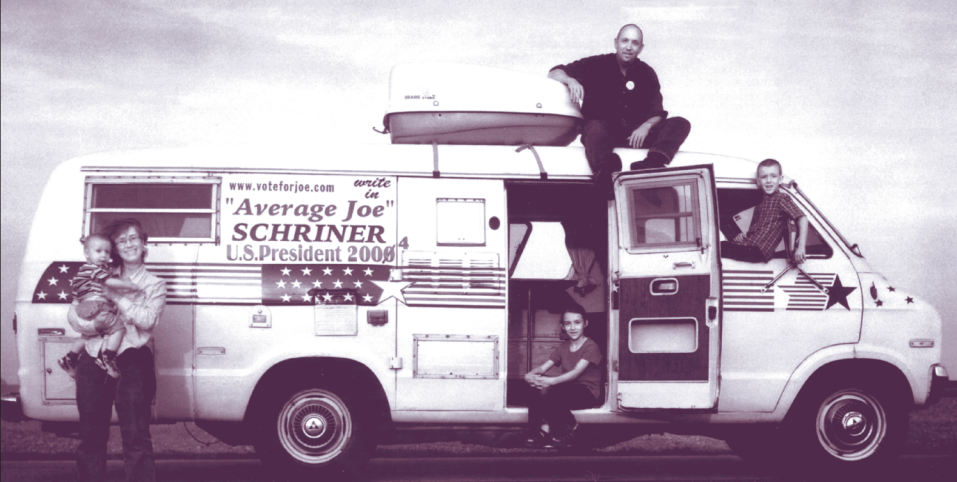


**grassroots politics at its gritty best . . .*

Back Road to the White House 2



by "average Joe" Schriner

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my wife Liz for the support, the perseverance, sharing the laughter, sharing the tears, and for being ‘willing to go where no wife, mother, campaign manager... has ever gone before.’ (Winnemucca, Nevada, as an example.) She has proven, time and again that – she was absolutely crazy to ever marry me.

I love you dear.

THANKS:

To God.

To my wife Liz, who is a modern-day saint.

To our Sarah, who is the best daughter a father could have; and the best “first assistant” any presidential candidate could have.

To our Joseph, my “go to” van guy and basketball buddy.

To our Jonathan, for not burping (too much) during my speeches; and for being the best baby a politician (or Dad) ever had to kiss.

To the Bluffton campaign team.

To Dale Way in Bluffton, Ohio for the friendship, the Painters Plus moments, and for once saying of my candidacy: “Well, look how Lincoln started. Who would have thought?”

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To Jim Langsford in Chillicothe, Ohio, for the support, and the notorious “water balloons.” (The kids said “thanks” too.)

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And to all you others in Vergennes, Vermont; Lancaster, New Hampshire; Sanford, Maine; Tallequah, Oklahoma; Wilcox, Arizona; Custer, Wisconsin; Edinboro, Pennsylvania; Buffalo, New York (well, we went to several big cities too); Epworth, Iowa, and on, and on.... who helped us, in one way or the other – get to the next stop.

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INTRODUCTION

Ok, I lost again.

This is the second presidential election I've lost in a row.

In Campaign 2000, my family and I traveled 20,000 miles over 19 months and campaigned in all 48 states in the Continental U.S. Our story (and message) appeared in some 200 newspapers, 80 regional network television news broadcasts, a whole lot of radio... and the owner of the General Store in Loma, Montana, put up one of our campaign flyers.

We still lost.

The best we could figure is we hadn't campaigned enough in Florida.

So for Campaign 2004, we more than doubled our campaign mileage (45,000 miles), and besides extensive campaigning throughout the country, we campaigned in Ohio for 10 months, going to almost all 88 counties – twice. We got even more press, more support... and this time, besides the general store flyers, Bluffton College librarian Paul Weaver put a blurb about the campaign in his family Christmas newsletter.

Yet we lost again.

Not to be redundant, but we're at a: 'loss.'

We thought we had covered every, or – well, almost every – base this time.

We campaigned down the Country Music Highway in the Appalachian Mountains; followed the Trail of Tears in solidarity with the Native Americans; did a Southern Border Tour to look at Hispanic immigration issues; did an In Search of Lake Wobegone Tour in Minnesota; braved the windy ride over the Mackinaw Bridge to stump throughout Michigan's Upper Peninsula ("Say yah to da UP, eh!"); launched a Coast-to-Coast Tour (with my in-laws no less) to reach a good deal of the rest of America; and, as I've mentioned earlier, spent more time in Ohio than President Bush, Senator Kerry, and even Ohio Governor Taft, for that matter.

Yet instead of starting to head toward Pennsylvania Ave. Nov. 3, we were headed back to Kibler St. in Bluffton, Ohio, to assess things – and try to find some work.

According to an analysis in the Baltimore (MD) City Paper, I'm a "...seemingly nice enough Midwestern family guy... who just seems to like running for president."

And I do.

But there's more to it than that.

I'm actually trying to win.

On the road, I'm simply known as: "Average Joe."

In fact, my wife Liz and I regularly tell people we are your "average concerned parents."

We're 'concerned' our kids are inheriting a world of too much pollution, too much violence, too much sexual imagery in the media (and on the streets these days), too much poverty, too much, well, too much of a lot of things that aren't good.

And Liz and I had two options the way we saw it.

One, sit back and lament about the state of society.

Two, run for president.

Of the United States.

Of America.

I mean, if you're president you have a better chance to change a lot of those things you're concerned about. Right?

So I ran for president.

No big money.

No party machine.

Just an old conversion van/RV – and a message.

A message that had been crafted by some ten years of cross-country research. (Among other things, I'm a former small-town journalist. And I used that background in doing the research.)

See, we figured if you wanted to end pollution, crime, poverty... you had to find people who were doing, not only effective things, but “common sense” things, to end pollution, crime, poverty... And if you're looking for common sense in America (and here goes our metropolitan vote), you are more apt to find it on the back roads.

And boy did we find it.

In Carmel Valley, California, for instance, we found out how to heal the nuclear family. In High Springs, Florida, we found out how to end pollution. In Newport, Rhode Island, we found out how to end crime. In Bellingham, Massachusetts we learned how to end poverty, both here and in the Third World.

So we excitedly headed off, not just to win the presidency, but to plant seeds from town to town about the things we saw. With the hopes some would take root, now.

“And each time this happens, it's as if I get one of my policies get enacted, on a small scale, long before I ever get to D.C.,” I recently told a graduate History class at Toledo University.

I then paused, leveled a serious gaze, and continued: “So in effect, on a small scale it’s as if I’m President of the United States now.”

They all smiled, politely.

Liz, who is often not as polite (at least when it comes to me), leveled her own gaze as we walked to our campaign vehicle that day after the class.

Then she said: “It’s a happy little world you’re living in, isn’t it honey?”

And on we went...

CHAPTER 1

Preparation **...“think tanks,” and such**

During Campaign 2000 we had given up a home we'd been renting in Ripley, Ohio, and stayed on the road campaigning for 19 months straight. Then we lost the election, and it was time to find a new home, and in this case, a new hometown.

We settled on Bluffton, Ohio (pop. 3,877).

Bluffton matched up with a lot of our platform.

As just one example, we believe pro-active community building is a key to good quality of life in a town. And Bluffton had this, in spades.

One church in Bluffton, for instance, had a “lending list” (chain saws, kitchen equipment, camping equipment...) that has people regularly sharing. What's more, the second night in Bluffton we attended a neighborhood potluck (*“Everyone in town welcome!”*) that had been held weekly – for the past five years.

Bluffton also had a “Kitchen Co-op,” with a network of people practicing “Home Arts” and regularly bartering with each other.

And this is just to name a few community-building

exercises.

The same held true for creative Bluffton projects to promote peace, save the environment, help the poor...

And speaking of poor, I was.

Our family had given up everything to campaign, and now, well... we were broke.

I took the first job I could find, which was washing dishes at a restaurant at the *Flying J* truck stop the next exit down the I-75 corridor.

The application required that I list my last job. I hesitantly wrote: "presidential candidate."

They didn't even ask, which indicated to me they must have needed a dishwasher bad, no matter how "off" he seemed.

The job paid \$7 an hour. And believe me, I *earned* it.

From 3 p.m. to 11 p.m., I humped. Rapidly busing tables, frantically washing dishes, rushing to put the dishes away... It was an all you can eat buffet. And truck drivers, I observed, can eat *a lot*.

I guess the best way to describe the job is it was like doing a non-stop aerobic exercise in a white apron.

Each night I would pull into the driveway exhausted.

But not as exhausted as Richard (the 61-year-old guy I worked with) must have felt each night.

Richard had been working there a year. And for the first few months of his employment, he'd been living in the back of his car while trying to save up enough money to get a place. He was now living in a room in a home, and trying to pinch pennies to afford heart medication.

Beat as I was when I got home, and struggling to pick-up a few bucks on the side to make ends meet (I'd lined up a job to write a column for the *Lima News*), there seemed little time, or energy, for quality time with the

kids, or community service, or...

In other words, like many other “average Joes” out there, I felt like I was continually just treading water.

During this time, and without even knowing where I worked, Bluffton author Lynn Miller approached me and asked if I’d read the book *Nickel & Dimed (On (Not) Getting By in America)*.

I said I hadn’t.

“If you’re going to be president, you need to read this book,” he said.

So I read it.

Nickel & Dimed was written by Barbara Ehrenreich, who is a rather accomplished free-lance writer in New York. As a social experiment, she set up a very small savings account, stopped writing, and set out into America to make a living in the service industry.

Traveling from Maine to Minnesota to Florida, Ms. Ehrenreich worked as a nursing home aid, a Wal-Mart sales clerk, a hotel maid and a waitress. She discovered, like Richard and I had, that the jobs were exceedingly draining, the stress around making things financially stretch was continual, and in the end Ms. Ehrenreich actually went bust.

And that was just trying to make it by herself.

National Social Survey?

During this time, I gave a talk to a sociology class at Bluffton College. Prior to the talk, professor Jeff Gingerich explained that the class was studying about a “new lens” for viewing the health of a nation.

He noted America currently has economic indicators for practically everything. There are all kinds of data on

income levels and purchasing habits. As there is all kinds of data on how many people are employed, unemployed, and so on.

But what about data like: How many people are feeling *fulfilled* in their employment? (More than a few people at the *Flying J* didn't look like they were feeling all that fulfilled.) How much time is spent on community building and civic projects? How much quality time is spent with the kids?

Professor Gingerich said some 15 countries (many in Europe) already have some form of what he calls a: "National Social Survey," made up of some of these types of questions.

I told the class later that the reason why America hasn't attempted such a consistent and quantifiable survey is simply because: "We don't want to know." We don't want to know many of us are unhappy in our jobs. We don't want to know our community building and civic involvement is, at best, minimal. We don't want to know we're woefully short on quantity (not just "quality") parenting time.

So we stay in denial about the things that really matter – unlike some of these other countries.

And it's another country that former Blufftonite Paul Neufeld-Weaver is interested in, particularly Columbia. During a talk at the weekly Bluffton potluck, Paul explained he is a reservist for Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) that go into global hot spots to help diffuse tension and protect the innocent.

Columbia, Paul continued, is considered one of the most violent countries in the world. Paul explained he had recently gone to Columbia to help stage prayer vigils at night on dangerous city streets and stand up for the

oppressed.

At one point in Columbia, Paul started to question whether putting himself in harms way was the right thing. At that moment he saw a father, mother and two young children just about the age of his children back home in Minnesota. He said the thought instantly came: ‘Doesn’t this family have a right to the same peace and safety my family experiences every day back home?’

“We need to fight a war for peace,” said Paul, a Mennonite. “We need to be willing to die for peace – just as soldiers are willing to die in war.”

And as Mennonite’s are against people dying in war, they are just as against people dying in prison.

One of the next things I attended in Bluffton was a Mennonite “silent protest” on the downtown square for Jay D. Scott’s execution. He would be the second Death Row inmate to be executed in Ohio since the state recently lifted a 38-year-ban on capital punishment.

Bluffton’s Bill Trollinger, a professor at Dayton University, told me he was at the protest because Sam McDonald was not. Bill had linked up with Sam as part of an inmate correspondence program. For more than 10 years, they talked family, football, and why Sam was in prison. He had grown up poor and black in the inner city of St. Louis. A way out was the military, where he developed a drug habit in Vietnam. Then one night, on drugs, Sam killed someone during a robbery – to support his habit.

Bill Trollinger said there were so many factors working against Sam in life that he found it hard to see how they could justify killing him. But “they” did one night in 1997 by lethal injection.

The same way Jay D. Scott, a diagnosed schizo-

phrenic, died today – at 10:04 EST. And the Mennonite Church bells in Bluffton rang.

Think Tank

Now, as my wife will tell you, my strong suit isn't, well, thinking. So we decided to convene Bluffton's 'best brains' (sorry) for an "average Joe" Think Tank, as a prelude to declaring for Campaign 2004.

Some 25 people attended. And most of them, I believe, came because Phyllis Mosier donated two home-made lemon pies.

The "Tank" opened with Painter's Plus owner Dale Way saying at the start of his speech: "Before it all started to happen with Abraham Lincoln, who would have thought, huh?"

This gave me the indication Dale thought I might not be a 2004 front-runner right out of the shoot.

Our neighbor Steve Harnish's father, Bob, who was in attendance, had driven in from Eureka, Illinois – just five miles from where (Are you ready for this?) Lincoln used to practice law.

A coincidence? Probably.

Liz then did a brief presentation, saying the "average Joe" phenomenon could mushroom nationally, referring to a formula in the marketing book: *Tipping Point*.

"Average Joe for president could become the next political epidemic for the nation!" She exhorted. [While washing dishes afterwards, I suggested to the future First Lady that perhaps another word besides "epidemic" could be used the next time.]

After Liz's talk, the Tank was opened for, well, thinking.

Somebody suggested billboards. Another said there

would be more emphasis on college talks. Yet another said homemade buttons might be just down-home quirky enough...

This went on for quite some time, and ended with our friend Matt Meyer suggesting the slogan: “Nothing could be finer than to vote for average Joe Schriner.”

At this point, we knew it was, indeed, time to end before more people started getting a bit goofy.

Mars or Bust?

Now it was Liz who was thinking I was acting a bit ‘goofy’ in regard to what I did next in Bluffton. And as a preface...

One of our campaign’s credos has consistently been: “Think Globally. Act Locally.” And it was during this time that the Bush administration decided not to participate in the Kyoto Protocol, a set of standards developed in the UN for reducing carbon dioxide emissions, which a good number of countries did sign on to.

The worry: global warming.

And a valid worry I personally thought, considering polar ice caps are melting at an alarming rate now and sea levels are rising dangerously.

In my *Lima News* column, I wrote that at this rate of ice cap melting, we may soon be having shark attacks – in Iowa. *Jaws 7 (From the Corn Belt)*.

Now, even though the Bush administration had decided not to go along with the Kyoto Protocol, our family did.

We committed to walking, or bicycling, 90% of wherever we went in Bluffton. We don’t use air conditioning (there was actually a time in the not too distant past when

no one used air conditioning). We also close off part of the house in winter, turn the thermostat down and wear sweaters. We share the same bath water...

And we, or rather I, decided to take all this a step beyond. I constructed a homemade yard sign that said: **Kyoto Protocol Home Zone** and told everyone who asked, and even some who didn't, what that meant. (Our kids even planted a couple flowers around the sign.)

Meanwhile Liz, who isn't given to such loud outward displays (she's from New Zealand and has some 'proper English heritage' in her), asked one day how long I was going to keep the sign up.

"Until the polar ice caps stop melting," I smiled.

She didn't.

Nor was Liz smiling, much, as she overheard a conversation I had at one of the next potlucks.

Bluffton's Ron Rich, a former Stanford Physics professor, has a tendency not only to think globally, but 'inter-galactic.'

And this night he was wearing a button that said: "Mars or Bust!"

I asked Ron why we'd want to spend billions getting to Mars, when we have children starving to death in the Third World on this planet?

His response was that Jesus said: "There would always be the poor."

"But there would be a lot less of them if we didn't spend billions on this kind of thing Ron!" I countered.

\$4 a shift

Several days later, while painting a series of fences, I heard a piece on National Public Radio about some of

these “poor” I’d been alluding to. They live in the border city of Juarez, Mexico.

They’ve come here from all over Mexico to work in the new factories that have gone up on the border after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) passed. These people make on average: a mere \$4 a shift. They live in cobbled together shacks with their children, no electricity, no running water and little food.

Some who feel helpless to provide adequately for their family in Juarez (or elsewhere in Mexico), try to clandestinely cross the border to the U.S. Some 1,500 people die in this passage every year.

I put down the paintbrush and made a note about going to Juarez.

But first I had to go to Tiffin, Ohio, and points east.

CHAPT. 2

Declaration Tour

...message played to mixed reviews.

To declare to run for president, you just have to announce in public. Being an old journalist, I put together a news release saying I was announcing: today, August 21, 2001.

The *Lima News* called for an interview.

After that story ran, the local *Fox News* affiliate came out to do a piece. Our front yard was teeming with supporters. (Ok, there were maybe about 15 adults and a bunch of neighborhood kids holding signs and chanting: “*Vote for Mr. Schriener!*”).

Fox reporter Amy Basista asked why I was running.

I said: “See those kids over there? They don’t have much of a voice in society right now. But if they did, what they’d be shouting is: **Enough with the violence! Enough with the drugs! Enough with the pollution! ENOUGH!**”

When my rather forceful response abated, Ms. Basista then asked if I’d be “thrilled” to get on the ballots this time?

In as cocky a manner as I could muster, I said “no,”

and continued that the only thing that would “thrill” me was if I *won* this time. Nothing less!

As timing would have it, later that afternoon the Federal Election Commission book on vote tallies for Campaign 2000 arrived. Because we simply didn’t have the staff to be able to meet the Electoral College requirements in many states the first time out, our write-in votes hadn’t been counted in those states. However, in the few states where they were counted... let’s just say, oh, it hadn’t shaped up to be a landslide.

In Georgia we got five write-in votes, in Idaho four, in Maryland three, in Indiana 24 (Go Hoosiers!)...

I told Liz I really wanted to call Ms. Basista, retract my earlier statement, and say: “Yes, we actually would be ‘thrilled’ to get on the ballots this time.”

Note: I had told the media we would be leaving the following month, starting Sept. 25, for a 350-mile Declaration Tour of Northern Ohio.

In between, Sept. 11 happened.

Sept. 11, 2001

We all seem to remember where we were at.

I was walking through Bluffton College’s Student Union with our six-year-old daughter Sarah. I noticed a rather good-size group of people gathered around a big screen TV.

I asked what was happening.

While they were telling us, the second plane hit the second World Trade Center Tower.

I spun Sarah away.

We don’t do television in our family and try hard to keep her and her younger brother Joseph sheltered from

as much violent imagery as possible.

Walking Sarah back home, I wondered what it all meant.

I was soon to find out.

And as this day would change the tenor of the country, it changed the tenor of our campaign.

While many talked “revenge,” I personally wondered.

I wrote a column the next week saying that because of 10 years of American-backed sanctions in Iraq (one of Osama bin Laden’s reported grievances), little children were dying of hunger and lack of proper medicine there, as little children died in the planes Sept. 11, as little children would die as we began to drop bombs on Afghanistan.

Given all this, I borrowed a line from one of singer Pat Benatar’s songs: “Hell is for children.”

I ended the column by saying the question anymore shouldn’t be: Who’s wrong? There seems to be enough wrong to go around these days.

The question should be: Who’s going to stop the cycle of retaliation?

Declaration Tour

And as the Declaration Tour began, Sept. 11th continued to follow us.

I told a history class at Heidelberg College that while I believed personally in the “just war theory,” I wasn’t so sure going to war with Afghanistan would be ‘just.’ Sept. 11th was by no means a black and white issue. There were complexities.

What’s more, I said the war in Afghanistan had al-

ready started, although we hadn't dropped one bomb yet, or sent in one Green Beret. That is, as America started talking tough, the humanitarian aid workers in Afghanistan were all pulling out.

"The children in the refugee camps there are starting to die this week (of hunger, illness...)," I said. "We call that 'collateral damage.' I wonder what God calls it?"

A front-page story in Tiffin, Ohio's newspaper the next day said my message at Heidelberg played to mixed reviews, at best.

What's playing to rave reviews, at least in environmental circles, is Oberlin College's relatively new \$7.2 million Environmental Studies Center, a creative interplay of environmentally friendly building material, passive and active solar applications, an array of plant life... We stopped at Oberlin next to meet with David Orr, the Chair of the Environmental Studies Program.

Orr noted that the extravagant use of energy in college buildings gives students the impression it's ok to waste energy. Likewise, the use of toxic materials in a college building gives students the impression it's ok to build with toxic material. Likewise, windowless rooms, or rooms with windows that don't open, give students the impression it's ok to keep nature at "arm's length."

Orr, who is the author of *Earth in Mind*, said many people in society these days want to keep nature at "arm's length" with temperature controlled homes, cars, football stadium domes... In fact, he said, the closest many people get to nature anymore is the: Weather Channel. And nature, in fact, has become the "enemy," something to be feared. He said a word that is evolving in the environmental field for this is: "biophobia."

"We will not fight to save what we do not love," said

Orr, who tries to encourage people to connect with as much of the natural world as possible.

We next ‘connected’ with the Southside of Cleveland. At the beginning of a talk at Annunciation Parish there, I said our campaign didn’t “pander to anyone,” then winked and added: “But I want you all to know when I do get to D.C., one of the first things I’ll do is have the Capitol Dome painted orange and brown (Cleveland Browns colors) and have them put a big face mask around it.”

A guy in the first pew called out: “You’ve got my vote!”

As Annunciation’s Fr. Russ Banner had my vote. This parish is one of the most social justice and peace oriented we had come across in the country.

Besides a Sister Church project with a church in Haiti, and a myriad of other projects to help the poor, Fr. Banner had also helped start a Pax Christi (Catholic Peace Movement) group in Cleveland. And in a sermon the weekend after Sept. 11, Fr. Banner said that while it was important to bring the terrorists to judicial justice for the “despicable act of violence,” we should not respond with another “despicable act of violence” (read: war).

Fr. Banner also suggested people go a step beyond and ask if there is anything that requires America to look beyond the “finger pointing.” Had our strong-arm tactics (sanctions in the Middle East which have led to massive human suffering) fueled Arab resentments? Fr. Banner wondered.

Another Cleveland Pax Christi member, Tim Mussler, told me he wondered (as many indicators point) if the chasm between the affluence in the Western World and the widespread abject poverty in parts of the Middle

East, and the Third World in general, is fueling some of the resentment. Musser said if we want “peace in the contemporary world,” we have to work for more justice, more economic parity.

To that end, Tim and his wife donate some 50% of their income to Third World charities, dropping their income below the level where a family of seven would have to pay federal tax. A good deal of which goes to the military anyway, said Tim.

Christ rooms

And it is the military industrial complex that Catholic Worker Movement founder Dorothy Day was opposed to. We had traveled further east to Akron, Ohio to meet with volunteers at a cluster of Catholic Worker houses set in a hardscrabble neighborhood here.

These homes are converted crack houses that now house the homeless, like Juan Pablo. He had come to the U.S. several years ago to flee the political oppression in El Salvador. Catholic Worker house director Joe May Jr. said during Juan’s three months in a Catholic Worker house here, he was networked with the larger Hispanic community, got a job, and eventually got his own apartment – where he now takes in other Hispanic men needing help.

May said Dorothy Day’s vision was that every parish should have a Catholic Worker house, and every parishioner’s home should have a “Christ Room” set aside for those in need. (Just prior to leaving on this tour, we had put up a homeless man in our version of a “Christ Room” at home.)

What’s more, although the Catholic Worker accepts

donations, they don't opt for a tax-exempt, non-profit status. Because of federal stipulations on non-profits, Ms. Day believed accepting this would limit the Catholic Worker's collective voice in politics.

And the voice needs to be collective, and loud, when it comes to peace issues, said May. Ms. Day believed a Christian orientation should be, not acts of war, but rather acts of mercy – tied to being the “peacemakers” that the Sermon on the Mount called for.

And in that vein, I told the *Ashland Times Gazette* on the way back to Bluffton that, again, while I'm not justifying in any way what the terrorists did, “instead of waging war in a military sense, our administration would wage ‘war’ against poverty and social injustice.”

For instance, I continued, we would ask people in Ashland, Ohio to cut back on their spending and adopt, and assist, a sister city in a struggling nation, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq... This potentially dramatic grassroots outpouring of goodwill would be a cutting edge step in starting to help disarm some of the tension, I said.

I added that we must resist the knee jerk reaction to want to respond in kind to violence in many instances. However, I acknowledged that that would be difficult for Americans in this case, or anyone for that matter. And the reason why can best be summed up in part of a new prayer that was circulating among Pax Christi members throughout the country.

Prayer in Time of Terrorism

“O God, I do not know where to turn in a time of terrorism. I have no easy answers or solutions to acts of ter-

ror against the innocent. When buildings explode without warning, when the defenseless are murdered without reason, I am tempted to retaliate with vengeance. I am tempted to place the flag above the cross and put my faith in the state, rather than the Sermon on the Mount. I am afraid to face my deepest fears of suffering and death, both for myself and those I love.”

CHAPT. 3

Country Music Highway Tour ...America's 'common man' poetry.

After the Declaration Tour, we spent about a month and a half back in Bluffton. I did some painting jobs around town. When I wasn't painting in silence and musing about a particular platform point, I would occasionally turn on some country music. Without knowing it, I was warming up to our next tour...

God Bless Afghanistan, too

At the beginning of November we headed out, aiming first at Georgia and the beginning of the Trail of Tears. However, we had a few stops to make first.

The first stop we made was at the "Annual Buckeye Book Fair" in Wooster, Ohio, where Liz got some books for the children and I talked with author Gene Logsdon. Logsdon, who is from Ohio and has written numerous books, believes we need "the fabric of small farms in America." His books include *The Contrary Farmer* and *Living At Nature's Pace*. He told me one of the "greatest towns in America" is Mt. Hope, Ohio (pop. 2,000),

where Amish farmers stay small, farm organically and sell locally. And, like it was in the old days, almost everybody in town is dependent on each other for most all the stuff of life.

Logsdon continued that he grew up in a time when “dumb farmer was one word.” And he said that prejudice accounts for why *Time Magazine* seems more important than the *Farming Journal*, yet really, which would be more important in the nuts and bolts of survival? However, it was *Time Magazine* this week that was showing the bombs dropping in Afghanistan to the rallying cry “*God Bless America.*” Logsdon responded that: “Just once I’d like to hear someone say: ‘And God Bless Afghanistan, too.’”

Art Gish would say that.

“...whoever the gun is pointed at.”

We caught up with Art Gish in Athens, Ohio where we joined him, and a group of others, for a “Peace Protest” outside the Athens County Courthouse. I told *Athens News* reporter Jim Phillips that there should be bumper stickers saying: “God bless Afghanistan too.” (Gene had said I could use that.) [Besides including that in his story the next day, Phillips would also write: “...his (my) campaign stresses a populist faith in the ability of regular American folks to fix the problems of the federal government with decency and common sense.”]

And it’s American decency (or lack thereof) that is becoming a huge international issue, according to Amelia Hapsari, who was filming a documentary on Art Gish’s life when we arrived. She told me modern Western media was prompting a deteriorating of sexual mores and a marked increase in violent acts and materialistic pursuits,

not only in her country, Japan, but all around the globe.

And it's the rest of the globe that's also worried about our nuclear weapons, I said during a talk to the Appalachia Peace and Social Justice Committee. I said our administration would push for a U.S. Department of Peace that was funded as much, if not more, than the U.S. Military. And one Dept. of Peace initiative would be nuclear disarmament. I was preaching to the choir, especially Art.

Not only does Art Gish believe in nuclear disarmament, as a Church of the Brethren member, Art has also put his life on the line, frequently, for peace as a member of the Christian Peace Keeper Teams (mentioned earlier). He has several times, for instance, gone into the heart of the Israeli / Palestine conflict and stands on the side of "whoever the gun is pointed at," he wrote in his book *Hebron Journal: Stories of Non-Violence and Peacemaking*. When back in the states, Art could well be one of the most prolific letters-to-the-editor writers in the country. He's written more than 200 in the past 15 years ("They know me around Athens," he smiles.) about such topics as war, Wal Mart, pollution, prison reform...

And prison reform is a topic that Professor Kay Hardesty at Pikeville College in Pikeville, Kentucky, is most familiar with. He's taught about "restorative justice" the past 30 years. At a stop in Pikeville, Professor Hardesty told me "we don't always calibrate a reasonable punishment" for the crime. Why some of the sentences are too long, said the professor, and why some of the prisons are short on rehabilitation, is because society simply doesn't prioritize rehabilitation as much as it could. However, Professor Hardesty said he's seeing optimistic signs that that's starting to change – in no small part because of efforts like his. Each semester his students visit courts to

watch sentencing, visit inmates in prison, and do projects (like collect toys at Christmas for prisoners' children) to help.

In all this, the prisoners become more than just a number, a statistic. And consequently, the desire to want to see them get more help increases.

life-size Loretta Lynn

We had been following Rte. 23 through the Appalachian Mountains. And a couple exits back, we had eaten dinner at Wendy's Restaurant.

It, like so many of these types of fast food restaurants these days, was a theme restaurant. And this restaurant's theme was: country music.

There were old phonograph records on the wall, pictures of old-time country music stars, and even a *life-size* mannequin of Loretta Lynn staring at Liz, the kids and I as we were eating our meal. (With Loretta, and all, it had the air of seeming even a little bit more than just your average "theme specific" restaurant, because the only other life-size mannequin I'd ever seen in a fast food restaurant was Ronald McDonald.) So I asked an employee.

"Rte. 23 is the 'Country Music Highway,'" he said
"Oh," I said.

I excitedly went back to the table and told Liz this, adding that since this was, in fact, the Country Music Highway, why don't we make this leg the "Country Music Highway Tour"?

Liz looked up from her Frostie and gave me one of those: 'You keep thinking dear' looks.

And to 'think' we are doing this all without paid advisors.

“Elvis of his time”

However it was a paid advisor (I bought him lunch) who filled us in on some of country music’s past in Kingsport, Tennessee. Paul Hughes, who refers to himself as somewhat of a “country music historian,” explained that this part of the country was settled by Irish and Welsh immigrants. They would sing “mountain ballads” they had brought from their homeland. The ballads were accompanied by: fiddles, banjos, guitars, washboards, and the like.

Over time, the ballads began to shift to reflect these peoples’ current circumstances. That is, the hard life of coal mining families.

Of the men who worked in the mines: “One sunset a week. That’s what these guys would get to see,” said Paul. What’s more, they basically worked for slave wages in a ‘serf-economy.”

The companies paid the wages, owned the store(s) in town, rented the homes... “People worked hard, but never seemed to get ahead,” said Paul.

Just a previous version of ‘Nickel & Dimed’ stuff, I couldn’t help but think.

Paul said the “official” birthplace of American country music was in Bristol, Virginia. So that’s where we headed next.

At the Country Music Museum in Bristol, we learned that in August of 1927, Victor Records sent a talent scout to Bristol to record some local artists. From these sessions came two of country music’s early break-out stars. The Carter Family, and Jimmy Rogers.

Rogers, who has been referred to as the “Elvis of his time,” like many of the early country music performers,

sang about the hard life of the Appalachia coal miners, the back breaking work of laying rail... Literature at the Museum pointed out that Roger's particular brand of country music had a strong inflection of the blues – as did that era.

As people worked at break-neck speed in the mines, the factories, the sawmills... to carve out a country with “muscle and sweat,” the music not only reflected the hard lifestyle, but also seemed to help keep it going.

And as Liz and our kids listened to some of the music from that era, while viewing the memorabilia, my feelings were mixed.

For one, I was hard pressed to see why we had to go at a “break-neck” speed in the first place. Couldn't this have been done in a more moderate, measured pace?

And at this break-neck speed, wasn't the landscape being raped (strip mines, clear cuts...)? And what's more, weren't the kids getting shorted emotionally because dad was always at the mine, or worse. He was dead from black lung?

Yet somehow, and quite romantically at that, the country music songs validated it all, even made something that wasn't even remotely romantic, romantic. Sorry Loretta.

CHAPT. 4

Trail of Tears

...she gave her blanket to a child

In 1838, the United States began the removal of some 17,000 Cherokees from their land in North Georgia to a destination in Oklahoma. President Andrew Jackson helped spearhead the effort, pushing the Indian Removal Bill through Congress.

As 7,000 U.S. troops descended on a peaceful Cherokee Nation, men, women and children were forced to march, often barefoot and without warm clothing: one thousand miles. Some 4,000 Cherokees died, including many children.

The march has come to be known as “The Trail of Tears.”

genocide

We connected with the Trail of Tears in Asheville, North Carolina.

Actually, it didn't even pass through here. But it did for us.

This week's edition of Asheville's *Mountain Xpress News-*

paper carried a story about Native American activist Bruce Two Eagles, who explained in so many (angry) words, that the Trail of Tears marches on in modern America.

Two Eagles noted most civil rights rhetoric in America is on behalf of Hispanics, Blacks... Native Americans are almost never mentioned, he said. "We're the invisible culture... created by wars against the Indians."

