

Circle!

Inspiring Chapin Fans and Friends to Make a Difference

Tackling Hunger in America: Challenges and Opportunities

by Bill Ayres

One of Harry's favorite lines when talking about hunger went like this, "You want to know what is really obscene? Hunger. Hunger is an obscenity and hunger in America is the ultimate obscenity."

What would Harry think now about hunger in our great country? Today, 30 million people in America are food insecure, and 12 million of them are children. That means that they often do not know where their next meal is coming from, have to skip meals, or eat much less than they need.

Much has been done to fight hunger in America in the past twenty years of which Harry would have been proud. I know all of us at World Hunger Year (WHY) are proud of the following two significant achievements:

Child nutrition programs like school lunch, school breakfast, after school meals, the Summer feeding programs, senior meals, food stamps, and WIC (Women, Infants and Children Feeding Program) help tens of millions to avoid hunger.

Two hundred food banks, including two founded by WHY, provide food to more than 50,000 food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and Meals On Wheels programs that serve millions more.

If these are our great successes in fighting hunger in America, you might ask why do we still have so many hungry people? Here are several of the major reasons:

- Wages for most workers have not grown beyond inflation in the past 30 years. American workers need a raise.

- The costs of housing, health care, child care, and higher education have skyrocketed.
- Benefits have been cut for most workers, especially health care and pensions.
- Unemployment insurance provides less money (after inflation) per week for fewer weeks.
- Welfare payments are smaller for less time and cover fewer people.

In short, the economy is not designed to provide a living wage for a majority of American families, and the so-called "safety net," which is supposed to supplement wages in a time of need, has increasingly gaping holes.

What can supporters of WHY do to "make a difference" (one of Harry's favorite terms)? Volunteer your time or talents to help a hunger or poverty organization in your community. If you don't know one, visit our online database at http://www.world-hungeryear.org/nhc_data/nhc_01.asp, and we can connect you to excellent people. Let your voice be heard. Write to the President, your congress members, governor, and state and local legislators about draconian budget cuts that are being proposed on federal, state, and local levels. WHY can tell you about the Federal cuts to oppose. You can ask your local organizations about the state and local issues.

Finally, READ and DISCUSS the issues. Start by going to our website at <http://www.world-hungeryear.org> to learn more. We should not live in a society that tolerates hunger when we can solve the problem.

Bill Ayres is Co-Founder & Executive Director of WHY (World Hunger Year).



PHOTO BY JOAN BEDER

Limited Edition CD Available

In the mid-1970s, Harry and Tom Chapin were guests on Bill Ayres' weekly radio talk show called "On This Rock" on WPLJ in New York City. A limited edition CD featuring approximately 60 minutes of segments from those interviews (no songs) is available for a donation of \$25 or more to WHY. In the interviews, Harry and Tom talked about their passion for fighting hunger. The CD is scheduled to begin shipping after July 20, 2003, and is available while supplies last (Allow 2 to 4 weeks for delivery). Click on https://ssl-033.imconline.net/worldhungeryear/forms/firm_why_donors.asp and make your donation, indicating "On this Rock CD" in the comments section.

Sen. Dorgan Cites Harry In Fight For Hunger Funds

by Bill Hornung

As the U.S. Congress debated passing a mammoth \$350 billion tax cut on May 19, **U.S. Sen. Byron Dorgan** from North Dakota passionately recalled Harry Chapin during a plea to include some relatively small funding to stem the ongoing starvation throughout Africa.

Dorgan proposed earmarking \$250 million for emergency food relief as part of \$15 billion in funding to fight the AIDS epidemic. The AIDS bill became a major discussion point during the budget negotiations. Both the budget cuts and the AIDS bill

were approved and signed by President Bush. The hunger-relief funding failed by two votes when Senate leaders pressured members to vote against any additional amendments.

All totaled, Dorgan's proposal asked to spend \$1 on hunger relief for every \$1,400 approved in new tax cuts. Officials believe 11 million are facing starvation in central and sub-Saharan Africa.

Dorgan, who befriended Harry and sits on WHY's Board of Advisors, cited Harry's "The Shortest Story" in his comments before Congress. "[Harry] used to

say, if one night 45,000 people died of hunger in New Jersey, it would make headlines around the world, giant headlines in every paper in the world. The winds of hunger blow every day, every hour, every minute, and 45,000 people, mostly children, die every day, and it doesn't make the newspaper," Dorgan added.

Click here <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord/index.html> to read Dorgan's speech and then enter the words "Harry Chapin" in the 2003 "Quick Search" box. The text is titled Global Aids.



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Masthead photo by Diane Maple

Thank you Harry and Jim.

