Summer Fun!
People of Praise youth camps in Allendale, Buffalo, Jamaica and South Bend
In this issue, we bring you two articles designed to further our conversations about city-building. The first is Claire Holovaty’s report on Ave Maria, a new town rising out of some dusty former farmland near Naples, Florida. Domino’s Pizza founder Tom Monaghan and his substantial fortune are the driving forces behind it. You may have seen a story on the town in your local newspaper or watched Mr. Monaghan on Good Morning, America. The town’s overt Roman Catholicism and Mr. Monaghan’s plans to restrict sales of pornography have earned it plenty of media attention.

The second article, an interview with Paul DeCelles, offers a People of Praise perspective on Mr. Monaghan’s ambitious plans. Paul raises questions we can all consider as we think about what our cities will look like. Should they be based on a medieval university-town model like Ave Maria town, on the Italian villages Paul admires, or on something else entirely? What should stand at the center of a People of Praise city? Are we going to need a big-ticket underwriter like Mr. Monaghan to proceed with our own ambitious plans?

I hope you enjoy the articles and keep the discussion moving.

—Sean Connolly

Domino’s founder builds a city from scratch.

Ave Maria, Florida

By Claire Holovaty

Tom Monaghan is building a town. It’s called Ave Maria and it’s under construction on what used to be 5,000 acres of tomato fields in southwest Florida, about 30 miles from Naples. Plans call for houses, town homes and condos, grocery stores, a bank, law offices, national-chain retail stores, an urgent-care clinic, a police force, public and private schools, and a total population of 30,000 by 2016. Last March, workers broke ground for a 100-foot-high Roman Catholic church that will seat 1,100 and stand at the center of downtown.

Keeping religion literally at the heart of things, Monaghan has made some bold claims about life in Ave Maria. Some of his statements, for example, his desire to limit the sale of pornography and contraception in drug stores, have drawn the attention of major media outlets such as the New York Times and ABC News, and garnered opposition from the American Civil Liberties Union.

Monaghan, 69, a Roman Catholic, is an entrepreneur and philanthropist who isn’t afraid to start things from scratch. In 1960, he launched Domino’s Pizza on a $500 investment, selling it 38 years later for close to $1 billion. Now he says he wants to spend his fortune on Catholic causes and “die broke.” He’s footing most of the $400 million initial bill for Ave Maria town, which he is building in conjunction with another pet project, Ave Maria University (AMU). (The web site for Ave Maria town calls AMU “the first major Catholic university in the United States in more than 40 years.” It’s expected to have 5,000 students.) Past projects include a law school (Ave Maria School of Law in Ann Arbor, MI), a four-year college (Ave Maria College in Ypsilanti, MI), and a handful of Catholic elementary and high schools.

The Plan

The layout of Ave Maria town, with its university and downtown radiating out from a central church, is similar to the layout of many medieval university-towns. The town square and churchyard are one and the same, punctuated by a 65-foot-high crucifix which planners say will be the tallest crucifix in the country. Around the elliptical main piazza, as the developers call it, is a row of mixed-use buildings with shops, offices and upstairs condos. This mixing of commercial and residential spaces is characteristic of European towns, and the developers are following the theme with Italian names and touches of Mediterranean style.

Just outside downtown are Ave Maria University (which will take up 1,000 acres, nearly 20% of the available land) and residential areas with houses and condos. In the residential areas, houses will be close to business districts with grocery stores, cafes and shopping, and also close to chapels offering daily mass. The whole community, downtown included, is designed to be walkable and pedestrian-friendly. Playgrounds, parks and lakes are also scattered throughout, amounting to 45% green and open space.

The town will feature a K-12 Catholic school (scheduled to open in 2007), and a public elementary school (scheduled for 2012). Ave Maria itself is located inside rapidly growing Collier County, which, with an average home-price of $450,000, is one of the most expensive real estate markets in Florida.

Though a Catholic presence is expected throughout, Ave Maria town’s web site (avemaria.com) makes very little mention of Christian faith. Monaghan himself says that the town will be “open to everybody.” Still, he and many in the press expect Ave Maria town to attract many Catholics: “I imagine a lot of them would be Catholics, and strong Catholics,” Monaghan said in an interview last May. Selling points for Catholics may include the proximity to Ave Maria University and the cultural and intellectual riches it promises. Already, on their temporary campus in nearby Naples, AMU has set up a student Gregorian chant choir and a lecture series with guest speakers such as prominent conservative thinker Richard John Neuhaus.

