

Donald Purcell Remembers Haiti:

'Nothing To Fear' From Haitians, Potsdam Man Says

BY BETSY BAKER

North Country residents have "nothing to fear" from Haitian refugees who will soon be housed at Ft. Drum, says Donald Purcell, a man who has lived and worked in that West Indies nation.

A recent announcement that up some 3,000 Haitians will be interned at Ft. Drum pending legal settlement of their immigration status, including some now housed at the federal prison at Raybrook, has led to protests over the natives of a tropical country being held in a North American "Siberia."

And some residents of the area around Ft. Drum have expressed fears for the safety of their communities.

Purcell, a retired Clarkson College humanities professor, was in Haiti in 1960-61, 1966-67 and 1968-69.

Energetic And Intelligent

The Haitian people are "energetic and intelligent — fine people," Purcell said in a recent interview, but in their own country they live in fear, tyrannized by a government that specializes in "shakedowns" of anyone who has worked hard and made money.

Those who have emigrated are "just hungry," Purcell said, noting that Haiti is one of the poorest nations in the world. Its chief exports are coffee and sugar, but droughts and famine in recent years have added to existing economic problems.

Rich and poor live side by side in Haiti, Purcell said, noting that in major cities, such as the nation's capital, Port-au-Prince, "filthy hovels" and spacious homes share the space available.

And Haiti is crowded; even in the country there is little open space.

On Fulbright Grant

The people and politics of Haiti are "fascinating," said Purcell, who worked in Port-au-Prince under a Smith-Mundt grant, a Fulbright grant and as an employee of the State Department, teaching in university and in a Haitian-American Institute, a kind of American information center, where Haitians came to learn English and obtain other information about America.

In the early 1960s, Americans in Haiti were there because the government believed learning about this country would combat the spread of Communism in the Caribbean counties, particularly after the fall of Cuba. It was a "people exchange" of American and Haitian scholars and teachers. Later Purcell taught English as a second language to Haitians, most of whom wanted to learn English to emigrate to this country.

Briefly, in 1968-69, Purcell headed an information center in Cap Haitien. "After about six weeks I was declared 'persona non grata' by the Haitian government," Purcell said, "and sent back to Port-au-Prince, where I finished out the year working at the information center there."



DONALD PURCELL

"I never really knew what I did, I believe if you did a good job in Haiti at that time you'd get kicked out," he continued.

Anti-American sentiment was very strong, and then-president Dr. Francois Duvalier was "very anti-American — reading the Declaration of Independence aloud was a subversive act," Purcell said.

Duvalier, "Papa Doc" to his people, died in 1971 and was replaced by his son, Jean-Claude, known as "Baby Doc."

Starving And Bored

Then, as now, according to Purcell, the Haitian people are "starving to death and bored to death." He continued: "If they do anything useful, make some money, they'll probably be shaken down by the government, so no one wants to make any money."

Haiti has a class society, with about 90 percent of its people illiterate and living in poverty.

Haitians who are not on the government's "good side" are "victimized by a mixture of police and army," he said, adding that seeing Haiti "made me suddenly see my own world in a different way. It's just that power is more naked there."

And despite the poverty, high illiteracy and unemployment rates and relative lack of productivity, Purcell said there is a "kind of ease about Haitian life, both among the rich and the poor, that we don't know here."

"You can feel it in the city, it's like a mass mood, and when the mood is good, when everybody feels good, you just feel like singing," Purcell said.

Tourists come to stay in Haiti's few hotels, but "most of them hate it," because of beggars crowding around them, Purcell said. One gets used to the beggars, he continued, and it is possible to walk safely at night in Haitian cities. "There is almost no crime in Haiti," he said.

Haitian culture is a mixture of African and French, the official written language is French; Haitians speak Creole.

The Duvalier government is a "black" government; 95 percent of Haitians are Negroes, five percent are mulattoes. Purcell said that now Haitians say their language is "African mixed up with French," during a previous mulatto government it was said the language is "French mixed up with African."