Florida Food Bank Reflects Harry's Spirit

by Bill Hornung

Editors' Note: Harry Chapin's legacy of inspiring others to act to eradicate hunger lives on in local, national, and international anti-hunger organizations today. In celebration of this legacy, starting with this issue, Circle! begins a series of articles that spotlight some of the organizations where Harry's influence continues to make a difference.

The Harry Chapin Food Bank of Southwest Florida illustrates just how far Harry's legacy stretches. The food bank is tucked between the gulf coast town of Naples where the ultra rich vacation and the outskirts of Lee County where many of the country's ultra poor live.

Harry's example of never giving up is what saved the food bank from nearly going out of business in 1990. The food bank hit tough financial times, but then food bank president **John Poelker** remembered that his friend Harry would not give up so easily.

The food bank rallied community resources and convinced **Tom and Steve Chapin** to perform benefit concerts to re-energize the food bank. The organization also hired **Hawley Botchford**, a seasoned business executive, to make sure the food bank stayed on strong financial footing.

After five years of hard work, the food bank moved in 1995 into a renovated warehouse. In celebration of its new beginnings, the organization asked Harry's wife, Sandy, if the food bank could be renamed in her husband's honor. After all, it was Harry's passion that had inspired the once beleaguered food bank board to keep fighting when things looked dismal. Sandy said the family would be proud to be associated with the food bank.

Now, 13 years later, the food bank distributes more than 4 million pounds of food annually. Each month, an average of 36,000 clients are served by 170 partner agencies throughout five southwest Florida counties that rely on the food bank.



"Harry was all about collaboration.... he believed we'd find better solutions by working together," says Botchford. "We adhere to that philosophy and that's why we work hard on the state and national level to promote programs that eliminate hunger.... so eventually the food bank won't be needed."

Botchford has led a number of innovative initiatives to join forces with groups and organizations to not only promote food security but also create efficiencies being modeled by other food banks:

In 2004, the food bank and local American Red Cross chapter expect to move into a state-of-the-art facility that houses both organizations in a coordinated effort to lower operating costs while simultaneously providing integrated responses in times of emergency. Called the Alliance for Community Response, the \$7 million center will act as a coordination hub for dozens of organizations that might be involved in the event of disasters in the region. The center includes classrooms that partner organizations can use for workplace skills training as well as Red Cross classes on nutrition and safety. A commercial kitchen will be used daily by the food bank, but it also can be converted to prepare meals for victims and volunteers during an emergency.

A Kids Café feeds thousands of children each week during an after school program. But the food bank also involves local schools in its annual Empty Bowl program. Art teachers work with local volunteers to talk about hunger issues while the kids handcraft ceramic bowls. The bowls are then sold during a hunger awareness event at a local shopping center to raise money for food bank. Botchford has testified before the U.S. Congress on hunger issues, works on national committees of America's Second Harvest and has served twice as President of the Florida Association of Food Banks. At the request of Florida Governor Jeb Bush, Botchford also was asked to evaluate and assist with recommendations to improve the Mexico City food bank systems.

In 1997, the food bank received national recognition for its innovative use of technology to streamline its operations. Botchford spearheaded a partnership with computer giant Hewlett-Packard to develop one of the most advanced networked computer systems deployed by a food bank. Botchford later helped extend the partnership into a broader pact that benefited dozens of other food banks in the America's Second Harvest network.

Visit www.harrychapinfoodbank.org to learn more, or to make a donation.

Harry Chapin encouraged all of us to "Do something."

Circle!, a free, quarterly on-line newsletter, presents ideas for social action, especially with the fight against hunger in the U.S. and around the world. Circle! is produced in its entirety by a volunteer staff. To subscribe, send an email with the word **Subscribe** in the subject line to circleteam@hotmail.com

Let's Hear from the Cheap Seats!

We'd love to hear from you with your feedback, ideas for future issues, stories about Harry, and what you're doing to make a difference. Please drop us a line at

circleteam@hotmail.com

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Rotary Club Members Bring a Green Thumb to Fight Hunger

by Mike Grayeb

A team of volunteers from the South Windsor Rotary Club is making its mark in the fight against hunger in Connecticut by donating and constructing a new greenhouse for the Hartford Food System's (HFS) Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project at the Holcomb Farm in Granby.

The HFS is a Connecticut-based private, non-profit organization established in 1978 that focuses on enabling people in the state to have access to high quality, nutritious, and affordable food.

"Having our own greenhouse has been our dream since the beginning," said **Elizabeth Wheeler**, Director of Agricultural Programs at Hartford Food System. "The South Windsor Rotary Club has made that dream a reality, and this greenhouse represents a significant milestone in our continued efforts to make healthy, locally grown food available to all Hartford residents."

