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A most unlikely job in a most unlikely place—that's how to best describe the occupation of Francis Chin, housing director of Project REACH in Perkinsville.

A 1969 graduate in German literature from Middlebury College, Vermont, and formerly of Boston, Chin now works in a miniscule, cluttered Catholic church. He directs a staff of ten trying to overcome the shortage of decent housing in the rural hamlets and countryside of three counties, Steuben, Wayne and Ontario.

It is just possible to see the beginning of some change being worked by the REACH housing projects, despite all the effort that has gone into developing them. This is understandable and even commendable, however, because Chin and his staff are working not for quick, highly visible change, but longer lasting, fundamental changes in the lives of the rural, low-income families with whom they work.

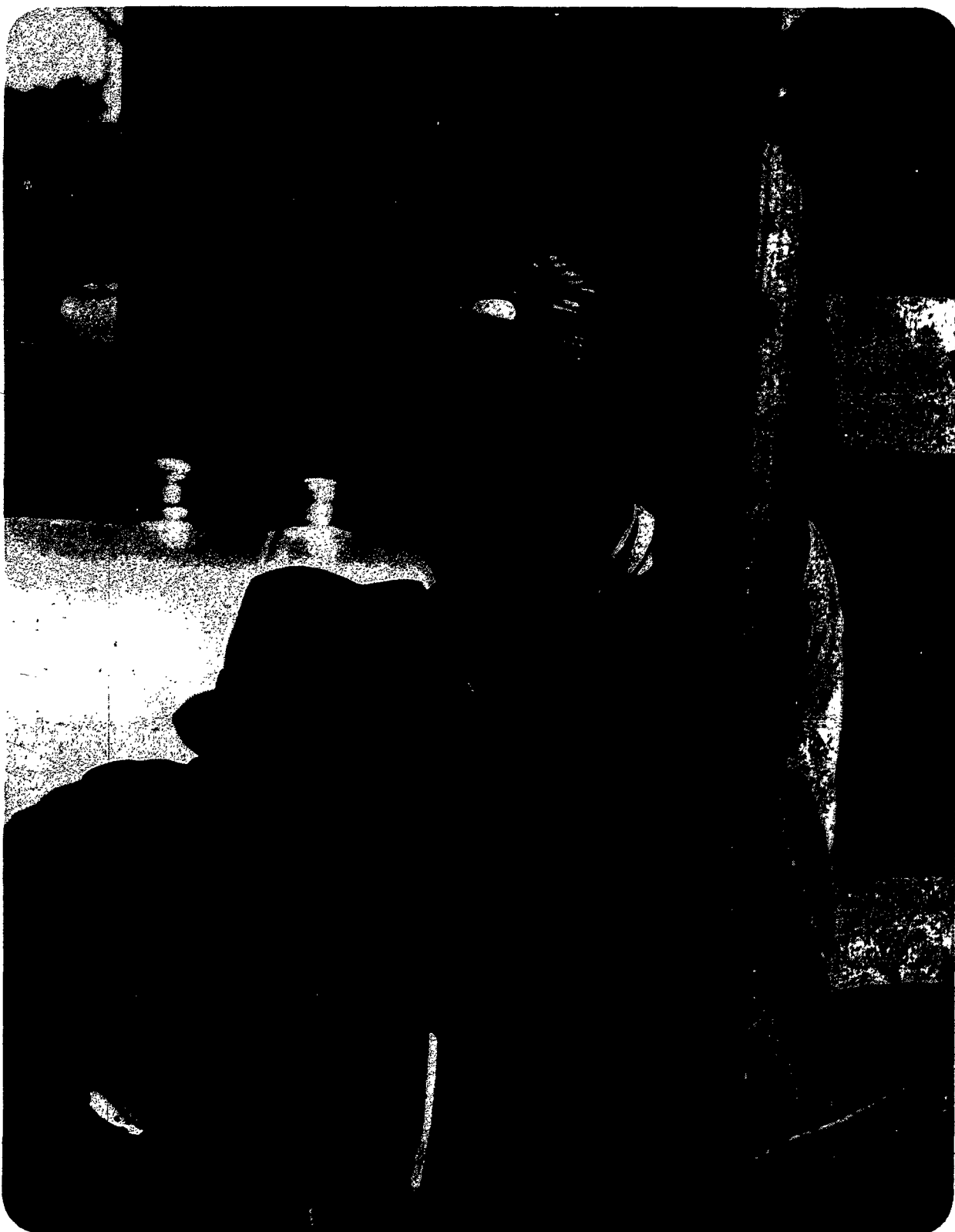
Three families working together under the name of the Willing Workers Association have almost completed building their own houses as part of REACH's self-help housing project for the rural poor. Following up on the success of this group in Steuben County, the Bath Area Self Helpers will start construction this spring, and recruitment for a third group in Wayne County has begun.

"'Sweat equity' is what we call it," explains Chin about one of the principal benefits to families participating in the self-help housing program. The three bedroom houses, financed by the Farmers Home Administration and Steuben County Churchmen Against Poverty, were built at a total cost each of about \$10,500 and are now estimated to be worth \$15,000 or more.

Families joining the self-help project draw up a membership and labor sharing agreement among themselves to share equally in the construction. All of the actual building is done by the future residents working under the instruction of a full time, salaried construction supervisor, John Areford.



Working together to unload roof trusses, above, is one of the ways in which families in the REACH program cooperate in building own houses. Below, L. A. Law, left, and Jess Whitson, participants, work on water supply.



Francis Chin, above, is director of REACH housing project in Perkinsville. John Areford, below, is construction supervisor on three houses finished.

