. Mass next day at the Newman Center of the State Teachers' College, where Mary and Susan attend classes. Some of the

Humphrey and most of the Doyle children go to the elementary school connected with the college. The Mass was beautifully participated in and the Gelineau psalms were sung. In the evening to the movie, **The Pumpkin Eater**, which Mary, mother of a large family, especially wanted to see. It was very hard for us to get the point of the movie. What was going to happen to the wife after the sterilization and abortion? Was the husband going to quite his philandering? Was the wife going to become a gibbering idiot with nymphomaniac tendencies like the woman she encountered in the beauty parlor in the hair dryer?

After the movie we went to the home of Fredric Petters, where there was to be a meeting of families, which was late because it was a job getting all the children to bed. Their house is large and right on the Mississippi, which of course was frozen over and snow-covered and could not be distinguished from the fields except that there were banks on either side. There were many students there as well as married couples and the meeting lasted until after two a.m. The Petters, who have the largest dress goods shop in town, and Barbara White, who is a genius at sewing, had between them made me a beautiful dress of wool crepe, which was all ready for me on my arrival. A frivolous note to introduce to this account of a wandering apostolate perhaps, but an indication of the generosity shown me on my journey. Eric Gill has a lot to say about clothes and their meaning in our lives. He recalls the meaning of clothes in a little homily for the Stations of the Cross where Jesus is stripped of his garments.

Barbara White made two other dresses for me during my three-day stay, fitting and finishing one which Mary Humphrey, who has made dresses for me in the past, had all but completed. Mary is coming to stay with us at Tivoli this summer with some of the children, and we will put her to work making sleeping bags for the children, and we will put her to work making sleeping bags for the next winter. Not to speak of flannel shirts for the men of the staff.

The next day, Jim Palmquist came over and fixed the furnace, which had been out of order for a week all during the zero weather so that we did not have to all camp out in the living room, dining room and kitchen, which is one long L-shaped room. Michael brought wood and the Petters sent coal, so we luxuriated in warmth again. Jim himself has a family of seven. Three more inches of snow today and zero weather at night.

Another Picnic

We drove that night to the home of Herbert Burke; who is a professor at St. John's, Collegeville, where we saw another movie, a Japanese film called **Ikuru** (To Live) and is about a bureaucrat dying of cancer, and how he ends his days accomplishing a great work of mercy, building a park in a slum section of Tokyo.

His attempt to "live" under the guidance of a benevolent Mephistopheles (who said he would not charge him anything) and his finding the meaning of life

through a young clerical worker who had left her stupefying job in his office to work in a toy factory (no sex undertones, just contact with the poor and simple) was profoundly moving. Somehow she convinced him that he should return to his office and work at what he wanted most to do, not allowing himself to be strangled by routine difficulties. The story of his going from bureaucrat to politician, from office to office, his humility, importunity, and insistence, was moving indeed.

After the movie, a meeting again with the crowd of students from St. John's, most of whom were Dr. Burke's pupils. Again we were up until two a.m.

The next day, my last in Minnesota, we were snowed in, though there was in the afternoon a two-block walk to show solidarity with the civil-rights drive in Selma and to commemorate the death of the three victims, Jimmie Lee Jackson, James L. Reeb, and Viola Gregg Liuzzo.

It was a day of visitors from morning till night, so that there was scarcely time to eat (The kids, it seemed, were living only on the cake they had baked for these same visitors). To bed early and up at four-thirty to catch the 5:40 train to Milwaukee. It was one of those trains with a Vista Dome, but the uniform whiteness of sky and field was hard on the eyes. No evergreens to brighten the landscape.

I was so tired on arrival that I went to the Abbot Crest hotel, right across from Gesu Church and down the street from the Library where the archives of the **Catholic Worker** are stored under the good care of Father Raphael N. Hamilton, S.J., who used to work in the history department of Marquette. Prof. William Miller of the history department is writing a book on the history of the **Catholic Worker**. They were using the meeting, selling tickets to build up a scholarship fund for students from the South from Xavier University in New Orleans especially. The meeting was overflowing, I was glad to see, and it testified to the students' concern with social and racial problems. Smear leaflets were passed around outside the building. I had forgotten to mention that these leaflets were the usual thing at many of the meetings throughout the country, and were labeled sometimes as being issued by the Young Republicans, Catholics on Guard, etc, etc.