The article notes that in 1492 when Columbus set foot in America, there were an estimated 20 million Native Americans. The 1890 U.S. Census showed only 250,000 Native Americans.

"This was perhaps the biggest incidence of genocide in the world," said Two Eagles.

Fellow Native American activist Monroe Gilmour agrees. In the article, he noted Native American lands and homes were seized, their people killed and their children forced to renounce their own language and culture.

"It was cultural genocide," said Tina Grover, who we met in North Augusta, South Carolina next.

Ms. Grover, who is a half blood Indian, said she read during one period Native American children were taken from their parents and moved to boarding schools in Connecticut "to be civilized."

Ms. Grover, a parent herself, said her ancestors must have been "dying of grief."

And Ms. Grover added that the white man didn't just take Native American children, lives, land... "The white man took the Native American's spirit," she said.

And it is this grieving, this loss of spirit, that is so powerfully depicted in a life-size, bronze statue of a Native American looking westward on a bank of the Tennessee River in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Chattanooga was a Trail of Tears starting point for many Cherokee.

Liz, who had been preparing our children with literature about the Native Americans for the last several months during home schooling, explained to Sarah and Joseph that this statue was a depiction of Cherokee Chief John Ross. She explained he courageously fought for his people, helped take the Indians' case to the courts, and having lost, still helped lead his people west.

Liz also pointed out to the children that the statue's face was streaked on one side with red, representative (we imagined) of blood.

One of the U.S. Volunteer Militia Men would write later: "I fought through the Civil War and saw men shot to pieces and slaughtered by the thousands; but the Cherokee removal was the cruelest work I've ever known."

Private John G. Burnett, a U.S. soldier also overseeing the march, wrote: "In one home was a frail widow and three small children, one just a baby. When told that she must go, the Mother gathered the children at her feet, prayed a humble prayer in her native tongue, patted the old family dog goodbye – with a baby now strapped on her back, and leading a child with each hand, started on her exile... [And while walking out] she died of a heart attack, with her baby on her back, and her two children clinging to her hands."

The other side of Chief John Ross's statue's face is streaked with: a tear. There was a lot to cry about.

tremendous respect for the environment

And there still is a lot to cry about, according to Ken Kifer. We met with Kifer on our second stop along the Trail in Scottsboro, Alabama. He said the pioneers entered this country and immediately started deforesting ev-

everything. “It was worse than the massive cutting of the Amazon rainforests today,” he said. Kifer went on that while the Native Americans demonstrated tremendous respect for the environment, we haven’t. To do his part to curb greenhouse gas emission, Kifer bicycles practically everywhere, maintains a website to inspire others to bicycle (www.kenkifer.com) and estimates in the last 40 years that he’s logged a phenomenal 100,000 bicycle miles. [Some two years after we met with Kifer, he was hit by a motorist, and killed, while riding his bicycle home one evening.]

We went about 50 miles from Scottsboro to Huntsville, Alabama where I read an Associated Press article in the *Huntsville Times* that said scientists were racing to develop a cure for smallpox in the face of the current bioterrorism scare. And this was not the first smallpox / bioterrorism scare in America either. The first was when the American Government purposely gave the Indians blankets infested with smallpox.

At our next stop, I told a Florence, Alabama, newspaper reporter that not much is mentioned in the history books about the smallpox incident, or many of the other past atrocities to the Native Americans. “That’s because the victor always writes the history books,” he said.

But apparently the history books Florence’s Leah Beth Bryson read had just enough information about the atrocities that it moved her to write an elective high school paper on the Trail of Tears. “I couldn’t comprehend people (Americans) being that...” her voice trailed off. To make some amends for her ancestors, Leah and her Methodist Church youth group volunteered for a summer-long renovation project at the Southwestern Indian School in Arizona.

Leah, who was now a student at Lambuth University in

Tennessee, was home for the Thanksgiving holiday. When I finished interviewing her, she interviewed me. (She is a columnist for their campus newspaper.) She asked me how I would inspire people to make amends to the Native Americans. I said I would tell them about her.

Just like I would tell people about Don Davis.

Tennessee, we learned next, has one of the most comprehensive health care systems for the disadvantaged of any state in the country. Called “TennCare,” in 1994 it saved Don Davis’s life. He told us his heart was stopping for more than three seconds at a time because a hereditary condition was getting critically worse and he needed a \$20,000 pace maker. While Davis was working at the time, he had no health care insurance. TennCare picked up the tab.

After meeting with Davis, we went to the Back to Basics Halfway House in Savannah, Tennessee.

On a tour of the facility, we learned Back to Basics, which is privately run, is rather unique in that it takes in recovering alcoholics and addicts, initially for free. Then when people here get employment, they are encouraged to donate to the facility if they can. The town of Savannah kicks in as well. Businesses donate. “James” the owner, who is in recovery himself, said often “when an alcoholic or drug addict comes off the street, he or she has no money, no place to live.” James said he and his wife see what they’re doing here as a “spiritual mission.”

“Thank You America”

Further along the Trail of Tears, we came across a group of bicyclists on a “mission” as well. The “Thank You America Tour” was made up of New York City firefighters riding to say, well, “thank you” for the outpour-

ing of help after 9/11. We stopped to talk with them and hand out a few buttons on an isolated stretch of Rte. 64. In a rather heavy New York accent, one firefighter said to me: “This is *great!* Do you, like, even have positions on stuff, and everything?” I said yeah. He asked if I need a running mate.

While being interviewed by a reporter in Selmer, Tennessee, later in the morning, I said these New York firefighters, and the firefighters who went into the Towers Sept. 11 (hurriedly scribbling social security numbers on their arms so their bodies could be more easily identified) epitomized the zenith of courage.

I, in turn, demonstrated a lot, ok, a modicum of courage, trying a “slug burger” (I’ll let you guess) at Pat’s Diner in Selmer for lunch. This particular display of courage, coupled with my “average Joe” persona in general, impressed a semi-driver in Pat’s enough that he offered to put an “average Joe” bumper sticker on his rig. “And I go to all 48 states,” he smiled. I turned to Liz and said: “I think we found our answer to big-party million dollar advertising.”

Walking out of Pat’s, we saw people were now lining the streets in anticipation of the arrival of the Thank You America Tour. Liz, the kids and I took our places as well. Up ahead the cyclists came around a bend, escorted by the town fire truck, siren blaring. People clapped, waved and called out their own: “*thank you.*” It was such a touching small town Americana scene, we all, I would imagine, felt proud to be part of the country this day.

the “Great Spirit”

We then headed into Arkansas, still along the Trail.

I again mentioned the smallpox/Native American

atrocities during an interview with a reporter in Forrest City, Arkansas. He replied he remembered reading that the U.S. specifically gave the Iroquois the smallpox laden blankets. And while he was thinking about blankets, he continued that he'd also read that even though Cherokee Chief John Ross's wife was suffering from pneumonia on the Trail of Tears, she gave her blanket to a child. She died in Little Rock.

Out of Little Rock, we ran into a frontal system of strong winds and driving rain. It was tough going on Rte. 40, but all we could think about at this point was how much more "tough going" had been the *walk* for these poor people of yesteryear.

And it's Native American 'yesteryear' that's featured by the Oklahoma Historical Society at Sequoyah Cabin. Site Superintendent Stephen Foster said Sequoyah was an Eastern Band Cherokee who arrived in Oklahoma in 1839 at the end of his Trail of Tears relocation. As we toured the site, Liz explained to our children that before coming to Oklahoma, Sequoyah devised the first syllabary (system of writing) for the Cherokee language, quite a feat considering that the whole thing was developed by just one person. Because of Sequoyah's work, the first Indian newspaper in the country was published on Feb. 21, 1828.

And to learn more about the Cherokee past, we then went to the Cherokee Nation Museum in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. In the Museum's Library are more than 4,000 volumes of books and oral history tapes on Cherokee history and culture. In one of the books on Cherokee spirituality, I read the Cherokee's worship the Great Spirit who "...gives and takes away breath." The Great Spirit is the creator, responsible for all, the book said.

And going to worship our “Great Spirit” the next day at Mass at St. Augustine’s in Tulsa, we noticed a life-size statue near the altar. It was a statue of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha. A member of the Iroquois Tribe growing up in New York, she was orphaned during, of all things, a smallpox epidemic. She is said to have lived a devout, austere lifestyle, with a great love of God’s creation. (St. Kateri is known as: “the patroness of the ecology.”)

After Mass we learned that at the end of the Trail of Tears, the Cherokee planted a small tree in what’s now Tulsa, as a sign of hope for the future in their new place. We went there next. The tree was now huge, and surrounded by a small, non-descript, black wrought iron fence – not even a plaque.

We prayed. And we wondered: ‘Why couldn’t we have lived in peace with the Native Americans? What does all this really say about the founding of our country?’

“...can’t take a fish out of water.”

We then traveled into the heart of the Osage Indian Reservation in northern Oklahoma where we met with Monte Roubideaux, 45. Roubideaux, who was currently at nearby Bacon College majoring in drug and alcohol counseling (“I want to give back to my people,” he said.), believes reparations to the Native Americans for past wrong should come in the form of more grants for college, or vocational schools; better, and more affordable health care on the Reservations; and an end to discrimination in the job market. (“There’s a stereotype of Indians being drunken and shiftless, yet most Native Americans are quite spiritual, and very sincere,” he stressed.)

Roubideaux is personally, as are many Native Americans these days, trying to learn as much as he can about his tribe's culture, including learning the language – which he is teaching to his children. “You can't take a fish out of water...” he smiled. And he added God put his people here, with their customs, their tradition, for a reason. And what's more, he said he believed we are, all of us in America, to live in “harmony” learning from each other.

The next day I told the Reservation newspaper in Powhaska that I pledged our administration would try to honor Monte Roubideaux's requests, not for votes, but because it was simply right. I also said it would be ‘right’ to have many more Native American history classes, taught by Native Americans, in mainstream school curriculum. And there should be other things, a *whole lot* of creative other things, to introduce Native American culture into mainstream society in general.

Note: Just before leaving the Osage Reservation, we learned that the specific tree we had visited the day before in Tulsa hadn't been planted by the Cherokee at the end of the Trail of Tears; but rather, it had been planted by the Creek Tribe upon their arrival here in 1836. The Cherokee tree was in another part of Tulsa.

Oops.

However, I consoled the kids by saying the intention was there. And anyway, our “Great Spirit,” I was sure, heard the prayers anyway.

I then turned to Liz and said: “We need an advance staff.”

CHAPT. 5

Border Tour

...15 million people lost their land.

We headed further southwest to look at Hispanic immigration issues along the border...

cracker box dwellings

In Eunice, New Mexico (pop. 3,000), often two or three Hispanic families live in one, of many, cracker box dwellings on the south side. They struggle to get a foothold.

Leon Navarette formed the Hispanic Council to help. He told us Hispanic immigrants to this country are often capable of more than just “putting a foot to a shovel.” But because of stereotyping and work place prejudice, the Hispanic’s potential are often stifled. The Hispanic Council, with a grassroots network of volunteers, help new immigrants in Eunice understand workplace rights, connects them with social services, encourages educational pursuits (even offers scholarship money), and helps in a number of other ways as well.

purple pony tail

And speaking of help, I needed some in a big way in Eunice. Our daughter Sarah had joined the Brownies back in Bluffton and was given a chance to attend a meeting here. What's more, I was asked to volunteer for the evening. (*And I thought running for president was stressful.* It's nothing compared to being face-to-face with 10 six-year-olds, all on sugar!)

Tonight's craft was making Christmas cards by gluing multi-colored yarn strips in the cards. Well, as you can imagine, not all the glued yarn strips made it into the cards. Actually, for a brief time, thanks to one anonymous little prankster, I looked like I had a purple pony tail.

"How come you didn't leave it on?" Liz asked afterward.

"Afraid I'd lose the rural vote," I smiled.

"...all about greed."

The next day we attended a Texaco/Chevron Christmas lunch in Lovington, New Mexico. (This area is part of an oil field so vast, it's a main supplier for a lot of the western states.)

Always the life of a party, about halfway into lunch, I said: "So guys, what's the sentiment about opening the Alaskan Arctic Refuge to oil drilling?"

After, oh, a few awkward moments of silence, someone who had worked in the oil fields here for over 20 years quite candidly said that if the oil companies thought they could make money, regardless of the environmental impact, they would.

"It's all about greed," he said.

Christmas Day (12/25/01)

During Mass at St. Helen's Church in Hobbs, New Mexico today, a Hispanic priest, with distinct angst (and in the best English he could muster), said he left "home, family, culture and friends in Mexico" to come to this diocese three years ago because of the shortage of priests here. It is a pain, I would imagine, that has to grip many Hispanics who have left home, family, friends, culture... so they could, say, send money back home to feed their children.

Hobbs's Ed and Betty Bryce have seen the type of poverty that would drive someone to seek a better life elsewhere. On a recent "Reverse Mission" (to observe, not so much help) the Bryce's went to rural San Pedro, Nicaragua where they frequently saw more than one family living in 20 ft. by 20 ft. shacks built out of salvageable junk. There were dirt floors, no windows or bathrooms. What's more, many of these people work in American-owned sweatshops there, getting paid 70 cents a day. Conversely, while many there are very poor by American standards, Ed said they are "rich" when it comes to faith, family and community life – because they don't have as many material, or entertainment, distractions.

During a talk to the Knights of Columbus in Hobbs several days later, I said our foreign relations policy would be to ask people in a place like Hobbs to adopt a place like San Pedro. And while we couldn't legislate this, we'd ask people in Hobbs to consider cutting back on clothes, food, energy use... ("Heck," I said. "Instead of the Caribbean, you guys could vacation in, say, Eunice (12 miles away) and save even more money.") Some laughed, but it seemed in a nervous sort of way.

“middle of the desert”

As we have traveled all these years, there have been many times when we’ve seen the hand of God at work. Whether that’s some small miracle that connected us to a person or project we needed to learn about for the research. Or whether that’s been helping us get out of a minor pickle, or for that matter, a dire straight.

The latter would fall into the category of this next story.

In early evening, we had headed west out of Hobbs, New Mexico, down a two-lane road through the desert. About fifteen miles outside of Carlsbad, New Mexico (virtually in the ‘middle of the desert,’ so to speak), the motor home started to shake significantly.

Amidst a rather loud rattling sound coming from the engine, and my arms vibrating profusely along with the steering wheel, Liz (who is in a constant state of denial about these sorts of things), looked over at me and, in a decidedly vibrating voice, asked.

“Do.. you... think... that’s... us... honey...?”

“Yes... dear,” I vibrated back.

I eased the motor home onto the rather sandy side of the road. Except for a few cactuses, sand was all you could see in every direction.

I got out.

No sooner had I opened the hood, than a pick-up truck pulled up in front of us and man got out. (For the last hour, we’d seen hardly any vehicles on these road.)

The man approached and asked if we needed help.

I, in turn, asked him if he knew anything about engines.

He half smiled and said. “Oh, I know a little.”

Then looking in, he turned to me and said.

“It’s your water pump.”

It had jiggled part of the way off. He then suggested we follow him to his place in Carlsbad. And he advised we drive slowly so the water pump didn’t come off altogether.

It took us a good hour to go fifteen miles. But we eventually made it to his driveway.

Keith Williams approached again. And I again asked.

“Really, how much do you know about engines?”

“I’m a stock car driver,” he smiled.

Keith looked at the engine some more and assessed the front part of the engine would have to be taken out (no small job) to get to the water pump. He said he was off the next day, and he and a neighbor would fix it for us.

What’s more, he said they had a big Winnebago motor home parked out back and we could be guests in it for the evening.

After years in a cramped conversion van, Liz accepted without hesitation. I was just happy we weren’t going to sleep in the desert to the sound of coyotes.

After a night in the ‘Winnebago Hilton,’ Keith, the neighbor and I started working on the engine. It was quite a labor intense job. But amidst grease up to our elbows, banged knuckles and a few expletives... we got it done.

It took a good 15 hours.

About 9 p.m., the neighbor had gone home and it was just Keith and I sitting in the driveway. I asked him if he wanted payment for his work.

He said that, yes, he wanted payment. I gulped a bit as I figured 15 hours at, well, a ‘stock car driver’s rate’...

Have I mentioned it's a low budget campaign?

"How much do you think would be fair Keith?" I asked.

"The 'number four' special at Wendy's," he said.

When that sank in (it had taken a few moments), I said.

"Let me get you the 'biggie size' on that."

After getting back from Wendy's, I asked Keith why he'd been inclined to help. He told me he'd seen us on the side of the road and just wanted to "make a deposit for God."

I smiled and said thanks, before heading back to the Winnebago for another night.

Now, although we hadn't planned on stopping in Carlsbad, there we were. So the next morning we went to Sunday Mass at St. Edward's Church in Carlsbad.

Afterward, a Third Order Franciscan group approached us and asked if I'd like to speak to their group that afternoon.

I said sure.

Well wouldn't you know, before the group started I met Stanley Evans. He is the executive director of the International Good Neighbors Program. The program currently had 28 chapters in the U.S. and Mexico.

The essence of the program is that chapters in America pick social justice projects to get behind in Mexico, as churches in Mexico pick social justice programs to get behind in America.

The Carlsbad chapter had chosen to help subsidize "Student Homes" in Chihuahua City, Mexico. Evans explained in rural areas of Mexico, youth often only have access to six grades of education. And to go beyond that, they have to go to a city. These Student Homes provide

a place for them to stay.

After interviewing Evans, I gave a talk to the Franciscan group. I said I'd just read where the Carlsbad police, at the city's request, had just broken up a homeless "squatter's camp" by the railroad tracks here. I told the group to carry out the Franciscan ethos of their founder (St. Francis), they might want to consider versions of the Catholic Worker "Christ rooms" in their homes for some of these homeless people.

The group's Madeline Ferguson was way ahead of me. An older widow, she told me after the talk that she has been regularly taking in recovering alcoholics and drug addicts who have no place to stay. Madeline, who also runs the St. Edwards Food Pantry here, said she never feels scared with her guests because she believes she's doing "God's work."

\$4 a shift

Out of Carlsbad, we headed toward El Paso, Texas, where we met with another Franciscan, Fr. Justus Wirth. He teaches at Roger Bacon College.

Fr. Wirth is a leading authority on the effects of globalization on Mexico and has written numerous articles on the subject. Fr. Wirth told me globalization had all sorts of possibilities to build one world and one people based on love, social equality and sharing. But the sad thing, Fr. Wirth continued, is that globalization has become all about "economics." Economics that are favorable to: big business.

Fr. Wirth said after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was ratified in 1994, the Mexican government stopped helping subsidize the small fam-

ily farmers in the interior of Mexico. Some 15 million people lost their land and moved to the population-burgeoning northern towns, where, not so coincidentally, big, multi-national factories were just going up.

These factories would need cheap labor, and the factories became “the only game in town” for many. Working for a mere \$4 a shift (with the basic cost of living being higher in Mexico than the U.S.), these new arrivals were living in the squalor of a massive shantytown. And if that wasn’t bad enough, Fr. Wirth said we in America – buying the cheap stuff out of these border factories without a (social justice) thought – are “silent participants” in a model that’s destroying Mexican families, culture and dignity. And nowhere, said Fr. Wirth, is that being more graphically played out than in Juarez, Mexico – our next stop.

they sometimes die

After crossing the border into Juarez, we were met by Fr. Francis, who runs Casa de Asis, a home for homeless boys here. From Bloomington, Illinois, Fr. Francis had been here six years and said one of the first things he’d become keenly aware of upon his arrival in Juarez was the number of homeless children on the streets. Fr. Francis got a house donated and set out into Juarez’s dangerous downtown streets, at night, to offer a place to stay.

Many of the homeless boys had come from the far west end of Juarez, where Fr. Francis took us next. What we saw was row after row of cobbled together shacks made of plywood, rusty corrugated steel, cardboard... There was hardly any electricity, no running water. A city water truck, we were told, would periodically fill

neighborhood rubber barrels on street corners with, people hoped, clean water. But sometimes it wasn't, or would stagnate after sitting awhile. If a baby, who was malnourished, drank the water and got diarrhea, they sometimes died, said Fr. Francis.

Some 200,000 people lived here among dusty streets and the continual sound of buses coming to take people to the factories.

At one point we were standing on a ridge with a clear vantage of El Paso to the north and the shantytown part of Juarez to the south. To say it was a 'stark contrast' would be an understatement. The border fence lay in between. I asked this priest his position on immigration. He pointed to El Paso. He pointed to Juarez. Then he simply asked: "What do you think Jesus would do with the fence?"

On the way back across the border later, I said to Liz that, although some might not like it, at least now we had a "definitive position" on Hispanic immigration.

"good, honest and hard working people"

We then angled back up to Las Cruces, New Mexico, where I interviewed a man who spent 32 years as a border patrol agent in California before retiring. Choosing anonymity ("...for safety reasons," he said.), he explained over the years he pulled a good number of bodies of Mexican men, women, and some children, out of the (ironically enough) "All American Canal" near Collexico, California. He said this was an absolute shame because it was his experience that many of the Mexicans illegally coming across were "good, honest and hard working people" who just wanted to feed their families. Given

that, I responded, it must have been hard arresting them and sending them back. He said no because he was first sworn to “uphold the law the American people wanted.”

A couple days later, the editor of the New Mexico State University campus newspaper asked me my position on Hispanic immigration.

“We should take the fence down,” I said.

CHAPT. 6

California or Bust!

Since we were as far west as New Mexico, why not go all the way to California? Again, this was not based on some particular political strategy. It just looked like we had enough gas to get there.

treasure the history of a place

In Wilcox, Arizona (pop. 3,000), we met Chuck Broeder. Actually, it was hard to miss him in his horse-drawn carriage, black suit and top hat. A historian, Chuck gives regular tours of Wilcox in his rig. Wilcox, we learned, is the home of Rex Allen, a 1930s cinema cowboy who was in six movies. And speaking of cowboys, Chuck explained Warren Urp (Wyatt's brother) was gunned down in Wilcox. What's more, Wilcox, which was a major cattle town, boasts the longest running commercial building in Arizona, built in 1880. "We must know and treasure the history of a place," Chuck simply ended with.

Chuck's wife Carol is a newspaper reporter in town, and I met with her next at the *Range News* office.

It was Martin Luther King Day and I told Carol our administration would call for even more "integration" than what already exists. I said with inner city Blacks

(Hispanics, Whites...) trapped in poverty loops, shouldn't mainstream society be doing much more to help them? I said we had researched a series of mentoring programs, tutoring programs, and so on. But this all takes people better off in society to slow their "upward mobility," roll up their sleeves and head into the inner city to help.

We, in turn, rolled up our sleeves, cranked down the windows, and headed across yet another desert to Needles, California.

At a service station on the way across, we were given passes for two free nights (plus the one hour long "presentation") at a "1,000 Trails" RV Park in Needles. During the presentation, the RV park representative told Liz and I that statistics show there are some 3 million RVs on the road today, with an estimate of 13 million that will be on the road by the year 2011. "Baby boomers are not sitting at home," he said. "They are retiring and taking it easy. That's what it's all about."

Apparently he hadn't read our campaign literature.

People who weren't 'taking it easy' in Needles were those running the "Drug Court," a highly innovative alternative for first-time offenders with alcohol or drug problems. A coordinator there told me the program's "spokes" include: treatment, employment help, assessment of psycho-social issues, parenting classes, medical assistance, help with housing... The theory: The more help one gets in recovery early on, the less the chance of relapse. Being a former drug and alcohol counselor myself, I have seen that to be quite true.

tremendously deep, reinforced hole

After my meeting at the Drug Court, I took our kids to look at the train station in downtown Needles. A con-

ductor talked to Joseph through a fence, then sounded the horn for him and waived as the train chugged off. Joseph was in ‘Conrail Heaven.’

We turned from the train to meet John Squibb. He said he was a geology professor at Mohave Community College, had heard about our campaign, and just wanted to say: “*This is absolutely great!*” I, in turn, learning he was a geology professor and all, asked him his take on burying high-level nuclear waste in nearby Yucca Mountain. (*Well*, it was either that, or asking him about the weather, or something.)

Professor Squibb said burying the nuclear waste in Yucca Mountain could backfire, with a future earthquake or volcanic reaction sparking a highly lethal, Chernobyl-like radioactive release. Professor Squibb continued that what makes the most sense (and was actually proposed during the Carter administration, he said) was to drill a tremendously deep, reinforced hole in the ocean and inject the waste below the North American Platelet, with the Platelet (which is in continual motion) gradually folding it over into the core of the earth – which is already radioactive.

“Why haven’t they done that?” I asked.

“Too much money,” he said.

Heading back east on Old Rte 66, we stopped in Kingman, Arizona, where local newspaper reporter Marvin Robertson (moving from his own objectivity for a moment) told me it was his opinion the nuclear waste should be disposed of at each nuclear plant site, to minimize the risk in transporting it, and so on. I said we should go one better and get rid of the nuclear plants altogether so there would be “no risk.”

A man I met in a library parking lot in Kingman the

next morning thought America should minimize the ‘risk’ of more illegal aliens coming across the Southern border. I told him I disagreed. He asked why. I started: “Well, I’m a Christian...” He stopped me and said he was too. So I asked him if he thought Jesus would look across the border to Mexico, see the hunger, the homeless kids, the desperation... and say the fence was a good thing. After an awkward pause, he said he didn’t “like talking politics this early in the morning,” then walked off.

We drove off, further east to Seligman, Arizona, home of the Historic Rte. 66 Association.

“looking for the America of yesterday.”

Angel Delgadillo started the Historic Rte. 66 Association as a tribute to an era gone by. His barber shop, which is right on 66, is now a museum.

On one of the walls is an *LA Times* article that explained Delgadillo was born just a few yards from Rte. 66, when it was dirt in the summer and mud in the winter. The article went on to say Delgadillo had seen Dust Bowl refugees and young soldiers, railroaders, big bands... Then it all stopped. “Little town USA was stilled.”

Rte. 66 was officially bypassed by the new Route 40 in these parts on Sept. 22, 1978. And with that, said Delgadillo, a part of America died.

But it wasn’t long before people were “looking for the America of yesterday,” Delgadillo told us. So he started the Association, began collecting memorabilia, and opened the museum.

The ‘yesterday’ Delgadillo said people were looking for was one of a “slower pace.” It was just as much about the trip, and stopping to see things and talk to people

along the way; as opposed to whizzing down the interstate with the only intent being: to reach a destination. Metaphorically, Delgadillo said this is akin to, say, a kiss (and so on...) in a movie today ("Which is almost next to vulgar," he said.), versus the slow, tender (and single) kiss of the cinema of yesteryear.

I next told a student reporter at Northern Arizona University's newspaper in Flagstaff that (kissing, fuzzy dice and Cadillacs with fins aside) our campaign is actually asking Americans to consider turning back to a simpler, slower-paced time that this old road, in a way, represents.

However, Nguyen ba Tong would rather not turn back part of his personal clock.

"Drunk Town USA"

We met Nguyen ba Tong in Flagstaff, Arizona. He said once the U.S. pulled out of Vietnam in 1975, Communist religious and political oppression ensued in a stepped up fashion throughout the country.

Nguyen said at age 20, he and 58 others crammed into a small boat and escaped Vietnam. After 30 harrowing days at sea, they finally were allowed to put into a port in Indonesia, Nguyen's first stop on his eventual trip to America. Shortly after coming to the States, Nguyen became a Catholic Dominican Brother and adopted the vow of poverty. He now ministers to the poor, the sick, the homeless... the condition of many who had been on the boat out of Vietnam.

Gabe Kanawite was worried about the condition of "his people," the Navajos. He grew up in Gallup, New Mexico and watched it deteriorate. He said the Navajos here spiraled into so much alcoholism, as an example,

that the *20/20* television news show dubbed Gallup: “Drunk Town USA.”

That’s changing, thanks to people like Gabe. Out of a sense of personal responsibility and grief about what was happening to his people, Gabe shifted college majors from accounting to drug and alcohol counseling so he could be “part of the solution” in Gallup.

Harrison Jim, founder of the Eagle Plume Society Center in Gallup, wanted to be part of the solution, too. Eagle Plume is a drug and alcohol recovery center, with a twist. Not only does the center help Native Americans get clean and sober, it helps them: “Get Navajo!” On a tour of the center, Harrison Jim told us he tries to help the Navajo recover from “trans-generational Post (Traumatic) Colonial Stress.” (A bumper sticker in the parking lot here read: **“You’ve Seen the New World. Now Go Home.”**) Through “talking circles” to deal with their addiction, and the trauma of western philosophy encroachment, these Navajos are encouraged to reconnect with their native roots, sacred songs, sacred prayers, age-old ceremonies...

And while hopeful, nonetheless, alcoholism and trans-generational pain in general have torn apart many Native American families. To help, people like Richard and Gloria Padilla have stepped in as foster parents. Richard, who owns a small horse farm on the edge of Gallup, told me he and his wife have taken in 15 foster children over the years, primarily from the nearby Zuni Reservation. What’s more, the couple has adopted one of these children and is in the process of adopting another, even though Richard is close to retirement age.

“We like helping kids,” he said.

And it was some kids (read: youth group) in an up-

scale part of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, that Liz and I told about the Native American foster children, the poverty, the alcoholism... We also mentioned President Bush had just called for people, “over a life-time,” to dedicate two years, or 4,000 hours, to volunteer work. And I told the group that they weren’t too young to start helping in situations like we’d just seen.

Then it was off to other ‘situations’ in Savannah, Tennessee. Fr. Thomas Kirk’s ‘situation’ is his humanitarian focus on: “the bomb.” Every July 16, you can find him “on vacation” at the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. People from all over the country meet here this day to pray in the faint early morning light at “ground zero.” For many, the vigil is a silent protest of the explosion of the first atomic bomb here on this date, at 5:30 a.m. in 1945. I told Fr. Kirk that our platform called for an end to nuclear proliferation. He said “good.”

Our platform also calls for an end to abortion, I told a group at St. Mary’s Church in Savannah the next night. (The Savannah newspaper would note that I said: “With abortion, we are living in a modern Holocaust, perhaps unparalleled in the history of mankind.”) Waynesboro, Tennessee’s Michelle Schachle was at the talk and afterward said she wished people would be as moved about stopping abortion as they are about stopping terrorism. Mrs. Schachle, who is on the board for Tennessee Right to Life, noted some 3,000 people died in the World Trade Centers in New York Sept. 11 – while 4,400 unborn babies are killed every day in the U.S.

“Step right this way.”

Coming through the Rockies about a week back, I heard a distinct noise come from our engine. It sounded

like a spring had sprung. And right after this, the van would only go about 42 mph, tops. (We started losing a lot of votes in single lane construction zones through Arkansas and into Tennessee.)

Anyway, Michelle Schachle's husband, Dan, approached me after the talk at St. Mary's as well, and said he'd heard I was having engine trouble. Could he help?

"Do you know much about engines?" I asked.

"I used to be an F-16 mechanic," he smiled.

Instead of smiling myself, I gave a crisp salute, and said: "Step right this way."

As Dan fixed the spring on our kick-down rod (I didn't even know we had a kick-down rod), he shared a "platform thought" he had about the prison system. He said he used to be a security guard at a maximum-security prison in the area, and would consistently notice the younger guys, instead of learning about changing their ways, were instead, learning more about crime from the "masters" in prison. And more often than not, as he listened, Dan said most of the men had come from quite dysfunctional families. And it was his belief, instead of just reforming the prisons system, we should also be "reforming families." I agreed.

As we were starting to head north toward Ohio, Liz read an extremely disturbing AP (2/8/02) story in *The Tennessean* newspaper. The story said that "in an extraordinary act of desperation" some Afghan parents in the refugee camps were selling some of their children – so the rest of the family wouldn't starve. One man said he sold one of his children for the equivalent of 30 American dollars, while another, Agha Mir, said he sold a 4-day-old son for the equivalent of 60 American dollars. (This paid for about a month worth of food for his wife and six

remaining children.)

“Parting with my baby was hard,” said Mir. “But watching my family die slowly of hunger is even worse.”

Shortly after reading this, we got off in Bowling Green, Kentucky, for some gas. It was a Friday night, and heading toward the gas station we passed a row of such restaurants as TGI Fridays, Applebees, and so on. Each parking lot was nearly full.

Meanwhile, I couldn't help but cringe knowing that many of us think nothing of spending \$30 to \$60 on a family meal at one of these places. Some \$30 to \$60 which could provide food for a month, or more, for a family in Afghanistan. And \$30 to \$60 that could mean whether some parents ever see their child again.

Note: Shortly after we returned from the tour, I got an e-mail from the church youth group leader back in Oklahoma City. He said as a result of the talk Liz and I had given, the group was planning a two-week trip to do volunteer work at one of the poorest Indian Reservations in New Mexico.

CHAPT. 7

Bluffton 'Tour' **'...we're all squares.'**

The first thing I attended when I got back to Bluffton was a Bluffton College Student President Debate (to get some pointers). A junior, co-captain football player with no student government experience whatsoever, was running against a sophomore with experience on Student Senate. The sophomore, at one point in the debate said: "Being captain of the football team means you have to know football. Being Student Senate president means you have to know about the Student Senate."

Shortly after the debate, the election was held. The football player won. I told Liz there was hope for us yet.

