

# TROUBADOUR

The Newsletter of St. Francis House, New London, Connecticut



Center Section: A Time to Reflect and a Time to Make Art &  
A Time for Witness and Clarification of Thought

Eastertide 2017

Vol. 19, No. 1

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## Eric Swanfeldt

May 21, 1932 – January 11, 2017

by Ellen Adams

Anne and Emmett had two goals when they bought the house at 30 Broad Street: to get to know their neighbors and to establish St. Francis House as a place of prayer, study and ministry. One of the first people to come and welcome them to the area was Eric Swanfeldt. He had come to Uncasville, a nearby village, as pastor to a Methodist congregation. After they worshipped, studied and acted together, this congregation decided that the best way to live the Gospel was to live together and so they formed an intentional Christian community. Eric served on the Board of Directors of St. Francis House from October, 2007 to October, 2010.

The bond between Eric and the St. Francis House community was strengthened when Emmett and Eric enlarged the Tuesday Morning Study Group. The group evolved but has always been made up of people who believe that one's actions naturally flow out of one's reflections and study. The group reads a variety of genres – fiction, non-fiction, biographies and poetry. Eric wrote of the group, "We tend to be, want to be resisters, subversive – embracing the vocation of making and keeping human life human – peacemakers, justice bringers." (*Broad Street Blues*, p. 281) He always brought a list of related quotes with him when it was his turn to lead that broadened and deepened the participants' own reflections.

One Tuesday morning in 2006, Eric said, "It's time to stop talking and start walking." (*BSB*, p. 292) He helped plan and participated in all four Peace Pilgrimages which St. Francis House sponsored in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2010. Eric was not a stranger to walking. He had walked in Selma, Alabama in the 60's. He walked all over New England to help the United Methodist Conference be aware of the suffering of their brothers and sisters in Nicaragua. He had walked in solidarity with the poor and oppressed in Nicaragua also. Some of these people came to join the Peace Pilgrimages as well.

While most of the walkers wore fancy sneakers, Eric wore a pair of leather walking shoes he had bought in the 70's. He had walked thousands of miles in them and had had them resoled many times. He was a soft spoken man who often had a twinkle in his eye. He loved music and kept spirits and energy up on the pilgrimages by leading people in singing short ditties and call and response songs.

We thank God for Eric's friendship, his humor, his wisdom and his witness to peace and justice. A memorial service will be held at All Souls UU Congregation on 19 Jay Street in New London on May 13, 2017 at 2:00 PM.

Ellen Adams is an Episcopal deacon working on criminal justice issues and a member of the extended community of St. Francis House.

This photo, by Peter Hvizdak/*New Haven Register*, is from the first 2006 Peace Pilgrimage. Left to right: Janet Minella-Didier, Emmett Jarrett, Glennys Ulschak, Nora Curioso and Eric Swan-



## Sabbatical Time

by Anne Scheibner

A traditional sabbatical should take place in the seventh year. Oddly enough mine did. Coming from the Hebrew “Shabbat,” it means a “ceasing” or a rest from work. Emmett died in 2010 and I should have taken a break then, but between health crises various with members of St. Francis House, caretaking responsibilities with members of my family and my own breast cancer diagnosis in 2015, it wasn’t until last fall that I felt the time had come.

I decided to return for two months to San Diego where I did print making forty-three years ago after working on the McGovern campaign in Los Angeles. Back then I lived on Mission Beach and the sound and beauty of the waves breaking is still there so I made weekly visits to “my beach” on my senior bus pass. But I lived in an airbnb with a couple and their two Rottweilers near the Art Academy of San Diego where I signed up for two weekly three-hour print making sessions.

Making art is how I have always taken time to “figure things out.” Writing does that for me, too, but whereas writing is a discipline of boxing things in, art opens me up to the Spirit in ways that are always surprising. Someone once asked Emmett what kind of art I did and he said, “She does what she thinks.” And if I could say it in English, I wouldn’t have to do it at all. Back in high school, I built a seven-sided frame because I thought that four-sided rectangles were pretty arbitrary. Cross and resurrection images have been ongoing visual themes for me for almost 50 years. And following Ed Rodman’s “Open Letter to the Episcopal Church” following the O.J. Simpson verdict, I spent two years working on what turned into a 13-panel installation with overlapping images to enable reflection on race and racism.

