

The Benevolent Order of Scurrious Monks

Abbot's Report

Winter Solstice, 2013

Brother Radio Rick Promotes Musicians!

Music has always been important in his life, but since his retirement from the Rochester School for the Deaf (RSD), where he taught for 20 years, Brother Radio Rick (Rick Simpson) has not



only gotten back into doing a radio show on a college/NPR affiliate station, but has started hosting house concerts as well. After retiring from RSD, he started teaching part-time at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID at RIT). Wasting no time, he went through the DJ training for the RIT radio station and did a show on WITR for 2 years. In the meantime, he started filling in on WRUR the University of Rochester/NPR station – a better fit musically, and in 2010 got a regular show on WRUR and bid WITR a fond farewell. You can stream his show -- *Gumbo Variations* every Thursday night 6-8 EST at www.wrur.org. Starting in December, his show is simulcast on WITR in Ithaca. Also in 2008, he and his lovely wife Monica had the opportunity to host Texas singer/songwriter Eric Taylor for a house concert. It was a sell out with about 60 people attending (they have a very large living room). After the thrill of the 1st one, they quickly decided to do an on-going series – now 6 years and 26 shows into it, they still have a

blast doing them. In addition to a number of great local performers, they've also hosted many national acts including: Steve Forbert, Patty Larkin, Peter Case, Catie Curtis, The Chandler Travis Three-0, Guy Davis and Colin Linden to name a few. If you're ever in the Rochester NY area, check in to see if there's a house concert coming up. You can find Rick on Facebook where he keeps up with the likes of Brother Donald and David Roe regularly. Happy Solstice to all.

Brother Jack Benny Returns to Haiti!

Brother Jack Benny (David Casey) made another trip to Haiti last Spring and sent us a report soon after the Summer Solstice. Here it is in its entirety:

Volunteer Report - Duchity, Haiti - June 2013

Why do volunteer work in Haiti? Last year, I concluded my report with this: "DOVE's vocational center in Duchity presents an inspiring way for me to contribute to a people in need of so much. After the completion of the main building, construction will begin on three facilities that will provide training in auto-mechanics, welding, and furniture building. These hands-on shops will support the school while giving its students real life job skills. This project embodies every reason for my return to Haiti for years to come: to be able to make a small but real difference, to demonstrate goodwill, to inject cash directly into a grateful economy, to work with locals for the betterment of them and their children, and to embrace Dr. Paul Farmer's idea that 'the only true country is humanity.' This place, this work, gives my life a unique resonance and depth of purpose." Fueled by the generosity of many of those reading this, I returned to Duchity this year to continue working on the construction of its vocational education center. In what I've come to refer to as "The Power of Us," my physical efforts were exponentially magnified by the more than 70 people who



contributed \$6,400 of direct aid to be spent on building materials and the salaries of local laborers. Alone, I would have worked tirelessly but been stymied by an individual's limitations. With The Power of Us, I was able to offer meaningful employment to many,

construct hope and a 900 linear-foot perimeter wall, and propel forward a vision of community and education. The Power of Us is tangible. This year's project was the completion of a concrete-block wall to protect the school's property from theft. Tools, lumber, even trees had disappeared in the past year, all due to the plague of developing countries: the crime of opportunity. I wish I could report that the main building's roof was finished or one of the workshops begun, but while Robert Frost could philosophically proclaim: "Something there is that doesn't love a wall," he didn't live in Haiti. There, walls that block temptation create "good neighbors." The money I brought, along with matching funds from the Vermont Haiti Project, purchased 4,400 concrete blocks, 110 bags of cement, four truckloads of sand, and two of gravel. All of those materials were manufactured in Haiti, delivered by Haitians, and used by a Haitian workforce that circulated all the money they earned in their local economy. \$6,400 may seem insignificant in a world dominated by billion dollar budgets and deficits, but in a place where only deficits reside, hard cash has a forceful impact. Three steel gates were created by a local welder. The sand and gravel were hand-sifted then manually mixed with cement and water that had been manually transported. Each block, and every bucket of concrete was hefted then hauled on a shoulder or head. As promised, I worked with vigor and determination everyday. I lifted, I sifted, I staggered, I sweated, I pressed, and I pushed. One day I carried 298 twenty-five pound, concrete blocks over slippery, uneven terrain. The next day I traversed the same course carrying 95 forty-pound buckets of concrete. I survived each laborious day with gallons of water, heavy doses of ibuprofen, and the reminder that work done to benefit others satisfies like no other. The word travay means work in Creole and, after two Junes spent in Duchity, it has become my last name. I am Dave Travay, the white man who works.