But there's little hope for the poor in Guatemala where Fr. Tom Hemm served. During a social justice talk at Bluffton's St. Mary's Church, Fr. Hemm said we in America take for granted safe drinking water, while millions around the world don't have safe drinking water. Fr. Hemm also said U.S. companies regularly siphon off wealth and exploit the poor throughout the Third World, including in Guatemala. He continued that being in soli-

parity with the poor, isn't about just "giving," but rather about living and working side by side with the poor. To that end, he has helped set up a Sister Church project between his church in Ottawa, Ohio and a church in rural Guatemala.

And it's the poor that President Bush's Faith Based Initiative Plan targets, said Bluffton College professor Linda Nyse, who has researched this extensively. During a Forum at Bluffton College, Professor Nyse said on January 29, 2001, the government established the Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives. The Office, in turn, set up a tiered funding system. Part of the determination about how much money would be given was in accordance to whether the applying organization was "faith saturated, faith centered, faith related... or secular." Amidst analyzing the bureaucratic structure, looking at the dynamics of the different faith category differentiations, and so on, professor Nyse called Minnesota's Mary Jo Copeland, who runs a homeless shelter in Minneapolis that had been a recipient of some Faith Based funds. Ms. Copeland said to professor Nyse: "Honey I'd love to help you, but I'm too busy helping the poor to be part of a study." Enough said.

But not enough has been said about "Conservatism in Twentieth-Century American Thought," author Ron Lora said at yet another Bluffton College talk. Lora said conservatives are people who want to "conserve" the past. They traditionally move at a slower pace, questioning, say, the ethics of altering genetic codes, or just blindly going with the next technological trend.

And its societal trends in general that ultra-conservative Amish author David Kline has bucked. At Bluffton College's English Festival, Kline said small-scale farming

(without the big combines, big tractors...) is still the sane and spiritual way to go. He said with the big farms, and big farming implements, the fields are basically “vacant” between June and August; whereas with the small organic farmer there is “always something going on in the field (weeding, hoeing...)” This puts the farmer more in touch with the land – and with life. To accentuate this, Kline quoted a Lakota medicine man: “Modern farming leads to a lack of respect for growing and living things, which (ultimately) leads to a lack of respect for human things (aborted unborn babies, children living in abject inner city poverty, the elderly being discarded in nursing homes...)”

Kline, who also publishes *Farming Magazine* about small-scale farming, added that in order for a mainstream, modern farmer to be in touch with the soil anymore: “he has to work in his wife’s garden.”

And it was my wife Liz’s garden that I was regularly finding myself working in (read: weeding) at home this spring, our version of ‘small-scale farming.’ Liz, who is from New Zealand and has a strong gardening heritage (New Zealand’s number one hobby: gardening), has also involved our kids quite actively in the garden. (Sarah even planted a number of patches of sunflowers this year.) Part of the money we save on food with the garden, goes to help the poor in the Third World.

Because, simply, there are a lot of poor in the Third World, I told a Bluffton College Social Work class this semester. The week before my talk, I’d learned the class had done an exercise about “class privilege” in America. To represent being at different levels of U.S. society, some students were given circles, others triangles, and a few were given squares. The squares symbolized the up-

per echelon, the extremely privileged.

I told the students that many of them, I'm sure, refer to themselves as "poor college students," that the exercise aside, I believed they were all: squares. I pointed out they all live in temperature-controlled rooms, ate three square meals a day (and snacks), had closets filled with name brand clothes, and this wonderful shot at higher education. I then showed them a picture of an Afghan refugee camp and said most of the Third World didn't live much better than that. Some started to see the "square thing" in a different light.

tears in Joseph's eye

And as poverty in the Third World can be wrenching, so can poverty in America. We saw in Paul (not his real name) a definite 'circle,' or lower, socio-economic class citizen the way Bluffton College's social work class would look at it.

Paul was homeless, not something you see every day in Bluffton, Ohio.

But there he was walking down a street, disheveled, with a couple fairly large duffle bags in tow. After our years on the road, it's not hard to tell those who are 'en route' versus those who are 'adrift.'

I stopped.

Paul, who appeared to be in his late 40s, said he was indeed homeless. What's more, he said he was a graduate of Bluffton College some 25 years prior, had developed a bi-polar mental disorder, and for the last 15 years or so had been basically out traveling, Flying J Truck Stops often being his home.

He said he would periodically return to Bluffton for a

few days at a time to pick up disability checks and touch base with a couple friends he had. When I came across him, he said he was headed to a clearing in the woods behind a Shell Station out by the interstate. He was staying there in a sleeping bag.

I told him I'd catch up with him shortly.

I then went to check his story with one of the friends he mentioned, who was a friend of mine as well.

The story checked out.

I then went to talk to Liz, who was currently reading a book about Dorothy ("Every home should have a Christ room.") Day, the Catholic Worker Movement co-founder. Liz said: "Well of course, bring him home."

I drove out to pick up Paul.

Our home at the time was the bottom part of a small two-story home. It had two bedrooms. With some creative space management, we moved things around and gave Paul one of the bedrooms.

Being a former social worker, I knew a bit about bipolar disorder. And one of its features is that if a person is in a manic phase (as opposed to the 'polar' opposite: depressive phase), they have a tendency to talk quite a lot. And although Paul was on medication, he still was leaning toward talking quite a bit in his current phase.

This was right up our five-year-old Joseph's alley. In fact, he and "Mr. Paul" talked quite a bit that evening, Joseph totally engrossed.

In the next weeks, I learned quite a bit more about Paul's history, his disorder, and his traveling. We all came to love Paul. And I made several earnest attempts to connect him with church and social service agencies that, I believed, could help him.

He expressed some interest, but in the end decided

not to pursue them at this time. After about a month, the road was once again calling, and Paul packed his duffle bags to leave.

We wished him well, asked him to stay in touch, and told him we'd pray for him. He waved goodbye. There were tears in Joseph's eyes, and tears in all of our hearts.

push mower

Shortly after our experience with Paul, Liz and I were invited to talk at a Simple Living Seminar at First Mennonite Church in Bluffton. Ready for the talk that day, I got my, circa 1950, wooden push mower. No engine.

"You're not really taking that to the talk, are you?" Liz asked.

"Yep."

"Well, *at least* clean the grass off it!" Liz admonished.

Standing in front of some 30 people with the lawn mover (grass clippings all over the carpet), I told them I believed this lawn mower was the "key to simplicity, if not all of life." I explained I'd bought the lawn mower for 20 bucks at a yard sale, adding to recycling in America and saving about \$150 that I would have spent on a new one – with a motor. Because it doesn't have a motor, it doesn't need gasoline – reducing our foreign dependency on oil and saving another \$15 in the course of a cutting season. I also mentioned that a recent *Audobon Magazine* article said using a power mower over the course of a cutting season creates the same amount of emissions as driving 14,000 miles (because they have little emission control). To simplify even more, I said we don't use fer-

tilizer on the lawn, so if the grass gets brown – it gets brown. And we also don't use water on the lawn, relying on rain. All told, we calculate the accumulative savings at about: \$215.

“This \$215 could be used to feed the family that lives in this house,” I said, as I passed around a picture of a cobbled together shack we'd taken on our recent trip to Juarez, Mexico.

Liz then talked.

Standing amidst a scattering of grass clippings, she said the reason American consumers are always wanting the bigger house, the better car, the nicer lawn mower... is because of modern advertising, and the entertainment media in general. They send messages we buy, figuratively and literally. If you want a simpler life, “turn the TV off,” Liz said.

And if you want a saner life (not to mention a more moral one), “turn the TV off,” I told a graduate class on Morality at Bluffton College. I told the class I'd recently listened to a Saturday afternoon, National Public Radio show segment that featured a reporter, in ad-hoc fashion, interviewing people in a downtown Chicago restaurant over a 24-hour period. One of the interviews was with a recently separated couple who were “still friends.” They were sitting in a window booth and at one point there was about 10 seconds of dead air time during the interview. The reporter then explained that a rather attractive, scantily clad woman had walked by on the sidewalk, and in mid-sentence, the guy had stopped talking and, with his eyes, intently followed the woman down the street.

“Can you see why we're still not together?” The woman not so much asked, as said.

I said to the class that most “significant others,” or spouses, would react the same. And they agreed.

Yet, I continued, we think practically nothing (consciously) of our spouse sitting in the other room watching one scantily clad woman/man after another through, basically, just another type of window: TV screen. (Yet unconsciously, anger grows, divorce multiplies.)

Professor Mitch Kingsley then spoke up: “When you think about this, it would be the same as saying to your wife: ‘Honey, I’m going next door to look at Marge through the window for a couple hours.’”

“Correct,” I said.

And it’s ‘correct,’ or at least common sense, to do more things like our neighbor Dale Way did several years ago. It actually could cut water usage dramatically in America and help a good deal of the Third World get cleaner drinking water. And it only costs 4 bucks. Dale installed a simple shut off valve (available at any hardware store) in the pipe to his showerhead. As family members soap up, shampoo, and whatnot, they shut the water off. Water bills, in turn, will drop, electric bills will drop... with (optimistically speaking in regard to social justices) some of the savings going to fund better water storage and filtration in the Third World.

And it’s the Third World that is graphically depicted in the documentary film *Baraka*, which Bluffton College professor Bob Antibus showed for “Earth Week” this year. There were scenes from all over the Third World: Scores of women squeezed together in a sweatshop in China making cigarettes, workers on an Indonesia assembly line checking, in robotic, brain numbing fashion, the same small computer panel every 20 seconds. The scene shifts again to a large group of people in India sift-

ing through a garbage dump for survival, then a six-year-old begging on an inner city street, then rows and rows of ghetto dwellings in Japan...

Walking back home with Liz tonight after the film, I looked at the pristine campus, then nice Bluffton homes, manicured lawns... and thought, not so much about how we're "blessed" here in America; but rather about how much more we could help worldwide, but don't.

Shortly after, at yet another Simple Living Seminar at Bluffton's First Mennonite Church, Bluffton College economics professor Jim Harder said modern corporations, for the most part, see people as: "individual markets," not: "individuals living in community." As a result, making money from the "individual markets" is the priority, and how people live in community isn't given much thought, said Professor Harder. So corporations often don't hesitate to pollute much, or overwork cheap labor, or exploit natural resources...

And it's not just the corporations that are at fault, it's ultimately us, the consumer, according to the documentary *'Affluenza,'* which was shown next during the seminar. The film, which is primarily about American society, noted that "globalization's" thrusts were not so much about bringing cultures together for more peace and social justice, as they were about: "...drawing more people into consumerism." The 'good life,' has become the 'goods life,' the film noted. And in no place is this more graphically demonstrated than America, where consumer craving for large quantities, at the cheapest price possible, (each American averages using 20 tons of material a year) is helping create sweatshop conditions in the Third World.

The following Tuesday at an early morning worship

service, as timing would have it, a pastor at First Mennonite Church prayed: “forgive us Lord... for participating in systems that hurt others, even though we don’t intend to.”

Walking out of the chapel area, with those words still echoing, I couldn’t help but think: ‘But what if you know?’

Note: Shortly after the Mennonite Service, I told Liz I could probably develop my whole platform just staying in Bluffton. But I was also noticing the Associated Press wasn’t exactly camping outside our home for daily quotes. So we started to plan for the next tour leg.

CHAPTER. 8

Front Porch Tour

Our state's tourism slogan is: *“Ohio: The Heart Of It All!”*

And since it is the ‘heart of it all,’ it only made sense we campaign here a lot, I told Liz. (And to think we still continue to do all this without paid consultants.)

So for 8 straight months, we barnstormed all of Ohio's 88 counties, traveling some 8,000 miles. And wouldn't you know, this turned out to be Chapter: 8. Spooky.

“...it's a vocation.”

And while it wasn't ‘spooky,’ Liz thought it was rather ‘odd’ (read: embarrassing) that I had stepped up on a park bench on the square in downtown Bluffton to give the Ohio Tour kick-off speech.

I said in our travels we are always looking for “extra-mile Americans” who are doing things to make their community a better place. People like Bluffton College's Liz Wessner, who coordinates the Lion & Lamb Peace Center and who regularly goes into schools to “wage peace” in teaching about conflict resolution in the class

and better family relations at home. Or there was lawyer Mitch Kingsley, who rides his bicycle practically everywhere in Bluffton because it's the healthy thing to do – not to mention he also doesn't want the polar ice caps melting.

And it was bicycles we mounted after the speech for the first tour leg: a 1,300-mile loop around Ohio along the "Buckeye Trail." We were accompanied for about a mile this morning by a group of "average Joe" campaign supporters and their children, all on bicycles as well. A Lima, Ohio *NBC News* crew met us at the city limits and the reporter asked what we were calling this particular tour. I said in line with the strategies of two other successful presidential candidates from Ohio (Harding and McKinley), we were calling it the: "Front Porch Tour." However, we didn't have much of a front porch to speak of back at our home, I smiled, so we decided to make all of Ohio our "front porch."

And one of our first 'front porches' was Yorkshire, Ohio (pop. 110), where we met with Dan Kremer at his "Eat Food for Life Farm." Kremer bases his farming on Catholic Rural Life Association teaching, grows everything organically and has developed a chemical-free co-op among a group of farmers in Darke County here. "A farmer is to be a good steward of the land, it's a vocation," he said. And part of the vocation is making sure people aren't taking in toxic chemicals (pesticides, herbicides...) that can end their life prematurely because: "It's a sin against the Fifth Commandment (Thou Shalt Not Kill)," said Kremer. "It's really a Pro-Life issue if you think about it."

What's also a sin, a "serious sin," according to Catholic Rural Life teaching said Kremer, is establishing large-

scale (chicken, cattle...) confinement farms. Not only are these cruel to animals, but they are bad for the environment with all the condensed waste run-off and bad for the farmers who are being pushed off their land – and out of their vocations – by, basically, the greed of a few.

And it's greed in part, and selfishness in general, that is keeping children locked in poverty loops in the inner cities of America, we heard during a church cell group meeting at Bob Jurick's home in Fariborne, Ohio. As more and more people move to the suburbs for the "good life," they continue to abandon the poor in the inner cities. And a Dayton inner city teacher this night said statistics show 75% of children born into poverty are born outside of marriage. With fathers often absent, teenage boys frequently bond with older teenage boys – in gangs. President Bush recently announced he was pushing for stronger marriages to end some of this poverty. Good idea.

STARFISH

What's also a 'good idea,' I believe, is STARFISH. Denise Swinger, a Yellow Springs, Ohio village council member and founder of STARFISH, said one of the aims of her non-profit organization is to foster more diversity in the town by providing "affordable housing." (About 30 miles from Dayton, Yellow Springs is "land locked" by a green belt area, and most homes go for a premium.) Ms Swinger went to some of the town's more affluent residents and asked that they put up collateral for a home loan. Some did. A STARFISH home was built on Main St. here, with some of the help coming from volunteers doing roofing, painting, landscaping... The home was

then advertised, with eligibility being the person/or family could only make 80%, or less, of the mean income in Green County – and the home also couldn't be resold for 10 years. This first Yellow Springs home sold to a single mom, and another home is in the works.

STARFISH is an acronym for: (Society Taking Active Responsibility for International Self-Help). Besides the local home projects, STARFISH recruits people (farmers, doctors, merchants...) in different fields in the United States to team up with their counter-parts in the Third World to exchange ideas and share resources. STARFISH has specifically targeted Sierra Leon, Africa, where there is a tremendous amount of poverty, said Ms. Swinger.

And it is an international focus that Chilicothe, Ohio's Carrie Oldacre, 14, is interested in. She told us she was going to England, France, Italy and Greece with 30 other Ohio youth as part of the People-to-People Ambassador Program. Established by former president Dwight D. Eisenhower, People-to-People is about promoting peace worldwide. For six months prior to the trip, the youth here had been studying about the countries and corresponding with people they'll be visiting there. Carrie, who has been cutting lawns to help pay for the trip, added: "When I found out there were other places besides Ohio, I wanted to see them."

And even though we also knew that there were more places than Ohio (I read *National Geographic*), it was more of Ohio we were presently off to see.

We cycled into Cambridge, Ohio, where we did a noon "whistle-stop" on the square, with a bustling Farmer's Market in the background. We were traveling this tour with Sarah and Benji Bergstrand, a young couple

who would be going to work in Chicago's inner city the following year with Mennonite Volunteer Services. Both quite good musicians, they broke out their guitars and performed on the street corner as we unfurled our banner and passed out literature.

Then after an interview with the local newspaper, we went to the Cambridge Library where we saw the sign: "Cans for Fines." The librarian there told me that one month a year you have the opportunity to pay overdue fines with cans of food for the local food bank.

Swish

Then to round (ball) out our Cambridge experience, Benji and I got in a pick-up game of basketball with two community college basketball players on a local park court.

Besides being quite a good guitarist, Benji (at 6' 3") is also quite a good basketball player, as it was apparent these other guys were as well.

I, on the other hand, had gone out for the Bluffton College basketball team in my youth, a youth which, unlike with any of these other guys, was a distant memory.

The game see-sawed, with Benji making up for my, oh, let's say less than dominant, court presence.

That 'presence' was diminished even more when the guy I was guarding took a pass in the corner. I positioned myself between him and the basket in a way that there was no way he could drive the baseline, unless of course, he drew the ball around his back, bounced it through my legs in one motion, and streaked around me for an easy lay-up... *Which he did!*

"Must have lost a step (or 10)," I mumbled.

Benji again took over with a couple fancy lay-ups of

his own, a great turn around jump shot from the top of the key, and we were tied 9 to 9. The game was to 10.

Benji then passed it out to me. I was in three-point (almost ‘4-point,’ it was that far) range. As he’d done before, my guy dropped off me a bit, daring me to shoot. (A good strategy because I hadn’t come close to making a couple earlier attempts from out here, or even in closer for that matter.)

Never one to shirk a challenge (I mean I was running for president), I spotted up, aimed, and let the ball fly. *Swish.*

I was more stunned than the other guys.

Afterward the girls asked how the game went.

I said Benji and I (with the accent on I) beat the college players (with the accent on *college players*) pretty soundly.

And there I was starting to stretch the truth, and I wasn’t even in office yet.

With the little energy I had left after the game, we finished the Buckeye Trail loop and then fanned out into the rest of Ohio.

‘power of love’

One of the next stops (or rather ports) was the island of Put-in-Bay, Ohio, out in the middle of Lake Erie. It’s claimed (although many pollsters won’t officially recognize this) that if you don’t win Put-in-Bay – you won’t win the country.

People from all over Ohio, and a few from Indiana, come here to vacation every summer. We rode our bicycles around the downtown, holding signs and urging people to “*Vote Joe in Ohio.*” Catchy, huh?

Afterward we met Kenneth Ault, a Township Trustee in Wood County who was on the island for an annual meeting of government officials throughout Northwest Ohio. He said as an elected official, while you often have to be concerned about the “letter of the law,” you also, at times, have to be flexible. Like the time he and the other trustees allowed a mother to hang a cap and gown on her son’s gravestone the year he would have graduated from high school, even though cemetery rules prohibit hanging things on gravestones, shrubs, and so on. The youth had died in third grade.

Detroit, Michigan auxiliary Bishop Tom Gumbleton is worried about youth, or anyone, dying – in war zones. I attended a talk by Bishop Gumbleton, which was given at a mosque in Cleveland. The Bishop said: “Jesus taught us how to die, not how to kill.” He had just returned from Afghanistan, where bombs were still falling. “At least 4,000 innocent people have already been killed there, and others are fleeing to refugee camps where some may die as well,” the Bishop said. And he added that when you resort to violence, you negate the: “power of love.”

And it was the ‘power of love’ that motivated Portsmouth, Ohio’s Dave and Sally Ferrell to become a host family for a student from South Korea as part of the International Student Exchange Program several years ago. Dave told us that not only did this Korean youth benefit, but the Ferrell’s benefited tremendously from learning, first hand, about another culture as well.

To learn about the culture here in Portsmouth, we went to the floodwall. It’s purported to be the biggest outdoor piece of art in America. The floodwall, which stretches along the Ohio River, spans one mile and links

52, 20-ft. high squares – each painted with a scene from the town’s history. (Jim Thorpe playing semi-pro football here; there was a rather prominent motorcycle club; the town has been a significant port along the Ohio River...) George Clayton, who helped spearhead the floodwall mural project, gave us a tour and explained that an artist from Louisiana was commissioned to do the project. It’s taken him 10 years.

Another piece of heritage that’s being preserved, in a big way as well, is the Underground Railroad sites in Ripley, Ohio. Ripley had been an Underground RR “hub,” and John Parker had helped make it so. He was one of the nation’s first black inventors and gave haven to many runaway slaves in his home on the Ohio River here.

And just as we arrived at Parker’s home, which is being restored, the “Footsteps to Freedom Tour (of Underground RR sites)” arrived as well, quite by surprise, to us. We walked along with the tour group for a time. Southern California fifth grade teacher Troy Holland told me he’d come here because the experience would help make his teaching about the Underground Railroad “come alive.” I later told the News Democrat newspaper here that this is a part of history that should not only come alive, it should stay alive in each of our minds – for every generation to come.

“Wasn’t that really weird...”

After finishing an Ohio River Tour, we took a side trip down to North Augusta, South Carolina to take a couple weeks to work with Digital Design’s Bill Baltzegar on updating our website: www.voteforjoe.com. Baltzegar had put countless hours in on the site the past four years, all a donation.

While in North Augusta, we also ended up in the *Augusta (GA) Chronicle*, in actually the oddest of ways. Sarah and I had cycled into North Augusta's downtown one afternoon. I was on a Cannondale, and Sarah was on an attach-a-long bicycle behind. We had no sooner gotten into the downtown than a photographer, who was out taking feature shots for the *Chronicle*, approached us. He asked if he could take our picture. I said sure. And he set up just up the street.

As we approached him, a car literally skidded to a stop next to us, and a guy with yet another camera jumped out and ran up to us. He said he was a photographer for the *Augusta Chronicle* and wondered if he could take our picture. After pausing a second (to assimilate the whole thing), I smiled and pointed to his colleague not more than 25 feet away. They both laughed. Then they decided to climb in one of the cars and ride parallel to us taking pan action shots from the window to capture motion.

As they were walking to the car, Sarah looked up at me and said: "Wasn't that really weird Dad?" I said: "Yes Sarah, it was."

The next day an absolutely great picture ran (they made Sarah and me look like we were going 70 mph) with a caption explaining because of our campaign's environmental concerns, we ask people to consider bicycling more.

terrorism, of another sort

And we continued to ask people in America to consider 'giving more' too, during a talk to some elementary students and their parents at St. John the Evangelist Church in Georgetown, Kentucky, on our way back to Ohio. The night before, I'd read a story in *Maryknoll*

Magazine that said: “Sept. 11 was awful, but the same day (as happens every day) 24,000 people died of hunger. We who control the food are guilty of terrorism of the worst kind,” said Father James Noonan, a *Maryknoll* priest working in poverty-ravaged Cambodia. I said during the talk that this isn’t just about oppressive governments stopping the flow of food to the poor in some countries, it’s also about us in America ‘controlling’ the flow by keeping too much (overeating, expensive meals, wasted money on non-nutritional junk food...) for ourselves. These people in Georgetown hadn’t really seen themselves as terrorists, until today.

As with food, the poor need shelter both in the Third World and here. Oxford, Ohio’s Bob Collins is trying to do something about that locally through coordinating efforts for Habitat for Humanity. A skilled carpenter, the Oxford “Citizen of the Year” told us he has supervised all kinds of volunteer construction crews, including a crew of sorority sisters from nearby Miami University who, while their hearts were in it, were a bit short on good old brawny hammer whacks. “It was more like this all day symphony of ‘tap... tap... tap...” Bob smiled.

But I was quite serious when I told a Miller City, Ohio High School Political Science Class that we were calling for one-third of America curriculum to be: volunteer work out in the community because “...I want my children learning as much, if not more, about helping others, as I do them learning about math, science and English,” I said.

injection in the basement

For the past several weeks we’ve had no taillights on our campaign bus. A wiring problem, we’d had two me-

chanics look at it, with no luck – ’74 vehicles are like that. I’ve been using hand signals out the window, which is still legal in most states. Although I’m sure Generation Xers who find themselves behind us were going: “What the heck does that mean?”

Anyway, we finally found a crack auto-electrician in Findlay, Ohio who happened to be old enough to have worked on this type of vehicle when it was new. And while Carl Stein fixed the lights (as a donation, no less), we met with Dan Feasel in nearby Carey, Ohio.

In a *Human Life Alliance Magazine* at Feasel’s place, I read Alliance president Marlene Reid’s statement that the Holocaust in Germany was, in part, about the deliberate, and systematic, killing of children with physical or mental disabilities. If two of Feasel’s five children had been in Germany at the time, they’d probably have been killed.

Feasel’s sons Matt, 33, and Jared, 22, still live at home. They both had adverse reactions to inoculations during the 1970s, leaving them both mentally and physically impaired. They’ve attended special schools, been through exhaustive therapies, and by societal standards would still be considered marginally functional. Although our Sarah and Joseph would consider them ‘fully functional.’ They all played together with a tractor collection for several hours. And Matt and Jared showed so much focus and love toward our children (way more than most adults do) that it was absolutely phenomenal. And to think at another time, in another place, that love would have been extinguished by an injection in the basement of a Luxemburg Hospital.

From Carey, we headed north to the University of Toledo where we learned the Latin Student Union and

the UT Diversity Committee were organizing a talk on “Justice for Immigrants and Farm Workers.” During a talk to a graduate history class here, I said that many people sit in suburban and small town comfort, eating food picked during 10 to 12 hour days in the hot sun by migrant farm workers who eat, by comparison, scraps – and their children lie on dirty mats in sweltering shacks on the edge of chemical-laden fields.

I continued that our administration, in solidarity with the late Cesar Chavez’s efforts, would push for way better conditions for the migrant workers. And right now, I said, we ask for people to lobby their local grocery stores to set up goodwill donation bins for these laborers (complete with graphic collages of them, their children, and the conditions) right in the middle of the produce sections.

CHAPT. 9

Jonathan Charles Schriener

Back in Bluffton I attended a Bluffton College Forum talk by Toledo Mayor Jack Ford. It was Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Mayor Ford said through being a “champion of peace,” King changed American life forever when it came to race relations. About this same time, the University of Michigan was under some fire for admission policies that were purported to unfairly reward or penalize prospective students based solely on race. Mentioning this to Bluffton College admission office recruiter Audwin Jones, he replied that we are “missing the point.” Where affirmative action should be most focused on, he continued, is not by the time students get to college, but rather at the time when young children are growing up in, say, extremely tough inner city settings as opposed to much more advantaged suburban settings.

Meanwhile, what was beginning to look like a more and more tumultuous setting was Iraq, where it looked like our troops would soon be sent. While participating in a Peace March in Findlay, Ohio, prior to the order to go in, Toledo’s *ABC News* asked me my take on the seemingly imminent war.

“What if we let the weapons inspectors into Montana? What would they find?” I asked. “Maybe, oh, 2,000 ‘weapons of mass destruction’ aimed all over the world?”

At church the next day, someone approached me who’d seen the news spot and said: “You know, I’ve been thinking the same thing.”

Shortly after, the bombs started falling in Iraq.

Students at Bluffton College set up a tent city as a show of solidarity with the soon to be refugees in Iraq. Our family put a tent up as well.

At an open-mike Mennonite service the night the war started, I challenged other community members to put up tents (at the college, or in their front yards for that matter) as a show of solidarity as well. I said this war and the suffering is so removed from us as Americans as we watch it unfold in such antiseptic fashion on TV.

The year prior, the Justice and Peace Committee at Bluffton College had staged a week-long tent city as a show of solidarity with Afghan refugees. These students also raised \$2,000, which was enough to build a home for a refugee family in Afghanistan.

And boy, could we fund even more Third World housing – if we weren’t, for example, so particular about how people are ‘housed’ after they’re dead here.

‘America’s Best Town’

Bluffton’s First Mennonite Church has a “Casket Ministry,” with carpenter hobbyists building quality cherry wood or oak caskets: *for only \$300!* Casket Ministry coordinator Neil Kehler told me an average “on the market casket” costs about \$4,300. An average cem-

etary plot is \$3,000, versus a First Mennonite Church plot, which is free. If you do the math, we bury a dead American for the cost it would take to provide homes for, at least, two and a half homeless families in the Third World.

I looked at the Casket Ministry here as part of my research for a three-book *America's Best Town* series on Bluffton. I wrote that “best” isn’t about affluence, or climate, or natural scenery... But rather, “best” is about the level of a town’s social justice outreach, civic participation, environmental awareness, community building...

And community building in Bluffton is no better demonstrated than First Mennonite’s “Lending List.” Church members offer to share blenders, dehydrators, canning equipment, bread machines, lawn mowers, chain saws, camping equipment...

To enhance community closeness even more, Bluffton has a “Kitchen Co-Op” with a circle of families bartering homemade granola, bagels, yogurt, babysitting time... (They’ve even come up with their own currency: “Co-op Coupons.”)

And with one eye on still more community building, and another eye on the ecology, Ray Person, who teaches Theology at Ohio Northern University, and his wife Elizabeth bought a 20-acre farm on the outskirts of Bluffton.

Elizabeth told me they were alarmed with the rapidly increasing loss of the family farm to urban sprawl. So to help reverse this trend, they bought the farm, leased 13 acres to a local farmer, and set up an organic garden co-op on the other acreage. Five families in Bluffton regularly go out to work the garden and do things like joint canning efforts in a “Summer Kitchen” that’s been

established in a converted garage on the property.

What's more, some of this produce is sold at Bluffton's downtown weekly Farmer's Market, which has a special emphasis on organic items.

Bluffton also has a highly creative and interactive "Community Sponsored Agriculture Project." Red Oak Farm here offers yearly "shares" for weekly produce. What's more, Red Oak owner TR Steiner told me he allows people to work on the farm (including children), to reduce the cost of a share – and to connect people more with the land.

And as many of these projects are designed to bring the local community together, Bluffton College is concerned about bringing the global community together with its Cross Cultural Program.

The program is an actual requirement at BC, and students go to places like Northern Ireland, Central America, Israel/Palestine, Vietnam, America's Appalachian region. They go to help the poor and to work for peace.

And if that isn't enough, BC offers International Scholarships and holds an "International Festival" every year (with booths from these students' various home countries) to raise cultural awareness.

And it was my 'awareness' that was about to be raised about another issue.

to pound nails

Liz had been a couple months pregnant at the end of the Ohio Tour. And now we were rapidly approaching the birth ETA, if you will.

I, as with most expectant fathers (who are honest),

was getting a bit anxious. And Liz wasn't helping any.

Liz had always wanted to have a home birth. And she had recently read a book about an Amish midwife, which strengthened her resolve tremendously.

Liz explained that in modern America we've come to accept having a baby as a "medical emergency" which requires being in the hospital.

Whereas in the days of old, child birth was simply a natural part of the ebb and flow of family

What's more, she told me, with a home birth she would have liberty to control her own body much more in labor.

I told her in response that we were: *47 seconds (I timed it) from a birthing center at a small local hospital the next street over!*

Nonetheless, Liz wouldn't be deterred.

But to appease me, we got a local obstetrician to be in the "bullpen" if the midwife Liz had picked couldn't make it on time. (She was 45 minutes away in Upper Sandusky, Ohio.)

The day came.

The midwife, Joan Shifely, did get to our place on time, as did one of Liz's friends who had offered to assist. And our Sarah was right there helping as well.

Meanwhile, I was helping too... by making pancakes, by myself in the kitchen. I was finding it calming. Eventually though, much to my chagrin, everyone got full (after some 30 pancakes). So I went on to some even more helpful, and important, things.

I took our Joseph and two of his friends out in the backyard to pound nails into several old pieces of firewood. We were on the third log when the call came out the window: Jonathan David Schriener (all 7 pounds, 8

ounces of him) was born.

We dropped the hammers and rushed up.

There was Jonathan, already breast feeding and everything.

The boys were fascinated and spent the appropriate amount of time (for five-year-olds) focused on the baby. However, what they were even more interested in was this “placenta thing.”

And there it was, blood, veins, the whole fleshy thing, off to the side in a big, purple salad bowl. It kind of looked like a bad Andy Warhol sculpture.

After a time, Joan, who had heard the boys were interested in seeing the placenta, pointed it out.

The boys turned their heads in unison. Then they turned white in unison. Joseph, who had turned the whitest, reached up, clamped his nose and then hurriedly turned to me.

“Can we go back outside dad?” He managed.

“OK, son,” I said in both an understanding and assured father’s tone, all the while hoping the others weren’t noticing – how white I was turning.

Soon the neighborhood could hear more nail pounding coming from our backyard – signaling yet another birth in Bluffton, Ohio.

blocked the shot

However, the nail pounding (or anything else that required using my right wrist) would be short lived.

Every Monday and Friday at 6 a.m., I’d get together with the students, professors and a few other Blufftonites for basketball. While most of these guys are younger, faster and can jump higher than me, I hold my own. In

fact, one particular morning, about two weeks before our next tour, a decidedly younger and faster guy stole the ball and was going the length of the court for what looked like was going to be an uncontested lay-up. But to his surprise (and mine) I caught up to him just as he was going up, leaped myself... and blocked the shot.