But what I knew I wanted to do this time harkened back to the Feminist Liturgical Art Project which I initiated as part of my reflection in 1979 on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the ordination of women in the Episcopal Church. A large part of that project involved working with cardboard boxes ranging in size from liquor cartons to the Cadillac of cardboard boxes, the refrigerator box. I loved the sound of the pop and the feel of pulling the top layer back to reveal the corrugation underneath and thus make the lettering in the larger pieces – “Behold, I Make All Things New.” I also knew I no longer wanted to do print making techniques involving metal plates, acid and oil-based ink. What would happen if I melted wax from the dregs of St. Francis House

votive candles and poured it into the stripped back corrugation of cardboard boxes? Would those “plates” work? What would I discover as I pulled the printed image off a corrugated cardboard plate? Grace Panko, also resident here at SFH, provided me with candle stubs from her Lutheran church and a local liquor store in my North Park area of San Diego provided the boxes and a door store provided scraps of screen as material in my plates.

I knew I wanted to try to use corporate logos to explore a post-modern idea of sin not as individual but as corporate. I had gone on-line and discovered a bunch of interesting images from Shell Oil and Nokia to Apple and Johnson & Johnson. My first day at the Academy I also discovered a wonderful second-hand bookstore across the street and what should fall into my hands but two books they had just gotten in on Hieronymous Bosch. Bosch’s triptych, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, is populated by the most amazing assortment of creatures. I suddenly realized what I wanted to do was explore images on a small scale (for me 8”x14” is small scale) with an eye to a possible later triptych using Bosch as my inspiration for reworking the corporate logos.

So I did that - trying for one image a week as I was also inventing the process of creating a wax base and experimenting with how to keep the cardboard flat while pouring molten wax. There were experiments drawing with a needle in the wax (printing those lines black using water-based ink) and then running the plate through the press again having painted or rolled colored ink onto the image or the background and experimenting with cloth as well as paper as printing material. At the end of my time I also tried doing a sort of soft ground plate using seaweed from my beach to press into the wax and removing it before the wax hardened. That image was quite beautiful and I had resolved at the beginning of my San Diego sojourn that beauty, and not just “doing what I think,” needed to be a dimension of my work and life this time round.

That impulse took other forms as well. I relished sitting under palm trees in the sunshine waiting for my #1 bus. I became part of the community of care and conversation that exists on buses between drivers and riders. I used coffee cup holders from my favorite coffee shop en route to the Academy to add to the texture of my plates. I followed my nose and went to a different church every Sunday. I reconnected with two people I had known 40 years ago, visited former SFH resident Mike Izbecki and his wife Kristin near Los Angeles and made new connections with a younger generation of Wellesley graduates in the

wake of November 8. Basically I allowed myself not to cram as much work as I could into each day but to simply “be” and enjoy the gifts of time and conversation and not having a car! I enjoyed both solitude and having more engaged social life than I would ever have thought possible. Having no responsibilities to a set pattern of life was a total gift. And the rhythm that emerged was totally life enhancing. I am grateful to all the people who shared their lives with me during that time and to the St. Francis House community for continuing the work of the House including an Advent Troubadour – the first issue for which I did not serve as managing editor in 18 years!

So now I’m back. Thanks to Deacon Ellen asking why Thursday was my “day off” I realized that the reason was that I was Aunt Dorrie’s weekend care team provider and that it was still my day off five years after her death! So with the support of the St. Francis House community, I am now taking a real weekend (for the first time in 30 some years) plus Monday to be able to continue art making. We’ll see if a stove carton morphs into a 4 by 5 foot triptych and if the triptych includes reflections of itself as prints. Once again, the journey is home.

Anne Scheibner grew up in SE CT and served on the national level with the Episcopal Women’s Caucus, Urban Bishops Coalition, National Council of Churches’ Faith and Order Commission and the Episcopal Urban Caucus. She has lived and worked at St. Francis House since 1999.

## Broad Street Blues

By Mike Hatt

It was an honor to meet Sister Megan Rice and to help host her in New London. Her presentation on April 7, 2017 brought a strong message of resistance to the continued proliferation of nuclear arms and the use of nuclear energy. She pointed out that nuclear energy is dirty energy. The presentation was attended by about 50 people, more than we could accommodate at SFH, so we secured space at All Souls on Jay Street. They very graciously welcomed us.

The story of how Sister Megan came to New London is an example of the deep connection and commitment that SFH has within the Peace Movement. It is also an example of SFH following the first principle of the House: nonviolence. St. Francis House is based on 10 principles. Morning Prayer starts with the reading of one of them.

The idea of having Sister Megan come to New London was brought up during the Tuesday Business Meeting. We had been working on the Spring Clarification of Thought series, “Peace and Security in SE

CT,” a timely one especially in light of the recent election and the escalating tensions in the world. While we were discussing who to ask to present each session, Cal brought up asking Sister Megan Rice to present on “The Age of Nuclear Weapons.” I knew a little bit about her, that she was a Plowshare activist and that Cal had known her during actions and corresponded with her during the two years that she was incarcerated. So Cal called her and to my surprise, she agreed.