The Controversy

In May, 2004, Monaghan made a speech in Boston that ignited a firestorm. “We’ll own all commercial real estate [in Ave Maria town],” he said. “That means we will be able to control what goes on there. You won’t be able to buy a Playboy or Hustler...
Florida Governor Jeb Bush praised the town as a place where “spirituality and serving almighty God is the centerpiece of our day-to-day life.”

magazine in Ave Maria Town. We’re going to control the cable television that comes in the area. If you go to the drug store and you want to buy the pill or condoms or contraception, you won’t be able to get that in Ave Maria town.” Already, Ave Maria University has made an agreement with Naples Community Hospital that its doctors won’t prescribe contraceptives or provide abortions for AMU students. A similar agreement regarding students will hold for the medical clinic that is planned for Ave Maria town.

The Florida chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has voiced objections to Monaghan’s plans, saying that restrictions on pornography and contraceptives would overstep the town’s governmental authority and encroach on constitutional rights. “If they attempt to do what Mr. Monaghan apparently wants to do,” says Howard Simon, executive director of the Florida chapter, “the people of Naples and Collier County, Florida, are in for a whole series of legal and constitutional problems and a lot of litigation indefinitely into the future” (http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory?id=1671484).

On the legal front, Monaghan has some influential allies, however. Florida Attorney General Charles Crist has said that nothing in the current plan is illegal, and that it will be up to the courts to decide the legality of the restrictions (http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/wireStory?id=1675320&page=2). At the groundbreaking ceremony for Ave Maria town and university in February, 2006, Florida Governor Jeb Bush praised the town as a place where “spirituality and serving almighty God is the centerpiece of our day-to-day life.”

With the controversy heating up in the press, Monaghan and Paul Marinelli, president and CEO of Bar-ron Collier, the development company building much of the town, appeared on several US TV networks. They said they wanted to correct a “misperception” that Ave Maria town was an exclusively Catholic place with illegal prohibitions against contraceptives and pornography. Monaghan demurred about his part in the planning of Ave Maria town, saying, “[The developers are] building the community. And I’m trying to help build the university.” When pressed about the restrictions on merchandise, Marinelli said, “In deference to the beliefs of Ave Maria, we are requesting that contraceptives not be sold in the town. We are not restricting the sale of contraceptives” (emphasis added).

A few months later, however, in a private speech to Legatus, an association of businessmen he founded, Monaghan said, “We control 50 percent of the development, our plan is that no adult material will appear on the town’s cable system and the pharmacy will not sell contraceptives.”

Ave Maria town has provoked controversy of a different sort among Catholics, while generating plenty of discussion on Catholic internet forums and blogs, such as catholic-forum.com and acton.org. Although they personally agree with the values of Ave Maria, some charge the town with isolationism. One anonymous
V&B: Thanks for doing this interview, Paul. We know that colon cancer and chemotherapy treatments have made things difficult the last few months.

Paul: The therapy has ended now. I’m getting better, but I’m not 100% yet. I’d like to thank everyone for all the prayers and cards. I’m extremely grateful for them, and they have been sustaining me.

V&B: You suggested that Vine & Branches do an article on Monaghan’s city-building efforts. Why this particular topic?

Paul: It’s fascinating—there’s a real movement alive in America to build new cities, and I think it’s a move of the Spirit. For our part, we want to see a real outbreak of Christian community—living tightly together in cities that we build. We’ve been building houses in Allendale with the idea that we’ll build 60 or more eventually, and of course there will be many more homes that we can fix up in the area for our neighbors. Although we don’t own property in Dinkytown, our work in Dinkytown is very impressive. In the campus division there we’ve had almost a 65% growth rate in the last year.

Also I wanted Vine & Branches to contrast our own city-building efforts with something that is already happening. The contrast will help illustrate what we want to accomplish in building our cities.

V&B: It seems like Monaghan is a lot further along than we are.

