

Our Journey Together as Orthodox Christians
In Community

Big House and Big Hearts Celebrating 35 Years

By Maye Johnson

The newly painted house, part of the ministry, known then as Maranatha North, stood alone at the end of the dusty dirt road. As I looked around on that cloudy day in June 1973, I could see the potential for a beautiful home, but there was still a long way to go. Back then, there were only five other residences along the half-mile of what is now Monastery Drive, and, adding to my feeling of having entered the wilderness, none were visible. Alaska had been my destination choice as a summer vacation, but when I arrived in Eagle River, I had no idea my life had just changed forever.

I was a “working” guest for the summer, assisting **Barb Dunaway** in the kitchen and helping my brother, Don Lourie, move rocks to make way for a new lawn. The summer included late night talks in the midnight sun with the many guests who wandered through and, by September, I knew this was the place I needed to be. I lived for a year in what became known over the years as the Big House. In the spring of 1974, before my marriage to Tom Johnson, **Harold Dunaway** sat me down and said, “Maye, someday you are going to run this house.” For numerous reasons, this did not happen, but I have been here to observe the many changes, challenges and rewards for those who did run the house.

If you have been reading this newsletter, you know the basic history of how Harold and Barb obtained the house to continue their ministry with young people. This is a small bit of the 35-year history of the couples who have run the Big House and its programs, and how a whole community evolved from it.

“This ministry began as a house for Christian discipleship and hospitality. A community and a church were born from everyone’s efforts at the Big House.”

- Fr. Marc Dunaway

Occasionally, Barb sent out letters and photos to her many friends and relatives, giving an update about the people and activities at the Big House. The letter she sent in spring of 1973 offers some insight to their goals and desires. She writes, “This winter has been a time of learning to cope with ‘increased house and household’. But God did say and we are reminded, ‘Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for my name’s sake, shall receive many times as much...’ (Matthew 19:29).”

(Continued on page 4)



1977-1978

What I Learned from a Beehive

By Tisha Dunham

From our front porch on Monastery Drive, my husband Joe and I love to relax and gaze out on the broad, flowered expanse of the St. James House lawn, with the Chugach Mountains rising behind it. The scene is lovely, especially in the brief summer months with their long, light days, and we feel privileged to live in this magnificent land.

But we are not the only creatures who spend time on this front porch. Joe is a beekeeper and we have 90 hives on a piece of farm land in Palmer, 25 miles or so from Eagle River. We also have one hive living on our front porch. As I sit here in the bright afternoon sunshine, watching and listening to their hum of activity, I reflect on the short life's journey of these bees, and to the lessons that they teach us, if only we will open our eyes and see.

The little screened packages of bees arrive early in the spring, each with its queen caged separately. After about three days, each package gets installed into a hive box and the queens are released into their hives. The queens know immediately what to do – they begin laying eggs. After 21 days, the first new bees hatch out and, as soon as their tiny bodies are dry, they too know exactly what to do. They can't fly yet so they become nurse bees for the next hatchlings. This process continues until the bees are ready to make wax, a job they move on to while newer bees take on the job of nurse bees. Eventually, the wax-making bees are able to fly; they go out to forage for nectar and pollen, which is used to feed the queen and the developing larvae.

The truly amazing thing is that the bees are born knowing just what to do. There is no question or hesitation. From the moment they are born, from birth to death, over a period of about 8 weeks, they perform all the necessary tasks in their colony.

We humans are also born to develop in our family. Our parents come from diverse backgrounds, as did theirs before them, so how we are raised depends largely on how our parents were raised. We are certainly helpless when we are born, and depend on our parents to care for us and teach us. Unlike the bees, we don't know what to do other than to demand attention and we cannot care for ourselves until many years have passed.

Watching the bees, I am reminded of one of my favorite verses of scripture. Psalms 139:14 says, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." God's design is absolute and at times unfathomable, but always beautiful and amazing. To understand this, all I have to do is sit and watch the bees as they come and go, all the while knowing exactly what they are supposed to do. If I am still and listen, I too can hear that wonderful inner voice giving me direction.

I believe there is a Godly imprint on us all; however, it is up to each of us individually to accept that we too are fearfully and wonderfully made, to tap into God's will for our lives, and then, like the bees, just do it.