Frida Berrigan brought us her copy of *Washington Post* reporter Dan Zak’s new book, *Almighty*, which she had been asked to review for *The Nation*. It is the story of Sister Megan and her two fellow activists at the Oakridge Tennessee complex. Anne and Cal bought 10 books to make available for the House and the extended SFH community. I soon learned that the facility was the Y-12 National Security Complex. I also learned how truly horrific the whole nuclear “industry” is. The lack of safety and controls is simply mind boggling. The book is, in my opinion, a very balanced look at the events that took place at Oakridge and the current situation that we have created.

When Sister Megan arrived I also found out that age really doesn’t make a difference in our ability to effect change. Sister Megan was 82 when she exposed the Oakridge complex to the world. At 87, she came to New London after testifying at the United Nations on nuclear disarmament. At 65, this offered me encouragement.

The element that kept emerging for me was the spiritual quality of this political action, the amount of prayer and discernment leading to this action, the evidence of Spirit leading the way. I believe the message is a simple one: Love your neighbor as yourself.

Mike Hatt is a resident of SFH and witnesses to peace and works on other peace initiatives with Cal Robertson, who also is a resident of the House. Both are Vietnam veterans.

*From the Ten Principles of St. Francis House*

### “Living in Community”

*Nonviolence:* This is the foundational value. Gandhi called it *ahimsa*, and it means much more than refraining from killing. It is our “way of life” involving conversion of heart in order to honor all creation as of equal value with ourselves. We believe nonviolence is the law of the universe and we aim to live in harmony with all of creation. There are people and values we are willing to die for, but not to kill for.



# A Time to Reflect and a Time to Make Art



*Far left:* Anne trundling print making supplies to the Art Academy of San Diego, fall semester, 2016.

*Left:* Anne in front of first wax on cardboard image of "Bosch fish" based on Nokia symbol;

*Bottom left:* Collagraph print "Who is Eating Whom?" using the Apple apple and a Bosch-world creature with head in the bite.

*Below:* Anne working this spring with exacto blade on left panel of triptych with Shell Oil skull and Big Pharma dog made up of the logos of various drug companies.





# A Time for Witness and Clarification of Thought

*Below:* Grace and Mike affixing one of the Hartford Catholic Worker's Stations of the Cross to the fence at the Groton Submarine Base on Good Friday.



Sister Megan Rice having dinner with the residents of SFH the day before her Clarification of Thought presentation on "The Age of Nuclear Weapons."  
*Left to right:* Anne, Grace, Sister Megan, Cal and Mike with Len serving as photographer.



50th Anniversary Witness: Mike and Cal hold the SE CT Peace and Justice Network's banner bearing the quote from Dr. King's April 4, 1967 Riverside Address "Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam." Quote reads, "Declare eternal hostility to poverty, racism and militarism." We then took turns reading the entire Declaration.



*Left:* Ronna Stuller presenting at Clarification of Thought on April 21. She and Joanne Sheehan, War Resisters League (second from right) helped the 24 people gathered to reflect on the History of the Local Peace Movement. Also in photo left to right: Frida Berri-gan and Janet Minella-Didier, members of SFH board.

## De Mello House

*Creating a new "house" in New London*

by Len Raymond

The name "de Mello House" is chosen in celebration of Anthony de Mello (1932 - 1987), the saint of the day for June 2nd in the book, *All Saints* by Robert Ellsberg

In my time at St. Francis House (SFH), I have found satisfaction in bringing bits of "new" peace to both SFH and the street scene in New London. Gratefully, SFH has been good for me in maturing ways and like many before me, it has led to a spin-off. In this case, it is to create a "de Mello House" (DMH) in New London as a sister house to SFH and with peace as the DMH organizing focus — the vision. Well-being is my big-picture interest, but "peace" is the chosen vision as it is the element of well-being that is most measurable. De Mello House will promote a vision of peace that calls for restorative practices, measuring well-being and witnessing of others' angers, fears and pains.

This is an undertaking of my own initiative. The residents of St. Francis House have known of my ambitions for over a year although we have not begun to significantly deal with it until now. I am looking to have things grow with a minimum of conflict and a maximum of positive synergy. In particular, I welcome input from others and I am requesting everyone to join me in creating a synergy between SFH and DMH so that they flourish together in ways that would not be possible on their own. I have organized the rest of this article around the classic questions of What-Who-When-How-Where-Why.

