

Modern-day good samaritan is working to help the homeless

By KATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

A man with gray strands in his scruffy beard shuffles to the hatchback of Bob Jasinkiewicz's car. Jasinkiewicz, a 43-year-old man with curly brown hair and wire-rimmed glasses, reaches into a white, plastic grocery bag and hands him a pack of his own Saratoga 120's. The bearded man mumbles a thanks and slaps Jasinkiewicz on the back.

For the past year, 24 hours a day, Jasinkiewicz has given everything he has to people who need it the most: Chapel Hill's "street people," or what he calls "broken people." He has what could be termed a mobile ministry, carrying items in his car and traveling to the needy.

"I was a broken person," he says. "I see people around me that are broken. I try to put them together again."

Jasinkiewicz is a secular Franciscan monk. He doesn't wear robes, but has vowed to follow the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi, a 13th century monk who gave up all his worldly possessions to serve the poor. In fact, Jasinkiewicz has done almost the same.

Jasinkiewicz's home is a clean,

mustard-colored Toyota Corolla station wagon. His closet is a few plastic bags thrown in the back, containing all of his personal belongings. A sign reading "St. Francis's House" sits on the dashboard of the car.

Jasinkiewicz depends on donations from people to his mission for the poor to help pay for gas and some living expenses. His father helps out by financing the maintenance on his car.

Jasinkiewicz says he is content to park and sleep in a public parking lot on the corner of Rosemary and Columbia streets. If he stays in the same spot every night, he says, people in need of help know how to find him.

A typical day for Jasinkiewicz begins early, around 6:30 a.m. when the parking lot attendants start arriving for duty. Even a good samaritan can't get free parking in Chapel Hill, it seems. He heads toward the Inter-Faith Council's Soup Kitchen in Carrboro to serve breakfast to those who are there for the first meal of the day. Then he strikes out on his own mission work.

As he drives the streets of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, people who know him wave along the way.

Later, he might give one of them a lift to the soup kitchen.

During the day and night, he is involved in what he calls crisis intervention, such as helping a reeling alcoholic keep calm when a police officer speaks to him. He says he has even helped several University students, giving them a ride home at night when they don't have a ride or can't make it home themselves. He says he asks for nothing in return, but people give what they can, which keeps his mobile mission rolling.

Though Jasinkiewicz's mission stems from his love of God and man, Jasinkiewicz doesn't push his religion on the people he helps. He says it never even comes up. The most important thing to him is to give people immediate attention to their needs.

"I have my God; everybody else has their own. The whole idea is we're people together," he says. "Everybody's a brother and sister. That's an old phrase, but everybody seems to forget it."

Jasinkiewicz says he takes people as they are and doesn't try to change them. And he feels he's paid his dues.

Down on his luck because of a



DTH/Matt Plyler

Bob Jasinkiewicz and his ministry-on-wheels

divorce, with two charges of driving while impaired and a drinking problem, Jasinkiewicz suffered from severe depression. For about a year he lived on the streets of Chapel Hill. A University graduate and former journalist for a local newspaper, he slept anywhere he could find a spot, such as a bench, the street or a park. He ate meals at IFC's Soup Kitchen.

"I sort of saw the flip side of life," he says of that period in his life.

His life started to change when he became involved in helping out in the same soup kitchen where he ate. He came in from the streets to live in IFC's shelter for the homeless, doing repair work for the home. He stayed there for two years, until he got his license reissued after the DWI charges. With all his hard luck, Jasinkiewicz vowed to be there for others when their fortunes took a nose dive.

"I've been to the bottom. I want to be there when they come down," he says.

Chris Moran, consultant to the community service division of IFC, is thankful for Jasinkiewicz. Moran says that agencies can't answer all the problems of the homeless, no matter how badly they want to. He says the purpose of the agencies is to get people concerned about other

human beings.

"If there's anything to be learned by this, it's that we all have responsibilities as individuals toward others," Moran says.

Jasinkiewicz's father says he was a little stunned when he learned of his son's decision to give up many of his possessions, but is proud of him now.

"That's what he wanted to do. I didn't object to it," he says.

Jasinkiewicz says that his way of life makes him happier than he has ever been, and he won't quit his mis-

sion for a more ordinary way of life. He says he hopes one day to run a donated house for homeless people the shelter can't take in, such as those who drink on the premises or who don't make it to the shelter by curfew.

"I took the road less traveled by and that's made all the difference," he says, echoing a well-known quote. "I think I've done something nobody else has ever done before. You'll be surprised what you'll meet on that road — wonderful, wonderful things."

Lab Theatre presents exciting whodunit

Though it started off not with a literal bang but with a gun, the Lab Theatre's current production, "Over My Dead Body," is a suspenseful and well-acted murder mystery. In Agatha Christie style, the play begins in typical murder mystery fashion — the secluded mansion setting, a hated character and all those with reason to hate him.

Act One. Enter Dora Bates, the maid (Rhett Wiley). She fusses, she fiddles. Something is up. Opening the desk drawer, she pulls out . . . the gun.

