



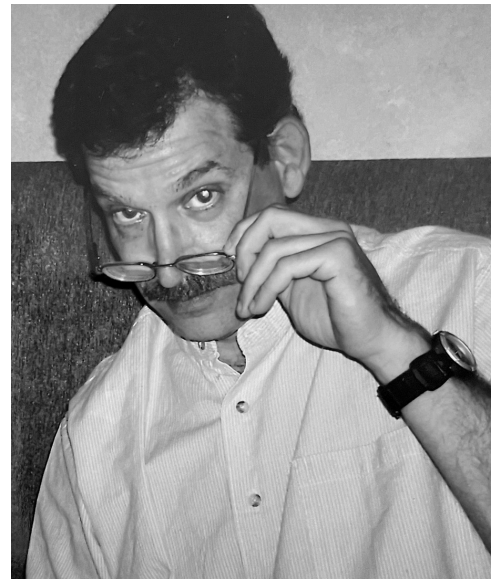
at the door

the quarterly newsletter of St. Francis Catholic Worker House – Chicago, IL

David Stein, 1957 – 2024

Loved by too many to count, dear David Stein passed suddenly and unexpectedly Thursday afternoon, January 2, 2025 from natural causes, related to organic cardiovascular disease.

He was doing something he loved when he passed: visiting an art gallery here in Chicago, looking at art. He was 67 years old and would have turned 68 in early April.



A longtime member of the Catholic Worker and a New York native, David Stein came to the Midwest in the 1980s and lived at CW houses in Des Moines, IA and Rock Island, IL before settling at St Francis House in Chicago where he was a mainstay until his 'retirement' in 2021.

Before coming West, David was part of the Community for Creative Nonviolence in Washington, DC. David was a woodcarver, a poet and, until the scene got too absurd for satire, a most acerbic social critic.

Four Easy Essays by David Stein

I

Our society praises individualism
And scorns communality.
A person is taught to work
For his/her own gain
Rather than for the common good.
So the individualist
Working for his/her own gain
And scorning communality
Goes to work in a traffic jam,
Works in a huge skyscraper
For a multi-national conglomerate,
Must dress the same as all the others,
And after going home
(In another rush-hour traffic jam)
Is entertained by mass media.

The Catholic Worker movement
Praises communality
And scorns individualism.
A person learns to work
For the common good
Rather than for his/her own gain.
So the Catholic Worker
Working for the common good
And scorning individualism
Works at home
Or wherever s/he may chance to be,
Dresses as s/he pleases,
Keeps irregular hours,
Needs to impress no one,
And can be a rather strange person
Without anyone caring much about it.
And after the day's work is done
The Catholic Workers
Entertain each other
With songs.

II

Money is not value. Money is a symbol of value.

Economics is the study
of the manipulation of that symbol.

Astrology, alchemy, and sorcery are also the
study of the manipulation of symbols.

So economics is akin to astrology, alchemy
and sorcery.

Every age has its fashions. So astrology et al.
are considered superstitions while economics
is esteemed as a science.

A symbol has power only insofar as people
believe in its power.

We believe in the power of money so much that
we have given it power over our lives and our
world.

Human beings, trees and rivers are real and not
symbols. But we believe in the reality of money
more than we believe in the reality of human
beings, trees, and rivers.

Thus we kill or degrade human beings who are
real, destroy forests and pollute rivers, which
are real, for the sake of money, which is a
symbol.

Whatever you sacrifice to is your god. So
money is our god, and we are idolators.

III

I read about it in the Tribune, so I guess it's an official trend. The article was called "Techno-Anxiety." It was about how many people feel anxious about new technologies and I don't think their lives have been improved by them.

The people quoted were pundits and academics. It quoted "trend guru Faith Popcorn". Trend guru Faith Popcorn? Yeah, right. It quoted a "professor of leisure studies" from the University of Pennsylvania. It quoted representatives of high-tech industries, I suppose for their impartial, objective views. It quoted not one working-class person or some one actually feeling the anxiety being discussed.

But it didn't have one word from a real person, someone who actually feels the way being discussed. Regular people were spoken about entirely as objects.

The tone was like: How can we make people feel more accepting of the new technologies? Cattle that they are, how can we keep them moving in the direction we want them to move in? There was not a hint that people have any real choices about the level of technology they want to use. It was like: since they have no choice, how can we make them feel better about what we have chose for them

Nobody said, maybe they have good reason to feel anxious. Maybe they are entitled to resist. Maybe they are beings with free will. Forget it! Are you kidding? This is journalism. These are the liberals.