Paul: In some ways yes, but in some ways no. For example, I’ve noticed that Monaghan makes no mention of community in his public speeches. He has the money to construct an attractive place, but who is going to be moving in? Total strangers? Who says they’re all going to have the same values? Of course, Monaghan may have a very restrictive interview with potential homeowners, but it doesn’t sound like that. It sounds to me like he’s taking anyone who has the money to buy a home in this town. Also, he doesn’t seem to be thinking much about ecumenism. I think a Baptist or a Methodist would feel very out of place in Ave Maria town.

Undeterred by controversy and with every advantage money can buy, Monaghan is pushing his project forward. The church in Ave Maria town, which is the first structure to go up, will be open in the fall of 2007. Sixty percent of the available business spaces are already leased (no pharmacies as yet), while three-quarters of the 70 condos placed on the market have been reserved. How far his dream will be realized—and how long it can be sustained in the face of impending litigation—remains to be seen. Until then, there will be plenty of people watching Tom Monaghan and his Ave Maria town.

A recent aerial view of the construction.

V&B: What about the money? It looks like Monaghan is able to do this because he’s rich and can pay for it. How much money does it take to build a city?

Paul: You can build a city quickly if you have a lot of money, and you can build a city without much money but it will
take a lot longer. Monaghan’s money is a real advantage. We don’t have an underwriter with a billion dollars in reserve who is funding us.

V&B: So, with so little money, what are we doing?

Paul: We’re doing something more like the 16th-century Jesuit reductions Mary Frances Sparrow describes in one of her papers. (The reductions paper is available in the file library on peopleofpraise.org.) You go in and work with the people who are already there. You don’t displace them. You make a life that’s better for them and build something that really is a city—with protections, with communications, with housing, with businesses and so on. The people in the reductions didn’t have any money at all and the Jesuits had very little.

Don’t get me wrong. Money is very useful. Look at Gregory the Great. He was pope in the sixth century. At the time there had been years and years of war in and around Rome. After he became pope, Gregory used the church’s money to buy peace. Money solved a big problem for the people of Rome. Obviously, we shouldn’t throw money away or waste it, but I’m not against using money when it serves a good purpose.

Money can’t buy a life together. Actually, the less money you have, the easier it is in principle to form community, because people have to rely on one another.

V&B: So you think Monaghan hasn’t thought enough about life together?

Paul: There’s been an interesting development. Did you notice how Monaghan said he was willing to work with the planning and construction of the university, but it looks like he’s giving the planning and construction of the city over to the developers? That’s almost the exact opposite of what we would do. Designing a place to live is more important than designing a university, and it’s more difficult. We’ve got a lot of experience with living together—living together in households and neighborhoods—and that whole area is missing from the plans Monaghan has made public. We aren’t trying to create a life from scratch. We are working to grow—to add to what we have and to enrich it. Take households, for example. They were and are a wonderful way of living life in common. When we first set up households we wanted to facilitate communication, cooperation and working on projects together daily. We also wanted our children to be able to relate to other adults in the community as aunts and uncles. That happened inside households, but it didn’t happen as much between households, or between households and other families. We were limited by our living situation, you could say, limited by our geography and architecture. The Lord is showing us that we can accomplish more of what he has always wanted by building cities.

V&B: What do you think about the Catholic church at the center of Monaghan’s city?

Paul: That’s very interesting. Actually, it’s quite a statement. It looks like he’s saying that the reason we live together is to go to church. I know it seems somewhat scandalous to say, but I don’t think we should build our cities around a church. That wouldn’t be any good for us. There are plenty of churches around.

V&B: What should be at the center of our cities?

Paul: On the conceptual level I’d say that somehow there has to be a space which we all inhabit at the center. It should also be a space that’s useful for bringing other people into our life. An open, shared space at the center would be ideal. The center of our life is life together, but how do you express that architecturally? We still have a lot of things to figure out. It would be great if we had a couple of architects on the payroll or some who could assist us in designing our cities the way we want to design them.

We don’t have a particular layout yet. There are a lot of options. For example—and this is a side point—many suburban housing developments have a fair amount of control over the appearance and layout of houses within the subdivision. We might consider a similar legal arrangement that would allow us to retain some control over the space. I don’t think the kind of suburban layout where you have each family in its own house with its own back yard is a favorable one for us. Maybe we could use a layout that is more like an Italian village.