One of the benefits of pure, physical labor is the way it frees ones mind to wander in thought where it will. So while my body toiled, my mind explored the reasons why working for others brings me such satisfaction, and I concluded, I'm not alone in this feeling. Whether you're helping a fiend, a neighbor, or a family member, giving of yourself somehow expresses a deeply embedded impulse that defines the best trait of humanity: altruism. I'm sure this philanthropic instinct has been codified more eloquently, but that doesn't lessen its importance to me. I also believe that many of the people who contributed to my effort this year did so in response to this impulse. Why else participate in a project to help people you will never meet if that involvement is not, at heart, based on the recognition of the distant kinship we see reflected in the struggles and aspirations of other humans?

I see great need and struggle in Haiti. The lack of quality education, healthcare, and nutrition are the painful symptoms of a chronic condition that, for decades, has eviscerated opportunity and stunted hope. But the beauty of the country, the strength and resilience of its people, and their persistent faith in a better future all promote a reason to return. I will next June. And next July I will report to you that the roof on the main building is complete, the unfinished dorm rooms are done, and ground has been broken on the first workshop. I will tell you that I delivered ten more English/Creole dictionaries to a dedicated colleague named Ewol, another ten solar calculators to his math-teacher brother Derrick, and that ten more pairs of work gloves were permanently borrowed from me and put to good use. I

will be thrilled to say that, at least, five workers received bio-sand water filters as part of their negotiated salary and, as a result, pure water will improve the lives of their families for years to come. I will share with you the friendships renewed, the fluids perspired, and the camaraderie of human cooperation felt. I'll be able to say that your full faith and trust were realized by a machine-like presence named Dave Travay, and you will know that altruism is thriving in a place with a positive future and at the center of that generosity is The Power of Us.

Yours for a better world, David Travay Casey--David Casey 1191 S. Orlando Ave. Cocoa Beach, FL 32931 DCASEY1@cfl.rr.com

Monastic Maladies

Brother Charles (Chuck Dixon) recently cheated death and conquered Cancer but paid a heavy price in order to do so. A large



cancerous tumor necessitated the removal of an entire leg. His surgeon was smiling the first time he saw her after the operation. She reported that all of the cancer had been removed. Subsequent examinations have confirmed the initial results. 2013 was a difficult year for Chuck and his wife, Murf. Murf's mother, who they had been caring for, died after a protracted illness. After years of living in the city of Lawrence, Kansas, the couple moved into Murf's mother's house in the country where they continue to live. Some friends at the Kansas City Renaissance Festival took up a collection to buy Chuck a Jazzy electric wheel chair. He and Murf were able to visit the Festival a couple of times this Fall. He rides his chair out to the road every day to get the mail. He can also get around pretty well with the use of a walker. They had equipped the house with a stair lift when Murf's mother was sick and the basement stairs have rails on both sides so he gets up and down fairly easily. Chuck says it could have been worse. Since he still has his right leg, he can still drive. He says he would have been worse off if he had lost an arm. During the time of the surgery, he also re connected with his two daughters who he hadn't seen in quite some time. Chuck says, "that almost made the whole thing worthwhile." He has a new prosthetic leg and is just starting to learn how to use it. He retains a remarkably optimistic attitude.

