

“A Phoenix Rises”

“Taking care of
people's
food
needs”



SACO FOOD PANTRY, INC.

Its Life & Times

Dedication

This journal is dedicated to Bryce G. Milne, Helen R. Fisher and all the volunteers who by donating their time and efforts have enriched the lives of all they serve.

FOREWARD

Founded by members, associated with the then Council of Churches, Rev. Rick Huleatt of the First Parish Congregational Church in Saco, Rev. Ken Murray of the Second Parish Church in neighboring Biddeford and supported by lay parishioners William “Bill” Searle of The United Methodist Church, located at Foss and Pool Street’s Biddeford, Mary “Mae” Renell of The United Baptist Church on Main Street Saco and later Midge Sanborn of The Cornerstone Methodist Church, then located on School and Middle Streets Saco, the Saco Food Pantry was given life in 1982.

Realizing the need to do something to help the parishioners in both cities, along with those in Old Orchard Beach, cope with the problems of that time they formed a union to help in some way and to ease the burden that was affecting their lives. These then are the facts as I found them to be in the first fourteen years of the Pantry’s life from 1982 to 1996. In compiling these facts, by talking to as many people as possible, I was finally able to find the keys that opened the door to the pantries past history. Those keys were the memories of some of the people directly involved with its formation. Rev. Murray, Midge Sanborn, Sylvia Searle, wife of Bill were able to help me weave together this tapestry of what would, I feel and did in its future, become a life line for all that rely on its mission of caring.

Because of its faith based connection, it was placed in a converted cloak room at the Beech Street side entrance of First Parish. It was open for two or three days a week and was serviced by about twelve volunteers on a rotation basis. With donations received from all the churches, drawn from the giving alms of their parishioners, this was their base of food supplies.

They would fill a few bags and give them to the people on a need basis. If other food was needed, to augment these staples of food, the council would take some discretionary funds and purchase directly from the area stores. As the client list started to expand, it was necessary to have the General Assistance Program at Saco city hall and the Department of Human Services screen and refer the people to the pantry. They also accepted a note of introduction from any of the area churches. Now we come to the end of the pantry’s beginnings. We look into its future and the way it adjusted to its continued mission of being there for those in need.

Foot note: while looking through some papers given to me by Audrey, Bryce's wife, I came across Helen's board meeting notes of December 6th 2004. There among the notes, that looked like they were taken directly from the Council of Churches minutes, was a brief history of the pantry. The following is a partial transcript of that page. "The pantry was conceived in 1981 in order to find a better way to feed the hungry. The resulting pantry was first chaired by Rev. Kenneth Murray of Biddeford and opened its doors on November 1, 1982". I will put the entire document into the journal that will be retained for the pantry's use.

Dear Reader,

My name is Bob Nichols and I am the Pantry Operations Officer. During a board meeting in early 2009 I was asked to update the life of the pantry since I was the one associated with it the longest. This is the way I remember it and the way its life unfolded during that "moment in time". I have included as many people, places and facts as possible so as to give you as much information about those times. So then we reach the starting point from my beginning with the Saco Food Pantry.

Chapter 1- 1996

I started with the pantry by re-stocking shelves once a week. There were six of us doing it and each had their own day. As I remember John Mazeiko was Tuesday, Al Masigliano on Wednesday, the brothers Bud and Paul Peck on Thursday, someone Fri. and I had Monday. Ed Gardner did the bread run on Tuesdays or Thursdays as they were the only days available in the schedule of, our long time donator, Country Kitchen. As previously stated we were located at The First Parish Church. It was difficult because as we were operating on two levels: the basement where we had five upright and two chest freezers and all the dry storage and one refrigerator combination was upstairs in the service area. Truck day was random (usually a Tuesday) and others from the church, a group of men that did various jobs for the church known as "the Top of the Hill Gang" were always there to help unload. When we received items from food rescue or our main supplier, Good Shepherd, we formed a caravan of two or three pick up trucks and went to Sanford to pick up the food. This was the way it was up to and into the start of the new century.