V&B: What do you mean?

Paul: I’m thinking of a row of houses with very little front yard and no side yards. They share exterior walls. They are lovely homes, but they are small. When you enter, you can walk through the house and go to the back yard. The back yard is absolutely gorgeous and it’s shared by everyone in the block. That’s a possibility, but that’s just one idea. What do we want our cities to look like in terms of layout and design? Everyone has to contribute to the answer.

V&B: Any concluding remarks?

Paul: I’m not trying to measure us against Ave Maria. However, when I look at his plans and his medieval way of laying things out, I think, that’s not us. Even so, I’m just delighted that other people have been thinking about a lot of things we’ve been thinking about.

Also, in some sense Monaghan is breaking down barriers for us. He probably has plenty of lawyers on his staff and he has experience with publicity, opposition and lawsuits. I pray that they succeed. I think that if they succeed it will help us.
Name of Camp: Father-Son Fellowship
Location: Annotto Bay, on the northeast coast of Jamaica
Dates: May 5–7, 2006
Camp started in: 2006
Leader: Kevin Rodriguez
Number of campers: 25 men and boys
Age range: 3 to 50 years
Types of fruit seen on the way to the bay: orange, mango, coconut, pineapple, papaya, banana
Activities: Knot-tying with Lt. Cmdr. Michael Rodriguez, a community father and former member of the Jamaican coast guard, hiking up the Pencar River, building rafts out of bamboo shoots and riding dirt bikes. Evenings around the bonfire included Jamaican folk songs led by Locksley Robinson and folk tales told by Kevin Rodriguez.
Fascinating fact: The only People of Praise camp where campers play cricket.
BUFFALO

Location: Camp Li-lo-li, Randolph, New York, west of Allegany State Park
Dates: June 25–30, 2006
Camp started in: 1987
Leaders: Tom and Theresa Shriver
Number of campers: 118
Age range: 9 to 15
Number of counselors and staff: 35
Branches in attendance: Buffalo, Indianapolis, Muncie, New Orleans, northern Virginia, Portland, Tampa
Theme: “Come to the Kingdom”
Activities: Rope climbing, arts and crafts, swimming, archery
Fascinating fact: Buffalo camp features a program for ninth- and tenth-graders called F.A.R. (Formation, Action, Recreation). F.A.R. activities include canoeing, rifle shooting and rock-wall climbing, service work such as clearing trails, painting cabins and landscaping, and Q&A sessions about the People of Praise.
Best Evening: The Jesus Jam, a prayer meeting led by the F.A.R. group.

From left: Maria Kane, Andrew Forbes, Johnny Horneman, Justin Lokke, Tim Forbes
Catherine Lokke, Meghan Ganther and Lydia Eng

Pat Baldwin and Nicole Putland in the crafts cabin.

Photos by Traci Reno
Location: Camp Tannadoonah, in southwestern Michigan along the shore of Birch Lake
Dates: June 11–15, 2006
Camp started in: 1978
Leaders: Randy Raciti and Amy Zwerneman
Number of campers: 103
Age range: 9 to 13 years
Number of staff members: 71 (plus 11 day helpers)
Longest-serving staff member: Roy Somerville (21 years)
Branches in attendance: Indianapolis, Muncie, Rockford, South Bend
Theme: “You are the Light of the World”
Winner of best cannonball diving contest: Mary Timler
Winner of best belly flop diving contest: Jason Slowiak
Fastest time on The Hood obstacle course: Dominic Raciti
Fascinating fact: South Bend camp and Servant Camp share the record for longest-running People of Praise camps. Each has been going strong for 29 straight summers.

Top: Third-grade boys on stilts.
Second from top: Third-grade girls on steps.
Third down: Mary Timler leading the always popular “Go Bananas” cheer.
Left: Larry Day holds the traditional shofar, and Andy Meeks blows it, while Camp Director Randy Raciti amplifies it.

Photos by Stephen M. Busk, Tim Pingel, Beth Pingel, Ben Shrack and Jason Slowiak.
Locations: A vacant lot on Dove Street; the front yard of 1426 Yale Ave., one of the houses built by the People of Praise.