We recently received a Christmas card from Brother Babi (Mary Palmer). She has been in bed all Summer long, recovering from

some kind of surgery. She is reportedly doing well. Brother Lee's (Ashley Nichol's) father is still surviving with ALS, better known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. His wife, Kathy has recently written on their Facebook page that Jerry has a machine that helps him to eat and another one that helps him to breath while he sleeps. Although he can still walk, he recently fell and sustained an injury in their Florida driveway. Their gaming business at the Texas Renaissance Festival has been taken over by their long time employee, Tom. We send our prayers, hope and best wishes to everyone else who is ill and we are grateful for the good health of everyone who is not.

Brother Doctor's Recovery Thank You Card

Brother Doctor (Danny Lord) has been wintering in California. He sent us Email with a picture: *I thought this crazy shot might spice up your Abbot's Report. A year ago I was in hospital, I feel oh so*



much better. I lost a bit of weight, but have been hanging out with the right crowd.

Brother Sister Gets a New Marquee!

We stole this story about Brother Sister (Gale Tallis) from an old issue of *The Kansas City Business Journal*: Kansas City's oldest theater is bursting with history, but few are aware of its location. Gale Tallis, executive director for the Folly Theater, said she often noticed people on the sidewalk searching for the theater when they were standing right in front of it. "There's so many things going on Downtown with the Crossroads (Arts District) and the Kauffman (Center for the Performing Arts), so this new marquee concept helps tie us in to Downtown and the energy happening here," she said. Folly Theater and Star Signs worked together to choose a theme that would complement the theater's history. Its roots date to 1900, when it featured artists such as Gypsy Rose Lee, who gave her first burlesque performance there. It also has hosted appearances by Walter Kronkite, Itzach Perlman and President

Obama, who stopped by for a 2010 fundraiser. "The new marquee lets people know we've been here for 112 years, and we'll continue to provide world-class entertainment," Tallis said. "It represents that the Folly has a bright future."



Old Monks Marry!

After visiting with his Mom in Manlius, NY last September, our Abbot drove south through the Finger Lakes in search of the illusive Brother J. Sparrow. (J. Wrobel) He found the Sparrow Dome but the place seemed deserted. After leaving a note on the front door, he continued on to Chenango Forks, NY where he spent the night with Brother Bonehead (Norman Wylde) and his lovely wife, Donna. They are still living in their home in town while work is being completed on their house in the country. The country estate is called *Dreamland*. We took a ride out to view the progress. The heated hardwood floors had recently been installed and the big propane tank was set to arrive the next day. The pond is stocked with bass and the five wooded acres provide plenty of room for the award winning dogs to run around. A couple of days after completing his journey back to the Ozarks, our Abbot was pleased to receive a phone call from Brother J. Sparrow. He had just



returned home from his honeymoon. After marrying his long time companion, Heather, the newlyweds took a train trip to Miami and

subsequently spent six days honeymooning in Key West. Heather's father had recently passed away and the couple had moved out of the Sparrow Dome and into her father's house in Auburn, New York where they are now living happily ever after. We also neglected to mention in our last report that Brother Reverend Doctor Merlin (Bill Palmer) was married to his new wife Julie on March 24.



Quoting Bill, "What's all this fuss about gray marriage? Shouldn't the elderly have the right to get married and have an established relationship?"

New Monks Appointed!

The last time new monks were appointed was more than two years ago on 11/11/11. Congratulations or condolences (whichever seem more appropriate) go out to our newest Brothers:



Mark Reed



Julian Bemi



Connie Colten



John T. Mills



Jeff Fahringer



Scott Hendricks



Jim Ellis



Craig Merlin Broers



Kristin Thorsen



Lance Hatcher



Patty Lindquist



Sandy Dale



Heidi Thomann



Lars Elling Lunde



Denis Fitzpatrick



Stevo Doccerson



Michael Reilly



Roger Swezey