Al Rodrigue, president of the South Windsor Rotary Club, explained why the club got involved with the greenhouse project. "Connecticut is the richest state in the country, and yet it also has some of the poorest cities," said Rodrigue. "As this greenhouse helps Hartford Food System to continue its great work, we hope it will also serve as a reminder that each of us can make a difference in this important cause. No one should be hungry."

The CSA project serves more than 1,000 low-income Hartford residents who are able to purchase organic produce from the project at an affordable cost. The project also serves people from 30 towns in the greater Hartford area by introducing hundreds of children and their parents to how their food is grown and by training a new generation of farmers.

The 26' x 12' x 48' greenhouse arrives on the 10-year anniversary of the CSA project. The Rotary Club of South Windsor, pooling funds raised locally with additional funds from The Rotary Foundation, donated nearly \$4,000 to the project, and its members donated their time and talents to build the



PHOTO BY LAURA BROWN

greenhouse. Members of the youth staff of the CSA project also helped with the construction.

The greenhouse helps the CSA project in many ways:

- Frees the CSA project from dependence on purchased seedlings, thereby enabling a more efficient operation,
- Allows the CSA project to grow specific varieties of produce desired by its members,
- Helps the CSA project to produce more food for its members, and
- Provides an excellent setting for teaching activities with its membership and youth employment program.

Hartford Food System implements programs and advances policies that promote a sustainable and equitable food system, disseminates information that enables Connecticut residents to make informed food choices, and supports responsible food policies at all levels of government.

The South Windsor Rotary Club has donated time and resources to many worthy causes including the construction of a park pavilion, ballfield lights for Little League fields, and the provision of thousands of dollars in scholarship assistance for students.

For more information on or to make a donation to HFS, visit www.hartfordfood.org. For more information on Rotary International, visit www.rotary.org.

Letter to the Editor

I have wanted to share this story with Harry's family for years and appreciate having this opportunity to do so.

Let me give a brief background. My husband performed in a duo in which they performed many of Harry's songs. They started singing in 1976 and were very responsible for "introducing" Harry's music to the local scene of Dover, Ohio.

We saw Harry perform several times and always said that when one left a concert it was if you'd spent a 1:1 evening with Harry. You felt you knew him spiritually, politically, knew his family, and why he wrote a particular song.

We sang and played his music at home, and our children were equally familiar with him. They both continue to listen to his music as we share Harry with our grandsons.

In May of 1981 Harry and Tom came to Dover, Ohio, for a benefit performance. My husband Tom was fortunate enough to get to visit with Harry prior to the performance, and we have a wonderful picture that still hangs with honor on our wall.

After the concert our nine year-old daughter Lori wanted to buy something of Harry's. Tom gave her his last \$20, and she made her way through the crowd. She soon appeared with the large program booklet and a large smile on her face. Tom asked her for his change, and she indignantly said, "I told the man to keep it." Aghast, Tom asked why she did that, and she proudly exclaimed, "Dad! Harry says to keep the change!" How could we be mad? We felt proud that she'd been listening.

*Marlene Daniels
Dover, Ohio*



PHOTO BY LAURA BROWN

This Spring members of **Second Baptist Church in Suffield, Connecticut**, began a project to examine the root causes of hunger and poverty through a six-week course called Hunger No More. The program was adapted from a curriculum provided by Bread for the World and modified to encompass a number of meaningful issues affecting communities in and around Connecticut.

One outcome of this project was the church Outreach Board's decision to purchase several shares at Holcomb Farm

CSA. The local Suffield Emergency Aid enlists qualifying families to share in the harvest and bring nutritious food to their tables.

Individual members of the church also bought family shares, and the church is formulating a three-point plan to provide ongoing assistance to organizations leading the fight to end hunger.

Second Baptist is also a sponsor of the Satinwood band's Legendary Songs Series which contributes to the Hartford Food System and WHY.

Chapin Family Sets Ovens Park Weekend For Aug. 15-17, 2003

The Chapin Family Weekend kicks off on Friday, Aug. 15 at the Ovens Natural Park in Nova Scotia. The annual event features fun and music with the family and friends of **Tom and Steve Chapin**. Reservations for the park's cabins and campsites fill quickly so planning early is recommended.

For more information, visit www.ovenspark.com or call (902) 766-4621. Read Scott Sivakoff's short essay below about previous events.

Ovens Park: A Genuine Chapin Event

by Scott Sivakoff

Ovens Park is a magical place for everyone. Whether you are a musician, simply appreciate music, or just have a general interest in the park, the Chapin Family Weekend is one not to miss. I've been going for the past four years, and each year it gets better.