Problem here was, to block the shot I had to be pretty high up in the air. And at my age, and at this height, well, gravity can do some funny things. The first thing I heard was a crack as my foot came down funny on the floor, followed by another crack as I put my hand out to break the rest of the fall.

In the emergency room (just below the birthing center) the doctor said X-rays showed I had broken a small bone in my foot, and an even bigger bone in my wrist. He put a splint on it, but said I should really see an osteopath.

Being one of the 46 million Americans who don't have health insurance, I decided to try to take my chances with the splint.

Meanwhile, we began readying for the next tour.

CHAPTER 10

“Say ya to da UP, eh!”

It was the start of the summer of 2003 and everything in the presidential campaign was pointing toward the Iowa Caucuses. So we decided to go to Michigan. Call it a hunch...

common sense solutions to problems

We stopped first in Morenci, Michigan, where C&W Cycle owner Will Harsh told us he believed the reason many American adults don't bicycle more is because they simply lean toward a more sedentary lifestyle, as opposed to people in a country like China who bicycle practically everywhere. *Morenci Observer* Publisher David Green has bicycled practically everywhere in town on his “old steed” for the past 30 years. And what's more, he seemed impressed we were asking tough questions about why people don't bicycle more to save the environment, why they don't spend more time with their kids to help save the next generation...

Green would later write: “What I like about Joe's campaign is his constant search for what's working in this country. Most everywhere he travels, he discovers com-

mon sense solutions to problems – solutions that could be applied throughout the country, generally with limited government intervention. They're the sort of things that an average citizen should be able to do."

Manchester, Michigan's Christina Snyder is a good example of what one 'average citizen' is doing to make this a better place. Her electric vehicle gets 50 miles on a charge, solar panels provide the energy to heat her home, and the class she teaches at Lawrence Technical School in Southfield, Michigan won a statewide competition for designing the best "Zero Energy Home," utilizing creative passive and active solar applications. Snyder told us with dramatic shifts in the environment because of pollution, the overall eco-system is currently in major trouble. She told us what people don't seem to realize is: "If plants don't make it – we're next."

And what was 'next' for us was a stop at Concord Grove Educational Center in Alto, Michigan. At a seminar there, we learned America is awash in "light pollution." Businesses that are not open but nonetheless are lit up at night, mercury vapor streetlights that not only shine down but needlessly up and sideways, residential lights on for no reason... It was noted at the seminar that if we simply turned many of these lights off and used "down shine" street light fixtures to train the light only in the direction it's needed – we'd save millions of dollars annually in America and cut down tremendously on energy use.

\$6, No Facilities

We then headed *way* up north over a windswept Mackinaw Bridge into the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. And wouldn't you know, the second town we en-

countered was Newberry where the town's Historic District had just installed new, rather smart looking "down shine" style street light fixtures.

Nancy Kiplinger, at Michigan State University Extension in Newberry, is shining another type of 'light.' Kiplinger, who is the Extension director, told us they have recently adopted the Minnesota Search Institute's "40 Youth Assets Program." Some of the "asset categories" included: positive family communication; access to theatre, music, arts and literature in a town; caring neighborhood... With select categories, the Extension here is developing programs to try to enhance the various areas.

For instance, in the "...access to literature" category, the Extension has set up a "Backpack Theme Program" at the local library. Newberry Library's Mary Olmsted told me youth can take out a backpack with such themes as gardening, butterflies, trees... complete with things like seeds and gardening spades, butterfly nets, and the like. And the youth are encouraged not only to read the books in the backpack, but also to engage in gardening activities, or butterfly collecting, etc., with an adult – to increase camaraderie (and quality time) with a parent, relative or neighbor.

Doing a "Youth Assessment" of my own, I determined our children needed some quality time with me doing a primitive camping experience. So at the Rustic Camp Spot outside Newberry ("\$6, No Facilities"), we gathered firewood, got a fire going and roasted some \$1 hot dogs we'd purchased at nearby Bob's IGA. This same day, the *Cheboygen Tribune* ran an article about the campaign, saying: "Schriner is no big money presidential candidate..."

That continues to be an understatement.

“Consistent Life Ethic”

We headed further up the Peninsula to Marquette, where we learned about the Medical Care Access Coalition, a network of health care providers who give services and medication at little, or no, cost. One of the Coalition directors, Dr. Fritz Hoenke, told us many doctors in the area are involved, as are some pharmaceutical companies. Potential patients are given a financial assessment at one centralized location and then referred throughout the network, where they are treated on a minimal sliding fee scale. Dr. Hoenke added that the Coalition is part of an emerging nationwide effort to help those with no medical insurance.

A Newman Center minister at Northern Michigan University in Marquette would look at this effort as part of a: “Consistent Life Ethic.” Brian Dolan told me he teaches students that being “Pro-Life” means not just being against abortion, but being against conditions that can lead to premature death. Conditions like poverty, pollution, not enough health care, neglect of the elderly...

Little Brothers (Friends of the Elderly) in Hancock, Michigan is going a long way toward making sure the elderly are not neglected. Executive Director Mike Aten told me the program matches an elderly “friend” and a volunteer to spend “quality time socializing at home, going on (social) outings, shopping, doing light chores.” Aten said 22% of the county is elderly, and some 90% of them live below the poverty line. (Little Brothers is also in seven other locations throughout the country.)

Shoots & Ladders

After doing the interview at Little Brothers, we swung

around a corner in the “average Joe” mobile and there it was: “Shoots & Ladders,” the town’s public park.

Now if there were ever America’s “Public Park Aficionados” it would be us. In all our travels, we’ve stopped at (it seems) almost every public park in America, twice. But never, and I mean *never*, had we seen the likes of Shoots & Ladders.

The nucleus of the park was a hill, a fairly steep hill. It was a three-story-high (or more) hill. Coming down the hill were two plastic, cylindrical slides that, judging from how wide Joseph’s eyes were, could hurtle a kid 100 mph, easy.

Sarah and Joseph were off like shots, for the ‘shoots.’ After what had to be some five minutes of pretty intense climbing up the UP’s version of Mt. Everest, the kids stood poised at the top – for all of a moment.

Then, with abandon, Joseph jumped in with a holler, Sarah close behind. Liz and I, on the other hand, took deep breaths, and held them.

Because they were closed cylinders, you couldn’t see what was going on inside, but you could imagine. And I imagined Joseph, tucked in a cannon ball position (to gain as much speed as possible) careening off the walls, toppling over smaller children, going head over heels about halfway down, then actually flaming out as he broke the sound barrier near the bottom.

I wasn’t far off.

“*Boy*, that was *fun* Dad!” He exclaimed, strands of his red hair sticking straight up from the tremendous amount of static electricity he’d generated on the way down. I was afraid to touch him for fear of not so much getting a shock as getting electrocuted.

However, I was ‘shocked’ any group of rational adults

on a City Park Board, anywhere, would have conceived of such a diabolical attraction.

“They probably did it to increase tourism,” Liz said.

“It’s working,” I said, looking around at a full parking lot, with cars from Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Alaska...

And before I could get out: “Wasn’t that fun kids, but it’s time to go,” Joseph was again at the top of the hill.

Liz said something about it going to be a long afternoon.

I said when I got to be president, one of the first things I’d do was cut off the supplemental government funding to the Parks Department here.

Then Liz and I went off to grill more of Bob’s IGA hot dogs.

CHAPTER 11

A Sustainable Planet, Starting in Wisconsin

From the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, we headed toward Custer, Wisconsin, for the 10th annual “Renewable Energy & Sustainable Living Fair.”

At the Fair, Fred Wittig told me the Appleton, Wisconsin Schools have replaced refined sugars, starches and other cafeteria fare with salad bars, whole grain food, natural juices... Wittig said without all the sugar, et al., not only did the student health improve, but behavior and ability to concentrate also improved.

Barbara Naslund told me the country would ‘improve’ if we went to a more “Natural Home Model.” A representative for the magazine Natural Home (Living Green, Living Well), Naslund promotes the use of non-toxic paints, alternative energy for heating and cooling, environmentally safe cleaning fluids and green (no chemical fertilizers, no chemical pesticides...) landscaping.

From ‘natural,’ I went to the ‘not so natural.’ Anti-nuclear activist Sharon Cody said to me: “We are culturally habituated to allowing corporations to extract raw material (in the case of nuclear: uranium ore) to create

goodies for our own wants, not needs for today – without caring about destroying the planet.” And what could well destroy part of the planet, said Sharon, is burying high-level nuclear waste in Yucca Mountain. Instead, Sharon said she’d like to see the waste arranged in an “above ground” sculpture titled: “Monument to our Stupidity.”

Catchy, I thought.

Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin’s John Hippensteel would like to see something else ‘above ground’ – a whole lot of wind turbines, like the ones at his booth at the Fair. Hippensteel, who is owner of the Lake Michigan Wind & Sun Co., told me wind-generated energy is growing by 25% worldwide every year now.

Minneapolis, Minnesota’s Gary Hoover would like to see bicycling growing by the same percentage, and more. In his seminar “Living Well Without a Vehicle,” Hoover said he sees his bicycle as an SUV (Sensible Utility Vehicle). Hoover said before he started bicycling, he was quite overweight and on high cholesterol medicine. Now he said he is off the medicine, in great shape and bicycles everywhere, including to his jobs as a lawn care specialist. (He uses only non-engine push mowers) and a cleaner (he uses non-toxic cleaning fluids, etc.) He said recently his teenage daughter approached him and said: “Dad, we’re *too* green!”

And it’s “green cooking” that Circle Pine, Minnesota’s Greg Lynch is about. In his seminar “Building and Using Solar Cookers,” he said you could cook anything in a solar cooker, which uses no energy. “This is not rocket science,” said Lynch, who said temperatures need to reach no more than 180 degrees (max) and these things, apparently, are so efficient you can actually bake bread on a sunny day in 20 below zero weather “...for all

of you from St. Paul (MN),” he smiled.

While I was talking to Mr. Lynch, Joseph was constructing a solar oven out of simple cardboard and aluminum foil at a “Raising a Sustainable Child” seminar. In fact, it looked functional enough that we took it with us – for the next batch of Bob’s IGA hot dogs.

Blue Gold

At the Energy Fair, I saw an article in Solar Spotlight (A Publication of the Solar Oven Society) that said up to 80% of all sickness and disease in the developing world is caused by sanitation problems and poor drinking water. (The article also noted having solar ovens in villages with no electricity – water heated to 149 degrees for 10 minutes kills all water born bacteria and parasites – would impact this tremendously.)

In Stephen’s Point, Wisconsin, our next stop, University of Wisconsin environmental professor George Kraft told us 70% of the world’s water is used for irrigation, 20% for industrial use, and 10% for drinking and cooking. Professor Kraft said the book *Blue Gold* points out the world is running out of fresh water because man is “polluting, diverting it and depleting it at a startling rate.” Professor Kraft added we must realize nature, not just man, needs fresh water and when we start diverting it and polluting it, this throws the natural balance off.

And professor Kraft’s wife, Susan, is concerned about balance around ‘death and dying.’ She helped start the “Community Coalition for End of Life Care” in Portage County here. Susan, who majored in Social Work and worked in the hospice field, said: “Death has been taken out of home life... and (these days) we think we can

somehow outrun death with technology. Death is much better accepted when the person dying and the family have education around the process.” And to that end, the Coalition provides “death education” to area schools, work places and churches.

In Stephen’s Point we also met a woman who deals with issues of life and death every day at the Pregnancy Information Center in nearby Waupac. She said, in what she hopes will be a bell weather for many cases across the country, a local young man began lobbying to keep his baby, even though his girlfriend wanted to abort. After getting some counseling at the center and help exploring legal options, he won his Pro-Life fight.

“...dress modestly”

Poverty in Nicaragua should be considered a Pro-Life issue as well, said Capuchin Brother Fortin in Marathon City, Wisconsin. He was just back in the states after 33 years in Central America, his last residence in Bluefields, Nicaragua, where there is pervasive hunger, little health care, no sewer systems and a good deal of the drinking water is contaminated. During a talk to a Third Order Franciscan group in Marathon City later that day, I said we were asking Americans to cut back on their lifestyles considerably so people in Nicaragua can have, at least, the basics.

The next day I reiterated that message to *Merril (WI) Courier* reporter Barb Phillips, and added we could be more active in helping causes in America as well. To that end, we then crossed the street to a Blood Drive event at the Merrill Court House lawn. And as Sarah and Joseph watched, transfixed, as my blood bag was fill-

ing up, I joked with a nurse that running for president as an independent was, metaphorically, "...a lot like giving blood."

However, what isn't a joking matter is where fashions are going these days. But Notre Dame Church in Chipewewa Falls, Wisconsin is making a statement about that. A big sign in the church vestibule reads: "In respect for the Lord and your neighbors in church, we ask you to dress modestly. We implore men and women, boys and girls, not to wear tight clothes, tank tops, mini-dresses, halters, shorts..." Later in the day, local *NBC* reporter Matt Cooper asked what I'd learned while in the area. I said I learned: "We should all dress modestly."

I don't think he was expecting that particular answer.

"If you build it..."

We headed into southern Minnesota.

I still had the splint on my wrist and had said to Liz (more than once) that I was concerned it wasn't healing right. In Northfield, Minnesota, I was playing with the kids in a little downtown square. A man who appeared to be in his early 30s pulled up on his bike. He had gray duct tape wrapped around his wrist. I asked. He said he'd fractured his wrist in a bicycle spill a couple weeks back. And he added he was a dishwasher at a local restaurant and didn't have health insurance.

In Minnesota we were joined by two Ohio "average Joe" Campaign team members. Matt Meyer and Mark Schumacher had driven 12 hours to join us for the weekend. With the 'entourage,' so to speak, we participated in the North Morrison Annual 4th of July Parade. Big doings. Some 125 parade vehicles, a large feed and the

“Fat Dutchman Polka Band.”

Liz, who knows how to Polka, asked me if I knew how to Polka. I said no, but how hard could it be? A minute and a half later, Liz was walking off the dance floor (without me, the song still playing) shaking her head. “*Would Laura do this to George?*” I called after her.

The next day we all headed south to the New Melleray Abbey in New Melleray, Iowa. This was somewhat familiar ‘territory’ for our team member Mark, who was a former monk from the Genessee Monastery in New York. As with many monasteries, the monks at New Melleray have seven short prayer services during the course of the day here.

After Compline (evening prayer), the “average Joe” team retired to the Monestary front lawn to grill yet more hot dogs on a Coleman Stove Matt had brought. While the dogs were grilling (probably a first for the New Melleray Monastery lawn), off a ways we noticed a man doing what looked like poetic Aikido movements. This, it turned out, was Rev. Vitold Jordan of the New Kingdom Ministry of Fairfield, Iowa. He said he is a Christian who believes Western Christians would do well to incorporate some of the meditative, physical and nutritional aspects of the East. Rev. Jordan added he is an Aikido Master who had developed “Yeshua-Do,” a Christian Marital Art based on Biblical values.

After our visit with Rev. Jordan, we headed west for a rendezvous with a decidedly ‘Western’ pastime: baseball. We took the kids to the *Field of Dreams* movie site in nearby Dyersville, Iowa. This Sunday afternoon there were some 100 people milling about, taking pictures, and participating in what has to be the longest-running, impromptu baseball game in America.

As adults and kids come, they just naturally move out to an open spot in the field, or blend into the batting order. Sarah and Joseph both went 8 for 8 hitting, partially because of Dad's under-hand, knuckle ball pitch – which is almost impossible not to hit. And partially because of the parents out in the field wanting each of the children to remember this experience as their own 'Field of Dreams.'

Actually, besides what it meant to the kids, it was special for Liz and I to be here today as well. For a long time now, we've attached the movie's line "*If you build it... they will come.*" to our campaign. Although I have to admit they're not coming, oh, as fast as we'd like at this point.

10 cents

Nevertheless, we headed further west into Waterloo, Iowa, where we met with a man who is general manager of a large, national warehouse here. He has a family of five children, and, because of the luxury of a rather large salary, has opted to have his wife stay home with their children because both he and his wife think this is critical to healthy development. This man also said if his company instituted a sort of 'white collar / blue collar wage-sharing program' to help some of the general warehouse workers' spouses stay home with their children, he would enthusiastically sacrifice some of his salary. (Although I couldn't help but wonder, if he felt that strongly, why he wasn't taking some of the employees aside and doing it voluntarily now, for the sake of the kids.)

And it's the kids in Waterloo who are benefiting from the "MET Transit Trolley Kids 2003" initiative. Each Friday, MET provides Trolley rides for youth ages 7 to

14 to parks and supervised locations throughout the city. (The cost is 10 cents, and adults ride for free if accompanying a child.) Kids can board the Trolley anywhere along the route and some of the stops include: the city swimming pool, Boys & Girls Club, Center for the Arts; Public Library; Liberty Park... In addition, different organizations and businesses along the route (town newspaper, Waterloo Fire Station, Children's Theatre, YWCA...) offer the kids supervised building tours on these Fridays during the summer.

We then headed north to Charles City, "America's Home Town," the sign at the city limits reads.

Along the river here, which runs through the middle of the city, the town has developed a wonderful walking/bicycling trail and accented it with five rather creative "outdoor artwork" sculptures. The Charles City Art Committee had a nationwide competition to get design ideas, and local businesses and private donations covered artist costs. The idea that proved most popular was: seating. At five points along the trail are the funkiest, yet creative, 'seats' you've ever seen. I viewed (and sat in) Katie Magie's "Season's Seats," which is a brightly colored, abstract depiction of Iowa's varied climates. Atop one seat, for instance, is a loud, orange whirly gig that would blow in Iowa's blustery fall winds. Another had a bird stand symbolizing the return of the birds, and other life, in Iowa's spring...

On a hill overlooking this art display, is a church that's interested in Life as well. Prominently displayed in front of Immaculate Conception Church is a "Garden of Life" commemorating the unborn. A path winds through a well-kept array of wild flowers and shrubs, and is interspersed with lights, benches and plaques with vari-

ous quotes about the “Sanctity of Life.” At the head of the garden, looming prominently over the street below, is a large head stone inscribed with a picture of a baby in its mother’s womb.

In Charles City, Victoria Nehls is a concerned, low-income mother who has a family on Medicaid. She said when her three-year-old son unexpectedly developed a serious dental problem, she had an extremely difficult time finding a dentist who would take Medicaid. In a subsequent research paper for a local community college, Ms. Nehls noted area dentists are hesitant to take Medicaid patients, in part because the reimbursement dollars don’t stretch far enough. For the paper, Ms. Nehls also interviewed Sue Ayers, who is director of Nursing Services at Chautauqua Guest Homes, a nursing home in Charles City.

Ms. Ayers explained many of the elderly on Medicaid at her facility were also having trouble getting local dental care because Medicaid didn’t cover enough, and Chautauqua was currently seeking care from the University of Iowa’s traveling clinic. Ms. Nehls concluded mobilizing a series of mobile clinics, with supervised medical student interns throughout the state (and country), could go a long way in providing a safety net, and hope, for those on Medicaid.

Hope House

And it’s hope that Charles City’s Hope House holds out for people afflicted by addictions, or other problems. A recovery clubhouse, providing space for Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Codependency Anonymous and Alateen, the Hope House was started 20

years ago. A group of people from these various groups formed an Alano Club Corporation and initially rented a room from Immaculate Conception Church here for \$1 a month. When the church said they needed to raze the building for an expansion project, the group went to work.

They got the city to give them a plot of land near the downtown for \$500. Representatives then went from church to church to raise money for a new building. “The churches were quite familiar with us because practically each one of them had referred people to us over the years,” a Hope House representative told me. The group also got a loan, members volunteered with construction, and two years ago the new Hope House was completed.

At Mass at Immaculate Conception the day after I talked to the Hope House representative, Fr. Carl Reis said St. Benedict once said we should treat every guest “...as if they were Christ.” And I couldn’t help but think that through all their volunteer efforts, the Alano Club group was doing just that for all the hurting ‘guests’ who would come to their “Hope House.”

We headed north.

Vietnam

Each year the town of Floyd, Iowa has the “Floyd Fun Days,” which we missed this year. However, we had our own ‘Floyd Fun Friday,’ joining in with an impromptu baseball game at Floyd’s Community Park just before sunset. We then plugged into a wonderful park, donated by the local Lions (“Camper Donations Appreciated”) for the evening.

The next morning we drove to Osage, Iowa, where we came across Francis Morris who was pedaling toward the grocery store on her bicycle. It had two wheels in the back, one in the front, and a rather comfortable high-back seat. It was also very low to the ground, had retractable handlebars, and a basket in the back. “I got the bike because I can’t walk as far as I used to,” said Ms. Francis, 82.

Even farther north at St. Ansger’s, Iowa, Dean Church is going the extra-mile in another way. A military veteran, some six years ago he started the first Vietnam Veterans of America chapter north of De Moines. The group meets for camaraderie, support and to serve as an advocacy group for veterans and their families. Church told me in addition to his work with the chapter, he provided a venue (in conjunction with the Veterans Administration and State Vocational Rehabilitation Office) for disabled Vietnam veterans to learn a hobby or get the training necessary to start their own business.

And speaking of Vietnam, Church told me in the small town of Toeterville, just north, lived a man who was in on two raids in Vietnam as a Green Beret to rescue American POW’s. What’s more, he’d also been in on two raids to save American POW’s in – World War II. Just the year before, the book *Raider* (St. Martin Press) was released about Gaylen Kittleson’s bravery during these missions.

Church also added a rather quirky Vietnam statistic. He said during the whole Vietnam War, only three men from Mitchell County here were lost – all from the small town of Staceyville.

Note: And I thought the North Morristown, Minnesota parade that we’d recently been in had been short

(one-quarter mile). Church told me this last 4th of July there was a parade in the tiny town of Bolan, Iowa. There are only two blocks in downtown Bolan, so the parade vehicles lined up, but never moved. Everyone just walked around them.

CHAPT. 12

In Search of Lake Wobegone

We headed into Minnesota in search of “Lake Wobegon,” Public Radio storyteller Garrison Keilor’s famed, mythical concoction.

But we weren’t so sure it was, indeed, mythical.

What’s more, if we found it, tell me that wouldn’t be a national story – and the ticket to the presidency.

It’s thinking like this that would make one wonder (I think) why we hadn’t actually won the presidency already.

“I’d feel guilty turning on the water...”

While we didn’t find Lake Wobegon in Duluth, we did find a Catholic Worker House where volunteers live in community in a cluster of homes. In these homes, they take in the homeless, providing shelter, food, and help getting jobs. What’s more, the Catholic Workers here share things in common among themselves, including the owning of these homes, cars, appliances... In addition, one of the volunteers told me of a Catholic Worker leaning priest in Garner, North Carolina, who takes homeless people into his rectory because, well, there are

empty rooms, it's what the gospel would say to do, and it's a good example to the parishioners to consider doing the same.

Hibbing's Minnesota's Sheila Arimond is a good example for anyone. She went on a mission trip to Tanzania where she would walk to a dry creek bed with some rural villagers every day to dig for water. Sometimes they'd find it, sometimes they wouldn't – and would go thirsty that day. Returning to America, Sheila (who now lives in a modest, ranch style two-bedroom home) told me the Tanzanian experience made her reflect on the “opulence” of her life. “I'd feel guilty turning on the water (when she got back from Tanzania),” she said.

What Sheila experienced first-hand in Tanzania (and what tragically plays out everyday throughout the Third World) is something she said every American should experience.

“I wish that for just one time
You could stand inside my shoes
And for just one moment
I could be you.”

Singer Bob Dylan, who is from Hibbing, sings these words on the release *Positively 4th Street*, the lyrics displayed in a whole room dedicated to Dylan in the town library.

It was at this library that I met Howard Margulas, producer of the local cable-access show: *Voice of the People*. He asked me to be on. I asked the format. He said he aims the camera and simply says: “You're on.” And for the next 30 minutes, it's yours. A politician's dream!

Although instead of a ‘dream,’ Liz looked at it more like a nightmare the next day when, at the beginning of the *Voice of the People* show, I, in rather impromptu

fashion, introduced her as “mom,” campaign manager, chief political strategist – and the one who frequently says to me: “Honey, are you really sure you want to do this presidency thing?”

The camera had panned to my instantly red-faced wife just as she was in the middle of breast-feeding Jonathan. And to make matters worse, I then introduced Jonathan too (keeping the camera there even longer), saying he was now three months old, and: “...eats, sleeps, cries, eats some more, and burps – usually somewhere in the middle of my speeches.”

Liz, in turn, said there wouldn’t be too many more speeches if I *ever* put her on the spot like that again.

And I put the people of Hibbing on the spot when, toward the end of the show, I recounted Sheila Arimond’s Tanzanian experience. I asked knowing what they now knew about Third World water shortage, what would keep the people of Hibbing from cutting back dramatically on water use and adopting a town of like size in the Third World? I said people here could consider not watering lawns, sharing bath water, collecting rain water... and take the savings to send to this adopted town so they could have the basics in water – to drink.

home town of Judy Garland

From Hibbing we headed even further north, to the northern boundary waters and tiny Ely, Minnesota.

Here a creative organization has, in a dramatic way, helped save the wolves up here. They were quite endangered. Their numbers were down to only some 600 in this area in the mid 1960s, the International Wolf Center’s Gretchen Diessner told me. With the help of the Wolf Center Association, with members in 50 states and

48 countries (education programs and a highly innovative and interactive Center here in Ely) the wolf population is up to 3,000. I told the editor of the Ely newspaper that we'd like to see similar initiatives rally around each endangered species, even the more unromantic ones like the snail darter.

But we weren't slow as a snail (sorry) as we headed to Bovey, Minnesota, where we met with Phil Solem, whose life has been thread through with social justice outreach. He said in the late '70s he and his wife sold their home because they felt they were "sitting on too much equity": \$15,000. They gave the money to an outreach to help subsistence farmers stay on their land in Mexico. And they, in turn, went to live with an inner city community in Minneapolis that was doing outreach work to help the poor of the inner city.

We then went to Grand Rapids, Minnesota, where I told a reporter of the *Grand Rapids Herald* that (like Phil Solem) many Americans could stop "sitting on much of their savings (equity, retirement funds, big savings accounts...)" and send the money to Mexico, Tanzania, or wherever.

Grand Rapids, by the way, is the birthplace of Judy Garland. And with perhaps her most famous movie line playing in our heads – "There's no place like home." – we started to head home.

landed the biggest trout

On the way back, we stopped at a Flying J. Restaurant in Black River Falls, Wisconsin. As I was writing at a counter, I half-observed a waitress taking the orders of a nearby table of five guys. They ordered variations of eggs (scrambled, sunny side up...), hash browns, oatmeal

(some with raisins, some with raisins and brown sugar) toast (some dry, some not)... none of which was all that unusual. What was unusual was that Alice Deno, 23, didn't write any of it down, just stood with her hands clasped behind her back.

I had to ask.

She said she never writes an order down unless there are more than nine people.

"Photographic memory?" I asked.

"Yes," she smiled.

"That's great!"

"My boyfriend doesn't think so," she smiled again.

At our last stop in Valparaiso, Indiana, we met Richard Schutkovske, who told me as a youth in the late '30s he had been adopted as a young child. Because of the love he felt from the parents who adopted him, he made a vow to adopt when he was an adult. He and his wife, Charlotte, adopted three children, one who had been born with a blood clot and another who had been born premature (at 3.5 lbs). "There was a need, that's all," he said.

As an aside, Richard Schutkovske is also one of the most famous anglers in these parts. He landed the biggest trout ever caught in Lake Michigan. What's more, the same day we met Schutkovske, the *Valparaiso Post-Tribune* ran a front page story saying the trout (small mouth bass, white fish, channel catfish...) were not all that safe to eat anymore. The Indiana Department of Health warns that accumulation of pollutants (PCBs, mercury...) in some of these fish may make them hazardous to eat for humans – not to mention how this is affecting the natural eco-system in general.

Driving the final stretch back to Bluffton, I told Liz

that, like the International Wolf Association, there should be a 'Great Lake Fish Association' to help these fish.

She agreed.

CHAPT. 13

One Tank Trips

Cleveland, Ohio boasts the longest running news segment in the country. Over the past 30 years, *Channel 8's* Neil Zurcher's weekly "One Tank Trips" has taken him all over Ohio's back roads searching out the fascinating, the poignant, and often: the quirky.

And in that tradition (and because it continues to be a low-budget campaign), the "average Joe" team embarked on a series of one-tank trips throughout western Ohio.

First stop: Hicksville.

That's the name of the town, honest.

...on the 'edge'

Upon arriving in Hicksville, I read a column in the *Hicksville News Tribune* by Bill Metz. He wrote that in his youth on any given summer day, there were sandlot baseball games going on all throughout the town.

Now there are none.

I told the *News Tribune* that kids have traded in active, wholesome pastimes for more sedentary, spiritually

corrosive ones: TVs and computers, as a start. I said, for one, youth brains are absorbing a steady stream of sexual and violent images. And I added that while you couldn't particularly legislate this, we exhort "parents to be parents" and have more positive influence in the lives of their children – that is, once they themselves stop watching the sexual and violent images on TV.

And it was the 'violent' image of a fall off a cliff that was evoked as I read a t-shirt hanging in a downtown Hicksville Department store: "If you're not living on the edge... you're taking up too much space."

I took that as a cue to head 10 miles north to 'Edgerton,' Ohio (I don't plan these transitions, honest).

In Edgerton, we stopped at a Catholic church and picked up a copy of *MaryKnoll Magazine* that had an article about "child labor." It said, according to the International Labor Organization, 250 million children worldwide are in intolerable work situations. They work long hours hand spinning carpets in hot factories in Kathmandu, they struggle as dump scavengers in Cambodia, and US-based multi-national corporations like Nike, the Gap, Wal-Mart... continue to employ children in foreign sweatshops. The article also noted: "Child labor thrives because there is no shortage of people willing to profit from the pain of others." {And that, I thought, includes all of us consumers who patronize Wal-Mart, Nike, the Gap... to get the cheapest products possible.]

Arriving back in Bluffton, Sarah and I attended a Mennonite prayer service that focused on the Bible passage James 2: 14-17. It says: "What good is it... if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says go in peace, keep warm and eat your

fill, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, so what is the good of that?”

And what is the good, I wondered, in going on with our lifestyles in this country (often defined by all these sweatshop brand items), as opposed to sacrificing tremendously and sending the money to such agencies as “Free the Children” so these little kids can have the basics in food, medicine and education – not to mention a childhood.

But did it, really?

And it’s being ‘re-educated’ about priorities that continued to strike me on our next one tank trip, first stop Wapakoneta, Ohio – hometown of astronaut Neil Armstrong. Armstrong planted the first human foot print on the moon and said the famous words: “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”

But was it really?

Ironically, Wapakoneta was the final capital of the Shawnee people c.1798, before their forced relocation to Kansas in 1832. Liz said in the pioneers’ breakneck (and tremendously greedy) race to “conquer space” on this new land, they all but killed a whole race of God’s children.

And isn’t our breakneck race to ‘conquer outer space,’ I posed to a reporter from the Wapakoneta newspaper, doing practically the same thing? That is, we’re spending billions on the Space Program (including the millions that have gone to the elaborate Neil Armstrong Museum here), while scores of God’s children die every day in the Third World of starvation, contaminated drinking water... Shouldn’t we be taking the money to “conquer,”

say, world hunger on this planet? I continued.

Also while in Wapakoneta, I interviewed Neil Armstrong Museum curator John Zwez. He told me Armstrong was a quiet individual whose passion was flying. “He was a pilot, out and out, always wanting to fly the fastest and the highest,” said Zwez.

Some of the first guys who wanted to fly the “fastest and highest” (not to mention to also be the “first”) were Dayton, Ohio’s Orville and Wilbur Wright. At the Wright Brothers Bicycle Shop in Dayton, which has been preserved as part of a National Historic Park, we read that the “human imagination found it’s highest expression” in Orville and Wilbur and their historic Dec. 17, 1903 flight.

But did it really?

They, along with small “Mom & Pop” bicycle shops around the nation, were making bicycles that provided good exercise and allowed people to get about their often close-knit communities at a sane (non-polluting) pace. Planes would end up polluting tremendously and eventually increase mobility exponentially. And with this increased mobility, billions of dollars (that could have gone to all kinds of environmental and social justice causes) would be wasted on expensive vacations that could have just as well have been taken in one’s ‘backyard,’ so to speak. And this increased mobility (with planes, automobiles...) started to fragment these close-knit communities simply because it was now much easier to move to a new locale.

The Old Order Amish, on the other hand, don’t go for planes, or cars, for all these reasons. In our societal dysfunction, we look at the Amish way as whimsically quaint at best, or archaic at worst. Yet the reality is in

this area of societal “human imagination (and spiritual soundness)” is probably finding its highest expression in the Amish. In other words, the Amish haven’t just accepted every technology that’s come down the pike, but rather made very considered, prayerful assessments about whether the new technology would adversely affect the quality of family and community life.

‘intentional communities’

And it’s the quality of life in rural Guatemala that University of Dayton student Allen Schulze is concerned about. A third year engineering student, Schulze passed up the chance to hone his skills (and make some good money) last summer in a high tech factory in the States, to volunteer with Ethos Engineering doing something decidedly more “low tech.” He went from home to home in Guatemalan villages helping people put in small, vented ceramic ovens. Most villagers in this poverty-stricken country, he explained, still cook with a non-vented, open flame pit inside the home that causes all kinds of respiratory damage and severe burns to young children.