Haitians are 80 percent Catholic, "in name," Purcell said, but the practice of voodoo abounds, and Purcell said there is "something devilish about it, drums in the distance and that kind of thing."

The present refugee problem may be a language problem, Purcell said, noting that if the Haitians "are not political refugees they are economic refugees."

Purcell and his wife, Colette, live in West Potsdam.

Pleasant Street Buildings Ordered For Action

Pleasant Street residents have petitioned village officials to take action on a vacant, fire-damaged house at 2 Pleasant St. And the trustees voted Monday night to begin legal action against the owner of another fire-damaged property at 27 Pleasant St.

Mayor James Penneck read a petition presented by Mrs. Glenda Cowen and signed by residents of the street protesting the condition of 2 Pleasant St.

According to the petition, rats in the neighborhood are coming from the property which burned some two years ago and there is also a "smell of decaying meat" coming from the property.

Owner Michael Owens, who was present at last night's board meeting, told the Courier he plans to renovate the house.

Action to compel another property owner to remove rats from his house at 27 Pleasant St. will begin following action by the trustees Monday night.

Owner Mark Maroney was notified Aug. 20 that the house, which burned in the spring of 1981, was in an "unsafe and dangerous condition," according to village officials, but Maroney had not responded to the notice as of Nov. 13.

The village can now begin legal action to compel Maroney to repair or remove the building.



CLEARING FIELD — Martin Smith works in a light rain last week, clearing burdock and milkweed from a lot on Bay Street owned by A. Steven Giannell. Giannell hired Smith and Terry Pitcher to cut brush on the lot, which, according to Giannell, has pine tree seedlings planted on it. Giannell was ordered to have the lot mowed last summer; the matter has been the subject of litigation between him and the village. Pitcher and Smith said they saw no trees while working on the lot; Giannell told the Courier grass is bent over the six inch seedlings. (Betsy Baker photo)

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Giannell Cuts Brush, But Continues Legal Battle

A. Steven Giannell continued his efforts last week to prevent the Village of Potsdam from forcing him to mow a vacant lot he owns on Bay Street in the village.

But Giannell did hire two individuals last week to remove brush from the property, on which he says are planted over 2,000 pine tree seedlings.

Giannell notified village officials on Sunday that he wants a list of the names and addresses of all property owners who have been sent notices to cut their grass for the years 1970-1981. And he wants a list of names and addresses of property owners whose grass has been cut with village equipment at the owners' expense for the same years.

If he does not receive the list by Nov. 24, Giannell indicated to the Courier and Freeman that he will seek a motion in State Supreme Court to compel the village to hand over the list. And at that time he will contact the civil rights branch of the State Attorney General's office, he said.

Giannell has argued that the village has violated his civil rights by ordering him to mow the lot.

The Courier sought to obtain the in-

formation Monday under the Freedom of Information law; Village Administrator Sanford D. Dewey refused the request, saying that the list is part of a matter under litigation.

Giannell was notified during the summer to mow the lot; the village's mowing ordinance requires vacant lots to be mowed every three weeks. There had been complaints from neighbors about the lot as well.

Charging that the mowing ordinance was being enforced in a selectively discriminatory manner against him because he is foreign born, and saying that the lot contains Christmas tree seedlings planted under a U.S. Department of Agriculture program, Giannell sought a temporary injunction in State Supreme Court against mowing.

He was granted that injunction in August. He also sued the village for \$7 million; the village's attempts to have that suit dismissed were unsuccessful.

Giannell has asked the State Attorney General's office to aid him in his action against the village.

The two men who cut brush on the property said last week they saw no trees. Giannell told the Courier that grass is bent over the trees.

Kay Wyant, A Loyal Blood Donor

"This is something a person can give that is totally their own; no one can give it for you."

So saying, Kay Wyant explained her long and generous involvement with the Red Cross blood program. Mrs. Wyant has donated over three gallons of her blood over more than 20 years.