It is a rare opportunity to really get to know any of the Chapins. Everyone is very friendly and open. There are no egos or competition. It's just good old plain fun.

There are two nights of music in the park's café that lead up to the main Sunday afternoon concert outside on the big stage. And everyone has such a great time that the music often flows into the evening.

One of my favorite memories is from three years ago after the first night of music. The café had closed, but my friend Gabe and I noticed that the lights were still on inside. We wandered in and found Steve with some of his friends from the church choir in which they all sang as kids. They invited us in to hang out.

They were waiting for John Wallace to show up. As we waited, Steve and his friends started singing some of the old choir songs. I can't remember exactly which songs, but what I remember are the good vibes in the room. Everyone was truly happy there. Steve then grabbed some fresh smoked salmon and made a late night snack for everyone. Tom's daughters Abigail Chapin and Jessica Craven also found their way in to join the crowd. When John showed up around 11:30 p.m. or so, the stories all started coming out.

Obviously, Gabe and I were enjoying the old stories that were going back and forth. But the moment captured the feeling that makes the park, and that weekend, so magical.

Chapin Family Members & Friends to Reprise Tribute to Harry in July

Several members of the Chapin family will reprise their loving and memorable tribute to Harry in two Summer concerts. "Harry Chapin: A Celebration In Song" featuring **Tom Chapin, Steve Chapin, Abigail Chapin, Lily Chapin, Jessica Craven, John Wallace, Howard Fields, Michael Mark, and Jon Cobert** will be presented on **July 19, 2003, in Akron, Ohio**, and on **July 20, 2003 in Bensalem, Pennsylvania**.

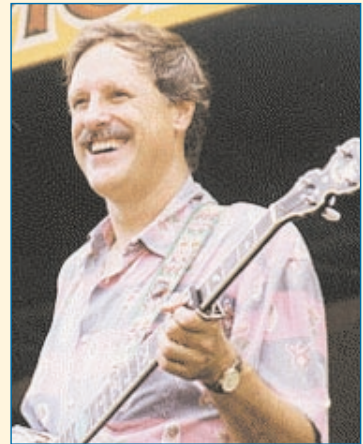
The Ohio show will be held at 8:00 p.m. at **Lock 3 Live**. Tickets for this show are \$10 and can be ordered at <http://www.ticketmaster.com>. For further information, see <http://www.akroncivic.com/pages/calendar.html>.

The Pennsylvania show will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the **Commerce Bank Amphitheater** at Bensalem located in the Municipal Central Park at 2400 Byberry Road. Tickets for this show are \$15 and can be ordered from the venue. Go to <http://www.cbaevents.com> and click on the events link. When you find the event, there will be a link to order tickets at the bottom of the page.

Visit Tom's website at <http://www.tomchapin.com> to find information about his adult and family show schedule and to be added to his mailing list.



Steve Chapin



Tom Chapin

PHOTO BY CHUCK MORSE



PHOTO BY GABE STROJNY



PHOTO BY GABE STROJNY



PHOTO © BY PETER BLACKSBURG

Kids Cafes Offer Innovative Solutions to Childhood Hunger



by Linda McCarty

When two young brothers broke into their housing project's community center in a desperate act to find food late one night in 1989, the Second Harvest Food Bank of Coastal Georgia knew something had to be done.

The food bank conceived and established the first **Kids Cafe**, a free meal service program for children. Four years later, in response to the growing numbers of hungry children, America's Second Harvest, the nation's largest hunger relief organiza-

tion, launched the Kids Cafe program nationally.

"Today there are 1200 Kids Cafes operating in 41 states across the country where affiliate food banks work in partnership with local agencies and schools to feed hungry children," said **June Tanoue**, the Kids Cafe program administrator.

Boys and Girls Clubs are frequently used as Kids Cafe sites, and in many cases they were the missing component that has led to increased attendance," said Tanoue. The sites serve anywhere from 15 children once a week to 500 children five times a week during the school year. "In a few places Kids Cafes do meals in the Summer, and we are working with the U. S. Department of Agriculture and others to get additional support," she added.

Kids Cafe programs are as diverse as the populations they serve and are found in a variety of community settings. "In Waterloo, Iowa, they do a quarterly cultural theme with appropriate food and dress," Tanoue said. Many programs include nutrition education and tutoring and others sponsor arts programs. By utilizing existing community resources, Kids Cafes can offer social and recreational programs both for the children and their families.

One of the reasons for the program's success and growth is that locations are chosen both where children are likely to be and where voluntary help is available. In Chicago, for example, one Kids Cafe is located in the famed "Magnificent Mile" and is run by the Fourth Presbyterian Church. On the West side of town, another site is found in a storefront and is run by the sisters of the Fraternite Notre Dame. New York City's programs soon will include a site in Chinatown.

