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*(dedication page)*

To people everywhere  
who struggle daily  
with addictions  
with roads mis-taken  
with brokenness  
—whose vulnerability  
life's circumstances have exposed  
to the rest of us,  
without your wanting,  
without your permission...

To you especially who through your stories here  
have testified in eloquent silence  
that our full worth as human beings  
is dependent entirely and exclusively  
on simply being born  
and nothing else under the sun...

**TO EACH OF YOU AND ALL**

**Master Teachers**  
of those of us whose own brokenness  
hangs by but a  
single  
gossamer  
thread  
above the surface of discovery

**THIS BOOK  
IS DEDICATED**

## PROLOGUE

### *the beginning*

"People should know about this."

"Oh... I don't think so. I don't have anything to say."

"Anything to say? Kate, you've been talking non-stop for an hour!"

The year was 1985, and thus began what would become my more than twenty-five-year journey into the lives and times of Kate St. Martin and more than a hundred male residents of Portland Oregon's Skid Road.

Kate and I were dining that evening at a restaurant near the De Paul Center for Alcoholism Treatment where we both worked and had met the year before. She was the nurse at De Paul and I was assistant to the president. De Paul is located within walking distance of the Skid Road area where the majority of the stories of this project take place. Kate is a Sister of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, a Catholic religious order of women.

### *the what and why*

This project is essentially an oral history consisting of a hundred and fifteen stories and twenty-five interview sessions. Interspersed among these are many historical segments and several photo galleries. Kate is the source for the stories and interviews, both of which she provided in the form of casual recording sessions between the two of us over the course of twenty years. The material was then transcribed and edited. For additional details of the project development process, see *Appendix IV: A Look Inside Some of the Project Development Process*.

The reason for dedicating more than twenty-five years of my life to this undertaking was, simply put, to try to help make the world a better place. From the start it was easy to see a connection between that goal, the example of Kate's life, and the question people frequently ask: "What positive impact could the efforts of just one person like me possibly have on the world's problems, which are innumerable, unbelievably vast and complex, and seemingly overwhelming?"

The telling of the stories of the men and of Kate's impact on their lives formed the essential link between my goal and the question, "What could just one person do that could possibly matter?"

Related to this goal was a desire to cut through the objectification our society commonly applies to Skid Road and other marginalized populations. To offer the reader and myself a certain reconciliation with those individuals by providing an opportunity to take another look at our attitudes and beliefs about them. To put a face on the men of Skid Road, most of whom most of us probably never have seen, stood next to, or spoken with. And to explore their personalities, their thoughts and attitudes, their living conditions, and the disease of alcoholism.

The number of individuals in our world who are broken and hurting is very great, and the number of those among us who can bring relief and healing to them is similarly large. My task in this project was to encourage the convergence of these two groups by documenting and sharing a powerhouse of human actions and interactions that took place between a hundred and fifteen men and one woman in an impoverished, roughly ten-square-block area of Portland, Oregon, over the course of twenty-five years.

### *without the make-up*

The story of every human person ever born is important, no matter how brief it is, without notice, or seemingly uneventful. This is why even very short stories have not been excluded from the project, as well as some that were not particularly eventful. Each story says something about a fellow traveler on the journey called life, someone whose life is worth as much as our own—not more or less, but completely and entirely. Through the stories of this project, the individual characters give testimony. "I was here. I *am* here," they seem to tell us in their quiet way. "I did the best I knew. Well or poorly I dealt the deck I found myself with. I did what I had to do to make my way through the endless mass and mess of mystery, complexity, and compromise that form much of what we call the human experience."

Each person, without exception, is an indispensable part of the garment of human existence; for there among the threads that lead to any of us lies the path that comes from each of us. And each person is a part of the human mobile; when one part moves *all* parts move, and in some way, one way or another, sooner or later, we all are affected physically, emotionally, morally, in our spirits, in our minds, in our consciences, or in the guts of our being.

Despite how things might be presented to us in life, without the make-up we are all hopelessly

the same, believe it or not; changelessly equal in worth and rights, like it or not. Whatever the category, whoever the individual. When all is said and done, the men's stories are our own stories—set in a different context, played out with a different set of details, but essentially our own.

#### *target audience & glossary*

This book is written with an international audience in mind and, as such, is intended for readers from a wide spectrum of cultural and educational backgrounds. Transcending language and culture and focusing on the common humanity that unites us across national boundaries were values that formed part of the project's foundation from its inception. Because of this and the wide use of specialized terms that likely will be unfamiliar to many readers, a comprehensive glossary has been included for convenience. The glossary contains entries for virtually every term and concept used in the project, including regarding substance abuse and treatment, religion and Catholicism, HIV disease and AIDS, buildings, agencies, places, and events. When readers come to an unfamiliar term, they should assume it likely appears in the glossary. Even terms that readers are already familiar with may be explained in the glossary in such a way that generates new interest or fuller meaning, thereby lending additional richness and understanding to the narrative.

While some clarifications and other details in the glossary will be obvious and seem unnecessary to readers who are familiar with Skid Road cultures, Catholicism, the fields of chemical dependency and HIV/AIDS, or with life in Portland, Oregon, the project does not presume familiarity with these subjects by other readers, and the glossary reflects this. In the end, the glossary is there if and when use of it is desired.

#### *audio excerpts from the original recording sessions*

Audio excerpts are available from the original recording sessions. These are fifty-plus audio tracks drawn from both the 115 stories of the men and the 25 interview sessions between Kate and myself. These excerpts demonstrate the integrity between the original and spontaneous recordings and the written narrative that grew out of them. The recordings allow one to easily discern through Kate's own voice her remarkably non-judgmental attitude toward the men—an attitude that is consistent with the same attitude the reader will doubtless sense in the narrative. The content revealed in these audio tracks also helps make a case for the significant positive value that can result when even the smallest and seemingly most insignificant of actions is performed on behalf of others.

#### *small detail*

On a more technical note, *italic type* is used in the stories and interviews whenever Kate herself stressed the italicized material by raising her voice in a way which provided clarity or emphasis to her meaning. I did not italicize any of Kate's words in order to emphasize material that I personally thought should be emphasized.