Schulze is part of a relatively new educational stream at UD called the: Chaminade Scholars Program. Director Maura Skill told me the program orients students to look at their evolving professions as not just jobs but “vocations.” Classes look at the spiritual motivation behind such leaders as Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez... They visit St. Meinrad Seminary in southern Indiana to learn about centering prayer and the discernment process; they get credit for service work (homeless shelter, community garden, Boys & Girls Clubs) in Dayton’s inner city. In this whole process, said Ms. Skill, the

students learn more about their God-given talents and about the needs of the world.

One of my wife Liz's 'needs' during this time was for Calamine Lotion. While back in Bluffton the last time, our family had done a bit of yard work to make ends meet. Well, wouldn't you know, the yard we'd worked on had some poison ivy. (Liz can get poison ivy just being down wind from the stuff.) And boy, did she get a case of it – all over her body. Yet even though she was in extreme discomfort, she chose to press on because: "This is important, honey," she said.

I in return, in my ever sensitive way, said I was proud of her, and... "I hope it clears up before the Inauguration."

She didn't smile. And I sensed it wasn't one of my most 'community building' statements in the history of our marriage.

Yet as with my marriage, the world could use much more community building.

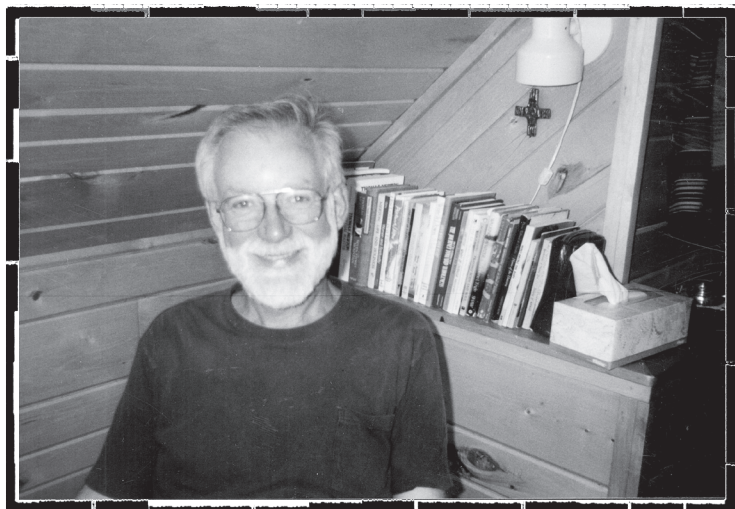
In the midst of all this mobility (the average American moves every five years), there is a counter-movement evolving to not only save community, but to enhance it.

Following our stop in Dayton, we drove east to Yellow Springs, Ohio, for a conference on "Intentional Communities."

At a workshop on "co-housing," Elph Morgan explained this concept has been catching on in pockets around the country. In his Sunward Co-Housing Community near Ann Arbor, Michigan, the houses are arranged in a close-knit circle, with parking on the periphery. The configuration allows for a common backyard where community children play together under the supervision of one, two, or however many parents. And



Yep, the "campaign team" was at it again for Election 2004. And all that our Sarah wanted for Christmas was her 'two front teeth.'



*Minnesota's Phil Solem sold his home and gave the money to the poor in Mexico because he felt he was "sitting on too much equity": \$15,000.
(Photo by av. Joe)*



Valparaiso, Indiana's Richard Schutkovske landed the biggest trout ever caught in Lake Michigan. And he and his wife adopted three children, two with severe physical problems. The Schutkovskes did it "...because there was a need, that's all," Richard said. (Photo by av. Joe)



*Just before launching on the Buckeye Trail Tour, 1,300 miles on bicycles. Sara and Benji Bergstrand (background) accompanied us.
(Photo by Daryl Nester)*



Jonathon, 2, was my "driving buddy." Out on the road we'd spot big yellow diggers and other important stuff. (Photo by Shaun Heasley c. 2004)



Eupora, Mississippi's Sr. Alix Therese and a friend. Sr. Therese works exhaustively to help the rural poor here. (Photo by av. Joe)



Manchester, Michigan's Christian Snyder and here students at Lawrence Technical School won a statewide competition for designing a solar "Zero Energy Home." (Photo by av. Joe)



Gallup, New Mexico's Gabe Kanawite was worried about his people, the Navahos. Gallup used to be called "Drunk Town USA." Not anymore, thanks to people like Kanawite. (Photo by av. Joe)



Juarez, Mexico's Fr. Francis (last row) and some of the boys at the Casa de Asis orphanage. (photo by av. Joe)



Some 200,000 people live in small, cobbled-together shacks in Juarez, Mexico, with no running water, no electricity... Some cross the border illegally because their children don't have enough to eat. Given that, "what would Jesus do with the (border) fence?" Fr. Francis posed. (photo by av. Joe)



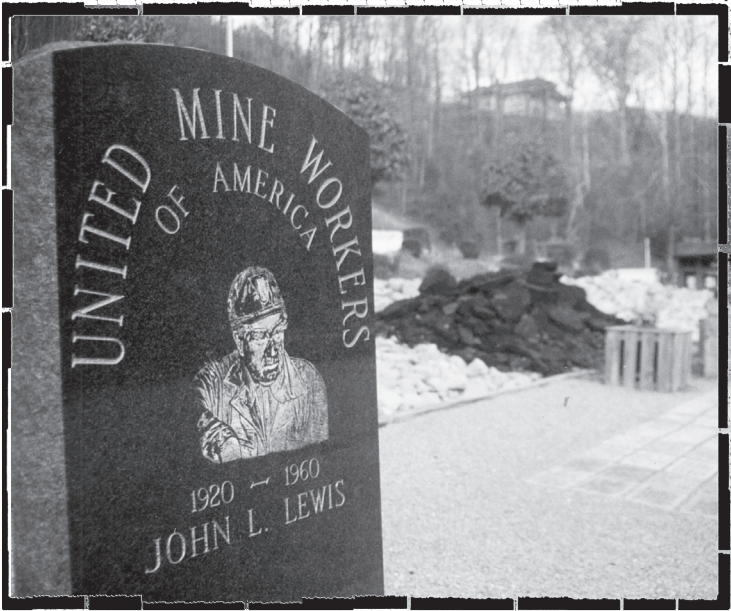
The 'Almost First Family' poses in front of the Dental Museum in Bainbridge, Ohio. The Museum is the former office of John Harris who is considered the "Father of Dental Education." (Incidentally, that's often how Liz also looks after a day with the kids in the motor home.) --photo by av. Joe



Wood County, Ohio's Michael McMaster plays Vintage Baseball on a team of admittedly "slow plodders." (photo by av. Joe)



Mt. Vernon, Ohio's Walter O'Dell and his GEM, mini-flatbed electric pick-up truck. "I just don't rightly think people around here knew about these things until I started driving around town," he smiled. (photo by av. Joe)



We went into the heart of Appalachia on our Country Music Highway Tour. Country Music historian Paul Hughes of Kingsport, Tennessee, said there were mountain-ballads about the hard life of coal miners “who only got to see one sunset a week.” (photo by av. Joe)



*In his **monumental** effort to help the environment, Scottsboro, Alabama's Kenifer told us he estimates in the last 40 years he has logged 100,000 bicycle miles. [A year after we met Ken, he was run over on his bicycle by a drunk driver. Tragically, Ken died.] --photo by av. Joe*



When Art and Peggy Gish aren't working on their organic farm in Athens, Ohio, they volunteer as Christian Peacekeepers in the Israel/Palestine conflict. "We stand in front of whoever is being shot at," said Art. --photo by av. Joe



The International Wolf Center in Ely, Minnesota, has worked tirelessly to bring the wolf population back in the Northern Boundary Waters area.
--photo by av. Joe



While back in Bluffton on one of our pit-stops, Joseph got a tool belt and level for his birthday. He and Sarah are now off to build something that will be, well, level. (photo by Liz Schriener)

besides individual homes in the complex, there is a “Common House” that has offices and a big kitchen where community members can eat up to four times a week together.

In another workshop, Laird Schaub, who is a founding member of Sandhill Intentional Community in Missouri, said there are 40 households currently in his community. They do some “income sharing” in the form of a flat tax per household. This goes into a common pool to purchase one washing machine and dryer for everyone, a pool of cars to share and farm implements. In addition, some of the members work outside the community while others work on an organic farm on the property.

And it was Dan Kremer’s organic farm in Yorkshire, Ohio, that we were headed to next. Dan had asked me to talk at his Farm Festival, which drew some 300 people.

I started by saying I had a sister in Cleveland who owned a bakery. On her bakery wall is the sign: “YOU ARE NOT WHAT YOU EAT!”

When the laughter subsided, I said that nonetheless we are, in fact, what we eat – “...and it’s killing us.” I said farm chemical pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers... are infusing our food and creating chemical time bombs (read: things like cancer) in us. I then said if a farmer puts chemicals on their fields, knowing it may lead to terminal cancer in some, are they actually breaking the Fifth Commandment: “Thou Shalt Not Kill.”

There was no laughter with this, just awkward silence.

“Go BG!”

After a brief pit stop in Bluffton, we headed out on another one-tank trip to Ottawa, Ohio, to look at mi-

grant farm worker issues.

Besides the low pay, back-breaking work, and continual exposure to harmful farm chemicals, migrant worker children often sleep on dirty mattresses on floors, and because of the transient nature of the lifestyle, the children have traditionally gotten little in the way of consistent education.

However, some of the latter is changing, Jack Betscher told me. A representative of the Putnam County Educational Services Center (ESC), Betscher said his agency is working hard to provide innovative and quality educational training for migrant worker children (and their parents) who come here during the summer. He explained, as an example, ESC has a series of programs to enhance “language arts” (writing and reading). “Reading is the eye gate to everything,” said Betscher. And to help the children with reading, besides the core programs, ESC has developed a Host Program of volunteer tutors (currently 140 local people) to help. ESC also partners with Toledo University, with students regularly interning to teach creative courses in English, Math, Science...

It was another nearby university, Bowling Green State University, which had contacted me during this time for a story for their campus newspaper. (I had graduated from Bowling Green in 1978.) Editor Carrie Whitaker asked: “Tell me how you are connected to the youth in America and why their vote is important?”

I said while I’d love to give some sort of hip, MTV answer, the point is I’m not trying to be “one of the youth.” I said I saw myself as more of a father figure trying to help guide the younger generation toward a newer way. A way that’s not about materialism, ultra-competitiveness and individualism; but rather it’s about “simplicity,

sharing and community.”

And in regard to the youth vote itself, I urged all students at BG to be critical thinkers, analyzing, in depth, all the data about each presidential candidate – then on Nov. 2: “...vote for the guy who went to BG. Go Falcons [BG mascot]!”

CHAPT. 14

Wintering in Bluffton

After the one-tank trips, we hibernated (sort of) in Bluffton for part of the winter.

Early in the hiatus, I attended a Bluffton College Forum with Prof. Thomas Walker, who is currently a professor at Ohio University and a former Peace Corps volunteer in Columbia, South America. (Since then, he said he's exhaustively studied U. S. policy in South America.)

Prof. Walker said that what the U.S. says about promoting democracy in South America and what actually happens is, well: "Like bumping up against the proverbial 'elephant in the living room,'" he scoffed. In a nut shell, the professor said the U.S. has significantly helped overthrow existing governments there, often not for democracy's sake but to put in a government that is more favorable to U.S. interests (allowing more access to natural resources, promoting more favorable trade, etc.), whether this new government has an oppressive dictatorship or not. Prof. Walker said this goes on because much of the general U.S. populace (who could lobby for change in this area) stays ignorant, for the most part, of political affairs and cultural differences not only in South

America but worldwide.

Taking the latter to heart, that night I took our children to the First Mennonite Church Library in Bluffton where we read from a *Children Around the World* book series. This particular book was about Dawa Bama, a youth in Tibet (not much older than our Sarah and Joseph) who was living in a poor rural village and preparing to be a Buddhist monk. Our children were rapt with the story – and the world grew a little bit closer tonight.

A couple days later I took Sarah to a talk at nearby Findlay University to hear Allen Pinkham, a Native American activist from the Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho. He said throughout the Tribe's history they relied heavily on Columbia River salmon runs. But as more and more people moved to the Pacific Northwest, there was more of a need for electrical power. So the Columbia River was tapped for power with a series of hydroelectric dams – which all but stopped the salmon runs. Pinkham said his tribe was trying to get some of the dams in their area removed, asking people in those parts to “shut off one light for one salmon.” That is, to cut back energy wise so there wouldn't be a need for those dams.

During a question and answer time, I told Pinkham that while Bluffton, Ohio, isn't in the Pacific Northwest Region (based on most maps), Sarah and I would cut back our energy use (even more) for his tribe and send his Chief Joseph Foundation some of the savings to help the cause. Then I, in rather spontaneous fashion (I'm like that), walked to the front of the room and gave him \$10 as a start.

Ironically, one of the next people I talked with was Larry Bohdercher, who wires Bluffton's annual Christmas “Blaze of Lights” extravaganza. It is a downtown

display of some 25,000 lights displayed on the Presbyterian Church lawn at the center of town. “When all the lights are on, the electric meter at the church spins so fast you can’t even see the needle,” he laughed. I didn’t – thinking about how many salmon that would be.

misses the point

Now admittedly this Christmas our family is going a bit over on electricity, with two small spotlights shining at a hand-carved nativity scene that was crafted by a friend, and Painter’s Plus buddy, Dale Way. It’s a modern nativity scene rendition, with carved, abstract figures. And, it’s interactive.

That is, the kids and I have made it that way.

Each Friday and Saturday night during the Christmas season, the chamber of Commerce has horse-drawn buggy rides to view home displays, and ours has become a featured stop.

On these nights, the kids (who are in St. Mary’s Children’s Choir) sit on the porch drinking hot chocolate and waiting for the sound of hooves. As the carriage approached, the kids take their place among the nativity figures, and I position myself in front as the “average Joe” conductor (made-up hand gestures, the whole thing).

Then when the carriage stops, the kids sing part of *Away in the Manger*. This is always met with a good deal of smiles and applause.

A couple streets over in Bluffton, there are three electronically interactive Christmas displays that draw people from all over Northwest Ohio. As you pull up and tune your radio to, say, 89.3, a 5-watt transmitter activates. And as you listen to *Jingle Bells* (or whatever, depending

on the yard) reindeer legs prance, Rudolph's nose blinks, and so on... all in synch with the music. The displays are quite an extravaganza.

Yet all I could think about these, after hearing Native American Allen Pinkham, was: *more salmon*; and that Jesus, born simply in a manger in a stable, would think the whole Christmas thing in America (lights and all), had gotten, oh, a bit nuts – and totally misses His point about what the real focus of the season should be.

“rough and tumble world...”

At another Bluffton College Forum, professor Perry Bush introduced featured speaker Dave Berger, who is the mayor of nearby Lima, Ohio (pop. 83,000). Professor Bush said Mayor Berger, in his 4th term, is a seasoned veteran of the “rough and tumble world of urban politics.”

Mayor Berger said Lima was a “rust belt” town that lost a significant number of jobs as the steel industry and other related industries started to decline.

“Lima used to rank 2nd in the state per household per retail sales,” said Berger.

So the town undertook a “retooling of community appeal,” with downtown revitalization, new condominium complexes, rebuilding public education buildings, more industrial parks with tax breaks for new businesses...

Some of these new businesses could well be like Tower Automotive in Bluffton. Shortly after the mayor's talk, I toured Tower Automotive as part of a Bluffton Chamber of Commerce monthly get-together. Men and women stood like robots methodically – and mind-numbingly – putting part after part in a stamping machine, or putting

part after part on a conveyor belt... all around was loud, raucous metal pounding sounds (ear plugs required) and the acrid smell of metal dust and paint.

What's more, the parts being made by Tower, a "global supplier," are for motor vehicles. Motor vehicles which by their very nature are causing the premature deaths and maiming of millions, adding tremendously to global warming and helping fuel the environmental cancer of urban sprawl.

The same day I toured the plant, I later picked up a *Silk Hope Community Catholic Worker* newspaper out of Siler City, North Carolina. A review of the book *Holy Work* noted: "Globalization and technology, rather than building an egalitarian and humane world... have only deepened the chasm between what is useful, and what is profitable." The book's author, Fr. Dom Rembert Sorg, also writes: "Work that threatens destruction and death of human beings, and our earth, cannot be 'holy.'" And he continues that even though some of the people involved with these destructive systems are viewed as "good Christian businessmen," they are in fact "children of the devil."

Fr. Sorg's belief of what is "useful," is a "back to the land" movement, with small family farms surrounded by a sustainable local community where: "The village shoemaker, for instance, should receive a salary, not by how many shoes he fixes but by how many children he has."

And as Fr. Sorg questions Western technology, so it is being questioned in Iran and throughout the Arab world. In another talk at Bluffton's First Mennonite, Marlin Jesckse, past Chair of the Bible and Philosophy Department at Indiana's Goshen College, said several years ago he'd gone to Iran with a group of Americans and found

sectors of the society hesitant to embrace modern (sped up) Western technology that could threaten family, community and the Islamic version of “holiness” in general.

Some are worried about that in India too. Not more than a couple days after hearing about Iran’s concerns, I met Leah Anjali Sonwani, who was from India and in Bluffton to visit friends. She told me for generations the Indian culture functioned at a slow, measured pace, elders were highly valued in their families and the community, and there wasn’t a preoccupation with materialism.

However, with the advent of television and the infusion of American programming, Ms. Sonwani said life in India has sped up considerably, the youth have a lot less respect for the elders, and materialism has taken hold in a big way.

“We’re not taking a strong enough stand against this (media influence),” Ms. Sonwani lamented.

I wondered if anyone was, except, of course, the Amish.

“...biggest political upset”

It was at this time that Findlay Courier reporter Steve Dillon, in one of his columns, had us win Election 2004. (And I thought we were still behind in the polls.)

In the lead to the column, Dillon wrote that “in the biggest political upset in history” I beat Bush by one percentage point. Then on Inauguration Day I did what no president had ever done before: shoveled the White House sidewalk. (Liz would have made me, so this wasn’t far off.) But beyond that, Dillon wrote I then moved the ‘First Family’ out of the White House and into an impoverished neighborhood in D.C. And finally – I turned the

White House into a homeless shelter.

That pretty much summed up the platform.

Ecological Footprints

Every student at Bluffton College is required to take a “Capstone Class” (mentioned earlier) called *Christian Response to the Global Community*. The class looks closely at social justice issues, family issues, environmental stewardship issues...

BC Biology Professor Bob Antibus told me that in the environmental issues part he tries to get students thinking about their “Ecological Footprints.” For instance, he will point out that if everyone on earth lived like the “average North American,” it would require at least three earths to provide all the material and energy we would need (read: the sin of gluttony, big time). About three-fourths of the consumption of food, forestry products and fossil fuels goes to 1.1 billion people who live in “affluence,” while one-fourth of the consumption remains for the other 4.6 billion people.

Translated: Bluffton’s Exchange Club newsletter this month included a “President’s Corner” about a recent trip she’d taken to Nassau in the Bahamas. Sandy Davidson said she had gone on a cruise there and noted: “... the people were so poor and I saw so many people lying around on the sidewalks. In the straw markets kids would run up to me and beg me to buy something. I can’t imagine my kids living like that... Thank you Lord for letting us live in such a wonderful, free country (America).”

Ironically, I ‘couldn’t imagine’ someone frivolously spending money on a cruise when it could go toward helping get these homeless people off the sidewalk. And

for that matter, I couldn't imagine why we Americans couldn't shrink our ecological footprints significantly to help the 4.6 billion living in abject poverty all over the place.

And I said so in a letter to the editor of the *Bluffton News* this month. I said the gospel message indicates that if you have two coats and your brother needs a coat – you give him/her a coat. And since it wouldn't take much of a Biblical scholar to figure this isn't just about coats, I wrote that wouldn't the spirit of that Bible passage be: If you live in a relatively comfortable home and know your brother is living on a sidewalk, wouldn't you bring others into your home and “halve” the expenses (energy uses, cars, lawn equipment...) and take the savings to help your brothers/sisters in Nassau have a home?

And wouldn't you know, a week after the letter ran, we got a call from a Bluffton College international student who was looking for a room to rent off campus. In the spirit of what I wrote about, we said sure. What's more, with him not having much money, we gave it to him at a reduced rate.

Michael Berhame is from the African country of Eritrea. I had read about Eritrea several years prior in a *National Geographic* article that had affected me tremendously and helped galvanize even more my resolve to try to help the poor and war-ravaged people in the Third World.

A bloody civil war had been going on in Eritrea since the 1960s as the Eritrea Peoples' Liberation Front had fought against Ethiopia for autonomy. Besides the fighting, famine racks the country, and according to the article: “...most observers agree that the cycle of famine will not be broken until combat ends. Ethiopia, for example, spends half of its national budget on its armed forces.

All that many people in Eritrea have known is the horror of famine and the horror of fighting – including our new roommate Michael. He told me when he was quite young, his father had gone off to fight with the resistance movement. He never saw his dad again. Because of the constant violence, Michael’s mother, like so many people in Eritrea, left for Kenya. She started a small business and eventually was able to send her son to the U.S. (Bluffton College also gave Michael an international scholarship and he is majoring in chemistry.) And while Michael now has the ability and skill to go practically anywhere, he wants to go back to Eritrea to make a difference.

The *National Geographic* article on Eritrea noted that region had also seen invasions (chronologically) by Egyptians, Turks, and then became an Italian colony in 1890. Italy then lost the colony to a British invasion in 1941. After WW II, a United Nations resolution made Eritrea a self-governing, autonomous region. But in 1962, Ethiopia formally annexed Eritrea, discarding its flag and forcing the adoption of the Ethiopian language.

As timing would have it, yet again, the next thing I sat in on was a Bluffton College seminar on: “Racism.” And it was noted “colonialism” (which Eritrea has experienced in waves) is the “internalization of superiority.” And an elongated definition given in the seminar for colonialism was: “An act of aggression against a people by a country which takes land, exploits resources, including the indigenous people of the land, destroys indigenous culture and the requires allegiance to the conquering country.”

Sounded familiar.

I mean, that’s *exactly* what we did with the Native

Americans.

And it was pointed out in the seminar that that's exactly what we did with the Blacks – after they were abducted from their own countries.

Yet in all this (and even with the expansion of Civil Rights), society is still set up to continually “reward the dominant culture,” one of the speakers said. This speaker, who was Black, said as an example, Blacks in the U.S. have called themselves “African Americans” and have identified with just some 500 years of history here – tremendously discounting their rich, and vast, history (culture, language, social mores...)

CHAPT. 15

“Average Joe” and the Monk Tour

In February of 2004, things were starting to heat up a bit in the presidential race, as the Democratic contenders (Kerry, Dean, Edwards...) were in motion in the early stages of the Primaries. And even though we had been on the campaign trail for almost a year and a half more than these other guys, the polls were showing we were, oh, still a tad bit behind.

Go figure.

So while the ‘big boys,’ if you will, were on the trail with their campaign managers, political strategists, and so on, I came up with yet another strategy for our next tour. I decided to take “average Joe” team member Mark Schumacher – a former monk.

Well, it was looking like we’d need all the prayer we could get.

And to close the gap even more, we decided on a 10-state, 3,600-mile tour – starting in St. Meinrad, Indiana (pop. 501).

See what I mean about needing the prayer?

getting awfully skewed

But first we stopped en route at the Louisville (KY) Slugger Museum. Besides being a former monk, Mark was a former high school baseball player, and was excited to stop. Plus, with a *5-story* bat sculpture leaning against the building, ya gotta stop, right?

And it's not just the big bat. Inside is a *15-ton* stone sculpture of a baseball mitt and ball, all begging the question – Why?

I couldn't help but wonder if these rather overdone sculptures had become somehow symbolic of how many in America have started to “worship” this game (and others), especially on a professional level. I mean, there are now baseball cards with pieces of cloth from a guy's uniform, or a splinter of Louisville Slugger wood from one of his bats.

When it comes to spiritual priorities in this country, it's getting awful skewed, I told a Moral Theology class at St. Meinrad Seminary the next day. We are, for instance, spending an inordinate amount of time on sports, as opposed to spiritual pursuits (whether prayer, reading, outreach to the poor...). I also said to the class that we are falling down just as much with our environmental stewardship.

After the class, I talked to seminarian Albert Kwon, who is studying Catholic Church teaching on the environment. He said Pope John Paul II promotes “solidarity among man and nature.” And if we are doing things to damage the environment (not recycling, excessive energy use, applying toxic chemicals to the lawn...), this can constitute “sin behavior.”

The Herald (Jasper, Indiana) reporter Michael Rubino,

who attended the St. Meinrad class talk, would quote me in a piece for the Religion page as saying: “I think the biggest part of anyone’s life should be their spirituality. And from that should flow their decision-making about family, and about work, and about involvement in community.”

“Does anybody really know what time it is?”

We headed west into Boonville, Indiana (pop. 6,856) for a “noon” corner whistle-stop event on the square.

Mark unfurled the banner with our new slogan: **“average Joe” for President / *Imagine That!*”**

Mark said: “Imagine what?”

So much for focus groups.

We had contacted the nearby Evansville, Indiana media, but no one showed. Nevertheless, we enthusiastically went at it: banner flying, waving at passing motorists, chasing down pedestrians to pass out literature.

Then at 12:30, according to my watch, we went to lunch.

About a half hour later, a *Fox News* reporter and cameraman walked through the door of the restaurant.

The reporter asked if I was just taking a break. I said no. She looked puzzled, but didn’t say anything.

Nonetheless, a big table of city workers came in and I spent the next half hour in a lively banter with them, explaining our platform, hearing their concerns. The news crew excitedly got this all on film, then thanked me and left.

Not more than two minutes after they left, I noticed a clock on the wall.

I’d forgotten we’d gone through a time zone change

on the way here.

The restaurant had “brain sandwiches” on the menu.

I was tempted to get one.

If Liz had been here, she would have suggested I order two.

You’re a pirate...

From Boonville, we headed to Mt. Vernon, Illinois, where I picked up a *Mt. Vernon Register News* that had an innovative feature. Each Saturday there’s a page reserved for area ‘teenage reporters’ from a couple high schools here. Besides some straight news stories about local happenings, this week’s edition was dedicated to Valentine’s Day and included several poems and essays on that theme. Several lines in one poem, *A Lover’s Burden* by (apparently jilted) Mt. Vernon High School’s Sydney Nulsen, read:

You’re handsome,
You’re smart,
You’re a pirate,
You capture my heart.

Won’t you give me
the time of day?

And it’s the ‘time of day’ that Paul Schmidt has been giving the rural poor in Dongola, Illinois the past 25 years. A retired CPA from Chicago, Paul and his wife Nancy moved down here to start Share and Care Inc. Located out of a small storefront, town volunteers serve meals to senior citizens, there is a teen recreation space (with town parents alternating supervision), a loan program for local people trying to start businesses (no inter-

est, and a repayment rate as low as \$1 a month)... Paul told me he could have gone to a nice retirement community down south, but he decided to roll up his sleeves and come here to help because: "I think we're all supposed to work for the Lord."

And the *Good News* weekly newspaper, out of Caney, Kansas, seems to be doing its part for God as well, with all its stories highlighting the positive aspects of Southeast Kansas and Northeast Oklahoma. In the edition I picked up, there were stories on: a Christian band concert; a seminar on American History; a dinner honoring 22 Eagle Scouts; new "agri-tourism" (a new market based on people from the city coming to the country to tour a farm, or go on a hayride, or do a corn maze...).

And it was farther into 'corn country' (Kansas) with a stop in Wichita next. Coming into Wichita on Route 54, you couldn't help but notice state troopers positioned at every exit. I found out later in the day that, as coincidence would have it, Vice-President Dick Cheney was in town for a \$1,000 a plate fundraiser at a posh downtown hotel this evening.

Not to be outdone, much, I talked at a \$4.50 a plate (and it was only that expensive if you got bacon) breakfast the next morning to a weekly Hope Mennonite Men's Breakfast Group at Emilia's Restaurant in Wichita. I wasn't here to talk about the campaign, but rather about the first *America's Best Town* book I'd written about Bluffton (which is also a Mennonite community).

Inevitably however, the discussion got around to political things.

A few of the men said they, too, had seen the beefed up security around town for Cheney's visit the day before.

And when I mentioned, as president, I wouldn't live in the White House, but rather in the inner city of D.C., one man responded:

"Wouldn't that be dangerous?"

I said no, that I'd rely on prayer.

He smiled and said he could picture the first time I ventured out to, say, shovel the snow. The Secret Service would form a perimeter around me, with the lead agent whispering over his wrist walkie-talkie.

"Ok men, he's coming out: *Everybody On Your Knees!*"

"GoZones"

After the breakfast talk, I met with Wichita's Inter-Faith Ministry's Director Sam Muyskens. He told me some 100 congregations throughout the city are represented at Interfaith. Muyskens said currently a good number of these congregations were rallying around the relatively new "GoZones Project." Six 10-block inner city areas have been chosen and revolve around "congregation clusters." Members of these churches work together with AmeriCorps (a federal program) to help build "healthy, caring neighborhoods." (Sort of like developing small towns in the city.) Each neighborhood now has stepped up tutoring and civic programs for youth; sister churches with outlying suburban churches; more links to community services and resources, and an association that helps oversee and coordinate these efforts. As a result, said Muysken, the camaraderie has increased significantly within the zones and there is much more of a connectedness between city and suburbs.

The night before I'd heard about GoZones, I had decided to 'go' (sorry) myself to a seminar in Wichita by author Glen Stassen, who wrote the book: *Just Peacemak-*

ing (as a play on the words *Just War*). Stassen said we must be highly proactive about peacemaking, and one of the best ways to do that is to organize “locally.” And in that spirit, he helped start a “Peacemaker Group” at a church in Maryland. It’s been running continuously for 15 years! They meet regularly to discuss alternatives to war: like how they can promote more democracy and human rights worldwide; how they can get more help to developing countries in the Third World (“If you want peace, work for justice.”); and how they can undertake meaningful non-violent direct action, like, say, lobbying for a reduction of offensive weapons in America, or coordinating peace marches, or getting behind a social justice cause.

momentous occasion

Leaving Kansas, and just 1/10th of a mile past the Choctaw River on Texas’s Route 56, the “average Joe” mobile went over the 200,000-mile mark. It was a momentous occasion. Not to anyone else, mind you. But it was to me.

I stopped, got out, and said a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

Then I got back in and said another prayer – that the van would start again.

reparations

We drove into Mississippi where I read a forum piece in the *Clarion-Ledger* newspaper by William Raspberry about a case for reparations to Black Americans (one of our platform points). Raspberry cited Prince Edward County, Virginia, where: “what we used to call the ‘white

power structure' shut down the public schools rather than integrate them in accordance with the 1954 school desegregation decision." Raspberry notes the schools remained closed from 1959 to '64, during which there was no tax paid education for black children. "Victims of this last gasp of American apartheid have an obvious (to me) claim for the educations they were forced to miss," he writes.

Raspberry followed this up by saying the Virginia General Assembly has unanimously agreed to provide scholarships for victims of Virginia's strategy of "massive resistance" to desegregation orders.

A point our campaign makes is that not only should these obvious cases of discrimination be compensated, but what about the not-so-obvious (but just as real) cases of discrimination?

For instance, Blacks were without education until after the Civil War. Then there was sub-standard education until 1964 when the Civil Rights Act was passed. Then, theoretically, everything was equal educationally. And even though it really wasn't, yet, it was at least closer.

However, what we're not looking at, I believe, is this: Again, there was no education for the Blacks for several hundred years, then quite substandard education for the next 100 years or so. Meanwhile, if you charted this along a graph, a majority of Whites were on a steadily upward path along an incline-line far above the Blacks.

Now, since studies have shown a lot, a *whole lot*, of education (knowledge, learning styles, and so on) is passed on through parents, not just teachers, it only stands to reason that, when you're looking at this over generations, many of the Blacks would still be behind as a whole.

And they are. Just look at the poverty dynamics of the inner cities in America.

Reparations?

Well, we think social-justice wise, more well-off Whites should consider slowing their upward mobility along that graph line a bit, and at the same time cut back on their lifestyles as well. Then, to make it right, they could take some of the freed up time to tutor and mentor Black youth in the inner cities. And they could take the savings to fund more scholarships for Blacks trapped in poverty loops in the inner cities.

I mean it only makes sense, not only socially, but spiritually.

Mars, Part 2

In Bastrop, Louisiana, on a KTRY morning call-in radio talk show, I said we can't keep looking at issues on a surface level in America. For instance, I said we shouldn't be up-in-arms about rising gas prices. We should be looking, instead, at why we've become "lazy," which leads to our excessive driving patterns. I also said we should be looking at the psychological reasons why we keep getting bigger and bigger gas-guzzling vehicles. Show host Henry Cotton was on the same page with this one, and said he believed TV advertising was brainwashing people to covet these larger vehicles (KTRY is a gospel station).

What's more, Cotton said he saw no way out of all this, short of an economic collapse and resultant depression. Continuing to not pander (to anyone), I said I thought another depression might be good for the country. That is, in the first depression people learned to conserve and live simply, to share on a much deeper level...

and in all that, people grew closer.