Corporate sponsorship also has aided in the program's growth, especially the participation of ConAgra Foods through its Feeding Children Better Foundation. Working with America's Second Harvest, the Foundation has opened 112 Kids Cafes, increased public awareness of childhood hunger, purchased 100 trucks for food banks to distribute food more efficiently, and installed extensive computerized inventory management systems in 88 food banks to regain potentially millions of pounds of food each year.

If you would like to get involved in a Kids Cafe in your community, Tanoue suggests contacting your local food bank. A database of food banks can be found at <http://www.secondharvest.org>.

"Remembering Harry Chapin" Benefit Concert Set for September 21, 2003

Plans have been finalized for **John McMenamin's** annual **Remembering Harry Chapin** tribute concert. The highly anticipated benefit will take place on **September 21, 2003** at **3:00 p.m.** at the historic **Strand Theater** in Lakewood, Ocean County, New Jersey.

Harry's band members **John Wallace**, **Howard Fields**, and **Yvonne Cable** will be joining John again this year along with **Rob DeVitis** on electric guitar and **John Gebhart** on keyboards for a special evening of Harry Chapin fan favorite stories and songs.

Beneficiaries of this year's event are **World Hunger Year**, the **Harry Chapin Foundation**, and the **Catholic Charities** Emergency Services Division in Lakewood. John requests that attendees bring along a nonperishable food item for donation to Catholic Charities. These items will be collected at the door.

Ticket prices are as follows: \$35 for orchestra, \$28 for loge, and \$22 for mezzanine. To order by phone, call **732-367-7789** from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. EDT, or visit the Strand Theater Box Office. A service charge of \$3 per ticket will be added.

For further concert information, go to <http://www.rememberingharrychapin.com>. For directions or other theater information, visit the Strand Theater website at <http://www.strandlakewood.com>. To be added to John's mailing list, write him at mcmem@aol.com.



PHOTO BY MARK LAMHUT

Where to Find Circle!

We are grateful to the following websites for posting **Circle!**:

www.harrychapin.com

www.harrychapinmusic.com

www.harryitsucks.com

www.rememberingharrychapin.com

If you'd like to post Circle! on your website, please drop us a line at circleteam@hotmail.com

"All my life's a circle

Sunrise and sundown,

The moon rolls through the nighttime

'Til the daybreak comes around.

All my life's a circle

But I can't tell you why

The season's spinning 'round again

The years keep rolling by."

Tom Gederberg

by Linda McCarty

Tom Gederberg remembers that one of the first 45's he ever bought was Harry Chapin's single of "Taxi" when he was 14 years old. "I think I wore it out. I was living on Long Island then. When I'd go to visit my cousin, he had the "Greatest Stories Live" LP, and I would play it again and again," Tom said. That was the beginning of his enduring admiration for the man and his music.

A few years later after he moved to Florida, Tom saw Harry in concert twice. "He talked about hunger, and I got both the concert program and the WHY newsletter. I was in awe when I shook his hand after the concert. Harry used to say that this country produces enough food for everyone, so why do we have hunger?"

Inspired by Harry's talks about the need to end hunger, Tom donated to food drives and assisted at Thanksgiving dinners for the needy. "I'll help out two or three times a year when the local TV stations have food drives, working on the phone banks to get donations or whatever needs to be done," he said. "It wasn't until I coordinated the Internet fan volunteers for the 1997 tribute to Harry at Eisenhower Park that I really got involved. I enjoyed working with Long Island Cares, so when I got back home to Houston, I thought there must be a food bank here. So I looked in the phone book and located the Houston Food Bank and started volunteering every chance I could.

"Usually I go there every other Saturday and collect food donations from individuals and goods from grocery stores that are not selling or are expiring soon. They have a conveyor belt line to assemble boxes for distribution. Volunteers take out the dented and rusted cans, and then the boxes are delivered to 250 agencies like soup kitchens, elderly centers, and food pantries." Tom noted that between 75-80% of the work at the food bank is done by volunteers.

Tom also has given talks at Federal agencies to encourage donations to the food bank when employees participate in the Federal Campaign. "It makes me feel like I'm doing something useful," Tom said in describing the rewards of volunteer service.

"Monday through Friday I work mostly for the company and the stockholders, but it's not as rewarding

as trying to make the world a better place in some small way. I looked at Harry as my role model. If I could be 1/100th of the person he was, I'd be happy."