Although she herself has never had to have a transfusion, she has known several people who have needed the life-giving blood. Mrs. Wyant feels that this sort of sharing is, "a responsibility of all citizens to give blood if they can."

Although she no longer gives blood as regularly as she used to, Mrs. Wyant was accustomed to donating three times a year. Still, Mrs. Wyant has occasionally helped out the clinic in other ways, such as volunteering her services in recording the names of those visiting the clinics.

Mrs. Wyant has even helped the blood program in the area of public relations. Last year in her capacity as director of the Potsdam Museum, she invited Mac Smith, the regional representative of the Red Cross blood program, to speak about the history of blood donation and the blood program.

Clinic This Week

The American Red Cross will be holding a blood drive this week on Nov. 17, 18 and 19 at the Presbyterian Center in Potsdam. The clinic will be open from 10 a.m. until 3:45 p.m. every day, and the goal set for this drive is 225 pints each day.

Zoning Board Eyes Gas For Robar's

The Potsdam Village Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 19 on the application of Fred Robar for three self-service gas pumps.

Robar is seeking a variance to install three pumps at his business located at 140 Maple St.

Following the public hearing in the Civic Center Board Room, the zoning board will meet in regular session.

Village Pursues New \$200,000 Grant

A new Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) totaling \$200,000 will be sought by the Village of Potsdam to aid the construction of 25 single family dwelling units in the village.

The trustees last night set 7 and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 30 for two public hearings on the plan, and approved a \$9,000 contract with W. Uccellini Enterprises, Troy, to prepare the application, which must be in by Dec. 1.

Village Community Development director Robert Juravich said Tuesday morning that a change in policy in Washington concerning the UDAG program makes it necessary to get the grant application in. Previously the UDAG program sought to assist residential, commercial and industrial development; after this round of funding the program's emphasis will change to commercial and industrial only, Juravich said.

The village can expect to hear in February 1982 whether or not its application has been successful.

The local housing program would total \$900,000, the non-UDAG share of the financing to come from in-

dividuals who would arrange conventional financing to purchase village-owned building lots and have houses built on them.

The program calls for 25 homes to be built; presently the village owns seven or eight lots acquired through the federally financed Community Development program. Other lots will likely become available over the three to three and one half years the new program is expected to last, according to Juravich.

Juravich said the program would enable an individual to obtain a second mortgage, noting that the "combination of being able to convey land to the buyer and arrange low interest, possibly deferred mortgage payments makes the program attractive."

The "biggest chunk" of the mortgage would be conventionally financed, with the UDAG money going to "ease the down payment," Juravich said.

Typically, homes to be constructed would be of the three bedroom, single story, ranch variety, Juravich said, but a person could use his own plans

as well.

Juravich said the good response to two rehabilitated houses recently put on the market by the village "encouraged" CD officials to begin the UDAG program. Some 25-30 people attended open houses held at the rehabilitated houses; another 10-15 people have made inquiries about them, Juravich said.

The two houses, one on Pine Street and one on Larnard Street, are to be sold at minimum bids of \$32,000 and \$30,000, respectively.

For the UDAG program, letters of interest are needed from people who say they would buy lots to build houses if financing aid were available. Juravich said he feels he can get such letters. He noted the program is designed for persons in the \$22,000-\$23,000 annual income range.

The village has received UDAG grants for renovation of fire-damaged buildings on Market Street. Other applications, for another fire-damaged building and for construction of a downtown motel, are pending.

Potsdam Students Whiz Through Quiz

Interscholastic competition is nothing new for Potsdam Central, but up until now generally has been of an athletic nature.

But on Oct. 26, a team from the high school traveled to the WNPE-WNPI television studios in Watertown to participate in the "Whiz Quiz" program, and came home after defeating Gouverneur Central 150-120.

