Suzanne's family, the Mendlewski's from Buffalo, N.Y. Jo and Paul Connelley-Del Junco who romanced at the Agape building project are here too, married and delighting all who pass with their own recently anointed one, baby Raphael.

People then move up the driveway, to the guest book and programs. Then, one beholds the 300 chair yellow and white tent, resplendent against the golden-red splotches of freshly-turned fall leaves.

After a pot-luck feast and entertainment including the "clowning" of Fr. Joachim Lally, the day begins appropriately with poetic praise inspiringly rendered by Sr. Jane Morrissey C.S.J. (Elms College, Chicopee):"for everything which is natural/which is infinite/which is yes." (e.e. cummings)

Certainly, Agape friends would have as the poet wishes "the eyes of their eyes opened" by the stunning day, temperature in the mid-60's, and "the ears of their ears awakened" by the riches of the speakers' words and the spirited communal song.

The sun, pulsating through the trees penetrated the spacious house windows, so ubiquitous in their expanse that they give the effect of bringing the "outdoors" in, not to mention, the benefits of passive solar. On clear evenings, the house is ablaze with stars bright enough to touch or maybe even eat, according to three year old Teresa Ellen, who lives with her parents Brayton and Suzanne at Agape.

ELABORATE PLANS FOR RADICAL SIMPLICITY

It had been the clear hope of Agape's diligent and faithful planning committee that the Agape inaugural would somehow recapture and perhaps even rekindle the spirit that went into the building of this house. Bob Wegener's steely architect's precision, community in spirit and in the flesh, burned brightly. Bob, who for a solid year, drove back and forth from Boston to Agape, (away from his wife Tara, who often accompanied him to volunteer on weekends) is perhaps the most unreported lead character of the Agape story. Bob's multidimensional talents from artwork to layout, designing, teaching in the ministry and, since the debut of the "Pacifist Players" at the opening, acting and script-writing, make him, a special messenger from God to oversee and engineer the dream.

We dreamed that the harvest of love which built this community on its nonviolent foundations would grow to bring new laborers in the Agape vineyard. If at one time the seemingly impossible could be made possible by God, what about again and again, in different ways, different forms with the same goal—a counter-cultural symbol of radical simplicity, poverty, witness, closeness to the earth.

Noonday Farm Singers

Gordon Zahn and Wally Nelson

Even now, as we gather wood and carry out our daily tasks from the newly named house, Francis (St. Francis, a surprise guest named the house himself), the heady energy of those early days fills us with amazement. It actually happened. As Alden Poole, one of our suporters throughout the years said on October 1st: "This house was built on peanut butter." And that it was, and much, much more.

The living memory of the "more" radiated from the picture display of the building project posted, along with photographer Skip Schiel's absorbing picture of the Quabbin, on the staturesque trees surrounding Francis. Shots of the gargantuan posts and solid oak beams which shape the heart, soul and personality of the house, hoisted to dizzying heights by a team of co-workers, seemed to impress viewers. Many wondered out loud, why, with such precarious footholds on such vulnerable scaffolding, there were no accidents. It seems that God protected those laboring for community in the spirit of unconditional love.

After the Bishop's and Sr. Jane's introductions, it was Suzanne's task to review those pioneering days, having second before her approach to the stage (built by good friends Dan Lawrence and Daniel Sicken the day before the opening) discovered that she had misplaced her carefully-crafted notes in the haste of the morning. So, what she managed to say, scattered though her remarks may have been, was that there were memories, milestones and many relationships forged prior to and during the life of Agape since 1982. These memories, milestones and relationships mysteriously pointed to this day, this place: Ailanthus; Pax Christi; John Leary; Haley House; Charlie McCarthy, Phil and Dan Berrigan, Liz McAlister, Billy Neal Moore, Bob Wegener and a score of others. All of these people, these struggles, these community efforts, contributed in a defining way to open us all to this most unpredictable venture and many-times blessed experiment. The spirit of Agape is rooted in the long tradition of nonviolent communities throughout history.

EARS OF THEIR EARS AWAKENED

Professor Michael True (Assumption College) set this spirit of Agape in the context of poetry, using Denise Levertov's words about the "syntax of mutual aid" and the "new language of peace" in what is really an old language. Agape is one of the "facets of a forming crystal" in the nonviolent lineage of the Worcester County area and the American landscape, reported Mike True, including such pioneers as Adin Ballou, Abigail Kelly, Lucy Stone and others.

It had been our sense all along that the economic base of Agape would be pleasing to Peter Maurin...the economy of "wait and pray." Knowing that we have a place in a nonviolent historical lineage still doesn't alter our sense of the "smallness" of our needs (flooring, fireplace, computer, a car that works, more volunteers for everything, community members, you name it) and the "vastness" of our dreams—hermitages on the land (the first poustinia will be started soon), a large garden, poetry readings, days of silence, prayer and nonviolence.