#### *the reality that supersedes*

It is possible there are instances when Kate's memory of the facts does not match the actual facts—that here and there she has stated incorrectly a year or dollar amount or street name or some other minor detail. Given the context of more than 115 men and their families and friends, and a multitude of social services, hotels, and events—all taking place over the course of more than two decades—an inaccuracy here and there would be understandable. Yet, although Kate and I are not aware of any inaccuracies, the point of a story should always be *what is going on*, what the human moment is that is taking place. *This* reality is offered as the superior of the two; it is the one about which there is no discrepancy and the one with which readers are encouraged to concern themselves.

#### *the rapprochements*

*Rapprochement* is a French word that in English indicates reconciliation between parties or the bringing of harmony to their relationship. The four rapprochements that appear in this book were originally personal reflections and not written with the present project in mind. They are termed rapprochements and have been included because they fill a strongly felt need for a more public way of reconciling myself with the men of Skid Road who were living at the time the stories took place, many of whom in my own way I avoided or otherwise rejected. Also in these brief writings I see and feel a bond with the men of Skid Road, for although the specifics of our culture's marginalization of them differ from my own experiences, a substantial similarity exists and remains.

*the two of us . . . perfect odd couple?*

As stated earlier, Kate and I first met in 1984 at De Paul Center for Alcoholism Treatment.

Born in 1921 in Canada of American parents and raised there for most of her first nineteen years, Kate has lived in and around Portland since 1940. I was born and raised in Portland and have spent my life here.

Kate taught elementary school for twenty-five years before becoming a nurse at the age of forty-eight and going to work and volunteer the remainder of her career on Skid Road and at an AIDS residential care facility. My experience with disadvantaged populations involves thirteen years of working with or on behalf of adults with various disabilities.

As for age, Kate and I could be mother and son.

Several of the individuals discussed or mentioned in the stories were acquaintances, friends, or co-workers of both of us, and I accompanied Kate in the mid-eighties on her rounds to various Skid Road hotels.

In the seventies and eighties, Kate could never wait to get down to Skid Road each day. By contrast, I was not comfortable there at that time and more or less avoided the area.

Kate and I are about as opposite in personality as two people can be. Truly an odd couple. She likes to talk, for one thing; I don't. She processes out loud; I to myself. It is always clear that something is going on in her because she expresses it; to observe me, some people might wonder if I am still alive. Kate likes to work on many task-folders at the same time, literally as well as figuratively, and with as many people present as might be present; I can deal with only one folder and person at a time. She looks forward to just about any new experience; I like to repeat mine, a lot. She loves a crowd, the more people the better; for me three is already an over-crowded situation into which I find it difficult to insert myself. She loves parties; I dread them, preferring instead to see the same people but one at a time and in some quiet place. She loves spectator sports, especially basketball; about all I manage in that department is spelling and pronunciation. She can't avoid telling me every detail of everything she has ever experienced (or so it seems to me); I am equally attracted to details, but mine spend the majority of their time in solitary confinement.

You get the picture.

*But...*

...our values have always been our real bond. And if intimacy is (as I believe it is) mutual, self-initiated, self-disclosure, on a regularly recurring basis, of matter of a substantial nature, then Kate's and my relationship has grown and matured through the years primarily because of our intimacy with each other.

*more on Kate*

Kate is amazingly non-judgmental (except for certain politicians and government policies, and certain Church officials and Church pronouncements). This attribute is rather obvious in the written version of the stories, but it becomes even more obvious in the audio excerpts referred to earlier.

Kate is very focused on whatever the task before her and staunchly resolute in the face of adversity.

She is liberal, at least in the sense that her more important decisions and actions are determined in large part by the question, "What would Jesus do in this situation?" I believe this is why—paradoxically—she does not always follow Church rules. Why, for example, she saw no problem making condoms available as a way of preventing the spread of HIV disease, or why she gave Communion several times to a man even when she knew he was not Catholic. And her actions are often enough not popular with or sanctioned by members of some of the groups to which she belongs (or would not be if they knew).

She is enthusiastic and always ready for the next experience, even more so if it is new. She is very young at heart, still at age ninety. And I know of no one who is and who has been more genuinely happy, both now and throughout her life.

But Kate can also be afraid and want to blend in. She can close up and not move forward easily. And she is not above shock value—perhaps particularly around folks who are trying to box her in, label her, define how a nun should behave. Perhaps. Yet perhaps she also likes to just plain shock others now and then—at least so it seems to me.

As for my own boxes and labels in her regard, a case in point might be of interest. Somewhere around 1998, Kate asked if she could share my home, staying overnight to make a private, one-day spiritual retreat there the next day while I was at work. When I got home from work on retreat day, I guess I expected to find her in prayer, or reading the scriptures, in some pious stance or something

similar. Instead, I found her in a pair of shorts, fast asleep on my patio in the afternoon sun of summer, stretched out on a lounge chair with an empty bottle of beer at her side.

### *chiaroscuro of human existence*

When I think about the stories of the men and the numberless things Kate has done for them, and if I ponder the many insights into her inner workings as revealed in the interview sessions, I often get the feeling I may be experiencing the presence of a saint. For what is a saint, at least in non-technical terms, if not simply an excellent model of good behavior, a fine example that inspires us to desire and strive to do always more good?

Yet when I think about Kate in this way I inevitably find myself saying, "Wait! Is *this* the same person I know? Is this the same woman who seems to never stop talking about her life, forgetting, it seems, that I have one too? Is this the one who used to rarely let me finish a thought without turning the conversation back to *her* life? Is this the friend who many times jerked me around in headstrong debate before conceding I was right, though she knew it all along? Is this—"

But she *is* the same person! She is.

I have wrestled much with this thought of sainthood and Kate. On the one hand she would seem to be just that. On the other hand I have known and experienced another side of her—a shadow side I will call it. A side that is less than desirable and not so selfless. She can be stubborn, feisty, judgmental, defiant, and resistant to being told what to do even by people in authority. Her behavior has been known to border on impertinence, and she has not always been up front with her true motives.