Tisha Dunham

Outpost of the Kingdom

By Mary Alice Cook

Maris Kelly, the long time secretary for St. John Cathedral, lived in the St. James House for a good part of her life, two years as a single girl and nine years, off and on, of her married life with husband Myles. Two of their three children were born and one died during their stay in the Big House. Maris' life has been intertwined with the history of the St. John's community for many years. She recalls a summer when she and Myles hosted Fr. Paul Lazor, a faculty member of St. Vladimir's seminary. It was late at night and Fr. Paul had gone to bed when the Kellys noticed the red and pink streaks of a spectacular Alaskan summer sunset. After a moment of debate, they decided that Fr. Paul shouldn't miss it, so they woke him. He came upstairs and the three of them stood together at the window for awhile, watching the gorgeous sunset before returning to sleep.

We have had many wonderful guests. We hope we have made them feel welcome. In the late summer of 1991, my family first went to the Big House to attend classes for "inquirers" into the Orthodox Church. I will never forget sitting in the living room on sunny afternoons, the big windows open to the sound of mowers on the lawn and the breeze pulling in the fragrance of freshly cut grass. We sat in the comfy, overstuffed chairs, sipping lemonade and listening to Fr. Marc's teaching, and marveling that we had finally found the church and the place we longed for.

This year we at St. John's celebrate two milestones, the 35 year history of the St. James House ministry and the 20th anniversary of the chrismation of the St. John's faithful into the Orthodox Church. At our just concluded Eagle River Institute, we heard a series of talks by Fr. Gregory Rogers of Aiken, South Carolina, recounting the history of the Evangelical Orthodox Church and the reception of its members into the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese. Fr. Gregory concluded his teaching by showing the video which tells the story of the journey of the EOC. At the end of the video, the loving, heartfelt words of Metropolitan Philip brought tears to many eyes. In this issue of *In Community*, as we celebrate our two milestones with stories and pictures, Metropolitan Philip's words are an appropriate theme: ***"WELCOME HOME!"***

Inner and Outer Journeys

By Denise Ray

Like Dorothy spinning in the midst of the tornado, so I found myself caught in a storm of swirling and colliding thoughts, memories, and feelings as I listened to the presentations of Dr. Al Rossi and Fr. Gregory Rogers at this year's Eagle River Institute. As the daughter of a former Evangelical Orthodox Church bishop, my growing-up years coincided exactly with the EOC's journey to Orthodoxy, yet I did not realize until this year's Institute the extent to which that journey molded my life and defined my concept of "normal." For while I absorbed Dr. Rossi and Fr. Gregory's teaching, God revealed the significance of many of my family's struggles and efforts over the past several years. "Grace, True Community, Vision, Authoritative Serving Leadership, Care, Seeing and Hearing from God, Good Works, Godliness, Orthodox Theology, Worship, The Hope, Catholicity." Unconsciously, these are the qualities my

economic demands of Southern California required that both my husband and I work full-time (plus overtime). Intuitively we knew that, as Dr. Rossi put it, "sanctity is a process of subtraction," and that somehow we needed to "say no, get rid of things, lighten up, carry less, and do less," yet we couldn't figure out how.

God took care of that for us. Last summer, He let us "lighten up" our finances and family configuration a bit when our daughter, Bethany, decided to extend her three-week vacation to a one-year stay at the St. James House. Frankly, this killed me. I *knew* she was never coming home. Yet, her reasoning was based on following Christ, so how could her father and I say no? As often happens during emotional stress, my prayer life improved tremendously, and one of the things I

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husband, Dn. Joseph, and I have sought spiritually and striven to cultivate both in our family and in our former parish, St. Barnabas, during our twenty-four year marriage, and God has in many ways blessed those efforts as He promised in Matthew 6:33 – "... seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

Of those church characteristics, "True Community" was by far the most elusive for us to achieve in Southern California. In an area where 1,000 square foot starter homes sell for over half a million dollars, we found it difficult to make ends meet financially, much less situate ourselves in any kind of geographic proximity to other church members. As much as the Eucharistic worship of the church did build us together as a community emotionally and spiritually, it was difficult to be separated from our church family during the week, especially since the

prayed for was that our family could be together. Foremost, however, I asked that God's will be done. Growing up in the church firmly ingrains in one's spiritual consciousness that, as Dr. Rossi put it, if we "learn Orthodox spirituality . . . Everything else will take care of itself."