The need is great and getting greater, Tom said. When the food bank opened its doors in 1982, it provided 1,000,000 pounds of food. Last year 23,000,000 pounds of food were distributed at more than 500 agencies. "Many people are not aware that there's so much need. They think people are on welfare and being cared for. Many who could get food stamps don't because of the hassles involved. There are too many hoops to jump through."

Tom recalls one of many poignant moments he's had while volunteering. Recently, when he was answering phones for a food drive, a woman called to make a donation. She was on assistance herself but had \$10 leftover from her check. "I told her she might want to hold onto that herself and that the thought of giving was enough. It was so touching that she needs assistance herself and yet would make that sacrifice. These stories happen pretty often and amaze me."



Renee and Tom Gederberg (rear) and Houston Food Bank staffers Anna Marie Colchado (left) and Kimberly Glauslitz (right) greet Bruce Springsteen backstage before a concert two years ago. Springsteen allowed the group to attend the concert to collect food donations and also encouraged his fans to support the organization several times throughout his performance. Additionally, Springsteen made a personal donation to assist the food bank in its mission.

Jason Dermer

by Linda McCarty

Many Chapin fans will recognize

Jason Dermer as the tall, amiable young man selling



Chapin merchandise and memorabilia at tribute concerts in recent years. That's just one of his efforts to help support the causes Harry espoused.

Jason's interest in Chapin music goes back to his early childhood. "Folk and '60's era rock music were played in my home," he said. "One of the standout songs in my memory was 'Cat's in the Cradle.' My sister and I often went to see live music with our father after our parents divorced, and I later found out that Harry was one of the performers that I had seen as a child."

After having idealistic notions about wanting to save the world, Jason joined the U. S. Marine Corps in what he thought would be an effort to make things better. "I wound up getting injured in early 1991 and started really listening to music again while in rehab. I was honorably discharged in April of 1992 and continued pursuing my musical interests. After hearing 'Cat's' on the radio, I purchased the 'Gold Medal Collection.' Through the spoken word cuts in this body of work, I learned about Harry's activism. Similar to my own views on the world, he was fighting for the little guy. I remember him saying if you're doing well you should do something for someone else. Well, in due time I was doing fairly well, and after a really introspective moment at Harry's gravesite, I decided to pass on some of what I had."

For Jason, that 'doing something' started with volunteering at the WHY-Chapin Awards ceremony. While there, one of the event's volunteers introduced him to Sandy Chapin, and they spoke about archiving Harry's old recordings. Soon the job of archivist was Jason's. In this capacity he has played a significant role in making available some of the CD releases in the last few years, most notably the production of the "Onwards and Upwards" CD, a few copies of which are still available. "Most of the time and effort was put in by volunteers, so except for the cost of pressing and shipping, there was no overhead. All of the profits from this project went to directly to the Chapin Foundation."

Jason also has become a part of the various Chapin tribute concerts. "It started out small, expanding on John McMenamin's collection of Chapin merchandise that he offered for sale at his Remembering Harry Chapin concerts." Today, the entire concept of the Chapin tribute concert has once again become a viable source of income for the various causes that Harry believed in. "I've become more involved in the

continued on page 7

Share Your Story

We hope you've enjoyed the stories in this issue of fans inspired by Harry's call to "Do something." We plan to continue sharing these stories in each issue of Circle!. If you're working to end hunger or volunteer for any other type of social action, we'd like to hear from you. If you or someone you know has a story we should share to inspire others, please drop us a line at circleteam@hotmail.com.

Daniel Christian

by Linda McCarty

Baltimore, Maryland, schoolteacher **Dan Christian** recalled the words of Tom Chapin to explain why he has sought to inspire students and others to learn about the music and activism of Harry Chapin. "What I was trying to do was 'pass the music on,'" Dan said.

Since the mid-1980s, Dan has found ways both in and out of the classroom to share his admiration for Harry as a singer-songwriter and a humanitarian. In a course on Dante's Divine Comedy, Dan weaves Harry Chapin into his instruction. He explains, "Dante's Heaven consists of a series of connected spheres—Circle! We watch the 'You Are The Only Song' concert video and then listen to that song. Harry starts off on his own, and then the band emerges gradually as they move into singing 'Circle.'" It has always struck me as interesting that just as the spirits in Paradise get brighter as they reveal themselves more fully, Harry is a conduit of light back to his band. It simply confirms what Yvonne Cable, the last cellist in Harry's band, said about how Harry's "bigness" made all the people around him bigger. Sounds like Heaven to me!"

To enhance his more formal presentations at schools, a college, and bookstores, Dan created a slideshow that he has used for many years. When a colleague asked him to talk about Harry at a retreat, he decided to donate his payment to the Harry Chapin Foundation. "I thought if they were willing to pay, maybe others would be willing to do so, too." To let the schools know what to expect, he created a brochure that included comments from students about the program.