The conclusion I have come to about this never-ending struggle between good and bad behavior is that both are present in all of us and at the same time. The inclinations within us to perform actions that affirm, encourage, and sustain life and to perform actions that erode, diminish, or tear life down—these both exist within us always and simultaneously, and we often turn from one of them to the other within the short span of only a few minutes.

The "chiaroscuro of human existence" is what I have long called this state of affairs, and the integration of dichotomy is what it regards.

While chiaroscuro referred originally to the representation and distribution of light (*chiaro*) and dark (*scuro*) in Renaissance paintings, by extension this term represents for me the contrast of dissimilar elements within the same entity, in this case the human person: the simultaneous presence of good and not good (light and dark) working side by side in the same person. We all (Kate and canonized saints included) are combinations of this chiaroscuro all of the time, to one extent or another, and each end of the polarity tugs at us constantly and vies ceaselessly to be in charge.

In spite of our every flaw, each of us possesses all that it takes to be the best (and more) that we see in Kate St. Martin. And we dare not point to her as she passes by and declare, "Look, there is the best!" unless we are willing to risk challenging one of our deepest fears: that she would turn to *us* in that moment and, holding a mirror to *us*, say to us, "Right you are!"

### *transformation*

I am convinced that the very shadow-side behaviors of Kate mentioned previously were in the end actually instrumental in leading her to Skid Road; that these very personality characteristics that commonly have negative connotations got rechanneled somehow—not by her, and unbeknownst to her—and provided the energy, tenacity, and courage that were required and essential for her to go down there and remain there for more than twenty-five years.

And Kate went there against all odds:

- She was a woman.
- She was alone.
- It was 1970 and the times were presenting new and considerable challenges on several fronts (the sexual revolution, for example, and the dramatic changes in the Catholic Church that resulted from the Second Vatican Council).
- Kate was initially in the area against the preference of her religious order at the time.
- She was older (in her fifties).
- She was naive regarding many worldly matters, knowing nothing about alcoholism or illicit drugs or sexually transmitted diseases, for example.
- She was getting into work that has one of the highest rates of burnout.
- And she didn't even go to Skid Road with a conscious plan or mission.

Whatever its source or inspiration, something almost magically powerful fired up and energized Kate to go to Skid Road with little more at first than a satchel of Band-Aids and aspirin, to function there

happily and without burnout, and to remain there for all those many years among the poorest of Portland's poor, in one of the most challenging chambers of the heart of human misery.

-Ron Talarico

(one of the 115 stories of the men)

## CHRIS

In the days of my little clinic at Matt Talbot Center, I used to visit various hotels, in addition to working at the clinic. One of my favorite of these hotels, and the one I most frequently visited, was the Holm Hotel—the "Chicken Coop" rooms or "Chicken Coop Flophouse"—on Second and Burnside. It was nicknamed "Chicken Coop" because of the chicken wire that covered the top of each partitioned sleeping space. The main purpose of the wire was for ventilation and lighting. It also prevented a man from tossing his empty wine bottle into the next partitioned space when he was finished. Each room had a door that the occupant could lock. The Holm was a flophouse where a man could stay for one night at a time, for fifty or sixty cents. By contrast, the Home Hotel, on Third and Burnside, had more stable residents and slightly larger rooms, with regular ceilings.

I first went to the Holm Hotel by invitation from the hotel manager. He knew I was a nurse, and he thought maybe there might be something I could do in that capacity for the men. It was a men's hotel and, from what I was told, I was probably the first woman to be allowed to go in. I don't remember exactly that first time going to the hotel; I think I just went upstairs and said, "I'm a nurse. Is there something I can do?" Anyway, I got to be friends with the manager and several of the people who lived there.

Chris lived in the Holm. He was a small, short man, probably in his fifties. He was alcoholic and almost always had been drinking a few too many. Each time we met, either at the hotel or Matt Talbot Center, he would say, "Sister Kathleen'll fix me up. She always fixes me up."

At that time in his life, I don't think Chris had any specific problems, but if he *did* have a complaint, I was usually able to help. If his stomach bothered him, I'd give him Maalox. If he had a cold, I'd give him some cold medicine. Sometimes I would just listen to him and talk with him.

I don't remember Chris ever asking for money for cigarettes or alcohol or anything out of the ordinary; but, if he ever had asked, I'm sure I would have given him what he asked for, because he wasn't a regular panhandler and he probably did need it.

Chris died quite a few years before the Holm closed. After he died, the medical examiner got in touch with me to ask if I could locate the names and addresses of any of Chris's relatives, so they could be informed of his death. I remembered that I had been told that the manager of the hotel had the name and address of Chris's sister and brother-in-law, who lived in one of southern states. I obtained their names and address and gave that to the medical examiner, who then notified them in writing of Chris's death and asked them if there were any special arrangements they wanted. The mortuary held the body while the attempted contact was being made; unfortunately, there was no response, so the funeral was held without the family present.

I might add at this point that when contact was made with the family of a person on Burnside who had died, the relatives would often say they didn't want anything to do with him or the situation—they had become alienated from him. Often they would say that he had pulled away from their lives after causing a lot of havoc, and they felt resentment and hurt over this. And sometimes they were afraid they might be asked to cover the expenses of a funeral.

At any rate, about two weeks later, Chris's sister and her husband came to Portland. They had been on vacation when the medical examiner's letter arrived. They said they would have come in time for the funeral if they had known. The couple learned about me during that visit, probably from the medical examiner. After they returned home, they wrote me a letter telling me they had *wanted* to see me during their visit, because I was someone who had known Chris and they thought I might be able to give them information about him. But somebody had discouraged them from going to my office at Matt Talbot Center. They had been told, "Oh, you don't want to go down there. You don't know what'll happen. It's no place for you." They had no one to turn to at that point and no reason for staying in Portland, so they went back home without seeing me.

I'm sure that what they were told was in total ignorance on the part of whoever suggested the danger, because *nothing* would have happened! In those days, the violence on the streets occurred usually when an older alcoholic would be "jack-rolled" by a younger one for any money he might have. This usually would happen at the beginning of the month, when SSI or veterans' checks were issued.