And because of Sr. Alies Therese in Eupora, Mississippi (pop. 2,326), people are growing closer there. Part of the GlenMary sisters who work in the rural south, Sr. Therese has helped inspire a Friends & Neighbors Project at St. John Catholic Church here. She told me Hispanics, Blacks, Whites... all come one night a week for a potluck dinner, storytelling, quilting and other crafts. Sr. Alies, who has also worked in the inner city of L.A., said she's seen a lot of marginalized people. Yet they often don't get help because others more well-off are tremendously more focused on their own "business affairs," with little time for the poor.

I continued the theme of looking deeper at issues during a talk to some 50 students at the Mississippi State University Catholic Student Association Dinner in Starkville, Mississippi. I said, for instance, we have accepted almost every technological "advancement" that's come down the pike in America, revisiting the topic of space travel. And President Bush (whose campaign was also revving up) had just announced plans to spend billions on new manned space flights to Mars to, for one, see if there was ever any water on it. I told the students that scores of little children were dying of contaminated water every day in the Third World. And wouldn't it be more spiritually mature to spend the billions of dollars on setting up more water filtration systems on "this planet" for these little children?

As timing would have it, this week the Tuscaloosa (MS) News ran a New York Times Service story saying the tiny crater that holds the Mars rover *Opportunity* was once soaked in water – at some time in the distant past. "Our ultimate quest at Mars is to answer the age-

old question: ‘Was there life, is there life, on Mars?’” the article quoted NASA’s Edward J. Wiler, the agency’s associate administrator of space science. Ironically, the story ran next to an article about the country of Haiti being in political turmoil, in part, because of stark poverty that sweeps the land. (Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and one of those places where contaminated drinking water takes such a huge toll on the poor.)

Translated: We already know there’s ‘life’ in Haiti. Life that needs help.

“...3,400 bucks on a dishwasher.”

After the talk at MSU, Mark and I swung north for a talk at a Political Science Class at Greensboro College in Greensboro, North Carolina. Interestingly, not far away in Raleigh, North Carolina, John Edwards had just announced he was dropping out of the presidential race. Reports were John Kerry’s momentum had become too much. (Although I had to believe the possibility of a strong “average Joe” stretch run was what was *really* concerning Mr. Edwards.)

While I didn’t mention this conjecture in the Political Science class, I did say I was disturbed about how many people were starting to interpret the concept of “separation of church and state.” Not that I want the church, any church, to run the country. But I am a firm believer that personal spirituality drives many people, including a good number of people in politics. And I added that I believed people should be able to express their faith openly in any venue.

A good number of the students in the class said they agreed. Many also asserted that people of every reli-

gion, even “minority religions” in America (Buddhism, Muslim...), have just as equal rights to speak about and practice their faith. And senior Justin Severson told me he went to South River High School in Edgewater, Maryland, where they had an extremely creative class on *Comparative Religion* that focused on the many different practices of faith.

It was Collette Pettit’s faith that motivated her to travel to San Luis, Haiti on a mission trip recently. Ms. Pettit, who is a member of St. Patrick’s Church in Staunton, Virginia, took money, food and medicine to St. Patrick’s sister church there. She told me she was extremely moved by what she saw in this Third World village, where almost everyone was “skinny” because of lack of food. “When I came back, I found it hard to waste food, or water.”

Yet it was money that, in my opinion, was about to be wasted by the “Ladies of St. Francis de Sales” in Beckley, West Virginia. A benevolent group, they operate the church library, have an outreach into the local prison, and put on fundraising dinners. And one of the agenda items at the meeting I sat in on was the proposed purchase of a \$3,400 dishwasher to clean the plates after the dinners. (The women talked about the dishwasher as if it was the next best thing to sliced bread.)

I, in turn, shared about our campaign, including about meeting Ms. Collette Pettit at the last stop. I mentioned how tremendously moved she had been by the poverty she saw in Haiti. Then I said I wondered if “spending 3,400 bucks on a dishwasher,” while scores of people were malnourished and dying from contaminated drinking water in Haiti, was, oh, the best use of the money.

“Why not continue to wash the dishes by hand and send the money for the dishwasher to Haiti?” I posed. And I added that this type of working together would also enhance community building in their church.

Things got uncomfortably quiet.

I whispered to Mark afterward that we might have lost a few votes there.

He smiled – and kept praying.

Next stop: Bluffton, Ohio.

CHAPT. 16

Coast-to-Coast (...with: the “Big Dope”)

John Edwards, Howard Dean, and most of the other Democratic presidential candidate contenders were now out of the running. And while Dennis Kucinich was still in the race, he looked like he had about as much chance of winning the Democratic nomination as he did becoming mayor of Cleveland again anytime soon.

So, according to our calculations, it was *really* down to just John Kerry, George Bush, and, well... us. However, the polls were still showing we were still a little behind, so we had to come up with yet another ingenious strategy. After some thought one night over coffee after the kids had gone to bed, Liz and I decided on a “Coast-to-Coast Tour.”

And as if that wasn't enough of a ‘Herculean effort,’ we decided to do it with *my in-laws!*

speechless

Liz's parents arrived from New Zealand in early May. And the next week was spent catching up and preparing the newest vehicle to our “average Joe” fleet.

The year before, right after Jonathan had been born, we'd gotten a call from John Slotter in upstate New York (he was formerly from Bluffton). John had the same old model XPLOER motor home as ours (the old ones are 'XTREMELY' rare). His was a 1972 with only *36,000 miles*. And while he was just about to sell it, he had read some articles about us, and would rather we have it. A couple weeks later, John drove from New York to Bluffton, dropped off the XPLOER, had a cup of coffee with us, then got on a Greyhound Bus for home.

Liz and I were virtually speechless after he left.

Old Order people

Heading west in both XPLOERs now, our first campaign stop was in Shipshewana, Indiana, a community of primarily Old Order Amish and Mennonite people – many of whom don't vote because of religious reasons. (Do I know how to pick 'em, or what?)

Liz's father and I went to a fascinating Amish-Mennonite Visitor's Center here called Menno-Hof, where we learned: "change is not haphazard for these (Old Order) people," but rather quite prayerfully considered and studied. For instance, they place a premium on modesty and simplicity, so the plain fashions they wear just "never go out of style," according to a documentary at the Center. And these Old Order people don't drive cars, because not only does it lead to a "status" differentiation (old Plymouth Duster vs. a new Lexus); "but to kill someone is an extremely serious thing, even if you're just driving," the documentary also noted.

And allowing people to be homeless is an extremely serious spiritual thing, according to Liz's mum (that's

how they spell it in New Zealand) Dawn. As we continued west, Dawn told me she was extremely perplexed that people have big church buildings that are only used “a couple times a week.” If the church’s mission is to help the poor, Dawn wondered why these “big edifices” weren’t multi-purpose. That is, during the week why weren’t they used as, say, temporary homeless shelters, or a “play center” for single moms (or mums) with no relief, or...? “This is a *house of God*,” said Dawn, explaining that His designs might well be more in line with this multi-purpose idea.

On the optimistic side, God’s ‘front lawn’ (environment) is doing a little better in Ogle County, Illinois, where, during a recent “Household Hazardous Waste Collection,” more than 168 fifty-five gallon drums of toxic materials were collected. This included: waste oil, oil based paints, flammable solvents and liquids... In a release to the *Ogle County Life* newspaper, I praised the efforts, but later I couldn’t help but think the only thing that would be better is: *If we didn’t use this toxic stuff in the first place!*

“Buffalo Bill”

In Walnut Grove, Minnesota, we stopped at a *Little House on the Prairie* site. Liz had read our kids the book series, and Sarah and Joseph got to wade in the famous “Plum Creek.”

Then it was on to Brookings, South Dakota, for a noon whistle-stop event where I told a town newspaper reporter that we believed, strongly, in the Catholic Church teaching on “Preferential Option for Poor.” That is, we should be treating the poor better than we’re

treating ourselves. “But who actually does that?” I wondered. ABC reporter Robert Wilson, out of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, was also in Brookings to do a piece on the campaign. He wondered who actually runs for president without a party machine, big money...? I said I did.

In North Platte, Nebraska, it was my turn to wonder out loud to a reporter with the *North Platte Telegraph* about why there were more cars at the Buffalo Bill Cody Museum here than there were at St. Patrick’s Church. St. Patrick’s life is depicted here on a series of stained glass windows with some accompanying literature, as is Buffalo Bill’s life at his Museum, with even more accompanying literature and displays. However, I said to the reporter that in a “saner world,” wouldn’t people want to learn more about St. Patrick? She said I’d probably lose a lot of votes in these parts (the newspaper’s masthead even sports a picture of Buffalo Bill) for that kind of comment. I said to print it anyway, if she would.

Then what happens at one of our next stops? Dawn, my mum-in-law, comes out of Cheyenne, Wyoming’s Wrangler Store (“*Where all the cowboys and cowgirls shop!*”) with, of all things, a new “Buffalo Bill” suede vest. (Apparently she hadn’t heard what I’d said in North Platte, or the Wrangler Store was out of “St. Patrick” vests.)

Following close behind was Stuart (aka “granddad”) in a big Stetson hat – and an even bigger grin. Stuart’s favorite American shows are Westerns, and that evening he was in ‘John Wayne Heaven,’ heading into a spectacular Wyoming ‘Badlands’ sunset on Route 80 with the windows down, the country music cranked, and his Stetson tilted back just a bit. And if *that* wasn’t enough, a coyote crossed in front of us at one point – shortly followed by (Are you ready for this?) a *tumble weed!*

verbal abuse

It happened somewhere in eastern Utah, still heading west.

Transmitting on our new CB's, I said I was feeling like the "handles" Stuart had come up with could be, oh, a little more colorful. (At present, it was: "Campaign 1 to Campaign 2. Over.") I said to Liz, who at the time was riding with her folks to catch up on things, that after her parents were on their way back to New Zealand, maybe her handle could be something like "*Mookie-Pookum*," and something like "Big Daddy" would be a good handle for me.

"How about *Big Dope*," she instantly 'came back.' I had to wonder if Mr. Bush or Mr. Kerry had to put up with this kind of verbal abuse.

"Hanger 5"

Getting to the western edge of Utah in the town of Wendover, I noticed a small, rather non-descript sign with an arrow pointing to the "Old Historic Air Field." We followed the arrow along a dusty road to an isolated *three and a half million acre bombing range*.

The Wendover Air Field had been a secret WWII Army Air base where B-17 Bomber Groups practiced (including the Enola Gay crew who dropped the atomic bombs on Japan), Jim Peterson told me. Peterson is the current airfield manager and president of a foundation to restore the old base. "These servicemen sacrificed for us, and this (restoring the field) is a tribute to them," he said. I told the *Wendover Times* newspaper that our platform calls for the American people to not only remem-

ber the people who have served, but provide much more compensation for those who have risked their lives for the country. What's more, I said restoring the base should, hopefully, not only help people remember – *but work more stridently for peace.*

Joe Rivard, in Truckee, California (high in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range), moved to a Navajo Reservation in Northeast Arizona several years ago, not only to connect with the past, but to learn from it as well. He and his wife, who is of Native American descent, went to the Reservation to gain cultural awareness about ancestral ways, only to be “totally discouraged.” Rivard said this Reservation had morphed primarily into modern ways – “cell phones, media, junk food, and malls.” Rivard looked at this assimilation as almost inevitable, yet a tremendous tragedy.

At the other end of the world, however, a Native people are starting to fare better in the protracted wake of colonization.

After roasting some marshmallows with the kids at a campground in Morgan Hills, California, Stuart and Dawn told me about the Maoris of New Zealand. Like our Native Americans, the Maoris had signed treaties with the British who colonized New Zealand. The most significant being the: Treaty of Waitangi, which was a broadband treaty (supposedly) establishing equitable rights between the British and the Maori throughout the country. However, also just like with our Native Americans, the treaties were systematically broken in New Zealand. And the loss of land, water and resources plunged the Maori into poverty – a situation that continues today.

Stuart said in the past 40 years though, some of this

is starting to reverse as the New Zealand government strives to make amends and put some “teeth” into the Treaty of Waitangi. For instance, an Office of Treaty Settlements has been established, with some \$170 million in reimbursements already being paid out on Maori claims. Some of the land is also being given back. And what’s more, the Maori language and customs are now taught as part of mainstream New Zealand curriculum, with other steps to blend the cultures as well.

Stuart added that New Zealand, at this point, probably leads the world in trying to make right the wrongs of colonization.

The next day, we took Dawn and Stuart to San Francisco’s Airport for their trip back to New Zealand. While waiting for the flight, they said they were appreciative of seeing a lot of American towns (Wendover, Utah, Shipshewana, Indiana...) that aren’t necessarily on your standard tour routes. We, in turn, said we were appreciative of seeing them.

And it was a tearful goodbye as we all watched Stuart in his Stetson and Dawn in her Buffalo Bill vest (In the spirit of ‘keeping up international – and family– relations,’ I had decided not to say anything about the vest.) head toward the gate. The “Campaign 2” crew would be missed.

“Bye John.”

The next day in San Francisco, I met a couple visiting from Denmark. Torben Nielsen told me Denmark has one of the best societal safety nets in the world. For instance, it has a National Health Care System where everyone “can go to the hospital for free.” Almost everyone

can afford college under the system, as well. Torben said Denmark has never been a “caste system,” but rather most everyone “grows rich together.” Rich not necessarily being ‘bank account rich’ (Torben said the taxation rate is quite high); but rich being about quality of life as it relates to everyone having enough and living together in a safe (the crime rate is low there) and clean environment.

Meanwhile, not everyone is “rich” in San Francisco. In fact, there’s a tremendous homeless problem here. And we set out to talk to some people living on the streets, like John.

It was just Jonathan and I who came across John; the rest of the family had gone to get something to eat. John was quite lean and looked to be in his early 60s. But it was hard to tell, because many on the streets looked weathered quite beyond their years. He was sitting on an old suitcase staring at, well, nothing in particular. I said hi.

I asked if he needed help.

He said yes.

After giving him some money, we talked a bit.

He said he’d been homeless here the past 10 years and had no family to speak of.

His clothing was disheveled and his fingers were quite wrinkled and stained a cigarette filter yellow. John’s eyes were sunken, and while he stayed in conversation with me, his words seemed almost lifeless.

I tried, several times, to get Jonathan to engage by giving “Mr. John a wave.” But Jonathan just stared.

Periodically glancing from John to Jonathan, I couldn’t help but think this man John was once a cute, innocent 14-month-old everyone waved and smiled en-

dearingly at, like they do Jonathan.

My guess was now hardly anyone smiled at the older John, much less waved. It's more likely they look away.

Who knows what life twists and turns really happened to John to get him to this street, his home, in San Francisco. And he wasn't about to be that open with me this evening.

So I eventually shook hands with John and turned to go.

Jonathan, who could only say "Mommy" (not even Daddy, or anyone else's name for that matter yet), as if on cue, turned in the stroller, lifted his little hand in a wave and said: "*Bye John.*"

God's grace.

"Two Stiffs..."

We headed east aiming for the Atlantic Ocean, stopping first in Lovelock, Nevada, where we gassed up at a station named "Two Stiffs Selling Gas." I asked. A father and son started the station in 1932; their last name, of course: "Stiff."

Our next stop was the Winnemucca, Nevada Senior Center. While schmoozing from table to table, I talked to Bernie Jackson, who has a daughter in Fairbanks, Alaska. She works as a midwife to the Eskimos there. He said it's quite "satisfying" having a child who is trying to make a difference.

And it's a "difference" Liz and I are out to make, I told *Intermountain Catholic* newspaper editor Barbara Stinson Lee in Salt Lake City, Utah. I said our Catholic faith (and the gospel message in general) calls us to no less. Park City, Utah's John Sikorski would agree. The sopho-

more at Notre Dame University (who was home for the summer) explained to me he feels called to be a “radical” for Jesus. So much so, he started an independent Catholic newspaper on the Notre Dame campus called the *Irish Rover*.

“You’re only an undergraduate once, and it’s not about just putting your nose in a book. I had to get out in the cultural debate,” he said.

Rawlins, Wyoming Park Department Director Dan Mika is embroiled in another type of debate, a ‘grass debate.’ Sometimes referred to (only half jokingly) as the “Grass Nazi,” Mika said people in this high desert region often put grass lawns in, counter to the topography. What’s more, they waste precious water on them and pump polluting chemicals into them “...just to keep them green,” said Mika.

Rawlin’s Mark Williams, who majored in Ecology at the University of North Dakota and works at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) here, told me his pet peeve is the wholesale destruction of trees. He said the early pioneers “clear cut” all of the eastern United States. And he added that, because of invasive logging practices, to this day 86% of the nation is within a kilometer of a road. And it’s these roads, into the old- growth forest areas and open grazing land out here, that are causing big problems to the eco-system because, for one, dirt on pick-ups carries non-native seeds that alter the balance of a particular eco-system, said BLM’s Lauren Lambertson.

And it’s the ‘balance’ of the human family that’s off when you have youth sleeping on city streets in Denver, Colorado. On a tour of their haunts (literally) sewers, back alleys, and so on, “Dry Bones” (based on a story

from the Bible's Book of Ezekiel) Ministry outreach worker Robbie Goldman told us many of these youth left home because the abuse was so bad – “there seemed no alternative.”

And I said we believe there is no sane alternative to our “Consistent Pro-Life Ethic” either, during a talk to a “Just Faith Group” at St. Joseph’s Church in Arvda, Colorado. That is, our administration would not only be concerned about ending abortion, I said, but about ending conditions that lead to poverty, pollution, war and other things that can destroy life “prematurely.”

“...rebel on the hardwood.”

We entered Kansas, stopping first in the small town of Wilson (pop. 1,000), the “Czech Capital of Kansas.” Really. Lavenge Shiroky, 83, told us they have an annual weekend Czech Festival in Wilson, complete with Polka music (“Czech’s bounce,” a sign in a downtown dace hall here reads), roast goose and a variety of kolacke pastries.

Then, after being interviewed by a reporter in Colby, Kansas, we traveled to Salina, Kansas where I gave a short talk at St. Mary’s Church. I cited a 1995 Catholic Bishops Pastoral Message that read: “The pursuit of economic justice is not an option or add-on for Catholics; it is part of who we are and what we believe.” I mentioned the talk later in the day to the editor of the *Northwestern Kansas (Catholic) Register*, Msgr. R. M. Menrad, 92. Fascinatingly (to me, a relatively older journalist), when I walked in the office, Msgr. Menrad was banging away on the keys of an old, gray manual Royal typewriter. I asked him about that, and he said: “I’ve always done it this way.”

And Indiana has always done basketball in a *big way*. I took the kids to the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame in New Castle on one of our next stops, where they learned the legendary James Dean, before he was a Hollywood rebel, was a “rebel on the hardwood” for the Fairmont (IN) Quakers in 1949. There were also displays on such Indiana greats as Oscar Robertson, Larry Bird, and so on.

After the Hall, we headed north, where we stopped at Muncie, Indiana’s Annual Black Expo. Part of the event included a basketball tournament with neighborhood people enthusiastically cheering their teams. And I couldn’t help but think, wouldn’t it be nice to see “Halls for the Famous, and not so Famous,” featuring many of these local guys and gals, in every town in America?

And it was the ‘not so famous’ “average Joe for President” theme song lyrics (I’d just written) that I got Decatur, Indiana guitarist Kyle Heimann to offer to put to music. Sure to be a hit (cough), some of the lyrics go: “Shipshewana, don’t you wanna, vote for Joe... Tallahassee, don’t be sassy, vote for Joe...” I told Liz once Kyle finishes and we have the CD, we should blast it from a megaphone atop the “average Joe” mobile in each town we go through. Liz asked if I could only do that on the tours where she doesn’t come along.

Kyle Heimann, incidentally, had been to Haiti and Mexico on mission trips. And during a radio interview on a local Decatur station, I said it is young people like Kyle, who are continually looking beyond themselves, who are, indeed, the hope for the world.

And while not necessarily the ‘hope for the world,’ it was our son’s Joseph’s hope that I’d let him use a small bull horn I’d just picked up for three bucks at a garage

sale. (“*Can I use it Dad. Can I!*”) We might have lost a few votes during a whistle-stop in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, as a result, but Joseph indeed had fun – screaming. Afterward, I told reporters from the Meadville and Erie newspapers about Jerry Caler, whom I had just interviewed the night before in Edinboro. A volunteer at the Kid’s Café in Erie, Caler, who made the Olympic Trials as a gymnast in 1964, said the most poignant thing he’s heard at this “Café” for underprivileged kids was one youth saying: “Before I started coming down here, I didn’t know you were supposed to eat three times a day.”

July 4, 2004

We had the “average Joe” mobile in the Warren Pennsylvania 4th of July Parade. It was a huge parade, lasting almost two hours. We were positioned right behind a pretty elaborate “Jazz Float” sponsored by the local radio station and featuring a complete jazz band who played a series of lively medleys at about half volume. Meanwhile at ‘full volume’ just behind, Liz, on the bullhorn, was belting out: **“VOTE JOE! HE’S THE WAY TO GO!”** as the kids and I walked along passing out buttons. The guys in the band looked over their shoulders, oh, more than once. (Looks indicating yet a few more votes were gone.) After the parade, I met with Warren’s Gary Seymour and Joby McAulay, both Vietnam Vets. McAulay started the local chapter of Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and also spearheaded the drive to get “The Moving Wall” (a 5/8th size replica of The Wall in D.C.) to come to Warren. People came from all over, leaving pictures, bracelets, a bottle of a fallen comrade’s favorite beer... on the grass in front of the panel

with that particular friend or loved one's name on it.

Then it was on to Jamestown, New York, hometown of Lucille Ball. Under a front page Jamestown *Post-Journal* headline that read "Back Road to the White House," reporter Dennis Phillips quoted Barbara Marlinski, a woman we'd met earlier in the day: "He (Schriner) is for everything that's important to me and I think he is important for everything that should be important to everybody in the United States." And the endorsements continued later that morning.

On a WJTN radio talk show in Jamestown, I said a key platform point of ours is: "You can't heal the country until you heal the family." Dr. Edward Hallowell, who is a psychiatrist and instructor at Harvard University (and who was to be the next guest), leaned into the microphone and said: "That's right." Several hours later, a Jamestown reporter from *Channel 8 News* (with the camera rolling) said to me: "If you win..." I stopped him and said: "What do you mean 'if?'" And *when* I win, I'll seriously consider Jamestown Dr. Rudolph Mueller for a top post in the Surgeon General's Office. Mueller is the author of *As Sick As It Gets (Healthcare in America)*. During an interview with him, Dr. Mueller said he travels the country pushing for a National Health Care System because he's heard "too many horror stories."

Dr. Myron Glick had heard too many horror stories as well. So after Medical School, instead of setting up a lucrative practice in the suburbs, Dr. Glick moved his family into the heart of the inner city of Buffalo and set up a practice called "Jericho Road" (Biblical reference). A Christian, he told me his faith calls him to make sure every person has access to "quality health care."

And every person should have a right to vote, own

property and have access to equal education, according to literature at the Women's Rights National Historical park in Seneca Falls, New York. It was here in 1848 that the first Women's Rights Convention in U.S. history was held. The National Women's Hall of Fame here features such women as Dorothy Day, a famous Catholic activist, Bessie Coleman (first African American woman pilot – she got her pilot's license two years before Amelia Aerhart), Sojourner Truth, a nationally renowned traveling preacher...

Then it was on to another famous woman's place in Auburn, New York, home of Harriet Tubman, who made 19 perilous Underground Railroad trips to the South to help free some 300 slaves from the “Jaws of Hell.” She would frequently say to those she was helping on their exodus north: *“Children, if you are tired, keep going; if you are scared, keep going; if you are hungry, keep going; if you want to taste freedom, keep going.”*

We kept going as well

580 people were killed

In Utica, New York, the kids and I watched 10,000 runners (including a woman wearing a huge pink flamingo hat, head and neck duly flopping about, the whole thing) participate in the annual Boilermaker Run. Then we stopped at the Shrine of St. Kateri Tekakwitha (of the Mohawk Tribe and patroness of nature) in Fonda, New York, and afterward told an agricultural reporter from the nearby *Amsterdam Recorder* that this saint is a good model for many people these days who get no closer to nature than “the Weather Channel.”

In the small town of Whitehall, New York (birthplace

of the U.S. Navy), we learned at a Naval Museum that on Oct. 11, 1776, a fleet of 12 American ships sailed forward to take on a formidable British Armada, under the direction of, none other than: Benedict Arnold. I told editor Pat Ripley of the Whitehall newspaper here that I found it more than a bit ironic that this fleet, which was launched for “freedom’s sake,” was built, in part, by slaves. And although the fleet stalled the British, their troops began marching south from Canada the following year, being met first by the “Green Mountain Boys” at the hills of Hubbardton, Vermont, on July 7, 1777. Our family walked about this battlefield where 580 people were killed (27% of all those who fought here).

And although we’ve been in what’s getting to be countless towns in America, we experienced a first in Vergennes, Vermont. The backs of town city limits signs will frequently say things like: “Come Back Soon!”; or, “Thanks for Visiting!”; or... The back of the Vergennes sign simply says: “Farewell”.

But it’s the children of Alti Plano, Bolivia (elevation 12,300), who aren’t faring well, as they go hungry and barefoot, with their parents working long hours in mines for exceedingly low pay, Vergennes Fr. Gerard Leclerc, who used to have a parish in Alti Plano, told us. And Shelburne, Vermont’s Fr. Jim Noonan told us 50% of the children in Cambodia (where he is currently doing missions work) are illiterate and malnourished. Fr. Noonan said it’s hard to say we live in a “civilized world,” as the more well-off continue to allow all this to go on.

After touring the National Morgan Horse Museum (our Sarah’s favorite animal is horses) in Shelburne, I told the *Shelburne News* that our agricultural platform calls for a return to the small family farm, using these types of

horses (the Morgan is a plow horse, etc.), with, say, some small solar powered tractors, because the high tech tractors, super combines, and the like have opened the door in a big way to agri-business, which is systematically driving the small family farmer out of business.

Montpelier, Vermont's Doug Wells would go along with the solar tractor idea. A representative of Solar Works, he told me across the country a new type of home solar system is being installed where, after you've used what you needed for the month, the excess energy goes back into the grid. "And your meter actually starts to spin backwards," said Wells. A philosophy major from Miami University, Wells said he came up with this, well, philosophy: "It doesn't matter whether the glass is half full, or half empty – if it's polluted, you can't drink it anyway."

snow shoeing

After giving an impromptu "front porch" talk at the St. Johnsbury House for seniors in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, I told a reporter at the *Caledonian Record* there that "Social Security" should be just that: social security. That is, instead of being pushed off in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, seniors should be restored their rightful, and respected, place in our family homes and communities, like it was in the old days – and like it still is now in many other cultures.

And it's 'other cultures' that Fr. Joseph Towle is concerned about as a Maryknoll missionary who spent 10 years filming the video series *Children of the Earth*. Fr. Towle, who was in St. Johnsbury for a talk, told me he travels the country trying to get students to "adopt a

country” and follow the events there through international news reports, and so on... as a way of connecting them more to the “global community.”

And to connect students to the local community, I told reporter Chad Dryden of *The Berlin (NH) Daily Sun*, we would like to see one-third of the curriculum in America be volunteer work out in the community. I told Dryden I'd like to see our children learning as much about helping others as about math, science, English... After the interview, Dryden said he took up the “sport” of snow shoeing to cope with the long winters up here. “They say if you can walk, you can snow shoe,” Dryden laughed. I told Liz that that would be the “sport” for me as well. Noting my last basketball game acrobatics (read: broken foot *and* wrist), she said she agreed.

While in Warren, New Hampshire, Joshua Miller told me he and his family are members of Samaritan Ministries, which is a Christian Health Insurance Group. If someone in the network experiences medical problems, not only are they compensated financially, but a whole prayer network in the group kicks in as well. The Millers said they do their part to stay healthy, too, with a diet of only small amounts of sugar, wheat and dairy products.

‘Bruce d’ Moose’

Sanford, Maine.

I was interviewed by Tammy Wells of Sanford's *Journal Tribune*. She asked how my reception had been in Sanford.

I said: “not good.”

I prefaced my story by saying John Kerry probably appeared on the front page of every newspaper across

the country for his “first pitch” the night before at the Red Sox game.

Not to be outdone, I approached the operations manager of the Sanford Mainers (Summer Inter-Collegiate College League) to throw out the “first pitch” at their game the night before.

She, as judiciously as possible, said she was sorry but they had one of the stadium volunteers lined up to throw the “first pitch” because it was, after all, “Volunteer Night.”

Undaunted, I continued: “How about the ‘second pitch?’”

She smiled, but said no again.

However, I did take in a few innings. And what’s more, I got to experience something Mr. Kerry missed out on altogether: “Bruce d’ Moose.”

The Mainer’s mascot is, that’s right, a moose – big furry head with antlers, the whole thing.

During the 7th inning stretch, ‘Bruce’ even got on top of the Mainer’s ‘Moose Mobile’ and circled the stadium waving and tilting his antlers toward the crowd.

A sight you won’t want to miss if you are up in this part of Maine.

And life on the back roads rolls on...

8,000 miles later

We got to Old Orchard Beach, Maine, the last stop on our Coast-to-Coast Tour, which spanned some 8,000 miles (2,500 miles with in-laws) – which must be some kind of a record. We did a whistle-stop event on a street corner here. And toward the end of the event, we met Fred Ptucha from Santa Rosa, California. He provided

Naval Intelligence for “Swift Boats” (including the one presidential candidate John Kerry was on) during the Vietnam War. Ptucha is now a member of Veterans for Peace and is recently back from a trip to Vietnam – where he told me he and other veterans were helping build homes for families who became homeless after the war. I told local reporter Liz Gold that our administration would promote a U.S. Department of Peace that would include just such peace building initiatives as the one Mr. Ptucha had described to me, and more.

This week also marked the successful coast-to-coast bicycle trip of John Paquet from nearby Wells, Maine. The *Coast Star* newspaper here said Paquet left San Francisco June 6 and “dipped the front tire of his bicycle in the Atlantic Tuesday...” In that tradition, but not being able to get the “average Joe” Mobile over the sand to the water (it doesn’t have four wheel drive – and sometimes drives like it doesn’t have all four wheels, period); we instead dipped our toes in the Atlantic. And while we were at it, and because we have kids who wouldn’t have had it any other way (we’d been promising them an ocean swim), we donned our bathing suits and went “average Joe” body surfing. Which wasn’t pretty, but fun.

Then it was back toward Ohio, and the final phase.

CHAPT. 17

Buckeye Blitz

Even with the Coast-to-Coast Tour success, several polls were still showing we were a bit behind. Polls were also showing that everything in this Election was now pointing toward: Ohio.

And since we were heading back to Ohio, it only made sense we campaign some more in Ohio. Maybe even *win* Ohio.

“Wouldn’t *that* be something,” I said to Liz.

She smiled, to humor me.

And since we’d been to almost all 88 counties in Ohio once, why not go to all of them again?

And so, the “Buckeye Blitz Tour” was born.

11:44 a.m.

We crossed the Ohio line on Rte. 90 heading west.
LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

And they did, literally.

This evening, while eating dinner at a rather isolated pavilion behind St. Robert’s Church in Cortland, Ohio, some 16 people, out of the blue and almost simultane-

ously, pulled up for their weekly game of bocce ball.

I did some ‘stumping’ as they swept the fine cinder court, and in turn, they asked us if we wanted to join in. No mention, however, about me ‘throwing out the first...’ er, ‘rolling out the first ball.’

And my lament continued.

However, I wasn’t lamenting long, after talking to St. Robert’s Pastor Carl Kish the next day. He and some others were on the ground floor of starting Cortland Humanitarian Outreach Worldwide (C.H.O.W.) about seven years ago.

Churches in the area here have united because they see “...a world that suffers from an unequal distribution of goods and resources.” So C.H.O.W. regularly collects goods and raises money for the Third World.

Through their two warehouses here they have shipped: winter clothes to Kosovo, school desks to El Salvador, medical equipment to the Honduras, used school text books almost anywhere...

But it wasn’t almost anywhere, but rather Niles, Ohio, that we went to next. In a talk at St. Stephens Church here, I said that sexually explicit imagery is not only a problem in the media, but on the streets almost anywhere these days.

“Does anyone remember the word modesty as it relates to dress anymore?” I asked.

And it was a rather immodestly dressed *Channel 21* news reporter later today who asked me a series of questions at a whistle stop in the shadow of the (William) McKinley Presidential Library & Museum.

At the end of the end of the interview, the reporter said to me: “You make sense, common sense.”

“That’s what I’m shooting for,” I smiled.

And it was the editor of the *Catholic Exponent* newspaper who would ‘shoot’ a picture of me standing next to this funky-looking blue penguin (nearby Youngstown State University mascot) which sported the pictures of the eight U.S. presidents who had been from Ohio. (It was displayed in front of the McKinley Library.)

I asked the editor if he wanted me to pose holding up nine fingers.

He said he’d rather I just smile.

During the interview, I told him that with abortion we are living in a modern Holocaust of epic proportion. As I talked about this issue, I remembered a priest who used to take his vacations at abortion clinics, where he’d protest outside.