Dates: July 12–14 and 17–21, 2006

Camp started in: 2003

Leaders: Jo Zimmel (director), Mike Wacker (head of boys), Jeanette Zimmel (head of girls)

Number of campers: 8 to 28 (depending on the day)

Number of counselors: 11

Age range of the campers: 2 to 13 years

Camp Goal: To teach Allendale children interesting ways to play and to put People of Praise life on public display.

Interesting crafts: Bug boxes assembled from construction scraps, Pinewood Derby cars, decorated hula-hoops, masks made from paper-mache, floating hot air balloons made out of colored tissue paper.

Performances: A choreographed dance of praise, by the girls, and a drum corps piece, done by the boys.

Memorable snacks: Home-made ice cream, Ants-on-a-Log (celery, peanut butter and raisins) and s’mores.

Fascinating fact: Average daily temperature for this year’s camp was 98 degrees.
How $2 Million Becomes $13 Million—

A Real Estate Strategy for Catfish

By Hannah Lillie Brummer

River Ridge, site of the community’s Servant Branch offices and a campus of Trinity School, has been sold at a huge profit. On July 11, we finalized a $5.25 million sale to Evergreen Community Church, a fast-growing nondenominational congregation whose previous home was a high-school auditorium.

But you won’t see any major changes if you show up at River Ridge this fall. As part of the deal, Servant Branch and Trinity School will be renting their former home back from its new owners during the 2006-07 school year. Final relocation plans—still underway as this issue goes to press—are scheduled to take effect around the start of the 2007-08 school year. In case of delays, we have the option to rent River Ridge for a second year, through the summer of 2008.

A $5.25 million sale makes for a fine article, but in this instance it’s just the first part of the story. By the time all the ink was dry, we had $13 million to show for River Ridge. How? Briefly,

- $5 million came from the sale to Evergreen Community Church.
- $7 million came from a deal we struck with the Metropolitan Airports Commission, as part of their plans to expand the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.
- $1 million came from a building fund that included branch members’ donations and revenue from a contract with a downtown Minneapolis business.

Thirteen million dollars is particularly impressive when you consider that River Ridge only cost us about $2 million:

- In 1991, we bought the building for about $1 million.
- Between 1991 and 2006 we spent about $1 million on improvements.

In 15 years, then, our $2 million investment grew by 650%!

This big payday came courtesy of patient negotiations, sound property management and the volunteer sweat equity from community men’s and women’s groups. It’s a textbook example of the People of Praise’s approach to owning property.

A $2 Million Property Investment

The story starts in 1991, when we purchased River Ridge from a computing company. Over the course of the summer, men’s groups hung sheetrock, mudded walls and brushed on white paint, refashioning the building and saving us a significant sum in labor costs. They finished just in time for the start of the 1991-92 school year. This campus of Trinity School, previously located in the basement of an Episcopal church, finally had a home of its own. In addition, Servant Branch had offices, areas had a lawn for picnics, and kids had a gym for relay races.

It wasn’t long, though, before we were talking about the need for an auditorium for our community meetings and school plays. A dusty storage space at the southern end of the building was large enough to fit the bill. Estimates put the cost of renovations near $1 million, but donated labor from branch members and some savvy negotiations kept the price down around $100,000. Norm Dupre, a close friend of the community, came out of retirement from his career in construction to act as the contractor. Jim Ingram saved us tens of thousands of dollars through his donated labor.


Abby Olson doing landscaping in 2002.
he mentioned that working with the People of Praise was fulfilling for him, both personally and professionally. He said that it changed his life.

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process involved many others: Sam Claassen (vice-president of a Twin Cities architectural and engineering firm), Bill Wacker (Trinity School at River Ridge’s head of school) and Dan Lindeken (business manager for Servant Branch) to name a few. Principal branch coordinator Joel Kibler calls the whole effort “a big family affair.”

Around the same time we began looking seriously at relocating, the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) started talking about expanding the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and building a new runway. River Ridge, it turned out, was positioned below the projected flight paths of up to 400 airplanes a day and near the center of a designated crash zone. MAC offered us $5 million to renovate our building, cutting down the noise pollution the planes would cause. Airport officials also admitted that they would be perfectly happy if Trinity School decided to move away from the airport completely. We began to realize the strength of our bargaining position.