I wrote back and said, "You would have been safer on Burnside than in many other places in a

big city. The people down there would never have hurt you in any way. I'm so, so sorry I didn't know about the incident, because I could have taken you to the Burnside area myself—and it would have been a good visit." I told them some of the details about what Chris had been like, how dear he had been, and other things that I thought would be comforting to them. I really felt very badly that I was not able to meet with them.

Chris's sister was very glad I wrote to her. She and her husband sounded very dear, and they loved their brother. She regretted that they had not known previously all the information that my letter provided, but at least they knew that Chris had been receiving some care and kindness.

This concern from others for various Burnside men who died seemed to mean a lot to some of the relatives and friends when they would make a contact with me after the person's death. Though they might not have seen their loved one for many, many years, some held a deep love and feeling for them, nonetheless.

So, this was the way it had to be with Chris, I guess. He died alone. And his family wasn't there. No one was there.

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### **when Kate would give money to a man**

There were times, through the years, when I would give money to someone who was obviously very sick with tremors, because having a drink could stave off the possibility of the d.t.'s. At the time of Chris's story, there was no detox center yet where a man could receive care; and later when there was, there were often no beds available.

Other times when I would give money to one of the men, I would take him to Gus's Café, on Third and Couch, and buy him soup or a hamburger, and coffee. He often was not able to eat this, however, because he wasn't sober enough and food had no appeal for him.

At times, when a person had been drinking very large amounts of alcohol, he would get to the stage where he *needed* a drink but it wouldn't stay down. Some told me that they would swallow a raw egg when this happened, to settle their stomach. It was a sad, scary situation when a person *needed* a drink to stave off the possibility of going into the d.t.'s, but the alcohol wouldn't stay down.

### **before there was a detoxification center**

In the days before there was a detox center, the police would often pick up a man who was sleeping off a drunk on the streets; they would put him in the paddy wagon and take him to the "drunk tank" in the county jail, where he would be kept for thirty days and then be released. With no treatment, no money, and no place to go, he would begin drinking again. There was sometimes an opportunity for a man who wanted to stay sober to go to Blanchet House where he would have a place to sleep and meals, but he would be required to help at meal times and with the operation of feeding breakfast and lunch to hundreds of people daily. Also during that period, a halfway house called Harmony House provided housing to those who wanted to stay sober.

### **alternative sources of alcohol, and fortified alcohol**

There were some unusual ways that people would obtain alcohol when they didn't have enough money to drink. There was a small drugstore on Third, for example, where they would obtain a cough medication that contained enough alcohol to temporarily satisfy their need. One patient in the County Hospital, who needed dressing changes, and so had alcohol swabs in his room, would chew or suck on the swabs to obtain the alcohol. And a woman I knew drank Listerine [an antiseptic mouthwash] as her drink of choice; this was simple to obtain, and no one suspected it was being used as a source of alcohol.

The alcohol that was sold in the stores was chemically fortified, which enhanced its effect; it was more satisfying than regular wine and was also another cause of stomach problems. For many years after many retailers discontinued selling fortified wine, it continued to be sold by various local stores in the Burnside area.

(one of the 25 interview sessions)

## FROM THE INTERVIEW SESSIONS

### *Dealing with the Challenging Physical Reality of the Men and Their Surroundings*

**Ron:** This question, Kate, is on a rather delicate subject and, for some reason, is difficult for me to ask, yet I feel compelled to ask it: How did you manage to deal with the *physical* reality and surroundings of the people you served on Skid Road? I'm talking about the lice and cockroaches, the heavily soiled clothes that often smelled of urine and other things, the body odors, the foul-smelling breath, the unkempt and unwashed bodies, the stench of environmental smells when you went into their rooms, the smoke-filled rooms, the oppressive air from insufficient air circulation, the challenging behaviors and language. In short, I'm talking about the sheer raw humanity of it all, something which, all sum, I think most people simply would not have been able to handle emotionally or physically. How did you manage to deal with all these situations?

**Kate:** The first thing that comes to my mind, Ron, is that *people* were there. People superseded any of the other, apparently, for me. All the things that you named are part and parcel of a human being, a person whom God certainly loves unconditionally. I learned to love them for themselves. The smell and the dirt and the lice, which could be at times repulsive, or certainly unpleasant, you either forget or ignore or don't notice when you see a *face*, a human being, in the midst of it all.

**Ron:** And they did come to you in the ways I have described.

**Kate:** Oh, yes. Certainly. The smell was frequently present. I'm thinking of the time I was dealing with someone's leg, that was full of you'll remember what [fecal matter], which I had to remove before I could cleanse the leg and put a dressing on it. (Now that was not a daily occurrence.)

You know, you have to say this in their defense: If you were homeless, and your body was malnourished and possibly had infected sores, and you didn't have restrooms available to you, and if you weren't living in the hotels because you didn't have the money to get in, you wouldn't have had much choice. And if they were inebriated and they were passed out, they would lose control of their bodily functions. They didn't have much going for them. What would you and I do in these circumstances? If we were down on the streets, homeless, hungry, no money, and nature called and we had an urgent need, or we had what *they* used to call the "wine shits"—diarrhea—there wouldn't be a choice. They really didn't have a choice.

**Ron:** So you somehow managed to get through this when you went to their hotel rooms or they came to you.

I know you got lice once.

**Kate:** No, I got them three times!

**Ron:** And it's not that your own work environment wasn't clean. Certainly your little office space at Matt Talbot Center was clean. It's not that you lived in that squalor.

**Kate:** That's right. And, too, a lot of the people weren't living in squalor, either.

**Ron:** By contrast, and again on the question of the physical side of things, you have said about many of the men that they were as "neat as a pin." You've said how organized and orderly many of them were, which most people probably wouldn't think.

**Kate:** Well, they didn't have much, just a small space.

Nick had been exceptionally neat [see Nick's story], but he had been a merchant marine and had special training, and rolled his clothes and towels as they did in the navy. Others possibly were this way

through their home training when they were younger.

A lot of the rooms were cluttered with things the men had accumulated. Many of the men had so little that when they would see something they liked, they would buy it if they could. Then you had someone like Kurt [see Kurt's story], who had a room with his little kitchenette and a bathroom but his bed and floor were so cluttered that I had to make way to get in to see him—it wasn't dirt; it was *stuff!*

**Ron:** But you have mentioned several men whose cleanliness and neatness was noteworthy.

**Kate:** Yes.

**Ron:** Which only points out what we all probably know: that the way they came to you in your office—in their "physical humanity mess" I will say—was not really them.