During the next six months, every family member visited Bethany at St. John's, and several communicated that they would like to move here - in large part due to the strength of physical community. As we landed back in Los Angeles in February, after a visit to Eagle River, my husband, who was also preparing at that time to retire from the carpenters' union, said, "I want to move by August 1st." I was in shock – and not necessarily good shock – I knew this would be a huge transition for a family of seven. We committed to pray for God's will during Lent. Though we had not finalized our decision to move, our departure for



Deacon Joseph and Denise Ray

Alaska was announced at our Paschal Feast. It is the Lord. It seemed that God's leading was clear.

As expected, this has been a major change for our family, but the people of St. John's have been terrifically welcoming. I am impressed with the strength of catholicity which exists between the parish of St. Barnabas and our new parish here at St. John's, and I am confident that, in spite of the inevitable struggles and readjustments that the coming months (and, realistically, years) will bring, if we keep our eyes focused on Jesus Christ, we will together be able to make "ordinary" life "extraordinary."

In Community

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This verse in Matthew has proven to ring with great truth. Thirteen couples, so far, have left houses, families and sometimes their jobs, to be a part of this ministry. They helped out substantially as God led us down the path to the ancient and rich truth of the Orthodox Church. Each couple was willing to give a year or more to serve in this unique capacity.

Fr. Marc and Betsy Dunaway, one of the many couples who met while living as singles at the Big House, took over the running of it in the summer of 1984. The building of the cathedral had begun in 1983 and there was much effort being spent on getting it built and bringing the community into the canonical Orthodox Church. Fr. Marc is now our archpriest and Betsy teaches Kindergarten in our school and keeps the grounds looking spectacular all summer. They have done all of this while raising four children.

Another couple who met at the Big House was **Myles and Maris Kelly**. In 1977 they moved in to help with the program and maintenance, and then ran the program from 1988-1990. In February, 1990, Maris was able to sharpen the hospitality skills she had been teaching when the Big House hosted 25 priests who journeyed to Alaska for a conference.

From 1993-2000 the Big House was a "hospitality house," with several senior citizens and young couples calling it home. There was no official youth program, but **Eric and Diana Truelson** and their three children played host to many memorable guests during those years, among whom were: Dr. John Boojamra, Matushka Julianna Schmemann, Bishop JOSEPH, Bishop BASIL, Bishop KALLISTOS, Sister Magdalene of Essex England, and Patriarch ALEXI of Moscow. Diana stated, "Our children were submerged in teaching, dinners, guests, and "church talk", and heard what was important in life; it helped center our family in the church."

In 2000 **Dn. Tom and Susan Ross** took up the challenge of turning the Big House back into a youth ministry. They had met at Maranatha North and were eager to see the Big House, now officially renamed the St. James House, returned to its earlier purpose. Dn. Tom and Sue were grateful for the opportunity to help guide young people onto the path of adulthood.

After selling their home and retiring from the Navy, **Dn. Dan and Theresa Gray**, along with their four children, moved into the house in the fall of 2002. They were there for three years and when I asked Dn. Dan why they did it, he said he "always thought of the St. James House as the hinge pin of so many good things in our community." They too enjoyed working with young people.

During some of the earlier years there were many building projects in progress as the residents from the Big House bought land adjacent to the original five acres. The building of private homes, a multi-purpose building soon to become our worship center and currently our school, the Cathedral, and St. Sergius Chapel rose up as the fruit of great labor and sacrifice. Often, young people at the Big House would be asked to haul lumber and supplies to one of the many work sights. They and the couples running the program gave many hours of work and, quite literally, helped build this community. If you take a stroll down Monastery Drive today, you will see 27 homes that house 32 families in the St. John's church. Wander over to Darby Road, parallel to Monastery, and you will see homes which house 20 more families, all within walking distance of St. John Cathedral.