Chapter 2 -1996 + 1 year

From my point of view the two people I met during this time and became closely associated with are the real story. They drew us all together for one purpose, that of providing for all those in need. This story of caring for one's fellow man could not be told without them or people of their humanitarian genus.

We were part of the Council of Churches and the following is the story, I was told, of how Bryce Milne received the envious job of being the pantry's chairman. He was an interested party at their meetings while Helen Fisher was secretary / treasurer for the organization. The then chair of the pantry was moving away, in about the year 1987 and a new chair was needed. Bryce was sitting next to Helen. He was nudged by her to accept the job until a new chair could be found. That search turned into about twenty one years of not quite finding that special person.

Chapter 3 -Bryce's start 1958

After putting down roots at 408 Main Street in 1958 with wife Audrey and three kids (he was from away, although he let everyone believe he was a native Mainer) he supported the family on the salary of a "traveling salesman" with his territory covering Maine, Hew Hampshire, Vermont and northern New York. Not having enough on his plate he soon became involved with town politics. Almost simultaneously serving as alderman on the town council, election board, fire and police commissioner (both were one back then), a church religious educator and also served on most of the various church committees.

With both hands in the pie, everybody came to know Bryce. To fill a few leisure hours, he also did his part as the Red Cross disaster relief coordinator for all of York County. Not feeling motivated any more he resigned the post thirty years later. In order to be of some service to the town and the people he had come to love, he took up the leadership of the Provident Association. This is a charitable organization that helps with some bill paying when times are tough for whatever reason and people need a little more to get by. As I said before when the two ministers were moved by the need of their flock and others, Bryce was there to advance them the \$500.00 needed for this venture from the Provident. The pantry, would over time become a haven for all those who needed just a little more to get by, continued its long, eventful and ever changing life.

Chapter 4 - A life of service to others

Now I would like to introduce you to the other part of what could be jokingly and lovingly known as the Bryce and Helen show. Helen was born in nearby Biddeford. She graduated from Thornton Academy in the class of 1945 and went on to study in the classics, graduating Summa cum laude from Bates College in 1949. Her teaching career took her to various places while dedicating a large part of her life to volunteering. While teaching English and Latin in Bangor, during WWII, she also served as a plane spotter at The Filter Center. It was there that she met her future husband, Morris L. Fisher of New York City. After marrying, her life as both a wife and mother of seven began. Hers, I think, came with a slight twist.

Morris was, a career man in the U.S. Army and Helen with kids in tow followed him to all the far flung duty stations. In her case this meant life in Bellmore on Long Island, New York or putting down temporary roots in sweltering Thailand. When traveling became a necessity she, along with the kids made Army maneuvers pale in comparison. After settling here in Saco, when Morris retired, Helen served as a board member for Camp Laughing Loon for several years. She was for many years a member of both Saco School and Planning Boards and gave many years of service to the American Red Cross, where she served as Chapter Director, helping many local families in times of need. Although they butted heads on different issues over the years, because of the manner each looked at a given subject, in the end the respect and friendship each had for one another always prevailed.

She was, because of her long time association with various city organizations, the memory and conscience for the pantry. Keeping not only the monetary donations received, bank accounts balanced and bills paid but also the clients' family history up to date. Her memory for people was something to marvel about and if asked or challenged about town people you had better have done thorough research. When on family vacation in about 2005 she fell severely injuring a hip and never fully recovered, always moving from one health problem to another. Knowing that she could not do the required work she retired from active pantry work. She did however keep up with the pantry business and its life, letting her voice and thoughts be known to all.

It was during this time she passed on to a new secretary / treasurer, Mary Tucker, the knowledge acquired from years of service. Sadly and unfortunately both she and Bryce passed away with in a few months of one another in 2008 leaving a large void behind. Fortunately, because of their insight and the knowledge learned over years of volunteer service to their fellow man, whether knowingly or unknowingly, others also were imparted with that knowledge, and the pantry they loved lives on.

Foot note: in the 2004 board notes I found a notation that both Helen and Bryce had been with the pantry since 1985 and not as I previously thought.

Chapter 5 - A structural change

About a year or so prior to the turn of the century, some significant changes in the pantry's life started to take place.