**Kate:** Yes. But these others that I was just talking about were living in what were called "SRO's"—single room occupancy units. If they were in the Chicken Coop Flophouse (Holm Hotel) or in the Home Hotel, there would always be ashtrays and butts and bottles, empty or half-filled, in their rooms or in their little space.

**Ron:** Even so, if part of the reason that some of these men were neater was that they had a place of their own, that their lives were more "together," then it's not unreasonable to think that if these people who were in the Holm, for example, had gotten *their* lives together to the extent of some of the others, *they* might have been neater and more organized, too; whereas the view, perhaps by a lot of people, is that these people are that way by *nature*.

**Kate:** Yes.

**Ron:** Well, this whole question was one I hesitated bringing up because it is rather delicate and I felt uncomfortable asking. But I'm glad I asked and glad you named some things so clearly.

You saw *faces* in all of this. You saw the *person* first, not those other appearances. And this, of course, may be the central key to helping others, and something which a lot of us lose sight of.

**Kate:** And I think that more recently in my life I realize that I can be quick to judge—although I didn't judge down there on Burnside. I don't like to make judgments, because I don't know the person's circumstances. I don't know the person; I haven't walked in their shoes. When I find myself making a snap judgment of somebody, I say, "Now Kate, stop. Back up."

**Ron:** You *didn't* judge in your ministry, not at all. I mean, that really comes through. So, are you saying that you have become more judgmental as you've become older?

**Kate:** No. It's a different situation for me. It's an *inner* judgment that I sometimes sense in myself—that I could judge unless I stop myself. I mean there are things in each of us that we'd like to see changed and get rid of, and judging is one thing that I try to stop from doing. I don't do it very often, and I do it far less than I used to. But if I just see somebody in passing and make a snap judgment—somebody I am not getting to know—I think to myself, "You're making a judgment. You don't know this person, you don't know anything about this person. Why do you think this?" I don't like to even harbor the thought when it's somebody that I don't know.

And this all has nothing to do with your initial question!

**Ron:** Yes it does, I think, and it may be even central. This judgment piece *is* related to my question, because if you had had those judgments in those days on Skid Road, you probably would have left. Most of us could not have been down there. We would have been judging the individuals right and left. We'd have gotten out.

Do you see what I mean?

Judgment *is* involved in this, and it sounds like one of the very things that helped you start and continue this work on Skid Road was the ability not to judge, was the ability to see and focus on the *face* of the person in the midst of all of the misery (as you have said), rather than focus on the misery and the squalor itself.

**Kate:** It wasn't a conscious effort, though, not to judge. *Now* it's a conscious effort.

**Ron:** But you weren't judging!

And, in fact, don't most of our judgments of others often diminish or even stop once we get to *know* the person, as you got to know the men on Skid Road?

**Kate:** Well, yes.

*(one of the 44 historical segments)*

## **FROM THE TIMES**

### ***Letter from Jail***

*[Excerpts from a letter to Kate by a male inmate of Rocky Butte Jail, Portland, Oregon, circa 1972. Begun after Kate had visited the inmate in jail, and completed after he received a letter she had promised to send him.]*

You just left here and I am trying to get my thoughts together. I am still surprised or rather amazed. I just can't understand why you came here to see me. I have seen you do this and similar acts before—yet I can't find the motive. I am not a very religious man so I can only say "thanks." You said "God bless" when you left. Did you stop to think, that I have been blessed! If not for the grace of God things would be worse. Just suppose I would have had a gun! There has to be someone looking out for me or I would have been gone by now. I have been to so many "skid row" missions that my outlook on religion is warped. Yet when I think I am all alone someone comes along then my whole belief is shaken. There are so many things I don't understand. I could ask *why* all day long. I am really confused about you. I know I am not supposed to think of you as a woman but how can I help it. I don't mean romance but I remember once seeing you on Burnside walking with some drunk like myself. I don't know just how I did feel. Maybe it was shock. Anyway I hurried away before you saw me. I know that my way of living is the loneliest there is. Sister maybe I get jealous of anyone that tries to understand. Now maybe you get some idea how confused I am! I want to thank you again for coming here. Kathern [sic], maybe you can tell me what I should do when I get out. I hate being alone but I can't live with anyone that I know. So I suppose I will just have to let nature take its course. Every man should have some purpose, some goal. It seems I just wander like some gypsy. I am only 40 but have lived more than some men twice my age.

I just received your letter and am trying to answer. Most of this I wrote the day you were here. I was going to tear it up because it did not sound like the type of letter one writes to a Sister. But I know you would want me to be honest with myself. Describing my emotions is the only way I might be able to understand myself. I think fate chose you for me to confess to. [...] Kath [sic], thanks for calling me a good man. It really built my ego.

*(introduction to the glossary)*

## Appendix I GLOSSARY

This glossary is the project's central source of information about the various terms, concepts, agencies, buildings, places, and events that are mentioned throughout its pages. The information appearing herein is only as comprehensive as was believed necessary in order to define, clarify, or enrich the meanings of the entries in the contexts in which they appear in the project. While the definitions, therefore, are not intended to be exhaustive or applicable to every life context, they *are* intended to help one better understand and appreciate more finely the many details, nuances, and technical terms within the project as well as to support additional interest.

All religious terms apply to the Roman Catholic Church and many apply in part or completely to other Christian denominations. The texts of any prayers quoted are common traditional quotations. Given the Church's 2000-year history and universal dimension, there are surely other versions and translations in use, and many individuals nowadays prefer to compose the content that is addressed in the prayers using their own words.

It is hoped the glossary in and of itself will serve as a catalyst of sorts, a type of agent of change, by leading readers to new thoughts and connections within themselves which in turn will lead to increased positive impact on the wider world.