The People of Praise and some friends of Trinity School got back in touch with MAC. This group requested a second study on the costs of noise abatement, and asked if the money designated for abatement could instead be used as seed money for relocation. After this nudge, MAC bumped up their offer from $5 million to $6.9 million and offered it to the People of Praise regardless of whether we chose to stay or go. We accepted the money and decided to relocate.

Negotiations

Around the time we cut our deal with MAC, a neighboring tech company made serious overtures about purchasing River Ridge. They had expressed passing interest previously, but this time there were intense negotiations that lasted for months. When Joel and a company representative talked about the proposed purchase as they walked around the Bass Ponds, a shady nature area beyond River Ridge’s back fence, the businessman began sharing about his life and his questions concerning faith. Joel and the man stopped by a tree, and Joel prayed with him.

In late 2005, this businessman

A $7 Million Airport Deal

In late 2004, with parts of River Ridge still experiencing crowding, the ball started rolling toward relocation. The board of governors of the People of Praise asked Paul DeCelles and Clem Walters to head up the effort. Clem is president of Gabriel Property Management, and Paul is the community’s chief financial officer. The
contacted Joel with bad news. The company’s headquarters had turned down their plan to expand. In a letter that followed, he mentioned that working with the People of Praise was fulfilling for him, both personally and professionally. He said that it changed his life.

**A $5.25 Million Sale and $1.3 Million Extra**

We very much needed a new buyer, but MAC had placed stipulations on their offer. To use their $6.9 million to move, we had to sign an agreement that the River Ridge site would never be used for schools, homes or elderly care. MAC’s chief legal counsel did agree that churches could use the property, and that’s who God brought forward. The very day after the neighboring business turned down the purchase option, Evergreen Community Church contacted the branch. After touring the River Ridge property, Evergreen decided the circle was ideal for their purposes and agreed to buy the building for $5.25 million.

On top of all these increases to our storehouse, over the years we had accumulated $1.3 million in a building fund. Much of this money came from a deal we struck with a downtown Minneapolis business in 1999. We agreed to make the circle available to this company in the event of an emergency, and they gave us computers and money in exchange.

**Catfish**

The story of how the Lord took our $2 million and ballooned it up to $13 million is about much more than money, as Joel points out. “In all these people, companies and groups, and in all the conversations, planning, negotiations and contracts, I see the Lord at work. He wants us to continue to trust him for what we need.”

There is plenty of reason for trust when you consider that this is the same People of Praise that Paul once compared to bottom feeders—catfish—in its approach to property acquisition (“For the Record, Properties, Part II”; June, 2000). He called us “bottom feeders” because, when it comes to buying buildings, we start on the low end of the economic ladder. It’s the same community that bought the nine-story LaSalle Hotel in South Bend for $150,000 in 1975, acquired a new center there for $400,000 in 2000 (even though it was appraised at $1.3 million), and, more recently, picked up a center in Rockford for $100,500.

Call us catfish or call us the lilies of the field. Either way, we have a Father who knows what buildings we need and amply provides for us. For 15 years, River Ridge has been our community center, school, picnic grounds, retreat center and healing headquarters. In the fall of 2007, Servant Branch and Trinity School plan to be walking through the doors of their next new home.

**Meet Joel Kibler**

**People of Praise Road Warrior**

By Dan DeCelles

Editor’s note: In our series of profiles on the board of governors, we honor a departing member of the board. In August, Joel Kibler left the board of governors after serving for the maximum two consecutive six-year terms. He continues to serve as principal branch coordinator of Servant Branch and head of the Brotherhood.

D
on’t miss your chance to interview Joel Kibler! He may tell you about secretly transporting $10,000 in $50 bills into Poland to finance the purchase of an illegal printing press. (He remembers praying his way behind the Iron Curtain past army soldiers carrying AK-47s, not to mention stern-looking security agents and customs officials.) He may talk about working to get 10,000 people from 50 countries to a conference in Rome while the Italian mail, railroads and airports were on strike and Communists controlled the city. He remembers teaching Brazilian college students about covenant community, learning enough to get along in four languages, Flemish, Italian, Polish and Spanish, and logging more than one million miles on airplanes, including travel to more than 40 countries.

