

Questions shall persist as long as life unfolds

ONE BUDDHIST. Three Jews. Two Christians. Seated around the table, sharing food and a faith in God who unfolds the destiny of all life.

Two refugees. One from Vietnam and the other from Yugoslavia. Four native-born Americans with European ancestry. All citizens of the United States. Seated around the table, sharing food and the freedom of opportunity to become what one chooses.

A dermatologist. A pathologist, teacher and student. A musician and Lutheran clergyman. Seated around the table, sharing food and the recall of events that brought them together.

shape our present. It was also a time to create memories. Tra Mi had entered our lives because she could no longer live here in her own country. There was sorrow in the death of her husband at the time in his life where happiness and joy could again be known.

There was sadness in hearing again of her mother's life of hardship in Ho Chi Minh City. There was anguish and pain in tracing her route as a refugee from Saigon in 1975 to Michigan, 1985. There was celebration and commendation for her success in reconstructing her professional and personal life as a dermatologist, wife and mother in a new land.

We are led by God through life, but life is



Rev. Lloyd Buss

never pre-packaged. Life is never delivered to us in a finished form. To be led is to have a direction, the direction of the Spirit and the direction of memory and the direction of hope.

THERE ARE some things we will want to forget. If there are too many experiences or events without ultimate meaning, then we

shall collapse in despair. If your anguish and anger from the past make us impatient in shaping a life with meaning in the present, then there will be no future.

But the past is never past. Life will have meaning only when the past is folded into the present, or we discard the past and let it fall empty to the ground.

I really don't know the best way to remember or recall such painful events as flight from one's homeland, the loss of all personal goods and professional status, permanent separation from older parents and extended family. Where does one start to reconstruct the life of meaning we must have when the one we had is taken from us?

ONE BUDDHIST. Three Jews. Two Christians. Six citizens of the United States with unique ancestry. Professionally competent and productive participants in the order of life and community.

Some things were more important than others. Some things we would never want to change. Perhaps some day we can recall the past without the sorrow and sadness that gave us the present with its joy of accomplishment and hope.

Perhaps some day we will know the meaning of all that has unfolded for us, the possibility of meaning in what often appears to be a meaningless world was an experience of grace.

Abuse of elderly: hidden problem is emerging

Dear Joe:

Would you please address the problem of elderly abuse in your column? As a health care professional, I have come across several instances where the abuse of an older client has been such a concern that the abused person has had to be taken from the home and placed in a protective (nursing home) environment.

Mrs. C.V.

Dear Mrs. V.

Perhaps the best way to address the formidable problem of elderly abuse is to print the results of a recent survey done by the Gray Panthers. The 507 survey respondents were primarily nurses, police officers, hospital social workers and doctors. They reported more than 2,000 cases of elderly abuse in the Austin, Texas, area.



gerontology
A. Jolayne Farrell

When reporting the abuse the respondents noted:

- Seventy-five percent of their clients showed evidence of exploitation, mainly illegal or improper use of the financial resources of the elderly for monetary or personal benefit.
- Seventy-two percent were verbally or emotionally abused; i.e. older persons were insulted, frightened, humiliated or threatened.

• Sixty-two percent were physically abused and had been hit, bruised, sexually molested, cut, burned or physically restrained.

• Fifty percent showed evidence of active neglect such as the withholding of food, medicine, money or bathroom assistance.

SOME OF the "horror stories" uncovered by the professionals while doing the survey were:

A 70-year-old woman's son beat her and took her money to support his drug habit. Another elderly woman's son sexually abused her until she signed over all her life's savings to him.

And an elderly woman was semi-comatose and covered in bed sores when she was admitted to a hospital emergency room; she had been confined to bed by her husband for many months.

The abuse of the elderly (as does the abuse of

other vulnerable persons) stems from a multitude of social problems: crowded living quarters, extreme poverty or marital conflicts. Other causes that figure prominently are personal or financial motives, emotional problems, alcohol or drug abuse and major family crises such as the loss of a job.

WE HOPE there is a solution to the horrible problem of elderly abuse. The Gray Panthers recommend that a structured reporting system be put into place in all communities for law and health care professionals. Public education about elder abuse through newspapers, TV and other media is very necessary. Also families

caring for their elderly relatives need to know about the services that are available to help them cope so that the problem can be prevented.

Up until recently elderly abuse has been a hidden problem. Fortunately, health care professionals have become more aware of it and are doing something about it. Hopefully in the near future help will be readily available to all concerned so that the problem can be prevented. Thank you for your letter.

Readers may write to Jolayne Farrell at P.O. Box 66, Postal Station G., 1075 Queen Street East, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau (OCVB) has a current file of volunteer opportunities for more than 200 agencies. Non-profit organizations needing assistance may list with the bureau. For more information about these and other volunteer openings, call the bureau at 642-7272.

COFFEE HOUSE AIDE — Sensitive and caring adults are needed by Association for Retarded Citizens of Oakland County to set up and serve each Wednesday morning 7-10, September to July. Phone 642-7272.

DRIVER — Greater Detroit Society for Blind needs mature, empathetic volunteers, 18 and up, to drive visually impaired teacher to blind clients one day per week, 8:30 to 4:30. Oakland and Macomb area only. Mileage and lunch. Training. Phone 642-7272.

CRISIS COUNSELOR — Sensitive volunteers, 18 and up, are needed by Women's Survival Center to man crisis line, learn information and referral network and attend meetings. Four hours each time. Training. Phone 642-7272.

CLUB HELP — Camp Fire — North Oakland Council needs many volunteers to work with mentally impaired children during school but in club setting for one hour per week during summer. Experience

with mentally handicapped helpful, but not necessary. 642-7272.

INTERVIEWER — The OCVB needs experienced volunteers for interviews on-phone or face-to-face of potential volunteers and/or to solicit agency opportunities. Friendly, empathetic and good listeners. Phone 642-7272.

ORGANIST — Georgian Bloomfield needs organist to play hymns Thursday morning and Monday evening. Phone 642-7272.

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