We were taking on more clients and the job of the Council, in managing the pantry, was becoming more difficult, due to all the record keeping. A decision was made to split from the direct shelter of the Council itself. The pantry would become a separate entity but still retain and operate in the shelter of the church and its non-profit status. So one day, after the pantry was closed, a meeting was held in one of the church conference rooms. It was there that a pantry board was formed with Bryce as chairman, Helen as secretary / treasurer, I Bob Nichols as 1st vice chairman and John Gardner as 2nd vice chairman.

I'd like to share the story on how John and I came together. In the summer of 1998, with a scarcity of volunteers due to vacations, two women were talking in Shaw's about the expected need to close the pantry for a few days a week because of the situation. With time to kill, John came to the pantry, volunteered his services and the rest, as they say, is history. Bryce was to be the voice and fund raiser, Helen the sounding board and conscience, John and I were in charge of the day to day operations. Joined by a host of dedicated volunteers, an increasing client base, and with all the work of a food pantry being covered, we hoped, it was business as usual.

Chapter 6 - The End of a Dream

On Friday August 31st, 2000 at about 2 p.m. in the afternoon disaster struck. The church was in the process of a major overhaul which included new slates on the roof, refurbishing the clock and repainting the entire outside face of the structure. A worker used a highly volatile fluid, as a paint stripper, and the church caught fire. This forever changed not only the church and its parishioners but the life of the pantry as well. Because of the churches age (c.1863-66) its construction and materials use, there was no hope in stopping the hungry flames that engulfed and devoured the entire structure. Within a matter of a few short hours the first flames that appeared, at the entrance facing Main Street, engulfed this once beautiful house of worship. This imposing edifice, for years used as a starting or location point for both citizens and visitors, was gone. The pantry which served as a helping hand for many was no more.

After the fires were extinguished and the smoke cleared on Saturday morning Bryce and I, with the help of the fire department, went in for a look at what was our home away from home, so to speak. The place that gave hope to those in need now faced complete destruction. Some of the shelving, made of wood and the easiest to work

with, lay partially overturned in places and or braced on one another their contents in disarray. Can goods, cereal, other food stuffs scattered over all sections of the floor. The banana boxes, used as storage, were soggy from absorbing the almost endless streams of water used to extinguish the flames.

There was so much water that even with the three drains in the basement floor working we could see the water mark about 2-3 feet up the wall. Some of the upright freezers were on their sides along with the two chest freezers, which because of there final location floated, leaving their contents of Barber Chicken Cordon Blu and other frozen items scattered about. Even the freezer we had recently received as a donation, from the then mayor Bill Johnson and never plugged in stood in place. Its door was opened and the inside blackened. The only thing salvaged from the kayos was memories, pictures, video footage of the whole disaster and the steel roller conveyer system we used and still do for unloading the trucks. Later, as we stood in the parking lot talking, one of our clients lamented to us “Where will I go for my pantry help”. Hearing this and giving her a hug, for reassurance, Bryce told her not to worry as we would hopefully be like a “Phoenix rising from the ashes”.

Later that morning Bryce placed a called to, Arlene Chappell, a long time friend who managed the local Shaw’s shopping center store rental and asked if there were any spaces in the complex available for the pantry. Within a matter of hours, of that pleading inquiry, he was given the keys to a vacant store front, next to the then Ames Department store, by the Deering Family Trust and their agent The Boulos Company, rent and utilities free. During this time of upheaval Economy Drugs, located in that very center, went out of business. No longer needing the shelving and for a letter of donation value, drawn up by Al Hills who worked in the field before retirement, we were given all the steel shelving needed to set up in our new location.

Chapter 7- Rebuilding a mission

Word of our new location passed rapidly through not only the community but, we found out later, to other states as well. Representatives, from the North Saco Congregational Church, offered their help with rebuilding this much needed service by providing us with four brand new refrigerators from Vic’s appliance center here in town. Donations of tables, chairs, food, money, offers of any and all kinds of help came through the doors, at times faster than we had time to say thank you. Every one pitched in for the entire weekend and with Monday being Labor Day it gave us extra breathing room. The time line of this complete makeover, in the pantry’s life, over a holiday weekend, from its destruction to the time we were able to serve the first client on the following Tuesday, was about 91 hours.