*(below are sample glossary entries from among 225 main entries and numerous cross references)*

*(from Bethany Center to Butte Hotel)*

Bethany Center

A place for people with AIDS to go to receive free massages and sometimes haircuts. Closed in 2004, the center was started by Fr. Bruce Cwiekowski in 1998 or 1999 and was housed in a couple of apartments provided by Providence Portland Medical Center adjacent to their facility. Every other Sunday individuals would come to the CHAT group (Christ Has AIDS Too), which was a spiritual session, and on special holidays dinner would be served.

bi-polar disorder

Also called manic-depressive illness, a serious disorder basically involving extreme mood swings (from highs of things like increased energy, being extremely anxious or irritable or happy, talking too much and fast, and delusions, to lows of things like feeling very sad, depressed, inability to concentrate or sleep, and lack of interest, energy, or appetite).

bishop

Commonly the leader and chief priest of a diocese. Considered to be a successor of Jesus' twelve apostles, he, among other duties, ordains priests and participates as a member of the college of bishops, whose head is the pope.

blackout. See *alcoholic blackout*

Blanchet. See *Blanchet House*

Blanchet Farm

Large working farm in Carlton, Oregon, founded and operated by Blanchet House of Hospitality in Portland, where some forty men recovering from substance abuse continue their efforts to remain clean and sober while working and learning teamwork and similar life skills.

<http://www.blanchethouse.org/farm.html/>

Blanchet House (of Hospitality)

[Blanchet House of Hospitality provided Kate with her first important experience of the Burnside Skid Road area and played a fundamental role in and throughout her work on Skid Road.]

"From Social Club to Social Work—What began as a social club, founded in 1938, at the University of Portland has since developed into an institution unique among its kind in Portland's oldest and deepest 'poverty pocket', the Old Town/Chinatown area. Today, not only does the original Blanchet House of Hospitality, at 340 N.W. Glisan Street, founded in 1952 continue to offer to the poor: free meals, beds, jobs, and HOPE, but it has been joined by two more properties to become a multi-unit complex of charitable endeavors. The scope of Blanchet House of Hospitality has grown to include Blanchet Farm in Carlton, OR, and Mr. Riley's Place at 615 N.W. 18th. Charity - With No Commercials—'Unique' was the word we used to describe our organization in relation to others in the locality and it applies in certain important aspects. Of primary note is the fact that the Blanchet operation is not the integral agency of a church (although named for the pioneer first Archbishop of Oregon and directed by a board of Catholic laymen); nor is it an adjunct of government or of public fund groups such as the United Way, but rather it is independent of all, both legally and financially. Another unusual aspect is our policy regarding those we aid: no moral judgements are imposed and no participation in religious services are required.

A further distinguishing feature is the composition of our staff. All staff members are unsalaried volunteers; the Executive Directors have come from business or non-profit management backgrounds. The other staff has been recruited from among those we serve. The latter live in the House and perform all of the daily tasks involved in its operation, thus contributing to their own self-esteem and developing a community spirit. Since its inception, the House has served over seventeen million hot meals, provided over one million night's lodging, distributed over 800,000 items of clothing, and filled over 120,000 temporary jobs. Countless food boxes also were given to families in need, and small loans were made for training courses, licenses, tool purchases and whatever might contribute toward another chance in life. A number of new charitable undertakings have been successfully launched with aid from Blanchet House in the form of money for a few months rent, food supplies, equipment and experienced advice." [quote from Blanchet House Web site in 2008] [www.blanchethouse.org/](http://www.blanchethouse.org/)

[For more information on Blanchet House but through Kate's eyes, see stories *Beginnings*, *Blanchet House*, and *Mel & Harvey*. See also *From the Times: Blanchet House I* and *From the Times: Blanchet House II*.]

Blessed Mother

The mother of Jesus Christ.

Blessed Virgin. See *Blessed Mother*

Body of Christ

The community of believing Christians—the Church—of which Jesus Christ is considered to be the head.

Broadway Hotel

10 N.W. Broadway, Portland.

Brother (religious)

Male member of a religious order who is not a priest and not studying for the priesthood.

Burnside area. See *Skid Road*

Burnside, down on. See *Skid Road*

Burnside Hotel

[Located at 208 N.W. Couch Street, Portland, second floor, this hotel opened November 1, 1969, and closed February 1, 1973. The following quote was taken from information provided by Gil Lulay in 2008. Gil, a former Catholic priest, is Fr. Jim Lambert in this project. It was a newspaper article about him—"Priest Runs Skid Road Hotel"—that was Kate's primary inspiration to go to Skid Road and ask Gil if there was anything a nurse/nun could do to help out.]

"I was assigned to the Downtown Chapel, [then located at] 516 West Burnside, Portland, in the summer of 1968, as an associate pastor. As one of my responsibilities, I was liaison for Downtown Chapel to Hub-CAP, the church community action program for the downtown area. Hub-CAP was the ecumenical community outreach program sponsored by the Portland Council of Churches. There were, I believe, 13 member churches in Hub-CAP, including Lake Oswego Methodist, First Unitarian, Zion Lutheran, St. Mary's Cathedral, the Downtown Chapel and others. My focus at Hub-CAP was, of course, on the Burnside area.

"When the hotel opened, the Downtown Chapel contributed \$300 each month to pay the rent. I moved into the hotel, and slept there with the men at night. Once we had a kitchen operating, I took some of my meals there with the men too. I kept my room at the Downtown Chapel at the same time, and was at the chapel each morning to celebrate Mass and for breakfast.

"For the hotel, I remember building kitchen cabinets at my Dad's shop in Salem [state capitol fifty miles south of Portland], and installing the kitchen. I remember that the sizes were right, but I failed to allow for the fact that the walls were not plumb and true. I had to use a sledge hammer to get them into place. Those cabinets weren't coming down until the walls came down.

"We had showers for the men, and a washer and dryer for them to clean their clothes. We hustled beds, mattresses and linens from St. Vincent de Paul [thrift store] and from the Providence Hospitals. We collected food from the markets on the east side of the river [e.g. produce from the old produce houses in inner southeast Portland]. The men prepared the meals—some good cooks came off the street. I remember some of the faces and stories, but the names slip my mind.

