

# Martin de Porres House of Hospitality

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September 1997

Dear Friends,

It was September 1986, the first year we were at new Martins. We were serving outside, in what later would become Love's Garden. Inside our present kitchen and dining room, we were in the middle of the renovations, and everything was in complete chaos. The phone was ringing off the hook and it was impossible at times to find it under all the construction, hammers, sawdust, nails and dirt.

When I answered the phone an older gentleman introduced himself, telling me quite bluntly that his beloved wife had died and he was finding it impossible to get over his grief. It was suggested at his church that he might want to call Martins. He was already giving out bed tickets at his church, but had a need for a deeper kind of service. He then asked humbly if we would have a use for another pair of hands.

Looking back on that day, did we see God's Divine Plan unfolding? The truth is I told him you had to be crazy to work here, we were from all religious and non-religious backgrounds, we had been known to cry and laugh at the same moment, and we tried in our clumsy way to live in what we called a dimension of Love. He chuckled at something I said and we both knew it was a match. Made in Heaven???

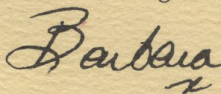
He started to volunteer regularly and Thanksgiving of that year he showed up bright and early. I put him and a dear longtime volunteer together to cut sweets for our meal. Adding up the combined ages of these two angels made at least 150 years, but to look at them that day you might have thought they were children. With each slice of cake, they would lick the extra frosting off their fingers, each variety of cookie had to be shared and sampled to make sure it was good enough for the guests. I look back in my heart's snapshots and see not a man paralyzed with grief, but one given a new lease on life.

He kept volunteering faithfully over the next 10 years. There would be setbacks; broken bones, falls, hospital time, but always as soon as he could, whether by bus or cab, he would always come back to Martins. We affectionately called him the energizer rabbit, for he kept on going and going. Each time upon his return, he would share with us his deepening faith, thanking God for the years he shared with his wife, his family and his Martin's family.

By April of this year George was no longer able to take care of himself. Together we decided that he should move into David House. We were excited about how much closer this would bring him into the community, at the same time we knew his care would stretch us to our limit. Daily he would hear the news of life at the soup kitchen, met more volunteers at dinners, potlucks and meetings. He added a dimension to our lives that filled out a circle to completion. He sat in the sun, ate ice cream, listened to his books on tape, laughed at our stories, comforted us in our pain and prayed daily for us all.

His faith was so strong, he not only was able to take care of other people, but towards the end of his life, this same faith allowed him to gracefully accept being cared for by others. His ability to come back to God, whatever sufferings he endured made him our spiritual teacher. He trusted us with his life and died peacefully in his bed at David House surrounded by members of the community he so loved. We love you George. Thank You.

In God's Light,



Barbara Collier  
for the Martin De Porres Community