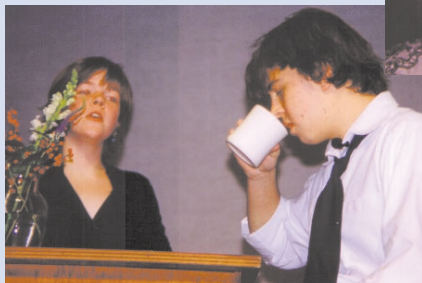
Last Fall he organized "All My Life's A Circle: A Harry Chapin Tribute" at the Gilman School Alumni Auditorium. Twenty-five students from Gilman and two other area schools were involved



Dan Christian



PAINTING BY BOB LAWS



"And the little man took the drink in his hand..." Students perform "A Better Place to Be" during a tribute to Harry Chapin at the Gilman School in Baltimore, Maryland. Photos by Abraham Choi

in staging, arranging, and performing Harry's music for the show. It was held on December 7, 2002, on what would have been Harry's 60th birthday.

The students, all of whom volunteered their time and talent, spent three months preparing for the concert. They were joined by folksingers Terra Nova and Side By Side for an enchanting evening of Chapin favorites. Between the musical numbers, Dan presented his slideshow and talked about Harry's life, music, and efforts to end hunger. Following in the spirit of Harry, who performed half of his concerts as benefits, the proceeds were given to the Harry Chapin Foundation and to the Donald Bentley Food Pantry, the latter named for a Gilman student who died tragically. From his presentations and this benefit concert, Dan estimates that he's been able to donate \$2,000 over the years.

To further involve students in the tribute event, Dan asked three students to contribute their artistic talents by reproducing Harry's album covers on 5'x5' canvases. Each artist was asked to put his own artistic stamp on the work. During the week before the show, they were displayed at a local coffeehouse and then brought back to the school for use in the tribute. "Harry Chapin created a wonderful array of characters in his epic-like story-songs, and these paintings clearly show that diversity reflected in the subtle shifts of attention in Harry's different faces. What's particularly striking about these pieces is that present in each is a small but poignant suggestion of the artist's own face as well," Dan said.

When asked why the students agreed to participate when it was not for school credit, Dan replied, "...because I asked them to. Once Harry's spirit is there it doesn't go away. More good things have come from Harry's music than I ever could have expected."



Jason Dermer

continued from page 6

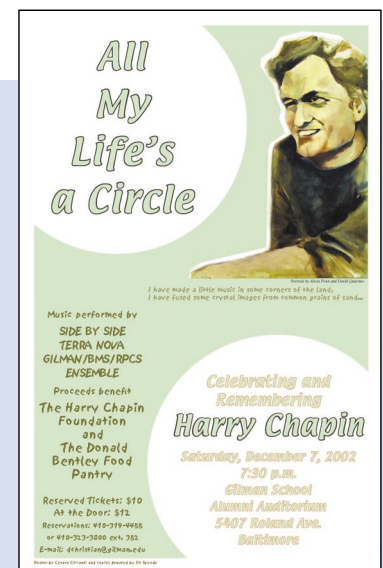
technical production of the shows themselves, but you can still sometimes catch me at the merchandise table. Barring that, just look for the guy running around with a notebook and the S.E.G. of someone who's having a really great time," Jason said.

Jason notes that nearly as rewarding as being able to give back to charities are the opportunities to have personal contact with others. "I'm in my early 30s, so I'm one of the younger Chapin fans. I love hearing people's accounts of Harry's concerts and the effect that he had on them. Especially moving are stories I've heard from people who were not only inspired to make a donation or volunteer with a charity but also make social action their life. Harry may have planted the seed, but it is their own commitment that makes it grow. Speaking to these people and seeing the work put forth by the various grassroots groups that I have had the pleasure to be associated with truly gives me hope that there can be peace and social justice for everyone in this world."

Asked about a single standout memory, Jason related this story: "After a few email and telephone conversations, I encouraged a fan to travel clear across the country to see John McMenamin's concert in Freehold, NJ. She had a great time and made a substantial donation to World Hunger Year. Seeing the smile on her face as she left the show really made my night."

After several years of volunteering, Jason was asked to serve on the board of directors of the Chapin Foundation. Serving as archivist and a board member are, "...the culmination of a dream. I've gotten to know not only the people who made the music but also the family. It's a great honor to be able to continue the work Harry left behind."

Jason can be reached at 3dproductions@earthlink.net.