"The men who came in were required to keep the rules—No drinking, No fighting, Help with your assigned tasks—and the consequences would be expulsion. If the men came back at night after drinking, they would not be admitted. Some stays were short. Some stays were for extended periods of time. The rules enforcement is what led to the opening of the Drop-In Center [see Drop-in Center]. It was gut-wrenching to turn an intoxicated resident away at the door at 10 p.m. when it was raining and there was no other place for him to go for the night."

[See *From the Times: Housing I* for photo of Burnside Hotel and Gil Lulay.]

Burnside, on. See *Skid Road*

Burnside Project. See *Burnside Projects*

Burnside Projects See also *Transition Projects Inc.*

[www.tprojects.org](http://www.tprojects.org)

[The following quote was taken from information provided by Gil Lulay in 2008. Gil, a former Catholic priest, is Fr. Jim Lambert in this project. There are several references in the quote to entities that have their own glossary entries: Burnside Hotel (regarding Hub-CAP churches), Cardinal Café, Clean-up Center, Downtown Chapel, Drop-in Center, Last Chance Café. Burnside Projects eventually changed its name to Transition Projects Inc.]

"Around 1971, I saw the need for some structure for the programs, if they were to continue after I no longer was present there. That is why Burnside Projects was incorporated [in 1971], with a board of directors that could carry on the work of continuity. [As stated in the articles of incorporation, the purpose of Burnside Projects was "To provide lodging, food and other assistance for poor and homeless men."]

"Before incorporation [from 1969-1971], the programs operated 'seat of the pants.' The Downtown Chapel was the chief support, as well as the Hub-CAP churches [...].

"In 1971, Burnside Projects was operating the Everett Street Drop-In Center primarily [also called simply the Drop-in Center]. The staff from Burnside Projects also managed the Clean-up Center [in the basement of the Downtown Chapel], but this was as much a project of the Downtown Chapel as it was of Burnside Projects. [...] The Last Chance Café had been left behind, as had the Cardinal Café [i.e. they had closed]."

[In the 1986-87 Portland phone book Burnside Projects listed its main office and "Emergency Night Shelter" as 523 N.W. Everett Street, and its "Burnside Clean-up Center" as 601 West Burnside, which would have been still in the basement of the Downtown Chapel. With the 1987-88 phone book, main office and shelter are listed as 435 N.W. Glisan Street, about three blocks away. At some point in 1987 the Clean-up Center moved from the Downtown Chapel to the Burnside Projects location. In 1991 Burnside Projects changed its name to Transition Projects Inc. (TPI), and it is still located at the Glisan Street location (though at 475), with greatly expanded services to individuals who are homeless.]

[Additional information from Kate: "Hugh did very well at Burnside Projects. He was kind of in charge of several of the areas there by 1988. Burnside Projects had *really* developed by then. I had a deep respect for what they did. One of the services they had was crisis intervention; if somebody, for example, was being evicted from his hotel, I could pay for him to stay at the Burnside Projects night shelter if there was an available bed. I did this for quite a few months with one man, which was why my ministry funds got so depleted at a certain point." (from Hugh Wright's story)]

#### Butte Hotel

Located at 610 N.W. Davis Street, Portland, this hotel is owned by Central City Concern and is Section 8 Housing for single adults. [www.centralcityconcern.org](http://www.centralcityconcern.org)

*(from Harmony House to Holm Hotel)*

#### Harmony House

[The information on Harmony House provided below is a composite of several quotes of Kate. These texts have been pulled from various places within the project. Since available material on Harmony House appeared to be very sparse except for Kate's accounts, it seemed more desirable and perhaps more interesting to use her own words here rather than for me to re-write a single running account using her words as the source. As a result, the transitions between quotes may not be as smooth as could have been otherwise, and the reader will experience some redundancy. The location of each quote is included at its conclusion.]

"The program was begun [in 1970 or 1971, in Portland] by a group of [three] recovering alcoholics who had received a grant to set up a simple rehabilitation program[/halfway house] for men. The program didn't function too well at this point because not all the men worked, which meant that there was not as much money available to the house as there would have been otherwise to feed the men, keep supplies stocked, and keep the program going. [...] [T]he Kerby Street House [...] was one of two houses that formed the Harmony House group at that time. That house has now been leveled, and the area has become part of the expansion of Emanuel Hospital." [from Alan's story.] [The second house was at the corner of S.E. Twentieth and Taylor Streets, northwest corner, facing Taylor. It was eventually also razed and is now a community-use garden for growing produce.]

"Harmony House is the most encouraging part of the work that I do. The program [...] consists of two houses, halfway houses for alcoholics, and the program director entered the program almost seven years ago. He is a recovered alcoholic with five years sobriety, almost five and a half years now. We have several people in the program that also have any place from one to five years sobriety. And the idea behind Harmony House, the philosophy here, is that a man can return to society, a successful way of living, happily, without the use of alcohol, a satisfying life without this. The people [men] are supposed to be self-supporting, because we feel that the work program is a very important part of their therapy. We are licensed, and we also I think have a good credibility and are highly respected from what we hear from different agencies, state and city, county agencies that help fund us. We don't receive much in the line of funding. We are applying for some funding, because it's difficult to run a program like this on just the income from the clients." [from a text Kate wrote in 1977 for one of her Holy Names Sisters, who used it in a presentation.]

[By 1977, the two houses mentioned above were those at S.E. Twentieth and Taylor Streets and on S.E. Thirty-ninth Avenue, a few blocks north of Division. At some point during this general period a third house was added, in Oregon City, a town south of Portland., such that all three houses for a while were operating at the same time. In addition, yet one more house may have opened later (mid to late 1980s or after this?), in Hillsboro, a town west of Portland.]