~ By David Stein, from At the Door, Spring 2000

IV

What is the difference between the two parties? The difference between the two parties is that the Republicans want to devour the entire earth this very instant, and the Democrats want to make it last another couple of weeks.

Why does the Right hate the Democrats so? It is because the Democrats want to give Big Business only 90 percent of what it wants, unlike the Republicans, who want to give Big Business 100 or 120 or 150 percent of what it wants.

So the Republicans call the Democrats Anti-business and socialistic. If wanting to give Big Business only 90 percent of what it wants makes you anti-business and socialistic, what are we to make of people who want to give Big Business maybe only 60 or 70 percent of what it wants? Or even less? Such people can't even be allowed into the debate, can't even be recognized to exist, since no one could possibly be that extreme. Or if they can't be ignored (like when they take to the streets and cause trouble) they can be ridiculed and scorned as lunatics and misfits and spoiled brats.

When the Republicans denounce the Democrats, who want to give Big Business only 90 percent of what it wants, as anti-business and socialistic, they can push the political spectrum ever further to the right and in favor of Big Business.

Keep it up until the Democrats reach 98 or 99 percent or until the planet dies-- whichever comes first.

~ By David Stein, from At the Door, Spring 2005

In Loving Memory of David Stein

Haikus by LCK



Haiku 1

*Bidding us shun war,
You lived in restitution
for those who do not.*

I had the privilege of living at Saint Francis House with David from 2010 through 2014 and continued having written contact with him over the past 10 years after my return to California. David lived the full sense of community, which as many of us know, includes moments of beautiful engagement and times of challenge and need for solitude. A fond memory I have is David agreeing to the Workers fostering a house cat (Alley) after a little convincing that the cat would be temporary and she would not be allowed outside to disturb the birds. Despite his initial resistance, David was the first person Alley liked and she softened his heart as he quickly succumbed to her persistent demands for breakfast at 4:30am. Through our correspondence I could hear David's voice and see his facial expressions come through the page as he wrote about community life, the political scene and asked about "that goofy cat." Until we meet again friend . . .

~ Nicole Pierre

Haiku 2

*What are we to be?
A wood curl or the remain,
tooled by your friendship.*



The first time I ever spoke to David, I had called asking about Monday night dinner. I asked what I should expect. He told me to wear a three-piece suit and plan for brandy and cigars afterward. Dinner that night was some kind of pasta-bake with fried eggs on top. Needless to say, there were no cigars. My favorite thing about living with David was discussing the Beatles. He was really fond of pointing out that the magic of the Beatles came from George Martin's production genius. His favorite song was "Paperback Writer," and his least favorite was "Within You Without You." Readers can interpret what they will from those choices . . .

~ Dan Justman

Haiku 3

*I read in your eyes
acceptance, modest worry,
both your daily prayers.*



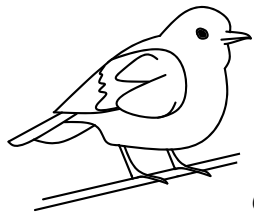
When I think of David Stein I think of handmade envelopes and sarcastic comments. I think of smooth wood and fabulous potato salad with apples in it. David was one of the most unique people in my life and I admired him for his authenticity. When I moved into Francis House as a Worker in August 2020, one of the first things he said to me was how glad he was that there was now a "non-beard" in the house. Together we worked on plumbing fixes and yard projects. He became my pen pal when he moved out in 2021 and we would go on outings throughout Chicago. I am going to miss our trips to small mom n' pop shops and ethnic grocery stores and our snail mail conversations. David, my prayer for you is that you have found peace and are at rest. We all miss you.

~ Stephanie Held

In Memory, continued from previous page . . .

When I lived at St. Francis David was always carving something. He taught me how to carve and he gave me some tools for when I left there. One day I said to him "My English is not good." He said "You can speak Korean and English, but I can not speak Korean. What's the matter?" His glasses were thick and his eyes were always deep. He had a shy smile. One day he said that "I hate whenever somebody asks me what the ingredients for the food are, I just put in whatever we have that day. When I got the sad news I had a mass for him and prayed for him and all the friends of St. Francis. Even though I live far away in Korea my heart is always with him and all of you. May God give him peace and eternal life.

~ BokDong Jeong.



Haiku 4

*Birds that etch the sky
remind the looker to feel
gladdened mourning hearts.*

Back in the 1980s, David used to visit with me at the 8th Day Center for Social Justice. He had elected to live on the street with those who were forced to do so. His goal was to form community among these same people. But he found it much harder than he expected because there were so many obstacles to doing so. He needed a port in the storm from time to time and 8th Day was in his neighborhood. It was my honor to visit with him. I will miss him but his spirit lives on.