Books and Birds

I was happy to visit Florence Weinfurter at the Cardijn Book Shop, just across from the University, where I met Tim Dunn, from Sheed and Ward, who lived in Westminster, Maryland, and knew the Hennessys and the Ordways there. He said he had just seen Hazen Ordway again and that his oldest son is in the seminary. I also saw Donald McDonald, dean of Marquette school of Journalism, who is going to the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, just as John Cogley is leaving to work on the New York **Times**.

It was good to visit with David Host too, also on the faculty of Marquette, who spent a summer with us in the early days at Cahrls Street, in New York. Had dinner with Dr. Miller and his wife and family out in the country, an hour's drive from town, where he has planted a field of pines and added to his house.

By this time the snow was melting so fast that brooks were running from the high fields in back of the house and flooding the road below the house. The sound of running streams, the flow in the willows and fruit trees, yellow and rose, and the sound of birds, all this meant the end of a long winter and spring. And getting closer to home!

Pontiac

I spoke on April first at Marquette, and early the next morning I met Nina Polcyn and Sister Cecilia at Evanston railroad station, and with Mary Margaret Langdon driving us, we made the seven-hour trip to Clarkston, Michigan, where Father Martin Carrabine, former great leader of the apostolate, is invalided at the Jesuit notivate there. I had known him since the first years of the CW; his Cisca groups had papered the city of Chicago with copies of the **Catholic Worker** every May Day, and from these groups of his had come leaders for the lay movement all over the country. Father Bernard Cooke, S.J., whom I had just heard speak at Marquette, had called him unique – that he had given a leadership and an impetus which had never been duplicated since.

Father Carrabine was delighted to see us and recognized us, although it was very hard for him at first to articulate, and a short visit that night was all he could take. But the next morning we had two more visits, one before and one after the eleven o'clock Mass – three visits, just as on a Pilgrimage, one of the others said. Father had given us all retreats and been close to us for years. He was one of those priests who was always available, always encouraging, who seemed to see Christ in each person he met. He took the thousands of high-school students and young college students who thronged into his cramped offices as though he enjoyed the visits of every one of them, now matter how early they came, or how late they stayed. He was stationed at Holy Family Church on the West Side of Chicago and when the House of Hospitality was thriving on Blue Island Avenue, we were in his parish.

During the organizing drive in the stockyards, and during the strike in **Little Steel** in '36, he stood by us valiantly when the **Catholic Worker** was barred from many parishes and schools because John Cort had written the headline, **Cops Murder Ten Pickets in Chicago Riot** in what came to be known as the Memorial Day massacre. There was no television then to show the shooting of fleeing pickets.

Strong and compassionate, steadfast and faithful was Father Carrabine to all the laity, in the field of labor, and race relations. He was the soul of the apostolate in Chicago and never neglected to emphasize the privacy of the spiritual.

And now I am home again and can take up the task of correspondence and visitings, and talkings at home, although I hope to spend these last ten days of Lent in holy silence, a fasting from speech, which Gandhi strongly advocated. In my Lenten missal there is a holy card bearing this note: "**Two-thirds of piety consists in silence.**" (Rule of St. Brendan, 483-577 A.D.)

First Day Home

Mike Kovalak came in this afternoon and began talking of how generous the landlord was of the men's apartments which make up part of our scattered house of hospitality. "He lets them sleep in the hall," he said, "and many a time these homeless ones go up to the door of the roof, all the way up the six flights of stairs, and they sleep on the roof. It gets so I can't sleep thinking of them, and I go up and see that they are not near the edge."

Fr. La Mountain

Later that evening, Fr. La Mountain, the pastor of Holy Crucifix Church on Broome street, where we go to Mass came in, cassock flying in the wind, and told us of a Puerto Rican mother and five children, the littlest only two years old, who had been sleeping in doorways the last few nights. The story no doubt was complicated – she had been to Women's Emergency Shelter and had been turned away because of some irregularity about the marriage, because, they said, she should really be in Puerto Rico, and she was not **eligible**. So these poor little ineligible ones had been wandering the streets.

Our good parish priest put them up in his small parish hall which was warm and where there were not only cooking facilities but also food. He had plenty of blankets and they were all bedded down on the floor. Today he is taking up their case at the Emergency Shelter. What we need is an extra apartment, besides the **ten** we already have to pay rent for, in addition to the \$250 a month rent for the three-story loft building on Chrystie Street. Our rents now amount to over a thousand a month in the city, and now we are once again low in funds. Our Appeal has gone out and we hope our friends will be answering soon.