

M E R R Y   C H R I S T M A S

Dear Friends,

On September 12th, the beautiful dream which was Rivendell for over 600 guests came to an abrupt and dramatic end. FBI and State Police with shotguns raided us at dawn seeking a couple who had lived here all summer, and who allegedly blew up an ROTC building in Hawaii where he was a minister. They, and their two week old baby boy fled the night before, acting on a tip. Because of my refusal to talk with the FBI, a period of harassment began which ended in the decision to close down. There is still the possibility of a grand jury being convened to force me to talk.

Since then, I have been in the Diaspora, visiting communes and street scenes around the state of Vermont. My spies in Boston tell me that runaways to the cities have decreased measurably since communities finally heeded our plea to open drop-in centers and hot lines, and since communes began to multiply.

Sadly, I must tell you that the counter culture is in a chaotic condition which could lead to its ultimate dissolution and consequent despair for many. I have no desire to desert my people now. I have come to love them and to be as alienated as they from the institutions oppressing so many, including, as the Pontifical Commission on Peace and Justice pointed out, my own Catholic Church. I want to be with them, even to sharing their poverty and suffering. I cannot conceive of any parish that would tolerate my brand of moral theology, dogmatic theology, patriotism or life style, or of any rectory in which I could live. I love God and feel very close to my Brother Jesus and hope the church can tolerate one freak priest a little longer. I am still in good standing, do not intend to marry, and hope to still be a priest when church authorities come to their senses and recognize that they are alienating massive portions of their finest young people. Whatever may be said of the failure of authorities to back us, at least in Boston the Archbishops have trusted me, refused to give credence to detractors and given me room to breathe and freedom to move as any missionary needs.

Although I would not stake my reputation on it since I no longer have access to the sources, I would guess that the current predictions of diminution in heroin addiction are wrong and that there will be a massive increase for two reasons; the returning troops (and, believe me, the army is still not telling you the truth) and the large reservoir of early twenty year olds who at the moment are not addicted, in many cases are not even doing drugs, but who will for several sociological reasons soon become chronically depressed and apt candidates for addiction.

Please don't send me money. I have managed to cut my possessions and daily try to give away one more thing. Not that possessions are bad, but acquisitiveness, selfishness and possessiveness are vices easily fallen into these days. Besides, it's good to travel light with few impediments. I think I can survive on my monthly salary and on stipends given to me for lectures.

There is an apostolate I am pondering undertaking but this time anonymously and surreptitiously since long and sad experience with the public convinces me that it would be folly to disclose it. Some of you may have heard me say publicly that there is and has been a phenomenon on the youth scene far more important and astonishing than drugs, about which I never elucidated since I was having so much trouble convincing people concerning drugs, alienation, violence, and runaways. Also you have heard me

lament: "No one ever asks, after drugs what?" When it finally surfaces, perhaps I will be knowledgeable enough and revived enough to enter the ensuing fray.

My mail will still be forwarded through my secretary, Miss Eileen Mulcahy, 128 Tremont Street, Braintree, Mass. 02184, Tel: 617-843-5731 who usually knows my whereabouts. I am still available for talks.

So my brothers and sisters who have so long and faithfully supported my efforts and loved my people so dearly, this old hermit is fading into the sunset for a time with an eagerness for what lies ahead, a lust for life and a heart filled with gratitude and memories of your largesse to and confidence in

The Hermit of Terrible Mountain

Paul Shanley

P.S. If you wish to receive occasional communiques from "the road", let Eileen know and she'll put you on her mailing list.