~ Fr. Bob Bossie, SCJ

To have known David is to have been charmed, inspired and enlightened by him. He would vehemently reject the cliché, but David was truly one of a kind. Steadfastly true to himself; he was a gentle soul, an artist, a humorist, an intellectual, a lover of nature and unwavering in his simplicity and humility. He was unique in his ability to identify defects of our culture that most of us accept blindly. I am a better person to have known David. He enriched my life more than he knew.

~ Ron Durham

Haiku 5

*Your huffing laughter,
mirth the sly ambassador
bursting from a pun..*



David is going to be missed immensely in this world. He and I met in 1981 at the Des Moines Catholic Worker. We never lost touch and I visited him every time I went to Chicago. In the 90's he got me into carving spoons, a hobby I still have. My wife and I were lucky to visit him two weeks before he died. David had a certain energy about life, along with intelligence, great sense of humor, simplicity and humility. David was special to all who knew him. I wished he had written more, we desperately need his philosophy of simplicity, honesty, humbleness. We joked about when he lived in the streets: "You should write a book. You would be famous and make a bundle of money". We laughed it off – yeah, David the millionaire, but in so many ways he was. We who knew him were enriched by his life. "David, if there is a heaven, and I make it there, you will be one of the first people I want to hang out with. I will bring the beer"

~ Mauro Heck



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House Needs

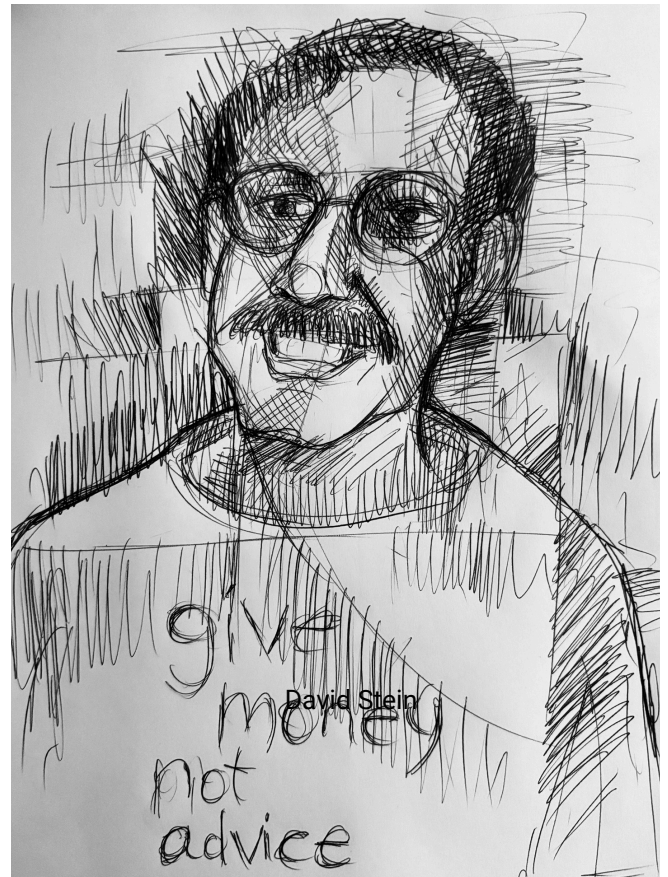
- Prayers for World Peace
- USPS Stamps
- Bath towels
- Washcloths
- Socks (large)
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Hand sanitizer
- Clorox
- **Coffee** (we serve ~1,250 cups of coffee per month!)
- Coffee creamer
- Vegetable oil
- Dish soap
- Hand soap
- Paper napkins
- Laundry detergent pods
- Fabric softener

**Donations to our house are welcome,
but are not tax deductible.**

Please make checks payable to "St. Francis Catholic Worker," donate on our website francishousechicago.org or scan this QR code with a smartphone camera to donate online.



We have one opening for a Summer live-in volunteer position at St. Francis Catholic Worker. If you're interested, please don't hesitate to reach out!



David Stein, Drawing by Gary Thomas

Thank You

Sister Barbara Quinn, Alexian Brothers, Anthony Sphalla, Richard Sasso, Stan's Donuts in Uptown, Ronald Carrier, Ronald Johnson, Sarah Moffit & Ian Jantz, Ray Graham, Donna Goering, Basil Tirtilli, St. Harold's Community, Anonymous Angel.