

## LOVE AND PEACE IN THE WORLD

"Kill a Commie For Christ" said a war protest bumper sticker on a green and yellow 60's Volkswagon bus. No, it wasn't mine; I drove a gigantic 4 door grey Plymouth with huge shark-like fins that my Dad hoped would keep me safe as I went out in the world. And he advised me to keep the doors locked and roll slowly through stop signs at night, should somebody try to jump in. Mother was even more reticent about the world. When Dad proposed trips, she always said, "My house is my vacation," and we knew she had remodelling plans. Dad and Mother had both hoped I would settle into a nice teaching job in Iowa, which I actually did for a year before seeking greater adventure and calling. So, when I yearned to see the world starting with New York City, both parents could only shake their heads and hope I lived to be 22.

They thought the world was not a safe place; but I was the typical naive idealist who assumed I could make it a safe place. Remember that lyric in the 60's music of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young: "We can save the world, rearrange the world, it's dying to get better." Well, that was me then. I even picked up hitch hikers

and rode the subways alone at night to Broadway and the Village and Harlem.

I may have made a difference to a few New Yorkers. For room and board in a pastor's residence, and with the small money I'd saved from a year of teaching, I gathered materials from second hand stores and set up in the rectory basement. After getting their parents' permission, I also gathered up kids hanging out with nothing to do, to help me make stuffed animal toys. The kids and I later developed a play about the toys and put it on for their parents. They each got a toy for themselves and one to give away. We also took jaunts around the city in the church bus. I'll always remember the happy squeals and eyes full of rapture when I took them to Jones Beach and the Bronx Zoo, these little kids who had never been out of their 5 block radius.

Those were my personal efforts one summer, and I can't say the world has gotten any better. In fact, it seems far less safe. Now that I have travelled this world extensively, and have seen results of unforgettable poverty and violence, I keep my car doors locked and don't see much reason to leave Colorado, or even Denver, or even Windsor Gardens very often. My dad used to say, "Everything you need is in your own backyard." I get it, now, Dad. And I've even felt the

sting of truth in my mother's refrain about home being her vacation.

As for peace, it's hard to imagine an al Qaeda embassy in the West. On the other hand, the Soviet Union was once the Evil Empire, and China once had guard towers with sharp shooters. So let's hear it for all the idealists who want to change the world.