On Sept. 6th while being interviewed by Mindi Ramsey, a news reporter from WGME T.V., a gentleman walked in and gave a volunteer, Nan Cone, an envelope. She in turn gave it to Bryce and with cameras rolling he opened it to find a bank check for \$2,000. Before any one of us could say more than just a simple thank you he was in his car and gone.

Later Bryce and I had an old car cell phone he had tied in so we had access to the outside world. Unicel, then located in Saco, gave us the service free of charge and continues to do so to this day, nine years later.

During a volunteers' meeting, the afternoon of the 6th in our new location, we were about to close the informational session when Mr. Jeff Robinson a local artist and handy man presented the pantry with a recently completed painting. It was painted on a piece of an old barn door and shows the church in flames, people watching, fire trucks and fireman battling the fire in the background, the center portion is the memorial square with the flag and monuments. The view is from the ground perspective site of the house property on the North West corner of North and Elm streets. During this short holiday week as well as the week following we were able to see others at their best. Good Shepard, now our main source of food, sent a truck loaded with everything we needed to start up again, No Charge. Joyce and Ed Gardner's daughter, Patricia Gardner and working in Boston, spoke to the Spinazzola Foundation about us and they had a truck from there bring us four, still in the box, large chest freezers. High school students, from the trade school in Biddeford, helped in putting the shelving together. A new pantry life was beginning.

Sure Winner Foods, which acts as a distribution point for the various ice cream manufactures, open their doors to the pantry. It acts as a half way storage point between Good Shepherd and us because of our limited amount of freezer space available. Notre Dame de Lourdes School gave us the use of half their walk in freezer and refrigerator for storage use. This arrangement allows us to take advantage of any limited frozen food available and at the same time we avoid interrupting Sure Winners work force.

We have, because of this gesture, been able to stock pile needed frozen food over the past nine years. Sure Winner also has a storage locker facility and once a year, when the Postal Carriers hold their national food drive, they allow us free use of a large locker for a few weeks so we can store, sort and absorb the donations received into the normal flow of food received from Good Shepherd. We were there in what became known as Shaw's shopping center for almost fourteen months until the center finished a complete makeover.

About the end of August 2001, we were given notification that we had to look elsewhere as the space was to be restructured and rented. Surely, somewhere, there must be a place for us to carry out this worthy and much needed endeavor. We were

beginning to feel like nomads and would soon find ourselves on the outside looking in again.

Foot notes: I am sorry to say the Spinazzola Foundation closed their doors on August 8th, 2007. Although closed we take this time to say thank you for being there when we needed you.

When we opened on Tuesday a little girl by the name of Abigail Ouellette and her mother came in to the pantry. Her grand mother had given her \$10.00 to buy something special and she donated it to the pantry. I have it on tape.

While editing some video tape I was able to glean this from it so I know it's accurate. In the fire we lost 600 jars of Peanut Butter, 2,000 boxes of Macaroni & Cheese, (Bryce got on sale at Good Shepard) a week or so before the fire. We also had some where in the neighborhood of 1,392 boxes of elbow macaroni from a Shaw's sale of .25 per box a week previous. We also had just purchased a second chest freezer that was stocked with a 100 pizzas.

It was during this time, in August 2001; the Council of Churches was disbanded and with it went our protection as a non-profit. Having formed what was a board of directors, although a loose working one, we applied for and received both federal and state tax exempt numbers.

The following is an update on the gentleman who gave the pantry a \$2,000 bank check in 2000 after the fire. He came in again on two occasions in late 2009. The first time I was able to catch him before he drove away. Regarding my question about the donation; yes, he was the man who donated the check. Now, after all these years, I was able to thank him personally for his generosity. The strangest event took place on the second occasion he stopped by with a donation. He was unable to start his car. I contacted someone who was able to help him. He learned why his car wouldn't start.

We were able to help one another, even though the events were nine years apart.