Juanita Nelson, tax refuser since 1947, farmer and activist, put it in this fashion to Agape guests on October 1st: "I want the way I live and get my living to be the clearest statement of my nonviolence." Juanita's simplicity, truth and lightheartedness, reminded us all of the need for humility, modest goals and steadfast resolve—to non-cooperate with an exploitive, evil, capitalist economy which fuels the military in debacles such as San Salvador.

"The only moral leader to say 'love your enemy'." With these words, Fr. Richard McSorley (Georgetown University Peace Center) reminded us of both our nonviolent credo and the foundation from which it springs:Jesus, the Lord. This same Jesus drew Dorothy Day to New York's bowery to serve the dispossessed and pulled Tom Cornell there in search of Dorothy. Tom grippingly described the sights and smells of Chrystie St. from the perspective of his early introduction at age 19 to the Catholic Worker.

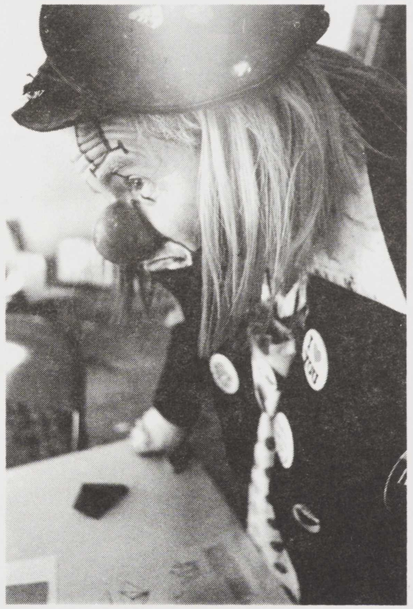
REVERENCE FOR ALL LIFE

The seamless garment is so intrinsic to nonviolence said Gordon Zahn (author, World War II conscientious objector, Center on Conscience and War) that their relationship should not even need to be articulated: all murder, one by one or en masse, is forbidden by God—abortion, capital punishment, war. In the spirit of Thomas Merton, Gordon cautioned us to be vigilant, lest we allow the desire for "results" to overpower the "means" by which we get them.

No ROTC and no CIA recruiting. Service projects, a newly forming Pax Christi chapter, a special place for prayer and meditation, these are the antidotes proposed by Sr. Carol Descoteaux (President, Notre Dame College, Manchester, N.H.) to the poisoning of consciousness which the violent American culture inflicts on our college-age students.

Fiery South African freedom songs by the Noonday Farm Singers had people out of their seats, holding hands, clapping, crying. Feelingly rendered original compositions by Sarah Pirtle were accompanied by the life-intoxicated words of Chief Seattle read by old friend Skip Schiel.

Generous guffawing was guaranteed from the first few lines of the Agape spoof by "The Pacifist Players." The cornier the lines, the harder we all laughed. The skit ended with a building pun on measuring and leveling—the players swaying in unison to the refrain of: "Agape is on the level." And through it all, sumptuous food was available under the food canopy, with many volunteers spearheaded by Lillian Lamothe and Irene Cratty, arranging the pot-luck contributions.



Fr. Joachim Lally, clowning

THE HOUSE IS BLESSED

As dusk descended, the guests moved from the tent to the house, the front of which dazzled all with a colorful peace mural created by the children. Throughout the day, they had been led in various nonviolent activities by volunteers admirably shepherded by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy of St. Francis-St. Therese Catholic Worker in Worcester.

Twilight painted the candle-lit house interior with an aura of mystery as guests alighted the entrance to be wrapped in the haunting melody of bells telling tales only they could speak under the tender hands of the Hardwick Memorial Hand Bell Choir members. Gazing heavenward, past the cathedral ceiling, exposed beams and back again to the balcony, we heard intonations of Hebrew Scripture from Jim Levinson of Noonday Farm. The staccato beat of a Buddhist drum punctuated the silence when old friends Sr. Claire Carter, Sr. Beth Ingham and Mamoru Kato of the Buddhist Peace Pagoda in Leverett, Ma. reverentially intoned strains of their order's ineffable peace prayer.

These expressions of interfaith communion were meditatively introduced by a Quaker friend and foundress of the International Third Order, Alison Davis of Hampton, Ct. Fr. Jack Seery S.J. and Sr. Jeannette Normandin S.S.A. read an antiphonal counterpoint in praise of the earth and all its splendors as the hushed crowd, the overflow standing outside, bowed in the directions of the earth's circumference offering thanks.

CLOSING LITURGY

The day closed, as twilight deepened, with a Mass offered by Bishop Timothy Harrington, a humble and gentle presence for the entire day, and concelebrated by Deacon Tom Cornell. Kathleen Legg, Dick Kirk (Olive Branch Community, Worcester) and a number of their talented musician and singer friends, pulled together with short notice, the liturgical music which revived the souls of the wearying and now-thinning crowd. The predictably penetrating remarks by Fr. Jack Seery, longtime friend of many present, reminded us of the roots of domination and quest for power right in our own, often violent hearts. How detached are we willing to be? How much will we really sacrifice?

So, we continue the struggle, united with all of you, knowing even in our waiting that Agape seems to be a source of energy, an expression of collective yearning, a long, langurous sigh for community waiting to be enfleshed.