

THIS IS THE STORY of how **HABITAT FOR HUMANITY** was born. Born, not made. "Made" suggests something mechanical & intentionally processive such as a planning process. Our dreams & plans, as Bobby Burns said, "gang aft agley" (go often askew), but cheer up! For while "God is not the author of disorder" (1Cor.14.33), he does bless our persistent intention to see his will done "on earth as it is in heaven" (persistence is the nodal virtue in the NT's Letter to the Hebrews [Jesus as model: 12.1-2]).

Before getting into flashbacks, I should tell you in what specific sense Loree was Millard's "partner in the Lord's work." She was first to use copies (I made) of the first photographs of the first Habitat homes ever built. She showed the color-slides in various churches to spread the good news. But back to the long form of the story....

1 "What if someone were to try to live, now, the Sermon on the Mount?" One of my fellow-students, in a doctoral seminar on the Greek of the Gospel of Matthew, asked the professor during a class session. Dr. W. Hersey Davis was silent, then smiled & said "Nobody's keeping you from trying." Well, my fellow-student the next year (1942) did try. With wife Florence & two friends, Clarence Jordan (pronounced "Jerd'n") started an interracial farming community in Americus, GA, & called it "Community"--actually "Koinonia," for Clarence's primary words of the Word were Greek, the common Greek of the NT, called "Common" (in Greek, "Koiné"). And Prof. Davis, though an elegant Southern patrician, was at heart a common man. He loved & taught the common street speech in which the NT is written & which we know best, elsewhere, in the papyri. On the titlepage of my copy of his GREEK PAPYRI OF THE FIRST CENTURY (Harper & Bros./33), I wrote what I heard him say more than once: "The papyri make a fellow * feel at home in the NT" more than anything else.*

2 27 years ol' Clarence plugged away on that red-clay Georgia farm. No imaginable temptation to discouragement passed him by. The red soil & the rednecks fought him, frustrating his efforts

*Clarence's "Cotton Patch New Testament" is written in Southern rural koiné.

This morning, as I was preparing to speak this evening to the adults of the Craigville Family Camp on their theme, "Community Building," I came upon this book & decided to tell an encouraging story of community emergence--a world-community emergence more magical, & spiritual, than anything in Harry Potter.

BOKOTOLA

Millard Fuller
Ass'n. Press/77

COVER: "The inspiring story of a man who turned his back on a fortune to launch a housing project in the Third World--and of its dramatic significance as a new form of mission."

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Titlepage

To Loree Elliott -

My partner in the Lord's work, i.e. And to Willis.

Both of you are special friends and I thank God for your concern and help.

May the Lord guide us all as we seek to serve in a needy world.

Millard Fuller

March 15, 1977

FOR
EASIER READING:

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MILLARD FULLER

March 15, 1977

but never breaking his heart (see 2Cor.4.1-16a: "never lose heart"). Millard & wife Linda lived at Koinonia during Clarence's last $4\frac{1}{2}$ years there & here (i.e., on earth); & on p16 of his book BOKOTOLA telling the story of the birth of HABITAT FOR HUMANS, Millard puts it memorably: "Enraged white segregationists set upon the community with a vengeance--beatings, bombings, burnings, and a total economic boycott." Machine-guns (I can add), forcing everybody to sleep in basements.

3 Clarence never preached or taught from an English NT--always & only from the original Greek, which he studied/prayed daily & was doing so when he died of a heart attack in his little private shack off away from Koinonia's main buildings. Millard rightly says that he took the body into town in a farm wagon because the coroner wouldn't go near the place. But I add something Loree & I heard widow Florence say as the three of us sat in the Jordan home drinking the last bottle of (scuppernon) wine Clarence had made: one white woman named Roslynn, whose husband was to become President of the U.S., came to Koinonia for Clarence's simple burial in a home-made pine box out among the pecan trees--& she brought a turkey she'd baked.

4 NOTE on clergy & the biblical languages: The old tradition was that ability to study the Bible itself (not in translations!) was a requirement for Protestant ordination. You couldn't get into seminary without knowing Hebrew, Greek, & Latin (& I didn't: I'm an old-school Protestant clergyman). In those days, Clarence was no exception to the rule that the biblical languages were foundational to Christian priestcraft, & our school--Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, KY--was world-famous for biblical-linguistic discipline (which is why I went there from NY).

Further, the clergyman was expected to be "social-action" oriented. (At that time, SBTS was the South's most social-liberal seminary, but of late it's sadly fallen into fundamentalism.) In Jan.'40, to integrate (white/black) our classes, we (Clarence, Gordon Cosby [later, founder of The Church of the Savior, Washington, DC], I, & a few others) petitioned the trustees; & upon being refused, we closed down the school till the trustees, against state law, agreed to the integration. Two years later, Koinonia began at the point at which the seminary had arrived in Feb.'40: integration. (No, integration didn't start with some black youth at a soda fountain in '59.)

5 Clarence & Millard had transformed Koinonia Farms into Koinonia Partners, using legal-managerial-financial skills Clarence didn't & Millard did have. Shortly after Clarence's death, in their Koinonia home Millard & Linda invited Loree & me to pray with them about the next stage of their ministry. On our knees, the four of us asked the Lord for direction & directions, that the treasure in these earthen vessels, our lives, not be squandered. They'd already begun to dream of low-cost housing for the poorest of the poor, & had visited African countries, of which Zaire seemed the best prospect (except that neither of them knew any French!). Loree & I had gone to the Fuller home right from the widow Florence's. (NOTE on Florence: She was a librarian at SBTS, & Clarence went to the library to take Florence out while I went there to take books out. He & I were friends especially from our common action toward integration in Jan.'40: common action leads to community.) (NOTE on Millard: He grew up Congregational & was very active in youth work in the United Church of Christ--a fact I wasn't aware of till I read the book.)

6 Another incident you won't find in the book: Millard, in deep despair over an impending divorce (which didn't occur), traveled to Koinonia in hope that Clarence could help him. Clarence didn't show for the appointment. Upon inquiry, Millard learned that Clarence, in the unexpected absence of the milker, was doing the evening milking. When he complained to Clarence about the delay, Clarence, without looking up from his milking, said "You can wait, the cow can't." Clarence & Florence could wait. 27 years in a never-"successful" community. Then death, & the birth of a world community of caring, a strange new form of Christian mission, HABITAT FOR HUMANS. P170: "Closed doors in one place mean open doors somewhere else." P15: "God was helping me put together the jumbled puzzle of my life," said Millard. And an old wise one helped Millard to surrender to God, stop planning his life, & give away his wealth. The old wise one, whom he happened to hear in a hotel-room television, said "A planned life can only be endured (p7)."