The team is composed of seniors Lisa Allison, David Cateforis, Stacey Partch and John Pike, all of whom were chosen in preliminary tryouts. Eight students in the senior class were chosen to participate in the tryouts; Allison, Cateforis, Partch and Pike going to the competition and Cathy Doran, Joe DiGiovanna, Jeff Johnson and Larry Stanfel on hand as alternates.

The show featuring Potsdam and Gouverneur was aired at noon on Oct. 29, and then again on Thursday night at 7:30.

The program was coordinated between the public television station and Potsdam faculty advisor Deborah Twyman.

Student Pike said that the program was smoothly run, calling it "pretty professional." He also commented that he is "looking forward to the next round."

The next round for Potsdam is scheduled for January, when the local "Whiz Kids" will face Hammond Central, again in the studios of WNPE-WNPI.

The "Whiz Quiz" program on WNPE-WNPI is in its second year, but this is the first time Potsdam has

entered a team. "Whiz Quiz" is aired in a half-hour spot on local channels 16 and 18, and features question-and-answer competition between two schools on subjects ranging from English and history to algebra and geometry.

Host Glen Gough begins the show with questions open to either team for which points are awarded for correct answers, then alternates questions between the teams, and finally closes with questions again open to either team, but this time points are either added or subtracted according to correct or incorrect answers.

Winning teams from each week advance to a second round, and so on through a playoff structure until a "season champion" is crowned.

New Buses Save Money, School Board Learns

According to Gary Snell, district transportation officer, the new propane-fueled school buses are saving the Potsdam Central School District about five cents per mile. Snell announced the findings in a report given at the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Education, held last Tuesday night in the high school cafeteria.

According to Snell's report, timing and minor wiring problems, resulting in two cylinders being open at once, had caused problems with "flashbacks" and some small fires in the bus engines. Those problems have been corrected, and so far the buses are now running smoothly.

At the present time, the district is paying 71 cents per gallon of propane and \$1.13 for gasoline, and so even though the buses average 4.5 miles per gallon with gasoline and only 3.5 miles per gallon of propane, the net

result is a savings of five cents per mile, according to Snell.

In a related matter, the board voted to change the voting date on bus issues to before that of the regular annual vote, so that new buses can be ordered earlier. In the past, the board has not been able to order new buses until after the June voting, and had not received the buses until December. Now the district should be able to start the school year without having to depend upon old and unreliable vehicles.

The exact date for next year's bus vote has not yet been decided by the Buildings, Grounds and Transportation Committee of the school board.

The Booster Club was again on the agenda for the Board of Education, this time the board approved the club's by-laws, which were submitted to the Program and Policy Committee of the board after that committee requested a copy from club president Jack Wiberg.

Report Cards: Out Tomorrow Under Non-Computer System

Parents of Potsdam High School students should be looking for report cards on Nov. 18. This report will cover the first ten (10) weeks (Sept. 9 through Nov. 10) and will be sent home with the students for their parents' review on that day.

The timeliness of the new report card has been made possible by using a new report form which will replace the computer-generated report used in recent years that has been much criticized by the P.T.O., parents, and teachers.

"The benefits derived from this new report system," said high school principal Wilford M. LeForester, "will enhance both communications and guidance of our students by both parents and school personnel alike."

A faculty advisory committee, guidance personnel, and parents all had a hand in solving the problem and we are now ready to make a cooperative effort to have the reports ready and on time.

Parents wishing to arrange con-

ferences with teachers may do so by contacting: Marilyn Scanlon, grades 10-12 counselor, Wednesdays; William Lewis, grade 9 counselor, Mondays; or directly with the teacher by calling 265-2000.

Old Crane Photo Given To College

A relative of Julia E. Crane has given an old photograph of her family to Potsdam College. The photograph, taken at the turn of the century, is a gift to the college from Jerome Sisson, grandnephew of Julia Crane. In the photograph the Crane family, lifelong residents of the North Country, is posed on the steps of the Crane Normal Institute of Music which became affiliated with Potsdam Normal School in 1926.

College President James Young presented the photograph to Dr. Robert Thayer, dean of the Crane School of Music.