Since 1974, Joel has worked tirelessly for the People of Praise, and he shows no signs of letting up. (For more on his recent doings see page 11.) His jobs have been unusually varied and have placed him in an eyewitness position during several important and interesting chapters of community history. Here’s a look at three of them.

**The 1975 Rome Conference**

From the earliest days of the charismatic renewal in the Catholic
Outreach in Poland

In 1976, the People of Praise began an outreach to the charismatic renewal in Poland. At that time, Poland was behind the Iron Curtain, governed by a Communist military regime that was hostile to Christianity. Andrew Plodowski, a native of Poland and a founding member of the community, led the outreach and traveled from South Bend to Poland frequently. In 1983, Christians in Mission (CIM), part of the community’s new Mission program office, asked Joel to lend Andrew a hand. Two years earlier, Andrew, 75 years of age, had undergone triple bypass heart surgery.

Once again Joel began learning a new language and developing personal relationships with people of different cultural background. In February, 1983, Joel and Andrew flew to Warsaw for a 10-day visit. They spent most of their time with Jacek Reka, the leader of a Krakow prayer group with about a thousand members. Andrew had prayed with Jacek to be baptized in the Spirit in 1977 and together they had helped bring solid growth to the charismatic renewal in Poland. Joel’s mission was to help Jacek and other leaders of the group decide whether to deepen their commitments to one another and become a covenant community.

Several months later, Jacek wrote Andrew and Joel saying that New Life had decided to take the next step and become a community like the People of Praise. Over the next three years, Andrew, Joel and Kevin Ranaghan made numerous training visits, and CIM secured funding for New Life leaders to travel to South Bend for more formation.

Eventually CIM invited New Life to become a branch of the People of Praise, but their leaders declined. In retrospect, Kevin says, that may have been just what God wanted. Language, distance, practical considerations along with significant cultural differences might have made it unfeasible to maintain the same unity that other branches of the People of Praise share.

Leading the Brotherhood

Joel joined the Brotherhood soon after his work was completed on the Rome conference. “I joined because I wanted to give my life more wholeheartedly to the Lord and to the People of Praise,” he says. In 1982, Overall Coordinator Paul DeCelles asked Joel to head the group, a position he has held ever since (though now, under the Brotherhood Constitution, the position is an elected office).

Joel has helped usher in several significant changes to Brotherhood life. Once they were one house of brothers in South Bend. Now, they have two houses, one in St. Paul and one in Portland. Once they were a loosely knit collection of single men exploring Jesus’ call to radical discipleship. Now, they follow his call in the context of a written set of statutes that makes them an officially recognized organization in the Roman Catholic Church. Once they were all laymen. With David Shaw’s ordination this past June, four members are now Catholic priests.

Clem Walters has supervised much of Joel’s work over the years, in particular his work for CRS and CIM. He says, “Looking back at all the work Joel has done for the community, I’m struck with the fact that everything we’ve asked him to do he’s done excellently.”

Joel says, “When I was 20 and a few weeks from graduating from college, my imagined future included a quiet home in the country, with a big back yard, preferably near a river, or, better, within sight of a snow-tipped mountain. But I had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. The seed of Christ was growing.”

Instead of settling down, Joel traveled the world on behalf of the community, learned new languages, and lately he’s been focusing a good deal of his attention on real-estate deals. (Again, see page 11.)

He has no regrets. “I love my life. I wouldn’t change anything.”
He gave to others constantly when he saw a need.

Lyle Eberle

By Ann Kinkley, Corvallis

The Lord revealed himself to the world through our brother Lyle Eberle during the short time he had with us in the Corvallis branch. In Lyle, the Love of God talks were true for us: we were more keenly aware of God because we experienced God’s presence in a truer way through Lyle’s life.

Lyle came underway just a few months before his death in a car accident, which happened on the way to his men’s meeting last November 10. We did not know him long, but we loved him. When first meeting Lyle, it was obvious that this man walked with the Lord and lived his life for him. We were honored that he wanted to share his life with us.

Born on the Eberle farm in Strasburg, North Dakota, in 1939, Lyle moved to the Pacific Northwest with his family. He received a degree in electrical engineering from Seattle University and, after serving in the Navy, worked on communications systems, such as submarine sonar, for several years in Vallejo, California. He lived with his family on a dairy farm, 40 miles north of San Francisco, devoting himself to the highest goals in his life at that time, serving as a good husband and father.

