

Beverly Waite

Beverly Waite was the manager of Judson House from 1959 to 1968.

In 1959 my husband, Ralph, left his ministry in Garden City, New York, to become an actor. He talked with Howard Moody about the job replacing Betty Murphy as manager of Judson Student House. Howard interviewed me, and I got the job I wasn't looking for. We moved our three little girls and all our belongings to what would be our home for the next nine years.

Those years were intense in every way. Greenwich Village in the sixties was "happening." I made the acquaintance of more foreign students than I can remember and made many close friends. We had great times partying in the Lounge. I think of Chuck Gordone and Jennie Franklin calling my white-girl twist "cute." My girls produced several plays, graciously attended by our residents.

Our oldest daughter, Sharon, developed leukemia and died in 1964. I'll never forget Howard Moody's supportive presence during her illness and after her death, nor the truly memorable memorial he orchestrated for her. Howard read a letter Sharon had written to her dear friend Jennie Franklin, who was serving in Mississippi that terrible summer.

Ralph and I separated shortly after that. There was a great deal of pain during those years but also much joy and laughter. When I think of laughter, I think of Julie Kurnitz, Paul Richter, Jack Matlaga, and of course Jennie. I remember the blackout of 1965. Returning from my girls' dance class, I found that the only lights in the Village were coming from my apartment. Jack Matlaga had collected every candle in the house and was holding a dinner party there.

I remember the march on Washington in 1963 with Susan Stern Moore, when we were part of the throng that heard Dr. King's famous speech. I remember the snow storm that turned New York into a village of light, with nothing moving but snowballs and happy people. I remember the sickness in my gut over the assassinations of Jack and Robert Kennedy, Dr. King, Malcolm X.

I remember with joy Ed Brewer's taking Sharon to see the Nutcracker. A few years later, Kathleen and Suzanne were dancing the Nutcracker, which was also one of my great joys.

I remember Jon Hendricks's demonstration for peace in the garden when I totally freaked out as he started to cut a limb from our only tree. The crowd thought I was part of the show.

I remember Lee Guillatt's unforgettable rendition of "Don't Think Twice" and Al Carmines's beautiful artistry.

I remember rats in the subbasement and charming inspectors out of citations.

I missed a lot of the Judson experience because I was extremely busy with my personal life. But I did attend a memorial for Lenny Bruce and a happening in the sanctuary when green paint was thrown on someone. In the Student House I became involved in a suicide attempt, Haitian guns hidden under a bed, a benefit for one of Harry Koutoukas's creations, a TV crew invading my living room for a segment of a report on Judson Church. I remember Carman Moore chasing a thief who was making off with the possessions of one of the students. We entertained the Living Theater at the Student House. There is nothing like expanding the mind, and Judson House certainly encouraged that.

During my final year, in 1969, I was on the staff of the runaway program. Under Art Levin's benevolent direction I worked with Michael Parker, John Maige, Bob Lamberton, and Nancy Katchel to help redirect the messed-up lives of the scores of teenage runaways. From them I learned a great deal about living honestly and courageously. I have a special thanks in my heart for Mike Parker, who helped me to see things differently.

During a time of spiritual confusion, my years at Judson House helped me to see what in the world God was doing.

BEVERLY WAITE

lives in Hawaii.