

Now that the Town of Barnstable MA has granted us occupancy (late winter '81), and my physical labor on the only house I've ever built is abating, I offer the following whimsical and profound thoughts on the process. You separate them into these two categories, and others if you wish.

1. What gets your attention gets you, and what holds your attention is your god. Yes, a very old saying of mine, and now backed with fresh intensive experience. The past eight months have back-defined me as house-builder (instead of clergyman, teacher [though I've been into some of that, as into other clergy tasks], author, public citizen). Paradoxically, I have more distance from this one than from previous domiciles: I could walk away from it without great psychospiritual pain--"having, as not having," as Paul saith. Not a god; on an Adirondak retreat I just returned from leading, I never even mentioned the house!

2. How wonderful, for one whose primary work is with invisibles, to be free to do (to displace, for the purpose, Mother Teresa's saying) "something beautiful for God"! And what a joy to see its beauty speak to visitors as well as some twenty workers through building-time!

3. How spiritual, in for me a fresh way, to strike this blow in defiance of decay! The common comment of architects who have seen the house has been, "It will last a thousand years." It was the last thing I heard the clergyman-patriarch of Cape Cod, Pierre Vuillemier (also, an architect-graduate of Harvard, and designer of many ecclesial structures on the Cape), say before his recent death. Some have hinted at the question, Why would an old one (I do not include Loree in "old," but's she's been full partner all the way in everything, including timber-hauling) build for himself such a house as he'll inhabit not more than a tiny fraction of its life-history to come? Ah, but that's the playful-joyful part of the defiance. On a steel plate I etched the details, then set the plate invisibly into the structure at a point where it'll be discovered 1,000 years from now at dismantling time....a jot on the page of history, and one tittle of immortality.

4. Compensation: I have never been physically strong except in will, and the tremendous strength of the house--its frame almost forty tons of red oak!--is a bodying forth of spirit-strength to house our bodies. Further, I am small, and the house can accomodate many guests and small groups (to continue our ministries, such as the less commodious Chappaqua house provided for in a smaller way).

5. Speaking of ministry, the house is in Craigville, an 1872-founded Christian Community on Cape Cod's warmest beach. Most of the buildings a rickety old white-clapboard Victorian with charming exterior-interior bricabrac and few years left to run out toward the Second Coming. Our house, in vertical cedar and unobtrusive except for size, is set behind the white tabernacle-church just beyond the marsh--so that it does not fight the American-gothic virtue of the hamlet's green which the tabernacle faces. Our building affirms the continuity of Christian community in general, and the worth and future of this one in particular. Year-round retreats and conferences. Craigville Conference Center, C. MA 02636.

6. Because Loree and I have been job-free to put fulltime on the project, the cost has been far lower than otherwise would have been the case--far less than half what people who guess (on their own initiative, for we of course never say: gross, in our subculture) guess. Doing much of your own architecture and all of your own contracting, as well as much of the "go-fer"ing and other hauling and arranging and and and....Why would it not save a lot of \$? And render a lot of pleasure and joy and good health of body and spirit!

"Every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything." --Hebrews 3.4 NIV