

STANFORD UNIVERSITY NEWS SERVICE
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EDITORS: The following feature was written by Laverne Dickinson, News Service student intern, a graduate student in communication from Austin, Texas.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

"Nonviolence is a way of life where you are concerned with the effects of actions in your life on other people at all levels. You might not be killing people but may be doing violence by overconsuming. Nonviolence means putting an emphasis on love and unity, on getting along with people; everything you do has to be consistent with the ways you feel about people."—Julie Matthaei.

Columbae House is a community of 50 Stanford students, including Miss Matthaei, dedicated to examining the many facets of a nonviolent life-style.

Columbae is also a part of the University housing system; students planned the house last spring during and following a three-day fast in White Plaza protesting the ROTC presence on campus. They obtained a place for their nonviolent community with the acquisition of a former fraternity house on Cowell Lane.

The name of the residence has several sources, according to the students. Among the most prominent are columbae, the Latin word for doves, and Woody Guthrie's song "Columbia," describing Guthrie's thoughts about America as it might be.

According to freshman Elaine Weil, Columbae House encompasses "all levels of nonviolent action—from baking bread in the kitchen to going out and sitting in at the draft center."

Nonviolence means many things to the residents of Columbae—respect for other people; political action; a communal life; a non-manipulating, non-consumer- and non-materially oriented world view.

Freshman Holly Reed says nonviolence is a way of dealing with other people. "No change by physical force is lasting," she explains. "You cannot convince someone by shooting him."

To implement their nonviolent philosophy, Columbae residents involve themselves not only in political protest, such as blocking entrances to draft centers, but also in non-consumer-oriented living.

Residents do all their own cooking and cleaning. They buy their produce at the San Jose Flea Market and grind their own whole grain flour in the kitchen. They also grow organic vegetables in a garden located in Escondido Village.

There are no permanent house officers. People volunteer to be food manager, house manager, or financial manager when they feel they have time to commit to those positions. Rotating groups do the cooking and cleaning.

Miss Weil says that although the Columbae community is "not just made up of the people that live here—it includes political friends, eating associates, and others—you have to live in the house to learn what responsibility is."

Frank Green, a freshman, explains that "there's nothing that 'has to be done.' The 'have to' concept is not applicable here. Rather the work is something special.

"Sometimes the kitchen is dirty and it's a drag to wash all those dishes; but with someone helping you, it's not a drag, but a joy."

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About half of Columbae residents are vegetarians. Meals are simple, but freshly baked bread usually accompanies the cheeses, honey, vegetables, rice, dried fruit, and nuts. Meat is served three or four times a week for those who want it.

Food expenses average only a dollar a day for residents, though about 25 non-paying guests a night share dinner with them.

About half the Columbae members have invited their parents to spend a few days at the house to see what a nonviolent community is like. Mr. and Mrs. F. C. Matthaei Jr., visiting Julie from their home in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., said that "nonviolence appears to be too limited a term for what this community is trying to accomplish. It's not just anti-war. If you love people and work with them, people become important. They are getting away from materialistic luxuries here and are people oriented."

Columbae residents are also experimenting with income sharing. Residents pay their room bills to the University each quarter. Some decided to volunteer to pay more to subsidize those unable to pay as much. Extra clothing is discarded and put in piles, either to be used by other house residents or taken to be given away.

Housemeetings follow the Quaker idea of consensus. No vote is taken, since voting is thought to "split things up."

For many, living at the house has changed their concept of education. They think education should be more concerned with "relating to people and what is happening in the world." Miss Matthaei, a junior who is taking a quarter off to re-evaluate her educational goals, comments, "I learned a lot in my first two years at Stanford but most of it was outside classes, in involvement with people and political things." Columbae residents view their living in a nonviolent community as an essential part of their Stanford education.

Forty percent of the present residents plan to move off-campus next year and live in smaller communal groups. "This community is so big," Miss Weil explains; "numbers compound the difficulties and make them really frustrating."

But there is a long waiting list for next year's Columbae House as well. Most residents cite the "warm community" they have found at Columbae as a reason for its popularity.

The house is now composed of two groups—students who signed up last spring and moved in Fall Quarter and others who moved in Winter or Spring Quarter. Some see no distinction between the two groups. "The only trend is that the house is getting younger," observes an M.A. candidate who is writing his thesis on Columbae; "sixty percent are sophomores and freshman."

Others see a change in direction. Miss Matthaei, who helped plan the nonviolent house last spring, says that the "conception of the house has changed. It was conceived as a means of political action, but new people are interested in nonviolence as a life-style." She then adds, "I think it's important, however, that nonviolence have more than its political side."

Miss Reed, who moved in Spring Quarter, explains that "most people do what they feel is important at the time. There is not that much distinction between the work that goes into creating a community like this and work that goes into creating a community outside. Both types of work are important."

Frank Green, who has lived in Columbae House since Winter Quarter, adds, "There are some people who are convinced that social change will only come through politics, and others who believe that the change will be a spiritual and cultural one; but most people here believe in a blending of both political and spiritual nonviolence."