POSTER BY DAN CHRISTIAN & CESARE CICCANTI

Behind the Song: Last Stand

by Howard Fields

It was March 30, 1981, and we were in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

I was in my hotel room where I'd usually be at about 3:00 or 4:00 p.m. on a gig day and would soon be heading over to the sound check. At that moment, however, I was watching the tube and taking great interest in the coverage of the shooting of President Ronald Reagan.

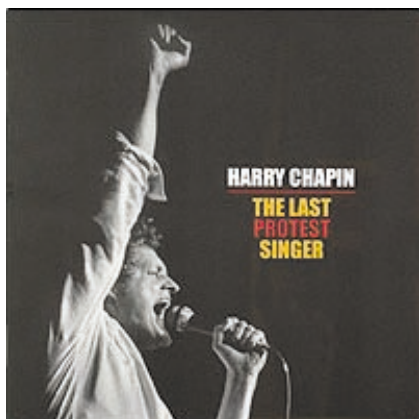
The phone rings and it's Harry, all excited in the way he got when he had written what he thought was a great new song. This one was probably less than a couple of hours old and inspired by the news of the day. He was requesting the band's presence at the sound check to try it out with us. Well, we all would have been there anyway; Harry, on the other hand, rarely attended sound checks, so he was clearly quite keyed up about the tune.

The only thing I really remember about that rehearsal was Harry telling Big John that eventually he'd be singing this one. How odd, I thought, why? Anyway, it's not just me who has always found it eerie how those brilliant lyrics, inspired by a near tragedy, would be so prophetic of the tragedy that would befall Harry 3½ months later.

And John has sung the song at Chapin concerts ever since.

Howard Fields was the drummer in Harry's band. His web site can be found at www.rockpaper.net

Editors' Note: "Last Stand" is featured on The Last Protest Singer, an album Harry was developing at the time of his death (click here <http://littlejason.com/chapin/songs/laststand.html> for the song's lyrics). The album was posthumously released and is now available as a special CD re-release through the Chapin family website: http://harrychapinmusic.com/chapin_site2/home/c_hapinhp_frm.html



"Experiences and Lessons": An Interview with Ron Palmer

by Steve Gibbons

If you weren't lucky enough

to see Harry live before 1975, then you missed some truly memorable songs written and performed by his lead guitarist, **Ron Palmer**. Often during a show, Harry would take a short break and turn the stage over to Ron for him to play some of his unique songs. Ron's dry wit and short-and-sweet style developed into songs that he called Experiences and Lessons. For anyone who missed these treasures, here's an example:

Experience #9

By Ron Palmer

Ridin' on my bicycle
Feeling free and loose
I hit a parked car
Fell on the crossbar
And I'll never reproduce.

In a recent interview I spoke with Ron Palmer to find out more about his music and what he's been doing since leaving Harry's band.

Steve: Hello, Ron, and thanks for being with us. Since you know what we're talking about, let me start out by asking you to explain to everyone what your Experiences and Lessons are.

Ron: Hi Steve. Nice to be here. The "Experiences and Lessons" were short, four or five line songs with surprise endings. Harry called them 30-second epics. They were mostly about sexual misadventures. They were "lessons" if I learned something, and they were "experiences" if I tended to repeat them...fictional, of course. The number was supposedly my age when they happened.

Steve: Were these songs something you wrote especially for performing with Harry, or were they already in your guitar case when you joined up with Harry and the guys?

Ron: I had written "Lesson number 18" quite some time before meeting Harry. "Experience number 9" was written when we were playing our first gig at the Village Gate. Harry encouraged me to write more of them, and they eventually evolved into an integral part of our show. Harry would be my "straight man," and masterfully set the tone. They were guaranteed to get laughs.



Steve: What did Harry and the guys think when you first played these for them and what was the setting?

Ron: They got quite a kick out of them. If memory serves me correctly, I did one of them in the dressing room of the Village Gate.

Steve: Was there ever any discussion about including any of your songs on Harry's albums?

Ron: No. Obviously, an album would have had to be "R" rated.

Steve: By my count there were about a half dozen songs. Have you written any since?

Ron: No...not that I haven't had lessons and experiences.

Steve: What have you been doing musically since you left the group?

Ron: I played for years in a three-piece bar band with a couple of longtime friends, did a lot of solo stuff, and even did a pretty neat music video once just for kicks. I released a CD of original instrumentals a few years ago...sold a couple hundred locally, but my venture on the Internet was a big flop. I still practice and do some writing, but I haven't played 'out' in two years.

Ron's CD, "Pigeon Hill Suite," is available online at SongRamp:

<http://www.songramp.com/catalog.ez?ShowProduct=000056&TopElement=0>

Watch for the Next Issue of Circle! Coming September 15th