"Today this ministry still impacts the lives of many. St. John's is blessed by the young people who live there."
- Fr. Marc Dunaway

Many of the overseeing couples spent time as singles in the house, ran it after they were married, and now help in many capacities in other parishes throughout the United States. Included in this group are:

Dn. George and Susie Nelson who took a turn in 1990 and remember "trying to help the VERY needy people...while still maintaining something worthwhile for others who weren't so burdened. The biggest 'rewards' were the many lifelong friendships and marriages that came out of that time together and the much larger picture of Orthodoxy we

were given as a result of the spirituality of the guests we hosted during the year." Dn. George and Susie now serve in Anchorage at St. Innocent Cathedral.

Fr. Paul Moses and Bonnie Jaroslav had been young singles at the house who married and then took the reins of leadership in 1980. Fr Paul always had a passion for young people and a great desire to found a mission church. So in the fall of 1996 he moved his family to Homer to begin the hard work of raising up a church. On June 10, 2007, All Saints of America church was consecrated by Bishop JOSEPH and Fr Paul was elevated to archpriest.

Reader Michael and Maria Smith moved into the Big House shortly after their wedding. In April 1987 they hosted Metropolitan PHILIP when he traveled north to chrismate us into the Orthodox Church. Reader Michael and Maria Smith are now at All Saints of America Church in Homer, Alaska.

Fr. Michael and Rita Molloy moved into the house in the fall of 1977. Fr. Mike said their greatest challenge was to "get a dozen young people with various personalities, from different backgrounds, with differing levels of social and spiritual maturity, to co-exist in one house for one year. That this ever works is due to the Holy Spirit." After 30 years at St John's, Fr. Mike and Kh. Rita served at St. Herman Church in Wasilla, Alaska until September 3rd of this year. They are now part of St. Paul Church in Lynnwood, Washington.

Single life at Maranatha North turned into marriage, children and eventually enrollment in seminary for **Michael and Leslie Dunaway**. He was ordained to the diaconate and the logical way to transition back into the community was for them to run the Big House. In 1991, they ministered to about 24 young people during the two years there. A short time later he became Fr. Michael and they founded St. Herman's Mission in Wasilla, Alaska. They now live in Goldendale, Washington where Fr. Michael serves as a priest.

Siding the House with cedar was one of the bigger projects **Harley and Dianne Cranor** took on in 1978 when they ran the program. Harley, with his Colo-

(Continued on page 5)

Big House and Big Hearts

By Maye Johnson

(Continued from page 4)

rado cowboy can-do attitude and his desire to serve others, along with Dianne's spunk and hospitable nature, made them great leaders for two years. Harley eventually went to seminary, was ordained Fr. Mark and they founded St. James parish in Ft. Collins, Colorado.

Currently **Bruce and Monica Johnson** are at the helm. Bruce said, "Being alumni of the Big House, we have always wanted to give something back, and with our boys out of the house, the question became 'Why not?' We love being around young people and hope to be a positive influence, set a good example within our relationship, and be mentors for life's challenges. It was also a great way to really plug into the church activities." With Bruce's knowledge and skill, all the windows in the Big House have been replaced and upgraded, the front deck has been repaired and rebuilt, new carpeting installed, and many more hands-on projects have been completed. In order to fund these projects, the Johnsons and the young people hosted several fun "Fine Dining" evenings. Bruce and Monica plan to stay on another year and will be assisted by Tom and Laura Frizelle, who recently moved into the Big House with their three young boys.

Running the St. James House is a good work. All 13 couples who have done this good work have mentioned the life-long friends they gained. All were challenged by a lack of privacy, and by the personalities and brokenness of some of the residents. But the good far out-weighs the bad, and many look back on some of the incidents with humor and relief.

In Barb's 1973 newsletter I mentioned earlier, she wrote: "Our basic satisfactions are not found in jobs, mortgage-free homes, money, power, successes, etc. but in PERSONS – the persons God has given to us: wives, husbands, children, good friends, relatives and Himself, pre-eminently. Come enter God's Kingdom of persons if you have not already done so. Leave your preoccupation with the world of things. We are spirits belonging to another world inhabited by our fellows and a tri-personal God".

"So what profit it a man if he gains the whole world and in doing so loses his own soul? Men around us everywhere...have gained the world but live with lost souls...drained of all emo-



1983-1984

tion, subject to the will of other men, daily, intellectually confused...they desperately need a new perspective...even a new life. 'He (Jesus Christ) restores our soul.' Joy to you. 'Make every effort to come to us before winter.' II Tim. 4:21."