*What will de Mello House (DMH) be?*

It will be an intentional spiritual community with an "inter-spiritual" point of view as represented in the book, *The New Monasticism* by Adam Bucko & Rory McEntee — including principles of religious pluralism.

DMH will begin with well-being for society as its primary mission — actions of hospitality, prayer and justice are in service of that mission. The extent of "peace" serves as the measure of the mission success. The governing principles will be based on the consensus process as taught both by Friends Society (Quakers) and the Sociocracy governance system. The house will take on my current work of Street Circles and other endeavors for "restoring" society's well-being. More generally, the house would be in the business of Civil Tech\* — apolitical action for a "high civilization."

*Who will live at or visit de Mello House?*

DMH welcomes as residents, those with a genuine interest in embracing the spiritual engagement and house conventions institutionalized by the current residents. Couch surfing visitors will be welcome — filtered as appropriate — as well as those wishing to stay for a fixed duration; all this with a strong emphasis on hosting international visitors.

*When will I be moving?*

I plan to start living in de Mello House in 2019 or 2020. Organizing for this loosely begins now, including finding others interested in joining me, as well as creating the necessary legal entities.

*How is it going to be financed?*

I expect my share of the sale my father's house to be sufficient to fully fund the purchase or construction of an appropriate building — don't plan to have much, if any, left over.

*Where is the house going to be?*

New London is my primary choice, Bridgeport the second choice — close to Westport where I grew up. Westerly is also a possibility. However, my intention is to be in New London, unless there is an overwhelming sentiment, amongst the SFH extended community, that DMH should be elsewhere.

*Why am I making this move?*

St. Francis House has a different mission — great mission, but different. With de Mello House, I am giving expression to a mission I already experience and celebrate in my heart. Going all-out for it seems worth the frustrations, fears and pains that will naturally surface along the way. If it doesn't work, I will write a book about Civil Tech\* — about societal methods and structures for a "high civilization."

Len Raymond lives and works at St. Francis House. He has his own business (Street 9) doing Street Circles for the homeless and formerly homeless with the mission of deepening and expanding each person's community of supporters — a "restorative practices" approach.

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\* *Civil Tech*: My coinage and meant to encompass disparate fields of practice and theory that show synergistic promise for advancing civilization; most notably, by means of societal methods and structures rather than by beliefs and political systems. This apolitical approach groups into three domains: (1) restorative practices — an umbrella concept in itself, (2) measuring well-being and (3) intentional witnessing of others' angers, fears and pains.



Panoramic view of Morning Prayer at St. Francis House, Monday through Friday at 8:00AM.

### St. Francis House's "Gathering Prayer"

The prayer with which we begin both our worship services and Bible study comes from *A Disciple's Prayer Book* which was developed by Native Ministries and Gospel-Based Discipleship of the national Episcopal Church:

Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all of creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and for ever. Amen.

As Bishop Mark MacDonald, now retired bishop of Alaska, says in the Introduction: "We must give special honor to the American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian elders who insisted that we all keep the Gospel at the center of everything we do. They said that we must gather in circles of love and prayer and place that which is most sacred to us in the center — the Gospel. This discipleship — listening to the Gospel and living it out in a circle of love and prayer — is our great joy and gives us a horizon that many of us thought unattainable."



### Clarification of Thought

Spring



2017

"Peace and Security  
in Southeastern Connecticut"

**March 24:** Just War Theory and  
Redemptive Violence  
*Deacon Ron Steed*

**April 7:** The Age of Nuclear Weapons  
*Sr. Megan Rice, SHCJ*

Location:

Unity Hall

All Souls Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
19 Jay Street

**April 21:** History of the Local Peace Movement  
*Ronna Stuller*

**May 5:** Economic Conversion  
*Tim Bowles*

**May 19:** In What is Your Security?  
*The Rev. Cathy Zall*

5:30 Evening Prayer and Bible Study

6:00 Vegetarian Supper

7:00-8:30 Topic presented and discussed

**Note:** This series was scheduled to start with Cathy Zall and reflection on the nature of security but due to a snowstorm we have converted that session into our wrap-up discussion.



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**Center Section:** A Time to Reflect and a Time to Make Art &  
A Time for Witness and Clarification of Thought

*St. Francis House Annual Retreat*

**Faith & Resistance**

**Anchoring Time / Day of Reflection**

**Saturday, June 17, 2017**

Coffee at 9:00AM  
Program 9:30AM - 3:00PM  
Lunch catered by Pacifeasts

*Location*

AJ Muste Center  
Voluntown Peace Trust  
539 Beach Pond Road  
Voluntown, CT 06384

**Please Come**