In an interview, the priest was asked about people who say they don’t have time for Pro-Life work.

His response: “If you watch television, you have time.”

Fran Clark has had time.

She is past president of the board for Womankind in Garfield Heights, Ohio. Mrs. Clark said Womankind, a Maternal and Prenatal Care Center, is rather unique in it’s scope.

First, of its some 100 volunteers, a good number are doctors, nurses and midwives. Prenatal care is provided during the first 28 weeks for women in crisis pregnancy, couples who have no health insurance, and so on.

In addition, Womankind offers such supplemental services as: counseling (there’s a licensed social worker on staff); childbirth classes; breast feeding information; support services for fathers, parents and others; nutrition counseling; parenting classes; legal assistance; adoption referral services...

At Mrs. Clark's church, Joan of Arc in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, Liz then came across a brochure about a program which has become the next logical step in the Pro-Life movement's continuum of care.

The Elizabeth Ministry, based out of Allen, Texas, provides mothers during child-bearing years with a "mentor" to provide ongoing parenting advice, foster companionship, offer resources...

"Then we win."

And it is resources of the material kind that are in abundance in Chagrin Falls, an upscale suburb of Cleveland. During a whistle-stop event here, I told a reporter from the *Chagrin Valley Times*:

"I would like people in Chagrin Falls to think about the next time they hop in their new Lexus with all the options, or hop in the comfortable bed in their \$300,000 home here; while at the same moment somewhere else in the world – a little child has starved to death."

And the reason they aren't hearing this from their priest or minister? The priest, or minister, is driving the Lexus (Cadillac, Honda Accord for that matter...), or sleeping in the comfortable bed, too.

That's because we're "coveting" too much stuff these days, said Dan Basinger. We stayed at Dan and his wife Cindy's farm on a pit stop back in Bluffton for the weekend.

Dan said modern advertising sets people up to covet things that are more convenient, bigger, better... than you already have. While we've actually come to accept coveting (translated: "wanting") as just part of a capitalistic, societal mind set, coveting, according to The Ten

Commandments, is actually a “serious sin,” said Dan.

So is ignoring those in the inner cities.

At our next stop in Bowling Green, Ohio, graduate student Jeff Moore told me he had just recently returned from a “Cultural Emersion” trip to The Bronx, New York, with BGSU sociology professor Bill Thompson. He said he was struck with the general lack of emphasis on education primarily because many there seem stuck in a poverty loop and see no real way out.

However, Moore said there was some hope in programs like “The Point” there. Out of an old converted warehouse, area youth are provided with a meal and tutoring for schoolwork and supplemental classes. Among the most popular is a class on the “Art of Graffiti.”

“Well, it seems to be a class a lot of the kids are interested in,” smiled Moore.

I told reporter Jennifer Feehan of the *Toledo Blade* that if we talk about The Point, or Womankind for those in crisis pregnancy, or wind turbine farms... and it catches on somewhere else: an inner city youth gets help; a baby who might not otherwise have been born, is; or another wind turbine goes up and the air is a little more breathable for everyone...

“Then we win” I said.

Who also ‘wins’ are Just Faith group members at Bowling Green’s St. Thomas Moore Church. Just Faith, according to Campus Minister Erin Battistoni, “brings social justice to life.”

Ms. Battistoni said “charity” is working in a Soup Kitchen handing out food to the poor. “Social justice” means trying to actually understand why the person is poor, then working to change the system.

In the course of a year, Just Faith members will do

four “Boarder Crossings.” For instance, instead of just serving food at a Soup Kitchen, a group member will eat lunch with someone(s) at a Soup Kitchen.

During the meal dialogue, Ms. Battistoni said a group member might learn they are eating with a family of four living on a one-parent, minimum wage income from McDonald’s. And in turn, this might cause the group member to start to question a society where, say, some are afforded college – and some are not.

‘gentlemanly score’

On the way out of Bowling Green, we stopped at the Wood County Historical Museum, where we met with Education Program Director Michael McMaster. He said as a way of getting more people interested in the 19th century, the Museum had recently assembled a Vintage Base Ball (used to be two words) Team.

Played by the rules and customs of the 1850s through 1880s, Vintage Base Ball can be considered an “open-air museum,” according Vintage Base Ball Association literature.

McMaster said teams have been springing up across the country of late, and in the 19th century this form of baseball (skinny bats, small hard ball, no mitts, a good deal of broken fingers...) was the Saturday afternoon entertainment in many towns.

And while the Historical Museum team’s recent game against the Tiffin Grasshoppers wasn’t attended quite as well as those games of yesteryear, it produced a ‘spirited match’ (as they would say in the old days).

When the infield dust had cleared, the Museum’s team had lost by a “gentlemanly score” of 17 to 18.

I asked McMaster what that “gentlemanly score” meant. He said they had actually lost 5 to 18, but when the umpire announced the final score to the crowd (there is no scoreboard), he said: “17 to 18” – so the losing team could hold their head high as well.

McMaster added the actual score might have been closer, but he said, in less of a gentlemanly fashion, that his team members, in comparison to the Grasshoppers, were decidedly a “bunch of slow plodders.”

Being ‘slow plodders’ ourselves (‘slow and steady wins the race’) we moved on to Vermilion, Ohio. There a man on the street approached me about big money influence on modern politics.

“Anymore,” he said, “you have to read between the oil (pipe) lines.”

Massage therapist Carol Krosneovich, who is studying to be a homeopathic doctor, didn’t have to ‘read between the lines’ to see I was stressed. (Three young kids on the road will do that to you, never mind the presidency stuff.)

Ms. Krosneovich works out of Vita Tan Inc., a Health Food store near where we’d just done a whistle-stop event. And she offered a 10-minute massage as a “campaign donation.” She also offered this thought:

While working on my shoulders, she said she doesn’t watch much TV because it “pollutes the mind.” And it’s our mind, she continued, that controls our emotional and physical faculties.

So no wonder a lot of people are out of whack these days.

Feeling decidedly less stressed after the massage, we headed down Route 60 for ‘points south.’

One of the first points south was Loudonville, Ohio,

where a guy cooking chicken on a grill out in front of Beezers Restaurant called out that he'd just seen us on a national news show. (The news spot out of Youngstown might have been picked up nationally. We weren't sure.) Anyway, we stopped to give him a button and learned he was the owner.

What's more, the place was called Beezers because his daughter Heather's middle name is Bee, and as a child he used to call her more by Bee, then it was Little Bee, then, of course, it was 'Beezer.'

The next person we met in Loudonville was 43 year-old Paula Young, who told me she'd "never be *old*." What's more, she has a 23-year-old son named Harley (Are you ready for this?) *Davidson* Young.

On a more somber note, Ms. Young, who is now single, works two jobs, a full-time one at Mansfield Plumbing Products and a part-time one at a Loudonville gas station. And even at 60 hours a week, she said she can barely make ends meet.

What's more, she said her health insurance through work has "quadrupled" in the past year. She lamented: "I'm always just one major illness, or accident, away from losing my home."

And it is accidents, vehicular accidents to be specific, that Loudonville's Brad Porter, owner of a Driving School here, is concerned about. A display in his downtown window says: "There Is One Vehicular Death Every 13 Minutes In Our Nation!"

"That's like a (half-full) commercial airliner going down in our country every day," he told me. "If you knew that, would you fly?"

I told the *Loudonville News* this would be good cause to lower speed limits, widen bicycle lanes, and go to much

slower, alternative vehicles – like Mt. Vernon, Ohio’s Walter O’Dell has.

O’Dell, who appeared to be in his late 60s, pulled up in his GEM, mini-flat-bed, electric truck just as we were starting a whistle-stop event in Mt. Vernon on our next stop. He told me he bought the truck, new, for \$9,500 at a dealership in nearby Marion.

And his first 800 miles has cost him a mere \$11 in electricity. What’s more, four other people in town have bought them since he purchased his four months earlier.

“I just don’t rightly think some people around here knew about these things until I started driving around town,” he smiled.

“I will talk about Mr. O’Dell’s truck all over the country, so more people ‘rightly know’ about them,” I told a reporter from the Mt. Vernon newspaper.

It was hot this day, and I did ‘rightly know’ that nearby Fairfield Beach on the Buckeye Lake would be a good place to take the kids. And with this trip, more of the electric vehicle theme unexpectedly emerged.

Lawrence Grey, 77, pulled up in a golf cart and told us because no license is required in this particular burg (pop. 500), there are at least 40 electric golf carts on the local roads. I couldn’t help but think, as I watched a few of these go by, what a slower and saner mode of local transportation this is.

“Load up, load up...”

It is a ‘saner’ response that Bob Sherman would like from the Federal Government. At a whistle-stop event in Lancaster, Ohio, Sherman, who is a Vietnam Veteran with a Purple-Heart, told me he contracted diabetes

from his exposure to “agent orange” while in the war.

So while the government in 2002 finally ok’d medical compensation for cases of agent-orange related illness, for 28 years prior Sherman spent almost \$60,000 for medical costs on this. And it’s not covered.

I told a reporter for the *Lancaster-Eagle Gazette* that as president I would push for these kinds of medical back bills for veterans to be covered. “I mean, these guys risked their lives...” I said.

While not risking her life, Liz apparently was in impending danger as an *NBC News* crew out of Columbus was filming her and the kids getting in the van to leave today.

In more than pantomime fashion, she was cheerfully singing (as she often does) “Load up, load up, everybody load up...” Then, as the final child entered the van, Liz swung the door shut, whirling to smile to the camera at the same time.

Only problem (besides being a ham) was she inadvertently, as these things go, forgot to remove her other hand. SLAM!

Liz winced. Then in tremendously understated fashion, with her finger throbbing, she said: “*Oh...* I think I hurt myself.” (Afterward, I told her I believed the best of First Ladies would have, at least, “*screamed like crazy*” on that one.)

And it would be the ‘best of presidential candidates’ who wouldn’t pander to anyone. And as we were pulling out, I looked straight into the camera and said we, in fact, didn’t pander “to *anyone.*”

Then I winked and said: “But I want the good people of the Columbus area to know when I get to D.C., one of the first things I’ll do is put a big buckeye on top

of the Capital Dome!”

And it was more of the Buckeye State that we were off to see, as we wound our way further south – with Liz’s finger still throbbing.

Shrine to Dentistry

In Chillicothe, Ohio, we talked with “dental artist” (that’s how she bills herself professionally) Elaine Dossett. Ms. Dossett, who has been a dentist the past 20 years, is looking to purchase a new ‘art implement,’ if you will.

A laser device.

Ms. Dossett said the device (basic model \$49,000) cuts into teeth and gums with absolutely no pain. She said she would be the first dentist in Chillicothe to have this high-tech device and would advertise her practice as: “Painless Dentistry.”

It isn’t painless dental devices, but what I’d have to describe as “torture devices” that are on display at the Dental Museum in nearby Bainbridge, Ohio, “...the Cradle of Dental Education,” a sign out front says.

The Museum is the former office and school of John Harris M.D., D.D.S., who is considered the “Father of Dental Education.”

Circa 1825, Harris established the first American School of Instruction on Dental Surgery, and two of his students went on to found America’s first two Colleges of Dentistry.

Out in front of this “Shrine to Dentistry,” Liz and the kids – admittedly a bit sacrilegiously (it was Liz’s idea) – posed for a picture with toothbrushes in hand and displaying quite exaggerated, ‘pearly white’ smiles.

After leaving the museum, we noticed a sign on a plaque in front of a crafts store in downtown Bainbridge. It read: "I don't suffer from insanity, I enjoy every minute of it."

I told Liz we should adopt that as our campaign motto.

In response, she displayed an even more exaggerated smile (with eyes bugging out) than she had at the Dental Museum.

(yuk)

We headed into Adams County where we talked with a woman whose vehicle has a simple, to the point, pro-life bumper sticker: "Abortion is Murder."

She said there are 4,400 abortions a day in the U.S. And she said the way she sees it, this is no different than if gunmen entered four fairly large U.S. schools and killed all the students, every day.

Earlier in the day, we had met with a friend at a school in Macon, Ohio. While waiting, I walked down the halls looking at graduating class pictures (both black and white, and color) of the students here over the years. Their looks, as is always the case with these types of pictures, seemed filled with hope, dreams...

But what of all these children who never get a chance to hope, dream?

The next day we took our children out for the afternoon. On the way to a hiking trail, the kids got us to make a brief stop at the Powered Parachute Wing Association Fly-In. While the kids watched these ultra-light airborne contraptions, Frank Parman from London, Kentucky, told me the average cost of one of these crafts

was \$15,000.

The average cost of a hike along the American Discovery Trail is: nothing. The Discovery Trail is the only coast-to-coast, non-motorized recreational trail in the country. And the stretch here is extremely picturesque, challenging... and we all had a wonderful time.

Although part of the hike I spent thinking: 'This is so educational, so environmentally sound, and what's more, free. While meanwhile, another group of parents and kids up the road are learning, well, ultra-light aero-dynamics I guess, are polluting the air, and spending thousands of dollars on these machines.'

Just the money alone for one of these crafts could feed a good number of villages in the Third World – for a year.

In fact, the money for just one of our nuclear missiles could probably feed most of a small Third World country for a year. So why don't we stop making them, wonders West Union, Ohio's Fr. Ted Kossee.

The priest said perhaps the biggest scandal in America is telling all these other countries (Iraq, North Korea, Iran...) they can't have nuclear weapons when the U.S. has the biggest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world.

Fr. Kossee wondered what was wrong with this picture.

Mineral Springs, Ohio's William ("...they call me Billy Lee") Smalley wonders what's wrong with the 'health picture' in America, specifically when it comes to sickness in the schools.

Smalley, who is the president of the Board of Health in Adams County, said schools are often "incubators for disease." During flu season the school system here expe-

riences a consistent 12% (or sometimes higher) absentee rate – which translates into missed education, medical costs (Adams County is one of the poorest in the state), and so on. Smalley continued that an average desk-top contains 20,000 germs – per square inch (yuk).

To combat all this, Smalley said the school system was going to a vigorous Hand and Desk Washing Program this year.

Peebles, Ohio's Bob Olsen wishes he could wash his hands of spiritual apathy. But he can't.

In fact, he left owning four radio stations in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (including being "The Voice of College Hockey" there), for a ministry position with Presentation Ministries here – because he felt God calling.

One of Presentation Ministries' main thrusts is helping establish small, home-based communities in a parish. These groups meet weekly for prayer, meals and to share the stuff of life. What's more, each community rallies around at least one particular outreach, whether pro-life work, helping the poor, or something within the parish.

Besides outreach, one of the communities in the heart of Cincinnati does 'in-reach.' That is, six times a year on a Saturday, everyone will go to one of the members' homes to help with some type of home repair project.

“I have gone to find myself.”

We did a whistle-stop event in front of the Court House in Georgetown, Ohio. Georgetown is the boyhood home of former President Ulysses S. Grant, and is also right in the heart of tobacco growing country.

I told *News Democrat* reporter Martha Mundy here

that we had a “consistent pro-life ethic.” Yes, we are against abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty; but we are also against other things that often end life prematurely, like: poverty, pollution, and, well... smoking.

I had written a rather unpopular column about tobacco as part of a series of weekly columns I’d done for the *News Democrat* when I lived in the nearby town of Ripley (before we started the presidential runs). And after the interview today, I caught up with publisher Steve Triplett.

Just the week before, Steve had written his own weekly column about singer Linda Rondstadt endorsing John Kerry during one of her performances, and reciprocally, country singer Ricky Scaggs endorsing George W. Bush during one of his performances.

Steve suggested maybe I could get a performer to endorse my candidacy. I responded that we probably had a pretty good chance with a harmonica player we met in Indiana.

After the newspaper office, we took the kids to a park here with a really nice walking track that winds throughout. It was on this walking track some six years prior that people from all over the county walked a mile as a culmination of a Mental Health Walkathon.

I had helped coordinate this as a volunteer with the Brown County Mental Health Agency. And for three months prior to this “last walk,” people got sponsors and walked all over the county. The man who had walked the farthest (some 500 miles) received a hand crafted walking stick that had been donated.

And among the most noteworthy participants, that is in walking circles, was Steve Newman – who is the only one to ever solo-walk the world. For the Walkathon, he

and his wife Darci took weekends and drove to every town in Brown County (and there are a good number of them) – then walked through.

From the park, I walked to a nearby grocery store where I came across a woman standing outside with the following on her t-shirt: “I have gone to find myself. If I get back before I return, keep me here.”

I wondered if she was sending herself postcards, too.

“...every dag’ gone germ”

Postcards, old ones, are on display at Blanchester, Ohio’s Historical Society Museum. Museum curator J.W. Simpson said on a “windy, dry October day in 1895,” a fire in a downtown livery stable here jumped from building to building – destroying five whole city blocks. Simpson said most likely it was sparks from a passing locomotive that had ignited the blaze.

And it was a train on those same tracks some 70 years later that made a “whistle-stop” in Blanchester carrying presidential candidate Barry Goldwater. Old-time resident and retired City Department worker Ed Bailey said he lifted the town newspaper photographer “high up above the crowd” in a heavy equipment bucket so he could take a picture of Goldwater.

I told Ed he might not have to lift a photographer up, oh, “as high” at one of our whistle-stop events.

Bailey also told me that he and his wife Dorothy, in their retirement, did a stint with the Peace Corps in the Philippines. They helped provide loans to small farmers.

Ed said where they were at in the village of San Fernando (pop. 4,000) was so poor the only one who had a

motor vehicle was the mayor. And he had an old, WWII jeep at that.

What's more, the mayor and his family also had the only TV in the village, a black & white one, which they watched for an hour each evening by hooking up the TV to: the jeep's battery.

The people in this village, for the most part, were rural farmers.

And it is the rural farmers in America who nearby Midland, Ohio's Fred Treaster is concerned about.

"I don't remember people living on pills (vitamin supplements and the like) in the old days, like they do today," he said, indicating he thought modern farm herbicides and pesticides were destroying the nutrients in the soil and causing all kinds of illness.

He'd like to see us go back to growing "naturally," Treaster said he'd like to see many of us go back to natural remedies for sickness..

He said his grandma used to make a medicinal salve out of roots and herbs. And when he'd get sick, she'd smear the salve on his chest, dress him in warm pajamas "...and you'd sweat until every 'dag gone' germ in your body was dead!"

After Blanchester, we decided to pause for a pit-stop back in Bluffton.

"I'm voting for Joe Schriner."

While I was on my pit-stop, President Bush wasn't. His campaign motorcade was to come up I-75 here this Saturday afternoon, passing within three miles of Bluffton.

To get a jump on Mr. Bush, I went campaigning at

Bluffton's Farmer's Market this morning. There I talked with a man visiting from Louisiana and a woman visiting from Idaho. (Bluffton is a Mecca.)

Both people walked away wearing "average Joe" buttons.

One of the market vendors, Cindy Basinger, said she'd been called by a Gallup Poll representative earlier in the week and was asked if she was voting for Kerry or Bush.

"Neither. I'm voting for Joe Schriener," she told him. And it got better.

The Bluffton University Library Director approached me at the market and said a new display case on the presidential election was just installed at the library.

"And you're right there in it," she smiled.

"...a security risk."

Back on the road...

At a whistle-stop in Tiffin, Ohio, political reporter Matt Shuman told me he had covered the Bush visit a couple days ago.

I said: "I bet his campaign vehicle was, oh, a little bigger than mine."

"Yeah, but at least I can sit in yours," he smiled.

And it was me who was smiling just before going on Fostoria's "Tom & Beth" morning show. Tom started with: "Ladies and gentlemen, we have a 'Tom & Beth' *exclusive*..."

And you feel 'exclusive' at Fremont, Ohio's Rudy's Restaurant ("Where you're the boss!"). I did some stumping with the morning regulars here, then met with Randy Fielding.

Fielding has developed the non-profit organization Angels Inc. The organization is designed to help youth, the elderly and the mentally challenged.

Feilding said these groups are often forgotten by the mainstream, with the unsaid refrain being: “Get out of our way, we’re making money.”

And while, for instance, incarcerated youth in Fremont’s correctional facility are temporarily ‘out of society’s way,’ Feilding believes that’s not the best thing, for anyone.

So he’s developing a model to hook these youth up with daytime jobs and community service. Money they earn, for instance, could go to “victim resolution.” And what’s more, some youth may learn skills that might keep them out of jail a second time.

And it was the ‘first time’ that I’d heard of an idea residents of Marblehead, Ohio were developing. At the Ex Libris Used Bookstore here, Gail Kowalczyk told me all the books were donated and the store had been opened to raise money for the renovation of an old Coast Guard barracks – for the town’s first Library.

Yet while the village hasn’t had a library, it has had a lighthouse, the famous (at least in these parts) “Marblehead Lighthouse,” which I went to view next. I arrived just as Carl White, 62, arrived on his 18-year-old recumbent bicycle.

From Columbus, Ohio, he told me he was touring the area on bicycle and what’s more, he estimates riding some 3,000 miles a year (mostly locally) on bicycle. His vacations, as well, center around bicycling.

I parked the van in a “No Parking Zone” to get a picture of the van, White and his bicycle, and the lighthouse all together. Just as I was focusing the camera, a

Marblehead police officer sped up to us.

'Wow, they're quick on these 'No Parking' violations,' I thought.

The officer did actually run up to me, but before I could get out my excuse, he hurriedly asked if I'd seen any "low-flying aircraft in the area." There'd been a report.

Sharing the incident with the editor of the Sandusky Register newspaper later this afternoon, she laughed and said: "You must be a security risk."

And I 'risked' my life even more (but not much) heading out on a ferry in a somewhat choppy lake to go to Kelly's Island, Ohio, later this afternoon. Kelly's is the largest island in Lake Erie, has the "finest example of glacial scarring in the U.S.," and a general store where everyone here shops. The store owner let me put up an "average Joe" flyer, then told me there were some 385 registered voters on the island. *D.C., here we come!*

But first it was on to LEMMY's Restaurant along the lake in Huron, Ohio, where I stumped with the regulars over coffee. LEMMY's, I learned, is actually a loose acronym for "Lake Erie Monster," (*ibid.*, Loch Ness Monster, and so on) which was supposedly sighted off shore here several years back. I told patrons that just as soon as our administration got to the bottom of the UFO mystery – LEMMY would be next on our list.

After coffee, I went to talk to the 4th grade class at St. Peter's School, not about LEMMY (although I'm sure they would have been fascinated), but about volunteering more, even at their young age, to help the community.

During a talk to a prayer group at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Sandusky later in the day, I said how each of us treat the environment is really a "Pro-Life" issue be-

cause of all the long term ramifications to plants, animals – and us.

Barbara Marlinski

I stumped with a morning group at the Pelican Coffee Shop in Bucyrus, some 25 men with an average age of 80. I told a reporter for the *Telegraph-Reporter* newspaper here that I would like to see these men also regularly joined, “elbow-to-elbow,” by area youth, young adults, middle-age adults... Anymore, I then told radio reporter Becky Abernathy from *WQEL Radio* here, the seniors in America are cast aside “when they have all these years of accumulated life experience and wisdom – that goes unheard.”

Later in the day, I met with Floyd Reinhart of nearby Sycamore, Ohio, who is a retired district director for the U.S. Farm Service Agency. He said the Catholic Rural Life Association is currently considering a program to inspire American farmers to set aside an acre of land for gardens (to be tended by local volunteers), with the produce being sold at, say, a local Farmer’s Market – the proceeds going to provide seed money for rural farmers in the Third World.

Back in Bluffton the next day, Liz and I stayed up late filling out election forms so we could be an “official write-in candidate” in some states. In many of the states, you have to fulfill a series of requirements to get electors for the Electoral College, and so on. Not hard for a party machine, but a bit daunting for a small family from the Midwest.

We have also shored up our selection for a vice-presidential candidate. She is Barbara (“He stands for ev-

everything I stand for...” Marlinski of upstate New York. (Note: Having a vice-presidential candidate is definitely an improvement over Campaign 2000, when we didn’t have one – although it wasn’t as if we hadn’t asked a good number of people.)

The next morning I strolled about Bluffton with a petition to get electors to fulfill Ohio’s write-in requirements... then it was off again.

“Buy American”

In honor of Labor Day, I thought it would be good to talk to people about, well, labor issues. (And President Bush needs Karl Rove. HA!) After taking my picture for a newspaper piece, *Crescent News* (Defiance, Ohio) photographer Thom Born told me he goes out of his way to “Buy American.” I told him we do too, because we believe in “local production for local consumption” – and much more help for people in poorer countries so they can do “local production for local consumption” as well.

Then, in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, I interviewed Whitney Wolfe, 18, an employee at McDonald’s Restaurant here. She said she didn’t see her \$6 an hour job here as permanent. “I want to make decent money and have benefits for my (future) kids,” she said. As I listened, I couldn’t help but think of all the moms and dads working at McDonald’s now.

In Mt. Vernon the family and I attended an Ohio Department of Natural Resources talk. ODNR official Mike Miller said current levels of farm herbicides and pesticides are throwing off “eco-system stability,” as the frog population in the Kokosing River here, for instance, has dropped dramatically in recent years.

And the idea of “abstinence” has dropped dramatically among American youth as well of late. Yet Mt. Vernon’s Geri Darmstadt, a volunteer with Care Net Pregnancy Services, told me her agency had developed creative peer education programs to get kids thinking about abstinence: *at the middle school level!* (God help us.)

We then headed back to Adams County, Ohio, to take our friends John and Joanne Brockhoeft’s children, and ours, for another hike along the American Discovery Trail. Afterward, we went back to the Brockhoeft’s home to wax the “average Joe” fleet – in preparation for the last six weeks of the “Blitz.”

“...you won’t have to do that anymore!”

Joanne Brockhoeft regularly reads her children news reports of contemporary affairs in other countries. And on a *Fox News* morning show in Cleveland, I said my administration would push for a U.S. Department of Peace, which would, among many things, include trying to inspire more parents to follow Mrs. Brockhoeft’s example.

After dropping the family off in Bluffton for a rest, I headed back out alone, stopping first in Bowling Green to give a talk to a Knights of Columbus group.

Steve Werner, the Grand Knight (or as one of the members jokingly referred to him this night: “the Grand Pupa”), introduced me. As part of the introduction, he said he’d recently gone out to an I-75 over pass here to wave to President Bush when the campaign bus had gone by. When it was my turn, I admonished the Knights that no one was at the exit tonight to “wave to me.” They all laughed, sort of.

Rolling north into Haskins, Ohio (pop. 1,000), I

noticed a village limits sign that said Haskins was the “Birthplace of Earl W. North, an American impressionist painter.” Next in Waterville, Ohio, Chowder’s N Moor Restaurant owner Tom Kuran said wouldn’t it be nice to see a town limit sign saying: This is the Birthplace of, like, Harry Schwartz, an “average Joe” who, despite a tough marriage and all kinds of problems with his teenagers – hung in there and “didn’t blow his brains out.”

Then it was onto Whitehouse, Ohio (pop. 2,737), where I got in a round table discussion at the “Chickaroo Restaurant” (it’s not the kind of establishment that you think) with some town old-timers and a reporter from a local newspaper. Jim Strain, 83, told me he’d bought his two-bedroom ranch-style home in Whitehouse for \$850 in 1951. With inflation, and Toledo urban sprawl, the same home just sold last year for \$92,000. Still in Whitehouse, I later told a *Fox News* cameraman that this might well be the “closest I get to the White House – this time.”

Fox News showed up again later in the day, this time with a reporter as well, explaining they’d decided to make the story a “feature package” and send it to their New York headquarters.

They shadowed me as I drove through Swanton, Ohio, \$3 garage sale bull-horn blaring. Perhaps the most poignant moment came as I called out to a guy cutting his lawn. **“If I become president, I’ll get you a union and you won’t have to do that anymore!”** He smiled. (I had the freedom to promise that only because Liz wasn’t around.) I then picked out a street and started knocking on doors.

From here, I met up with the family back in Bluffton, then headed down to Yorkshire for another talk at Dan

Kremer's "Farm Festival." I said one of the first things I'd do at the White House was tear out some of the front lawn and "put in an organic garden."

Then it was off to Sydney, Ohio (by myself again) and a rendezvous with "The Spot" Restaurant, which the sign says is: "the Spot to be." I passed out flyers on a busy street corner in front of the restaurant, then entered to see a big picture of George W. Bush, who had momentarily stepped out of his tour bus to wave in front of The Spot several weeks back. Next to the picture was the menu item: "George W. Bush Burger, \$2.95." I showed the manager some of my campaign literature, then I asked about them maybe naming at least a toasted cheese sandwich after me. She said no, but then smiled and added I could "order a toasted cheese sandwich."

Undaunted, it was off to Tipp City where Everett Hall, 64, told me he drives about town year round in a "road-ready" golf cart (complete with a canvass shell and mini heater) for about \$5 a month in electricity. Rick Sapolek, who reconditions old golf carts for street use in nearby Huber Heights, Ohio, told me the market would be better if towns added charging stations to parking meters and created more rooms on streets and trails for these.

"vote yey"

The whirlwind tour continued with stops in Wauseon, West Unity, Bryan, Ney, Sherwood, Deshler, North Baltimore...

While passing out literature at a Farmer's Market in Bryan, I said to the *Bryan Times* that I was running on a platform to: "end pollution, make the country safe for

children, and simplify the Federal Government.” (How could you lose on that, huh?)

At John Weber’s Restaurant (their slogan: “Good Food, Mediocre Service”) in Wauseon, I sat in on a board meeting of the local Fellowship of Christian Athletes. FCA’s Rex Stump said there were 86,400 seconds in a day, and his goal is to get his athletes making the most of each moment, not just for their sports’ endeavors, but more importantly, for God.

Taking that to heart, I sped on, stopping next in Ney, Ohio, where I hung a flyer up at Marty’s Restaurant, penning in: “Don’t vote ‘ney,’ vote ‘yey,’ for “average Joe” Schriener.”

Ok, so I was getting a little ‘squirley’ with fatigue at this point. But I couldn’t stop now.

In Springfield, Ohio, John Polley, 18, a manager at a used tire shop, walked with a limp, his knee “hurting bad from lifting semi-tires.” He had no health insurance and felt left to tough it out. I told a Springfield newspaper reporter that we had to get more help for the John Polleys of America.

Then, just prior to a whistle-stop event in front of the post office in Springfield, a postal employee began rather sternly scolding me for parking in a handicapped spot (by mistake) just as the *Channel 7 News* crew showed up. (*And you think Bush and Kerry are experiencing public relations problems!*)

In South Vienna, Ohio, a man on the street said to me: “*Bravo, fighting the big boys!*”

And in West Jefferson, Michael Tryee, who owns a small flooring business, told me he’s disconcerted with people driving 40 miles round trip to Columbus from here to look for cheaper prices at Lowe’s. He said what

people don't factor in is the extra gas money, wasted time and added pollution to the environment.

I next put a flyer in Mechanicsburg's Christian bookstore "Heavenly Touch," which I felt I was going to need – in a big way.

Then it was on to Urbana, where I was interviewed by the local paper, then stopped in the New Family Table Restaurant where I stumped and interviewed owner Brian Waller, who said his employees consist of his wife, step son, mother-in-law, niece... a *real* "family restaurant." Waller said the place has brought them much closer together as a family.

The next day the *Urbana Citizen* headline read: **Joe Wants to Win Ohio.**

And I will, if Kathleen Pipes has anything to say about it.

The week ended with me seeing a guest column on the Internet that ran in *The (Newark, Ohio) Advocate*. Ms. Pipes wrote: "This year I will write in a candidate of my choice," Mr. "Average Joe Schriener... I am voting to make a statement: 'We want to take back our country.'"

third podium

We did a circle tour of Grand Lake St. Mary, the largest inland lake in Ohio. We appeared on the front pages of St. Mary's and Celina's newspapers, then headed to Coldwater, where I stumped with the regulars at the Main Street Café. Their pens say: "This pen has been stolen from Main Street Café."

During a brief pit stop on the tour here, supporter Tim Axe fixed the idler arms on Liz's van as a donation.

But we couldn't stay idle (sorry) long, and we headed

further south to St. Henry's.

After a whistle-stop event, we noticed an end zone scoreboard (still working) out in front of Fishmo Restaurant. Owner Matt Stelzer told me it was from the old high school stadium here.

"I only post the (final) score if St. Henry's wins," Stelzer smiled. "People feel like I'm rubbing it in if I post a losing score."

And although it looked like we were still losing, we then headed to Greenville (hometown of Annie – "...get your gun" – Oakley) where we did a whistle stop event, then (conveniently) forgot to talk about our strong gun control stance during an interview with the newspaper.

But I did talk about our border policy position at a theology class next at Xavier University in Cincinnati. With our southern border tour a couple years back in mind, I asked how many students shop at Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Target... for the "cheapest prices possible?" Two thirds of the students' hands rather proudly went up.

"You could be destroying families in Mexico as a result..." I started.

During a whistle-stop event in Piqua, Ohio, retired teacher Larry Hamilton, who taught African American studies in high school here, told me he liked our idea of promoting more cultural studies (African American, Native American, Hispanic...) in mainstream American curriculum.

And the University of Dayton student government 'liked' the idea I was running for president so much, they invited me to speak – on the day of the first presidential debate between President Bush and Mr. Kerry.

I started the talk at Dayton by smiling and noting that the choice for me that day was to either participate

in the national debate, “or come here to speak to you today.”

