



Ministry in Appalachia - A volunteer (top left) talks with a hospital patient; volunteer Carl Raven (above) plays big brother to Vanceburg, Ky., youngster Jamie Thurman; a volunteer (below) helps clear rough ground for a garden.

mother, I had left back East. Although we did a lot of work throughout the county on our own, as farm managers our primary responsibility was to the high school and college volunteer groups. By working with these groups on housing projects, nursing home visitations and other service projects, we were able to have a much more profound impact on the community.

As each of the 10 volunteer groups arrived at the farm during the year, Randy and I did our best to provide them with a brief orientation to the program. One of us would discuss the rules and safety features, warning them to not drink the water and suggesting that they avoid getting hurt, since the nearest hospital was a 45-minute drive away.

The other would speak of the attitude summarized in the "Wisdom of the Ages" - the attitude we tried to instill in the volunteers and to exemplify in our own service:

THE WISDOM OF THE AGES

Throughout this week please try to keep in mind these four words: Acceptance, Giving, Expectations, and Sensitivity - The wisdom of the ages.

Acceptance: Please try to accept and experience others as they are not as we would have them be, or as we perceive them, but as they are. So often in our attempts to classify people we lose our ability to understand them. People here may sound ignorant to you because the only place you've heard the accent before is on "The Beverly Hillbillies." Remember where you are; you talk funny here. Try to let first impressions slide and focus on the person or the situation. This goes for members of the group as well as the residents of Lewis County.

Giving: Let's try to put ourselves second this week, to think about the needs of someone else before our own needs. Locally, the Catholic Church is known as the church that cares. This reputation has come from the works of the Christian Community Center, Holy Redeemer Parish, People's Self-Help Housing and 10,000 farm volunteers. You now become a part of this tradition. They see our care not only in how we treat them, but in how we treat ourselves, by putting the other guy first.

Remember, too, that one of the greatest gifts that you can give is to allow another person to help you. It feels good to help others. If you can allow a resident of the health care center to offer you some advice or teach you a song, you have allowed that person to give you a gift and to feel better about themselves.

Expectations: If you expect to build a house from the ground up for a needy family during this week, you will be disappointed. If you expect the exact same experience that you or someone else had here in the past, you will be disappointed. If on the other hand you can empty yourself of those expectations and allow yourself to experience the work sites, the group, the people of Lewis County, you will not be disappointed.

Avoid thinking "What's next?" Rather, attempt to experience the full effect of what's going on now. Frankly, this is probably the most difficult challenge of service to others. I'm always worried about where I have to go next. People have told me that I am a different person in the evening, when nothing is coming up next and I feel that I have all the time in the world for them. To this end I'll ask you to take off your watches now and trust Randy and me to keep track of the time for you.

Sensitivity: Please keep in mind that the people that we came to serve are humans, and as humans have feelings. They are not clay in our hands to shape and form, but people to whom we hope to bring a brighter day. The last thing that we want to do is to make them feel self-conscious.

Unless I specifically tell you that they are allowed, please leave your cameras here on the farm. We want to avoid the zoo effect - "Oh look at the cute little poor people." Try to imagine yourself in the same situation.

These four words - Acceptance, Giving, Expectations, and Sensitivity - will help us all to maintain a spirit of service, a spirit of love."

By the end of my first week as farm manager, I came to see my role as serving the students who volunteered in the same way I served the folks of Lewis County. It was no longer just a means to an end - getting good work out of them - but was also to provide for their emotional needs. I had to release my expectations of the year and allow God to work through me.

Being only a little older than most of the volunteers, Randy and I were able to become like mentors to some of the students. They were able to talk to us about family problems, boyfriend/girlfriend problems, religious questions, and much more. I was very happy to meet up with one young man from one of our winter groups on a summer service week as a staff member. At the time, he was looking at Glenmary as a possible vocation.

I left the Glenmary Farm in June of 1989 to work for the Cayuga County Council of the Boy Scouts of America, based in Auburn,

N.Y. The farm has not left me, though. In my interactions with all people, I strive to keep in mind "the wisdom of the ages." I try to make myself available to youths and leaders alike who are having problems. I'm still a better, more aware person when I don't have 101 things to do. I return every year to the farm for a refresher course in service, simplicity and love.

I know that "God has created me to do him some definite service.... I have my mission," and I strive to know it in this world.

Young men interested in volunteering with Glenmary may call the vocations' office at (513)874-8900.

A ONE-WEEK STAY CHANGES INTO A YEAR'S COMMITMENT

For John Cichello, one of the first appealing aspects about the Glenmary Home Missions' volunteer program was its rural setting.

As he recounts in his article, Cichello first learned of Glenmary when a priest of the order came to speak at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, where Cichello was a student.

A native of Weedsport in Cayuga County, Cichello liked the idea of spending a week in rural Kentucky working with the people of the region, especially after attending college in a city as large as Philadelphia.

"I went down there thinking that I wanted just to stay for a week, and by the end of the week I decided this is what I wanted to do for a year," recalled Cichello, who attends Weedsport's St. Joseph's Church.

Following a week as a volunteer in May, 1988, Cichello returned in August of that year to serve as manager of the Glenmary Farm for the next nine months.

In that capacity, Cichello was responsible for assisting the hundreds of young men who came for week-long stays at the farm. While there, those men met and worked with the region's rural poor as part of Glenmary's mission of pastoral ministry.

After his time as manager expired, Cichello went back to the farm for week-long stays in May of 1989, August of 1990, and August of 1991. Currently a district executive with the Boy Scouts of America in Auburn, he hopes to return with Glenmary to Kentucky again when his vacation schedule permits.

Looking back at his time as a volunteer, Cichello remarked, "It's something I felt called to do. It's made me look at the world in a different way."

Lee Strong

