February 14 - "O Men, O Women!"  
- words and music with the Koehls, Peters, Parrishes and Friedmans

After the service today there will be a sack lunch. Beverage and a special valentine dessert will be furnished. Along with your sack lunches please bring a small plate and fork for this "special." Another special will be Rebecca Clark's display of her valentine collection (many of them handmade) gathered over many years.

February 21 - "The Lodi Commune"  
- members of the Commune

February 28 - "Art for Pete's Sake"  
- Ted and Rebecca Clark

March 7 - "The Peace Corps Revisited"  
- Burt and Sheila Swanson, Bill and Jane Hammat

THOUGHTS ON A LETTER FROM A FRIEND

Recently we received a letter from an old friend who teaches grade school in Harlem. In it he spoke simply and beautifully of his experiences in teaching. He has been involved in one of the schools of the local control experiment in New York (the ones over which the long strike two years ago was fought). What struck me most about the letter was the sadness he feels about the loss of really fine young teachers who entered the system about three or four years ago. Many of them began with a sense of hope and concern, seeing a crying need for change, but now move on to graduate school, law school, etc., disappointed and disillusioned. Whether in black or white schools, in decent or degraded neighborhoods, these young teachers have been thwarted and frustrated by other teachers who felt threatened by them, by administrators who lacked the understanding or imagination to help them, by a system so bogged in bureaucracy as to be unable to adapt to or foster even its own institutionally sponsored experiments, and by various political forces in the community who (with the best of intentions often) used the schools and ultimately the children as a focus of the struggle for a better society.

Now make no mistake of it, our friend has long been involved in many ways in what I think of as liberating politics. What he expresses in the letter is not a disillusionment with such politics, but a deepening of his human understanding. For it is the frailty of the activists, their abandonment of action, the disintegration of their humane focus which disturb him and me. And this frailty, abandonment, and disintegration are evidenced both in those entering professional schools after a sort of social tour of duty and those who enter the weathermen and the like. As our friend indicated, you can say all you want about how the system didn't really want these people and how it tried to rid itself of them, and in some measure you would be right; but they didn't know to function either, they didn't have all the answers they glibly thought they did at the beginning, they too were human with feet of clay. Things aren't all as easy as many of us in these various movements had thought in the blush of innocence. Our actions, our ideas, and our hopes have often been just as inept as those we opposed. And our sticking power, our commitment may be no greater (or less) than others whom we were once quick to condemn. In the words of Pogo, "We have met the enemy, and they is us."

What this all amounts to is a strong dose of humility. Perhaps here in Madison the crowning blow that made a lot of people begin to rethink where they were and where
they were going was the bombing of Sterling Hall. I think that in the long run, however, it has been for many of us much more subtle and difficult than that, much more a growing understanding of the complexity of human existence and the ease with which humans err. None of us can yet tell where this growing realization will lead. I don’t think that for many of us it will lead to a con out (the very word smacks of a naivete no longer appropriate). I think that the concern for constructive change is a real and enduring one. Right now many of us are suffering the pains of casting off our glib self-righteousness and moralism while trying to face the monumental changes called for; in other words, growing pains. As we (whether young or old, for the youth thing is no longer appropriate either) enter the long haul, trying always to invent a better world, the humility that comes from knowing none can have the whole answer -- not to mention the ability to fully implement it -- we must screw our courage to the sticking point. We will fail sometimes; nevertheless, but sometimes, also, succeed. Our friend, by the way, remains in Harlem, devoted to his children and his labor of love. Sticking power seems to be one of his character traits. And at the same time that he remains, he supports and assists his wife as she moves to complete her PhD in African Ethno-musicology. They have accepted both the continuing commitment and the knowledge which it requires. Working on at 125th St. and Lenox Ave., New York, New York.

Dave Meyer

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

There will be a meeting of the RE committee on Monday, Feb. 15 at 7:15 p.m. at Pat Cautley’s, 1405 Regent St. Next year’s program will be discussed. All those interested are welcome.

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS

SUNDAYS SHARE RIDES

On the bulletin board at Prairie is a map. Find your own home, note the color of the dot, and locate your neighbors by the same color dot as indicated on the membership list -- also on the bulletin board. Really, it isn’t as complicated as it sounds.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prairie Play Readers: The next play reading will be held at Jean Gordon’s, 2202 E. Washington Ave., Saturday, Feb. 27 at 8:00 p.m. Mark your calendars now.

A Crafty Idea: Tired of this long, cold Wisconsin winter? Why not make the days seem shorter by learning Macrame ... the art of decorative knot-tying ... first done by sailors on those long, cold sea voyages? If you’re interested in this crafty idea, come to Rebecca Clark’s, 134 Washington Hill, on Saturday, February 20, at 10:00 a.m. The only supplies needed are some carpenter’s string which can be bought at your local hardware store. Bring a sandwich and spend the day getting tied into knots.

Adult Class in Unitarian-Universalism: Anyone interested in participating in a class discussion on the heritage of our movement and our current activities, thoughts, etc. should sign up at the program one of the next two Sunday morning or should call Dave Meyer to let him know. We must set a firm deadline on this because of the necessity for ordering books, so be sure to indicate your interest by February 21. There will be three or four meetings to this brief class which Dave will offer. No more than two small books will be used. The primary focus will be on present trends.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for the next newsletter is Sunday, February 21.