These were hard goals for him to reach. His marriage foundered, his job ended, and he reexamined his ideals. A Cursillo redirected him and his vocation. He decided he would live his life for the Lord. He and his wife were reconciled for 10 years, but eventually they parted.

Lyle asked hard questions about his reliance on material things, his income, his use of time. He moved into a motor home, lived frugally and gave to others constantly when he saw a need.

He shared at a community meeting once about meeting a man in need at a rest stop. “I don’t give money,” he said, “I find out what they need.” So he took the man into the next town, bought him some food and found him a place to stay.

Lyle looked after his family’s needs, too. He spent several months caring for his son after he broke his back and he cared for his parents for two years until his father’s death.

Lyle eventually moved to Corvallis, living in his father’s old motor home on his son’s property. Then, while attending a prayer meeting at a local church, he met community members Jim and Peggy McDowell and learned about our People of Praise life sharing with others and serving the Lord.

Lyle loved the People of Praise. His family said that being a part of the People of Praise had set him free. He was peaceful and full of joy. “The thought of a life lived in community really jelled with him,” recalled his son, Kevin Eberle.

When Lyle saw a need, he would drop everything to serve. He arrived early for dinners at John and Mary Lou Carey’s home so that he could help out beforehand, whether it was peeling the potatoes or hanging shelves in the kitchen. “He told us that he had the gift of time, and he wanted to use it to serve others,” John said.

Lyle was a very deliberate man, reluctant to give advice and always on the lookout for the outcast. He was constantly telling corny jokes to get folks to laugh, even if it was at his own expense.

On November 10, when Lyle didn’t arrive at the regular time for his men’s meeting, his brothers went searching for him. Later, after learning about the car crash that took his life, Peggy remembered something Lyle had said just a few days earlier. He had been praying for the recently departed and had commented, “I will be one of those soon.” She asked him about it at the time and he just said, “I don’t know when, but it won’t be long.”

Lyle’s journey brought him to the People of Praise, to Christ in the world. It brought him to the kingdom of heaven on earth and he was moved with love, for he had found the pearl of great price.

Kevin said of his dad, “He just wanted to be like Jesus.” Lyle succeeded in that goal. The Lord was alive in him here in Corvallis, and now Lyle is united with his Lord in a new way, just like he always wanted. Thank you, Father, for sending us your son Lyle.
John Barnitz (New Orleans) recently published an invitational article, “No Evacuee Left Behind: Brain-storming on Literacy Education After Hurricane Katrina,” in the Journal of Reading Education.

Eric and April Boughton have been transferred from the branch in South Bend to the Vancouver/Portland branch, effective upon their arrival in August.

Our sister in the Lord Mary Nienmann, a member of Servant Branch, died recently. Please pray for her family and friends in this time of loss.

Congratulations to these community members on their graduations:

Indianapolis:
Cathy McAleer, Vincennes University, Associates Degree in American Sign Language

New Orleans:
Elizabeth Pease, Loyola University New Orleans, B.A. in English

Northern Virginia:
Anita Brand, National Massage Therapy Institute (graduated September 11). On March 22 Anita received her national certification in therapeutic massage and bodywork.

Matt Ridenour, Xavier University, B.A. in political science

Pam Seale, George Mason University, M.S. in nursing

Rockford:
Eric Bomkamp, Northern Illinois University, B.S. in clinical lab science

Lyndsay Sullivan, Rock Valley College

Servant Branch:
Jeremy Osterhouse, University of Minnesota, B.S. in computer science

South Bend:
Patricia Brewer, Saint Mary’s College, B.S. in biology

Laura Ficker, Saint Mary’s College, B.A. in mathematics

Rebecca Flynn, University of Notre Dame, B.A. in theology and English

Jennifer Kenning, University of Notre Dame, B.A. in design

Eryn McEntee, University of Chicago, B.A. in history and philosophy of science

Catherine Bulger, Josh Caneff, Bill Crimmins, Joe Gleason, Mary Claire Holovaty, Jennifer Kenning, Debbie Mixell, Gene Stowe.

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"Bless the Lord, all his works, in every place where he rules” (Ps. 103:22).

An aerial view of River Ridge (in the lower portion of the picture).