John Strano, one of the students coordinating the event, immediately spoke up: “Did you want me to call Florida and have them remove the third podium Mr. Schriener?”

One month to go.

CHAPT. 18

The ‘Last Lap’

One more lap in what was turning out to be quite a marathon for us...

The presidential race was now really heating up on a national level, as President Bush and Senator Kerry sprinted around the country and barraged the airwaves with millions of dollars of ads.

Meanwhile, on the back roads of Ohio, far below the national media radar, I continued to speed around (sometimes four to seven towns a day now), meeting with people and putting up flyers on bulletin boards and windows of every grocery store, laundry mat, gas station... I'd come across. I did interview after interview with small town radio and newspaper reporters.

And every chance I got, I would tell anyone who'd listen that we could well be Campaign 2004's "Nader factor" in Ohio.

The strategy was simple.

We didn't have any money, just flyers.

But if we got enough votes in Ohio (or it looked like we were going to get enough votes in Ohio), it would probably be enough to generate some national stories.

With the national stories, everybody would finally know about our message.

And, well, who knew what would happen next.

“Go Joe!”

After a *Xenia* (remember the tornado?) *Daily Gazette* interview, I went to Yellow Springs, Ohio, where barber Greg Hasser said his shop had been broken into twice, once even after he installed metal bars over his back window.

“Those guys (presidential candidates) are talking about protecting our borders... and I can’t even protect my back window,” he smiled, sort of.

In Degraff, Ohio, a man playing ukulele outside on the main street, stopped, waved as I drove by, and yelled out: **“Go Joe!”** (Never count out the ‘ukulele vote.’)

Quincy, Ohio’s Bill Weiskittle, a Vietnam Vet, lamented to me that the news services seldom focus on the good things that are happening in Iraq, like kids going to school, women having more rights...

Then it was on to Nova, Sullivan, Lodi, Willard... At the end of a Mass in Willard, I read a “Prayer for Peace” with the rest of the congregation: “God... cleanse our minds of retaliation and help us to be instruments of your peace.”

During an interview on WWOW in Conneaut, Ohio, host Louie Free wondered if letting even the most obscure of species go extinct, in the long run, significantly “disrupts everything?” I answered: “Good question.”

In Jefferson, Ohio, I talked with two high school students who do “Buddy Walks” with Down Syndrome children as part of their “service learning.” Then I told an

Ashtabula Star Beacon reporter these students get an “A” in my book, as does Ashtabula’s Rita Sarell.

All over the front windows of her computer store here are large, graphic, Pro-Life posters. I asked if she was worried about the posters hurting business at her store.

“Oh, it’s not my store. It’s God’s,” she smiled.

In the Rock Creek Café the next morning, I stumped with a group of 10 “ROMEOS” (Retired Old Men Eating Out).

One man asked my stance on terrorism. I said some kids growing up in poverty in America’s inner cities join gangs. And kids growing up in poverty in the Third World join terrorist cells.

My answer to terrorism: end poverty.

Rita Linehan, a member of the Catholic Church in Rock Creek, is trying to do just that. Her family did a fundraiser to get five “4 X 4” jeeps for priests doing missions work in the highlands of El Salvador. And not only did they get the vehicles, but the family’s efforts eventually sparked 10 Sister Church projects with El Salvador.

Light one candle.

Or buy five jeeps.

“frankly give a ‘darn.’”

Salem, Ohio’s Karen Christy said she was raised on a nearby farm by parents who believed in: “The Golden Rule.” I mused with her about whether I could “legislate that?”

Then I traveled to Alliance, Ohio, home of perhaps the *most overstated* hot dog shop in the country (bright yellow building and a huge hot dog, with the works, on the roof). I told Alliance newspaper political reporter

George Salsberry that “as president” I would consider stricter zoning ordinances for hot dog places.

I was then interviewed by a reporter in Canton (home of the Football Hall of Fame), Ohio. And then it was on to Cadiz, where I told the editor there we believed the small family farm was an extremely important part of the “fabric of our country.”

She nodded. She and her husband, it turns out, own a small family farm.

And I continue to do this without an advance team.

Cadiz, by the way, is the hometown of Clark Gable – for any of you who “frankly give a ‘darn.’” (Sorry, but we’re continuing to run on a “family values” platform.)

And I was ‘gone with the wind’ as I headed to Lisbon, Ohio, where Tim and Ann Miller are raising their seven children on a family farm, practicing “apostolic farming.” The raise everything organically, they use small technology, and look at farming as a “prayer to God.”

In East Palestine, I was interviewed by the newspaper and met with Larry Walton, who was chairman of the Young Republicans in Columbiana County when Barry Goldwater ran for president in 1964. Walton said he continues to be frustrated that a candidate’s first obligation is often to the party, even if this means passing on a good idea from somebody in the other party.

Meanwhile, I felt it was a ‘good idea’ to head south along the Ohio River, where in Steubenville, Mental Health Retardation worker Candice Hill told me: “I’d much rather work with the mentally retarded than many others. They don’t back stab, they work hard, are generous, caring...”

And I told Steubenville’s newspaper that Josh Miller, who runs People Management here (and who I met with

earlier in the day), cares about people enough to help steer them in a career path that's not just about money but rather about using their talents for God's work.

In Martin's Ferry, Ohio, I told a reporter from the *Times Leader* that a "common sense" answer to the country's energy situation is to house share. Two families would share the energy needed to heat one place, cutting their energy use substantially.

Cambridge, Ohio newspaper reporter Dan Davis is thinking about 'sharing' water with the west. While talking about environmental issues, Davis said he proposes a transcontinental pipeline to send water out west – from all the eastern areas that have too much water.

I then stumped in downtown Marietta, Ohio, where (wouldn't you know) the Ohio River had recently crested its banks four feet above flood stage, causing a tremendous amount of damage to the town. I couldn't help but think this would be a good town to link to Mr. Davis's transcontinental water pipe line.

At the Blue Bell Diner ("...the best coffee in town") in McConnelsville, Dave Ruckman said he felt the whole presidential election process was "getting so far from (common man) reality."

Then at the McConnelsville newspaper, an office worker asked me for a button. She said she has a political collection dating back to the 1800s and regularly displays the items at libraries and schools. When they are not on display, they are tucked in a dresser. Her collection's title: "Politics Behind Closed Drawers."

Oct. 14, '04

The following was a typical day around this time out

on my own:

I stumped at M.R. Mack's restaurant in Logan, Ohio, early. *Logan Daily News* columnist Edgar "Bud" Simpson said he grew up in northern Maine where clear cutting all but destroyed the Penobscot River where he and his brother used to swim.

After writing an article about the campaign for the *Logan Daily News* (the editor had said it was ok if I "white-washed his fence" a bit), I traveled to Nelsonville, where I talked with some students majoring in "eco-tourism." They said the thrust of eco-tourism is to take people on "vacation" to places like the rain forests in Brazil to educate them about things like clear cutting.

From Nelsonville, I went to Athens, Ohio, where I stumped downtown, surrounded by two reporters, a photographer and a news guy from a local TV station. (It was almost like a "media event.")

It was then on to McArthur, where Penny Alzayer told me she spent 13 years living in Saudi Arabia and became extremely impressed with the majority of people's depth of spirituality. And, she added, she is concerned about the perception Americans are getting about the Arab world of late because of some of the media reports.

Alzayer, who is a reporter for McArthur's paper, then interviewed me before I went to interview Tabatha Sexton, a senior at Vinton County High. She is enrolled in a "Marketing Class," where students have the leeway to work part time while in school and also take classes on the fundamentals of "running a business" – for those not going on to college.

I then went to Vinton County's Chamber of Commerce, where I met with Brandi Boggs, who heads up

the county's new eco-tourism project. These particular projects involve fixing up a series of area covered bridges, Ms. Boggs told me.

As the sun was setting, I traveled to Wellston, where I talked with Michael Morrow, who said the country was founded on a party system, which effectively “locks everyone else out.”

Not one to be ‘locked out’ (without a fight), I closed the day by stopping in tiny Hamden, Ohio where I put up a flyer at the small grocery store there – then got a banana, some bread and peanut butter for dinner.

Have I mentioned it's a low budget campaign?

Democrats for Life

To kick the campaign into yet another gear in Ohio, I sent out a plea to supporters (no matter where they were at in the country), to send “letters-to-the-editor” of Ohio newspapers about the campaign.

And, surprisingly enough (even to me), we were actually developing a pretty good supporter base.

Now, while we get a pretty regular stream of e-mails from around the country, the volume started picking up more than a bit – and from *all over* the country, not just Ohio.

But I couldn't understand why, initially.

Then I got an e-mail from someone saying they'd seen our website posted on the national website for the sub-organization “Democrats for Life.”

Several years ago, a faction within the Democratic Party (who have a “Consistent Life Ethic” across the board) had started up, and they were lobbying for a stronger voice in the party. They were even starting to

back candidates.

And while they hadn't officially backed me, they did indicate on their site that our campaign came very close to the ideals they espoused.

This was quite a shot in the arm.

And it inspired us to speed up the work on our home-made "Write-in Joe Schriener for president" front yard sign.

We were going to put it up earlier, but Liz had suggested we "not peak too early in Bluffton."

showed her my wrist

Back on the road in Jackson, Ohio, at the Main Street Diner, cook Gina Pittman, 35, told me she is a single parent of three who was born with a separated disc and is looking at an ultra-expensive operation (the MRI alone: \$3,000). She makes \$156 a week and has no health insurance.

She said the country needed a president sympathetic to these issues.

I showed her my wrist, which hadn't healed right.

Then I told a reporter from Jackson's newspaper people like Gina Pittman are falling through the cracks.

One of the waitresses here was wearing a shirt that said: "Special of the Day: Road Kill." Yet another "average Joe" five star restaurant stop.

Next stop: Bluffton, again.

CLUNK!

I took our children to Bluffton Senior Center's Annual Spelling Bee, where they had a wonderful time and

I developed more of a real empathy for former Vice-President Dan Quayle (Remember when he misspelled “potatoe”?)

I misspelled, oh, mor then a fu werds myselph.

At a Sunday School class at St. Thomas Moore church back in Bowling Green, I told the youth about famine and violence in the Sudan. A 7th grader immediately volunteered to head a project up to get more money there.

Then at a Third Order Franciscan group in Hicksville, I said St. Blaze Parish in Bellingham, Massachusetts averages tithing 17% per parishioner for places like the Sudan, in part because one of the church members regularly writes poignant stories about how the money is helping.

It was then back to Bluffton, where I cloistered myself in Bluffton College’s Library for a couple days writing letters to the editor about the “average Joe” campaign to as many newspapers in Ohio as possible.

It was at this time, that I got an e-mail from a woman temporarily working in Ontario, Canada. She was a resident of Vermont. She wrote that she was filing an absentee ballot and wanted to know who my vice presidential candidate was for her form.

CLUNK!

I had sent some information to Ed, our web guy, about Barb several weeks back. Yet somehow, unbeknownst to me, it had gotten lost in the transmission and was never posted on the site.

Easily fixable, but that wasn’t the real problem I was afraid.

I hurriedly called the Ohio Election Commission in Columbus.

“When you write in a presidential candidate’s name on the ballot in Ohio, do you also have to write in the vice presidential candidate’s name?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“And if you don’t?”

“The vote doesn’t count.”

CLUNK!, again.

In not one of the newspaper articles, radio shows or TV spots had the name Barbara Marlinski been mentioned.

The flyers I’d been posting were drafted before Barbara had agreed to be the VP running mate, so they also didn’t mention the name Barbara Marlinski.

I had a sinking (read: *The Titanic*) feeling.

I told Liz.

She, in her typical sage-like fashion, said: “Oh, well.”

Then, as any good campaign manager would do, she urged: “There’s nothing you can do but keep on, honey.”

“Wouldn’t that be more democratic?”

So I kept on.

A PBS film crew from the Netherlands came to Bluffton to interview us for a special they were doing on the American presidential race.

How’s that for strategy.

If I can’t win Ohio, maybe I can win Holland, or something.

During the interview, I spent the first 40 seconds slowly, and quite endearingly, introducing my wife and our three children – who had been through a lot this campaign, and the last. I paused, then said: “Liz and

I are running as ‘concerned parents.’ We’re concerned about these little children inheriting a world of global warming, increased violence, drugs... So instead of sitting back and complaining, we decided to do something about it. And one town at a time, we are.”

Liz, trying to remain optimistic, said to me afterwards that maybe some people in the Netherlands “have some friends in the U.S. they can influence.”

And I’d apparently ‘influenced’ the owner of Staunton, Virginia’s *Brown Bag Express Restaurant* enough, during a stop there earlier in the year, that he named a sandwich after me. He sent an e-mail with his new menu. And there it was: “Average Joe” Brat.”

Farther into the menu there was a “Yogi-ism”: “If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll go somewhere else.”

But I knew where I was going.

And the next stop was Bluffton University’s Neufield Hall for a “Town Hall” style meeting. I said our administration would push for a simplified, one-page tax form (that is, if we continued with the income tax at all).

What’s more, the form would have a pie chart where the individual tax payer could designate what percentage of his/her money went to: the environment, education, military, social programs... “Wouldn’t that be more democratic?” I asked.

Bravo Sarah!

President Bush was speaking in nearby Findlay, Ohio, in a couple days, as part of his own ‘Blitz’ of Ohio. An army helicopter was sweeping the I-75 corridor in preparation just as the “average Joe” mobile, in all its Old Navy

stars and stripes regalia, was approaching the Bluffton exit.

The helicopter banked and then flew right over the top of us, I'm sure the pilot was probably thinking: *'What the heck is this?'*

I, in turn, waved.

Then it was off to Dayton for a whistle stop event at Court House Plaza. NBC News there asked Sarah, 9, what she thought about her dad running for president, expecting, I'm sure, a cute, well, 9-year-old answer.

"I like his message," Sarah started.

The reporter smiled and asked Sarah to describe one of the "messages."

"I like his stance against abortion. My dad has a bumper sticker that says: 'He's a child, not a choice.' And I think that's good."

Bravo Sarah!

We then headed to Xavier University again where I was asked to participate in a round-table discussion.

At one point, the topic of nuclear proliferation came up.

I said the U.S. has nuclear missiles aimed all over the globe.

"To the rest of the world, wouldn't we look like a terrorist nation?" I posed.

Walking to the campaign vehicle afterward, Sarah looked up at me and said: "Something is really bugging me."

"What's that?"

"These nuclear weapons. Isn't that just wrong?"

Bravo again, Sarah!

We headed northeast to the State House in Columbus, where I was interviewed by a National Public Radio

reporter. Afterward, Sarah, Joseph and I sort of snuck in on part of a school tour of the building that included viewing multi-colored marble tile outlines of all 88 Ohio counties, which we had now been to twice.

Joseph pointed to one county and asked why it was represented in “green.”

“That’s because of the rural character of that one particular county, son.”

Well, I didn’t know.

And I admitted I didn’t know everything (“What person does, without a staff?”) at a talk to students at the Christopher Program, an alternative high school in Columbus, later that day.

Students here this Fall were encouraged to work on local campaigns and even had a meeting with Governor Taft, who Christopher instructor Todd Stanley said seemed rather stiff for a “Human Side of Politics” class. Meanwhile, our Joseph and Sarah were tussling over a bag of ‘potatoe’ chips in the back of the class, and Jonathan (now a year and a few months) was pulling Liz’s hair (out); as I talked, off-the-cuff, to the students about: nuclear waste, stem cell research, and how to bring ‘potatoe chip detente’ to Sarah and Joseph.

Bringing détente between China and Taiwan would be easier, some days.

After the talk, we put up some more flyers on the way to Ashtabula County, the “largest county in Ohio,” we’d learned during the State House tour.

There Molly Linehan, a “Rotary Scholar” who went to India, told us she was struck with the extreme abject poverty there and the large amount of children working in sweat shops.

Then it was on to Cleveland, where Padua High

School's Augi Pacetti, who teaches a class on "social justice," said the average worker in a sweat shop in, say, Indonesia, makes the equivalent of \$1.50 a day, which means their families have very little in the way of the basics in shelter, clothing, medicine, food...

That night I learned seniors in Maine are doing better with food, with 30,000 elderly going to some 300 community-sponsored agriculture farms regularly for fresh produce. Gus Schumacher, former Under Secretary of Agriculture during the Clinton Administration, said in a talk that the new program has the state providing subsidy checks to the participating farmers.

Back to Bluffton.

“conscience will be clear...”

A cluster of last minute e-mails of support came in. A pastor of a small church in Kentucky wrote that he was struck with our message of “simplicity, concern for Life, compassion for the poor...”

A college student from Alabama wrote: “I happened to run across your website (recently) and I was finally able to breathe a sigh of relief. Here was this man who I honestly felt would not only keep America and the rest of the world from getting worse, but actually make both drastically BETTER!”

Another man from Rome, Georgia, sent a copy of an e-mail he just sent to “family and friends.” Part of it read: “Yet I truly believe that my vote for Joe Schriener will mean, and perhaps signify, more than just another vote for a candidate I am uncomfortable with. What’s more, my conscience will be clear as I leave the voting booth. I now can’t wait for Tuesday.”

What's more, he ended the letter with: "I'm Tom Farmer, and I approve of this message."

I loved that.

November 2

8:30 a.m.

I took Sarah and Joseph to our precinct voting place in Bluffton this morning with the intention of helping them learn, hands on, more about the election process.

(And if I could slip them past, maybe we could even 'stuff the ballot box' as well. Although I doubted Joseph could spell "Marlinski" correctly.)

On the way in, we met our friend Dale Way, who was on the way out.

He gave me a 'thumbs up,' and said: "Well, that's at least one vote for you."

I said thanks, but it probably wouldn't count because "...you have to write the vice presidential candidate in as well."

"I did," he said.

I looked at him quizzically.

"There's a sheet on all the tables with the write-in presidential candidates and their VPs," he said.

I felt a glimmer of optimism.

While standing in line, a fellow Blufftonite happened by and saw the kids with me.

"Aren't they too young to vote?" He smiled.

I said no, but I was concerned they'd forget and write in "Daddy," instead of my proper name.

Sarah looked up and said: "I'd write in Dad, not Daddy!"

Oh, how quick they grow up.

I then got the ballot and took the kids over to one of the booths where I wrote in Barb and my name, then voted on a slate of other local candidates and issues.

Afterward, I went to one of the election workers and asked to see the sheet.

She reached for a sheet of green paper – placed face down.

I asked why it was face down.

She said the “rules were” that the sheet was to remain turned over unless someone specifically asked for it (‘Like many people would even know to ask for it,’ I sighed to myself – optimism quickly vanishing.).

And it vanished altogether when I looked at the names.

Among five other write-in candidates in Ohio, there was my name and: Barbara A. Marlinski. (She had, unbeknownst to me, used her middle initial on the form I’d sent to her.)

“Do you have to write the name in *exactly*?” I asked the worker.

She said she was almost sure you did.

Now I wasn’t even sure if my vote would be counted.

I explained all this to Liz, in tones three octaves below morose.

Consolingly, Liz said: “You tried your best, honey.”

2 p.m.

And others seemed to think I tried my ‘best’ as well.

Checking my e-mails at the Bluffton Public Library, the following were some excerpts.

“Just wanted you to know I’m really impressed with

all the research on a variety of local initiatives Mr. Schriener has done. I was looking for a candidate I could actually support, and I found one here.” – Iowa.

“I had been searching for a candidate with a consistent life ethic, a commitment to actively working for peace and justice, and concern for the environment... I will happily support you at the voting booth today.” – Washington.

“I wanted to let you know you received two votes from North East, Ohio today. Neither my wife, nor myself, felt comfortable voting for the main candidates, and after reading an article in the *Akron Beacon Journal* and checking out your web site, we decided to give you our votes. I was tired of not voting for someone, but rather against the other main candidate. Also, it did not hurt that you went to Bowling Green (University)...where I graduated from.” [He must have heard I was going to change the national symbol from the Bald Eagle to the BG Falcon.] If you need a running mate in '08, let me know.” – Ohio.

I then left the Bluffton Library and walked to the Bluffton Post Office to check our box.

There was one letter. It was from Eugene, Oregon. The supporter simply wrote: “Keep up the good work.” And he enclosed \$25 for “gas money.”

4 p.m.

Liz had the radio on when I returned to our place. Election results were starting to come in from all over the country.

“Blue” states and “Red” states were weighing in.

I told Liz that maybe next time we should have a

“color” ourselves.

She smiled.

8:30 p.m.

It was late now (well, when you’ve got kids, 8:30 is late).

Liz, as she does every night, had just finished reading to our children. And we all gathered in the living room for nightly prayers.

We then tucked the ‘campaign staff’ in.

“Daddy, could you still win?” Joseph asked, his child-like innocence showing.

“Yes, Joseph,” I smiled.

8:45 p.m.

But based on the returns (and the fact that my name hadn’t been mentioned once on the reports), it wasn’t looking good.

Liz and I stayed up another hour drinking tea, listening to the ongoing reports, and reminiscing about the past three years.

Then, at 9:35 p.m., even before the polls closed in Alaska, I conceded.

And I didn’t even ‘concede’ directly, I just told Liz I thought it was time to go to bed.

4 a.m. (the next morning)

I awoke and went into the kitchen to get a glass of water.

The radio was on top of the refrigerator. I couldn’t resist.

Just as I turned it on, an announcer was saying the election had indeed come down to Ohio. There was a razor thin margin, and it was too close to call at this point.

I excitedly woke Liz and told her we still had a chance to make “a showing.” (That is, if enough Ohioans thought to ask that the green paper be turned over.)

“That’s nice, dear,” Liz half-smiled, patted me on the arm, and then – immediately rolled over and went back to sleep.

‘Some fun she’s going to be at those late night Inaugural Balls,’ I thought.

9 a.m.

The nation is still in suspense.

It’s apparently come down to Ohio’s provisional ballots, which won’t all be counted for weeks. (About the same amount of time it will take to count all the Ohio “write-in” ballots.)

2 p.m.

Even with a majority of the provisional ballots going his way, John Kerry learns it’s mathematically impossible for him to win. In a 15-minute national speech, he concedes.

Later this afternoon, George W. Bush accepted.

7:50 p.m.

After the kids were in bed tonight, Liz and I talked.

There was a sandwich in Virginia named after me. We had \$25 in the campaign coffers “for gas.” And we

had a platform, based on 14 years of extensive research, that we still contended is, *by far*, the sanest one out there.

“Do you want to do it again?” I asked Liz.

“Of course,” she said without hesitation.

“I’m in too,” I said.

Dec. 3, 2004

A *Findlay Courier* article explained today that the final presidential vote tallies for Ohio were in.

George Bush had gotten: 2,847,880 votes.

John Kerry had gotten: 2,720,955 votes.

The difference in Ohio being a slim: 126, 925 votes.

The article also noted that, of the six official write-in presidential candidates in Ohio, I had come in second behind the Green Party’s David Keith Cobb. He got 183 votes; I got 114 votes. (Translated: 114 Ohioans apparently spotted the upside-down, green piece of paper.)

What the *Findlay Courier* article didn’t say was how many people from Ney, Urbana, Hicksville, DeGraff (including the guy with the ukulele), Alliance (except the guy who owns the hot dog shop), Lancaster, Chillicothe, Cadiz (where residents ‘give a darn’ about politics), Wellston, Defiance, Bryan, Kelley’s Island... Ohio, went to the polls Nov. 2 and wrote in “Joe Schriner,” leaving the vice-presidential line blank.

What the article didn’t say was how many people, taking Newark, Ohio’s Kathleen Pipes’ advice, went to the polls and wrote in “average Joe” Schriner. (The Ohio Election Commission doesn’t accept nicknames.)

What the article didn’t say was how many people in Ohio wrote in both names and left Barb’s middle initial out.

What the article didn't say was how many Ohioans went to the polls wanting to vote for me, but seeing they didn't know Barb's name – didn't vote for president at all.

All told, maybe, oh: 126, 926?

Who knows?

And something else was missing from this particular article.

That is, how many people in Wendover, Nevada, after reading the local newspaper's article about our U.S. Department of Peace, vowed to work more stridently for peace – so another 'Enola Gay' never rolls out of "Hangar 5" at their airfield again?

Or how many students at Mississippi State University, after hearing my talk earlier this year, said to themselves: 'Maybe it isn't all about money,' and changed majors to social work?

Then again, by us talking about Eunice, New Mexico's Hispanic Council enough throughout the south, maybe some more families have moved out of poverty by now, and the children are no longer hungry.

Or perhaps a version of the Cleveland area's Womankind crisis pregnancy medical model got started in Burlington, Vermont, after Liz and I talked about it to some residents there – and a baby who otherwise wouldn't have been born, was.

Then (and here was a *real* intangible) how many people heard us talk about abortion, or the environment, or social justice... became more informed, and ultimately changed their vote from one mainstream candidate to the other?

And hopefully most of all, maybe, just maybe, as people in Rawlins, Wyoming; Sanford, Maine; Ely, Min-

nesota; Winnemucca, Nevada... read about how Liz and I had given up our “normal lives” to travel in the hopes of making the country a better place for our children; they, in turn, were inspired enough to do something in their community to make it a better place for their kids.

Who knows?

Those are the kinds of things that just never show up on exit polls.

...turned the cell phone off

The end of the *Findlay Courier* article that day said that: “Schriner could not be reached for comment Thursday [night], but may already be on the campaign trail... [he] announced Nov. 3 that he would again seek the land’s highest office in 2008.”

I was in fact home the night before raking leaves with the kids, then going over the Atlas with Liz for the next tour route.

It’s just that I’d turned the cell phone off.

After people start finding out you’ve gotten 114 votes in Ohio, you don’t want to be too accessible.

for more copies of this book call 216-781-8655

about the author

—The *Duluth News Tribune* in Minnesota said of Joe Schriener: “...a message of common sense and an aura as ordinary as his khaki pants and brown and blue plaid shirt.” However, the *Salem News* in Ohio sees Schriener



as “no ordinary Joe.” The reason they site is that in the last two election cycles, Joe and his family have traveled many thousands of miles down

America’s back roads campaigning. For president. Of the United States. Of America. No party machine. No big money. Just a vision and an old motor home. This “average Ohio parent” is a journalist in the ilk of Charles Kuralt, a devoted husband who loses to his wife at Scrabble regularly, and a father whose kids drive him nuts only occasionally. And it is those kids and their future, and for that matter every kids’ future, that drive he and his wife Liz to make this country, and the world, a better place.

One town at a time...

What they are saying about Joe:

“Isn’t our generation ready to put an end to overlooking our problems and truly make our world better? The first step? Vote for Joe.”

–Leah Beth Bryson,
columnist, *The Vision* newspaper,
Lambuth University in Tennessee.

“A lot of what Joe says really would come across as good, common sense to many Americans. They would gladly have someone like him leading the country...”

– editor David Green,
The Observer newspaper,
Morenci, Michigan.

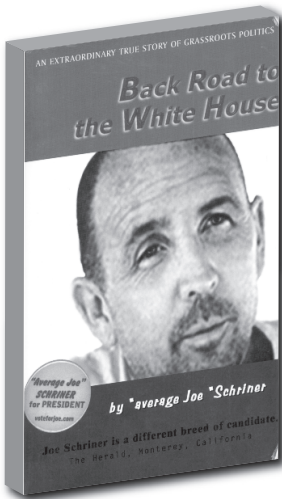
“...all of them (students) seemed to agree that Mr. Schriener’s voice is one that needs to be heard in our country and world.”

–John Cooper,
Theology Instructor,
Xavier University,
Cincinnati, Ohio

***For more books by Joe, see the following pages...**

Back Road to the White House

by “average Joe” Schriener



Against all odds, and then some, an “average guy” from the Midwest does the unthinkable. He runs for president of the United States in Campaign 2000. No party machine... No big money... Just a dream – and an old van.

What they are saying about Joe:

“I’m in awe...”

–Doug Raymond,
Straight Talk radio host,
Morehead City, N.C.

“...he seems to make a lot more sense than most politicians I try not to listen to.”

–Steve Zender, editor,
The Progressor-Times newspaper,
Carey, Ohio.

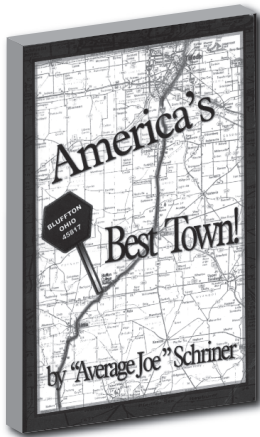
“Supplementing the national political debate is not Schriener’s goal, however. He intends to be president.”

–reporter Daniel Wood,
The Christian Science Monitor

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America's Best Town! *(Bluffton, Ohio 45817)*

by “average Joe” Schriener



If there were ever a town that embodied Joe’s political platform, it would be Bluffton, Ohio 45817.

The author’s groundbreaking first book about Bluffton (pop. 3,877), explains why it has the best “quality of life” of any place in the country. A quality of life that has led one of America’s top TV journalists, an internationally known doctor, a superstar comedian, a professional football legend, a U.S. presidential candidate, and a host of others to call this small Ohio town “home.”

A quality of life that’s not about affluence, climate or scenery (unless you like corn), but rather it is about community spirit, environmental awareness, outreach to the disadvantaged...and this rather odd college mascot.

Bluffton is an Oz, Dorothy or no Dorothy. It is a Field of Dreams that still boasts “free-air” at all the town service stations. And with just the right touch of small town charm, poignancy and humor, this book introduces the reader to an absolutely fascinating (yet admittedly quirky) cast of “Blufftonites,” and what they’re up to in making the town what it is – the best town in America!

“This is undoubtedly the best book about the best town by the best author!” –The author’s “best” friend, Ralph

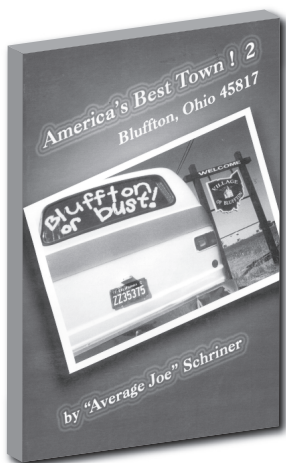
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America's Best Town! 2 *(Bluffton, Ohio 45817)*

by "average Joe" Schriener

What's the best town in America? Is it Carmel, California, Lake Tahoe, Nevada, Jackson Hole, Wyoming, or Bluffton, Ohio? If you answered Bluffton, Ohio, you were right.

And "average Joe" Schriener is at it again, seconding his claim that Bluffton's community esprit de corps (whatever that means), peace building, civic involvement, political activism, environmental consciousness and a small town Christmas pageant next to none... all combine to make it the best town in the country.



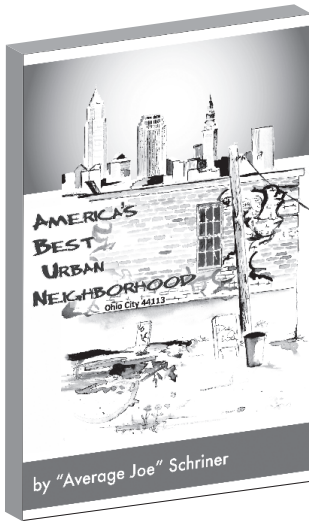
If that isn't enough, Bluffton (pop. 3,877) has the most poets per capita of any American town, the best coffee shop, the best university, and a furry little mascot that is trying – apparently with some suc-

cess – to take over the world!

And all this is told with just the right touch of small town charm and humor.

Llumina Press
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America's Best Urban Neighborhood (Ohio City 44113) by "average Joe" Schriener



There's graffiti. There're gangs. There're drugs. There's pollution. There're homeless people. There're homicides... And there's a scenic (cough) view of Lake Erie that's next to none.

So why would Cleveland's "Ohio City" area be the best urban neighborhood in the country?

Because in the midst of all the deterioration, a high-energy group of people has taken a collective deep breath, rolled up their sleeves and moved here from small town and suburban America, to help.

And boy, have they!

***To order, call *Orange Blossom Press* at: **216-781-8655**

\$14.95 per book + shipping and handling

Unfazed by a narrow defeat in their Campaign 2000 presidential bid (ok, it wasn't really *that* close), "average Joe" Schriener and his family took to the back roads of America again for Campaign 2004. And during a 40,000-mile grassroots political odyssey, the "campaign team" stumped in hundreds of towns, appeared in media practically everywhere they went and had yet more absolutely fascinating encounters with the country at large.

This book is for every 'average American citizen' who at one point or another has said: "I should run for president." And this will definitely put you in the front seat of what that might feel like.

What they are saying about Joe:

"He (Schriener) simply has an idea that his common sense approach to problem solving is one that can be administered from the highest office in the land."

— *Portsmouth (OH) Daily Times*

"A lot of what Joe says really would come across as good, common sense to many Americans. They would gladly have someone like him leading the country..."

— *editor David Green, The Observer, Morenci, Michigan*

"Supplementing the national political debate is not Schriener's goal, however. He intends to be president."

— *The Christian Science Monitor*

Joe Schriener (right) is your typical Midwestern husband, father, small town journalist and, oh yeah, presidential candidate on a mission. He is also the author of: *Back Road to the White House*, *America's Best Town*; *America's Best Town 2* and *America's Best Urban Neighborhood*.