Enter Ann Montrose (Larissa Biggers), the nervous and alcoholic mistress of the estate. She is not pleased about the sleeping arrangements her husband Cyril, a play director, has planned for the weekend he has scheduled at the mansion. She too opens the drawer. She too pulls out the gun.

Julie Olson Theatre

Enter Margot Tremayne (Kristine Watt). She is not only the choreographer of Cyril Montrose's play; she is also his ex-wife. Talking with Ann, she confides that she never could have stayed married to him. She would rather have . . . killed him.

And as the rest of the characters gradually enter the play, it becomes quickly evident that just about everyone would love to kill Cyril (Patrick Lawler). Even the audience. And just about everyone knows about the gun.

With a murder in Act Two, the suspense heats up. Fingers are pointed at everyone and by everyone. The bumbling inspector (Bobby Dabal) offers little help in solving the

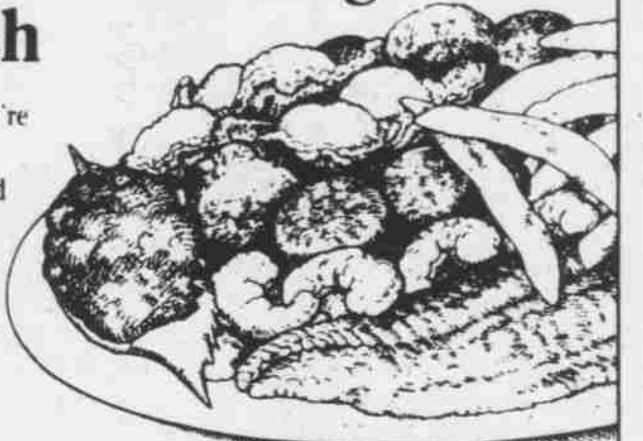
mystery, and the task is left in the capable hands of one of Cyril's weekend guests, ex-gossip columnist Beryl Cross (Terri Atkins).

As a murder mystery, "Over My Dead Body," written by Mark Nielsen, has an intriguing plot and, of course, the original and bizarre explanation of the murder. But the play is much more than just a whodunit; it is an excellent study of the personalities of the different characters involved.

The nervous wife, the contemptuous play director, the voluptuous starlet, and the busybody ex-gossip columnist all act and react in their particular modes of expression. The almost trite generalizations of the characters do not detract from the play but rather add to its overall humorous attitude. The good acting by all those involved serves to make "Over My Dead Body" a very entertaining and just plain fun mystery.