"[Harmony House initially] was only loosely organized. [...] The program in those early years consisted of house meetings, staying sober, and looking for paid employment. [...] It was a very unpretentious program. As the years passed, the government became involved with federal funding, which resulted in the inevitable paperwork and more accountability. More board members were added in time, which I too was, in addition to being a counselor and general

support person. Donations used to come once in a while, but we tried to encourage the men to find a job as a means of supporting themselves and the program. They didn't have to pay very much in rent (I think it might have been twenty or thirty dollars a week); it was very little at first, and then as times got better or the men were earning a little more, they would be asked to pay a little bit more." [from Scott's story]

"The program was low-key: the men were expected to go to work if they could; they had group[/house] meetings, and they met individually for counseling with some of the staff (including me at that time). The men didn't have to come to us from detox; they could move into the House just on the basis that they were alcoholic and wanted to remain sober." [from Matthew's story]

"The most responsible man at Harmony House was usually selected as manager of the house. We'd take whoever had the longest sobriety and looked like he could probably manage." [from Charlie's story]

[Harmony House had an administrative office for a time at 2005 S.E. Hawthorne Boulevard (upstairs), which is only a few blocks from the Taylor Street house. Since at a certain point the Taylor Street house, which had been housing about nine men, no longer met the requirements for a residential facility, it became administrative offices and a place to hold board meetings, and the Hawthorne office likely closed as a result.]

"We kept all our records, files, and equipment there [referring to the Taylor Street house after it could no longer serve as a residential facility and house the men]. We used the back room as the manager's office, the dining room as an administrative office with our records and files, and the living room for meetings and counseling sessions. And upstairs lived Steve; he was the only one holding that place down, and he was there so that the house wouldn't be open to vandalism." [from Steve's story] [At whatever point Steve stopped living at the house, Kate and Sandra (one of Kate's Holy Names Sisters) lived there for a year.]

"It is important to know that Harmony House was not an alcoholism treatment center such as De Paul Center. It was an alcohol- and drug-free environment in which everybody who was on the staff was a recovering alcoholic, and the people were expected to go to the house meeting. [...] [In the early years the men were expected to go to AA meetings. Later this requirement was relaxed in favor of just house meetings, which in effect served as a type of AA meeting.] It was a supportive atmosphere and a supportive group of individuals, and that was about the sum of it. Some of the men did very, very well; they stayed with the program long enough, they got a job, and then they supported the program by paying for their room and board at the house. Others, if they didn't look like they were making efforts to look for or take jobs, or if they drank, would be asked to leave. It was rare that people were asked to leave if they were trying." [from Kirk's story]

#### Henry Building

Low-income housing for single adults, at 309 S.W. Fourth Avenue, Portland, currently managed by Central City Concern. See *detoxification center* for more on Central City Concern.

#### Hillsboro (Oregon)

City located approximately 15 miles west of Portland, and part of Portland metropolitan area.

#### HIV Day Center

Multi-service daytime center in Portland serving individuals living with HIV/AIDS whose income is low. [http://www.emoregon.org/HIV-day\\_center.php](http://www.emoregon.org/HIV-day_center.php)

#### Hobo Parade

The Hobo Parade, later called Homeless Parade, began in 1980, partly as a reaction to Portland's Rose Festival Parade (see *Rose Festival Parade*) and the negative intersections experienced between the police and homeless individuals who would be in the same basic area as the Rose Parade and related activities, and partly to raise community awareness and understanding of homelessness and of the dignity of those who experience it. The parade included the selection of a King and Queen of the Hobos [or of the Homeless]. The parade was sponsored by the non-profit Burnside Community Council (see *Baloney Joe's*), and proceeds were to benefit the charitable work of the council. The Homeless Parade was held in 1988, which may have been its

final year.

Holm Hotel (also called Chicken Coop Hotel, Chicken Coop, Chicken Coop Flophouse, Chicken Coop Flop)

9 S.W. Second Avenue, Portland.

[See introductory comment for Harmony House. Same case for Holm Hotel.]

"On the southwest corner of Second and West Burnside was the Holm Hotel, with its entrance on Second Street. [There were a lot of stairs to go up.] The men in the Holm [...] did not have to be sober to stay there; they could drink and they could be drunk. While the Holm and the Western had separate street entrances, you could go through to one small area of the Western from the third floor of the Holm [the Western hotel was south of the Holm and next door to it]." [from "Beginnings" story]

"[The Holm and the Western were]... right across from Salvation Army [which is still there in 2008]; but, at the time I started on Burnside [1970], the Western had been closed down. When I think of it now, I realize there were fire traps that existed in some of the buildings on Skid Road at the time; you could have really gotten trapped if there ever had been a fire in one of them." [from Randall's story]

"The hotel was a maze of rooms, and it could be a task just to go around and know where everyone was." [from Victor Haddock's story]

"It [the Holm] was nicknamed "Chicken Coop" because of the chicken wire that covered the top of each partitioned sleeping space. The main purpose of the wire was for ventilation and lighting. It also prevented a man from tossing his empty wine bottle into the next partitioned space when he was finished. Each room had a door that the occupant could lock. The Holm was a flophouse where a man could stay for one night at a time, for fifty or sixty cents." [from Chris's story]

"He [Nate] was in a large, large room which was subdivided into smaller, partitioned, rooms with chicken coop wire over them. Some of the partitioned rooms were along the window side, and they were brighter and cost more. There was an aisle and then a big square in the middle of this large room, and that square was subdivided into small rooms. There was one little light bulb up in the ceiling of the entire space, so you can imagine how little light there was. These inside rooms were usually the kind that would be rented on a one-night basis to people who just wanted to stay a night or two; those who were there for a longer term had the outside rooms. In the early days when I first started down on Burnside [1970], the outside rooms were sixty cents a night and the others were fifty. When I'd send people to that hotel, Oliver [the manager—see Oliver's story] would always give me the rooms for half-price or less, even much less, in spite of the fact that he took a loss on this favor. I would pay the bill, then, at the end of the month." [from Nate's story]

"This was one of the hotels where I could just give a man a note that said, "If you have room, will you put so and so up for three to five nights?" and they would do it. They would mark down the number of nights that he stayed, and then at the end of the month I'd pay the bill for that person and for however many others I might have sent. Oliver was very good about helping me in this way, and he gave me cut rates (which Salvation Army did *not* do). He reduced the rates for me, and he kept them much, much lower, even when he had to keep raising prices for others because of heating and utilities. There were no women in that hotel at all; in fact, they didn't even let women up. But Oliver got to know me and trust me—and the fact that I was a nun I know had a lot to do with allowing me in." [from Oscar's story]

[See *From the Times: Housing V* for photos of a typical chicken coop flophouse and of one Holm Hotel cubicle.]

**(end of a look inside *Fire in the Dark*)**