The soil here has been turned. The seeds have been sown and over the years they have yielded much fruit. As a result of this fruit, nine of the residents became priests and six are deacons. Two of the young ladies are nuns and three of the young men have been tonsured as readers. Seventy of the residents now live all over the United States and serve other parishes, while about 76 of the residents have remained here at St. Johns. At least 46 marriages occurred from the many friendships formed during the years and as a result our church is also growing by the number of children born. Now, with the next generation, so far 27 of the our children have been a part of the Big House. We expect many more will come.

Our community has grown slowly and carefully. It is a living, breathing organism, always changing and evolving. As marriages are celebrated, babies are born and God calls people home to Him, I see the faces of faithful worshiping together every Sunday in the tradition of the ancient faith. Living in a community where our homes have grown up around St. James

(Continued on page 7)

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1990-1991



35 Years of the St. James "Big House"

1970's	1980's	1990's	2000's
<p>Purchase of the Big House & 5 acres as "Maranatha North"</p> <p>1972-76 Harold & Barbara Dunaway</p>	<p>1980-83 Paul & Bonnie Jaroslaw <i>In 1982-83 the Big House was the center for an evangelism team</i></p>	<p>50 acres purchased in 1990, work began on St. Sergius Chapel.</p>	<p>2000-02 Dn. Tom & Sue Ross <i>program for singles re-started with new name of St. James House</i></p>
<p>1975 Beginning of "Grace Community Church"</p>	<p style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 2px;">1983 Cathedral construction begins</p>	<p>1990-91 Dn. George & Susie Nelson</p>	<p>1991-93 Fr. Michael & Leslie Dunaway</p>
<p>1976-77 Paul & Bonnie Jaroslaw</p>	<p>1983-84 Marc & Betsy Dunaway</p>	<p>1991-93 Fr. Michael & Leslie Dunaway</p>	<p>2002-2005 Dn. Dan & Theresa Gray</p>
<p>1977-78 Mike & Rita Molloy</p>	<p>1985-86 Harold & Barb Dunaway</p>	<p style="border: 1px solid purple; padding: 2px;">1994 - Mike & Leslie move to Wasilla to start St. Herman's Mission.</p>	<p>2005 - 2007 Bruce & Monica Johnson</p>
<p>1978-1980 Harley & Dianne Cranor</p>	<p>1986-87 Michael & Summer Smith</p>	<p>1995 First Eagle River Institute</p>	<p style="border: 1px solid cyan; padding: 5px;">This ministry still impacts the lives of many and both St. John's and the young adults who have lived there have been blessed by their presence.</p>
<p style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 2px;">1979 Formation of "Evangelical Orthodox Church"</p>	<p style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 2px;">1987 Metropolitan PHILIP in Alaska Orthodox Christamations</p>	<p>1995 - Fr. Paul begins Holy Cross House ministry then moves to Homer in 1996 to start All Saints of America Mission.</p>	
	<p>1987-88 Harley & Dianne Cranor</p>	<p>1993-2000 Eric & Diana Truelson <i>No official "program"</i> <i>The Big House was still center for hospitality</i></p>	
	<p>1988-90 Myles & Maris Kelly</p>		
	<p style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 2px;">1990 Apartment added</p>		

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EAGLE RIVER



Big House and Big Hearts *By Maye Johnson*

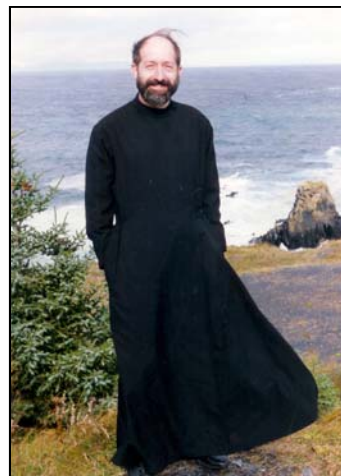
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House and St. John Cathedral, and where our lives are centered around the activities of the church and her calendar, has given more strength and stability to my life than I could have ever imagined.

Thank you to all of the couples who have taken the time to toil in the garden of life for all of the young people and the church itself. The fruits of your labor are already evident and our whole community and church are blessed by the open doors you have always offered at the Big House.



SAINT JOHN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL NEWSLETTER — EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA



Fr. Marc Dunaway