Two minutes is too long for Calabash

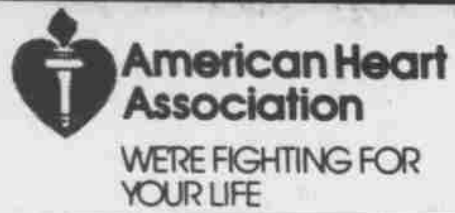
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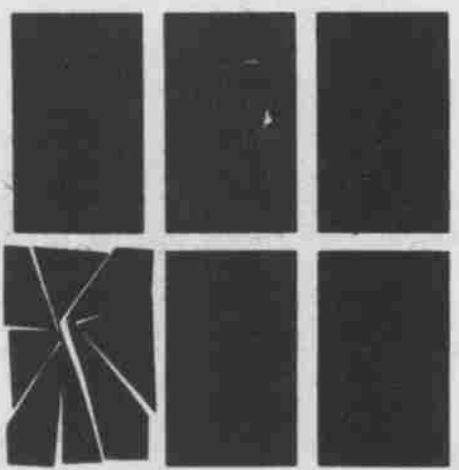
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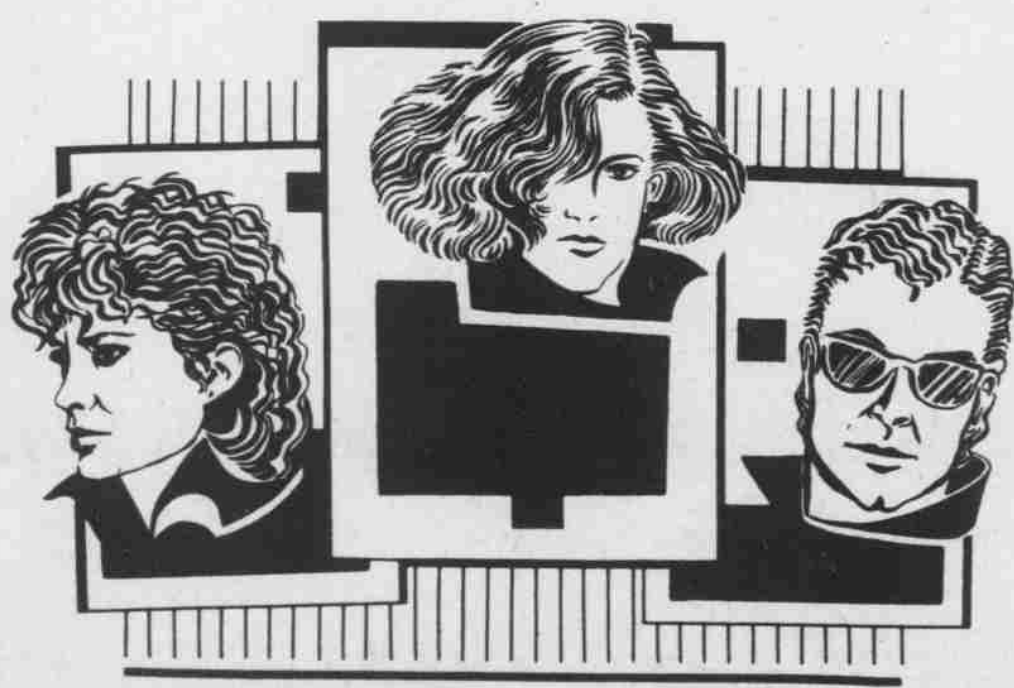
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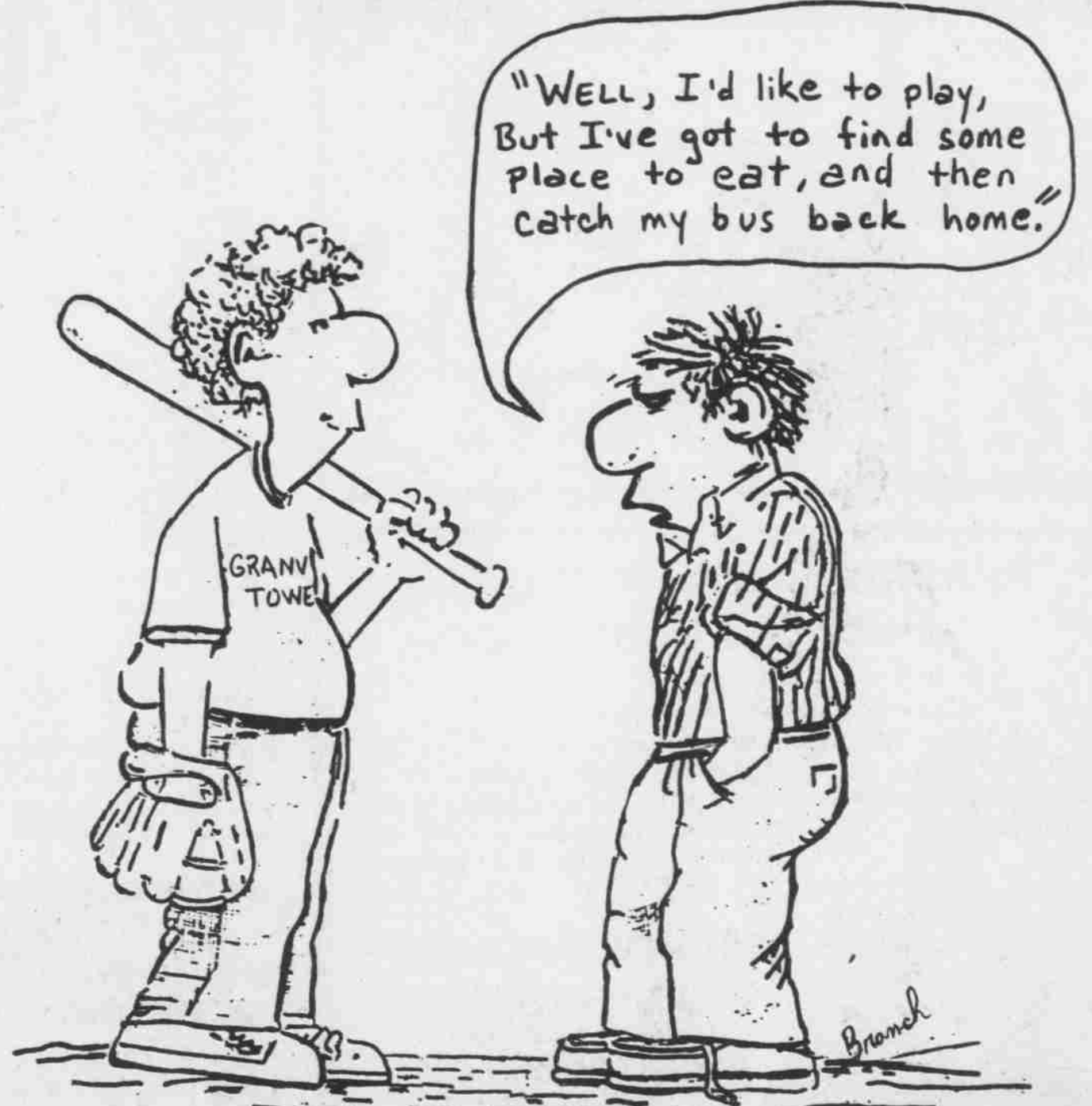
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