Chapter 8 – Packing up, moving on

With hopeful knowledge of where and who to approach as another benefactor, Bryce found one in Hannaford at their shopping center on the north end of Main Street. Looking back to the total number of families / people being helped I think that when I started in 1996 we were helping about 90 families /125 people a month out of the church.

By the time we left Hannaford in 2003 we were nearing 190 families / 450 people. With the remodeling of their center almost complete in Sept. 2003 we received notice

again it was time to move. We were in their shopping center for about twenty two months rent free from about Dec. 2001 to Oct. 2003. The process of dismantling our home was about to begin.

Foot note: In the middle of October we posted a sign in the window that said “This pantry will close on or before Oct. 31st.” By Helens notes of 2004 in the year 2003 we gave out enough food to feed 49,608 meals to about 190 families or 450 people.

Chapter 9- Moving on again

Reaching a low point in the fall of 2003, Bryce and I, with each day bringing us closer to our dead line went scouting for another location that we could call home. All suggestions of places to relocate were explored and rejected for any number of reasons, mold, location, security, no facilities for cleaning, to name but a few. Expanding our search we found the ideal place to again set up shop only a short distance away and accessible to all the clients as it was on a bus route.

But it came attached with a rather large stumbling block, for us or any non-profit. We needed the \$1,500 a month rent. Dejected, as we knew we could not afford it while still procuring the necessary food for our clients, we went back to the pantry and voiced our dismay to Sheila St. Hilaire who was doing volunteer service that day. She just sat and listened to both the excitement and our rather large disappointment as we told about our find.

That night, she told her husband Archie of the pantry’s situation insisting he do something to keep the pantry open. Shortly thereafter, he and Kenny Blow, the owners of our local trash removal firm, Blow Brothers in OOB, not only had the rent reduced but agreed to fund the first years rent. Steve Garland, owner of Garland oil and at the time their business neighbor supplied the propane, used for heat and hot water with each using the pantry as a charitable donation thereby enabling us to continue our mission of feeding an increasing client base. Steve did this for 3 years until, in order to pursue other interests, he had to reluctantly stop. To all involved during this transition period and upon whose shoulders we stood and continue to stand we can only say thank you. Again by luck or Divine intervention new life was put back in the pantry.

We progressed through 2004 slowly and surely to where we were serving 150 - 200 families or more a month. Because we no longer were linked to both Biddeford and OOB pantries by the Council we could and did, except for emergency needs, only take Saco residents as our main client base.

In the fall of 2004, Hannaford called us into their Saco store and set up a food rescue plan for their produce and bakery items. They had one in place by donating to Biddeford, but by doing this their donation would stay in the community. For a

signature absolving them from any liability once the food was taken by us, we were able to provide our clients with these items thereby eliminating the waste of good food. Starbucks was added in 2005, along with Brooklyn Deli and Bakery of Biddeford in 2008, all on board with this system of passing good desired food along to those we serve.

Foot note: We started to occupy 67 Ocean Park Rd. on or about Nov. 13th 2003. John and I started to put the shelving back together, that we had put in storage at Sure Winner, in late Oct. 2003. The contract to purchase the place took part on October 29, 2004. It was purchased from Bob and Evelyn Tyrrell for \$175,000.00.

Chapter 10 -Fall of 2004

We did however retain some of the older established clients from these two adjacent towns so as not to penalize them for not living in Saco. Our benefactors Archie St. Hilaire and Kenny Blow told us in mid summer 2004 that purchasing the place, we were calling home, should be strongly considered as their support of the pantry was ending due to other commitments they had made. The set purchase price of \$175,000 established when the lease contract was negotiated by Archie and which we signed was excellent because of the interest being shown in the property by other business people.

With the pantry holding first refusal rights we swallowed hard, went seeking any and all means of advice, held our breath and forged ahead into uncharted waters. Bryce, many of the women volunteers and any one with a glimmer of hope for the pantry's success started writing pleas from the heart to any person, business, financial institution or charitable foundation willing to listen asking for donations to make this dream come true.

One volunteer Elaine Tarrintino made up an appeal and personally hand delivered it to all the companies in a local industrial park, That's Dedication! Slowly, from all points in the state, as well as ones in other parts of the country, the necessary funds for both a down payment and continued payments on what would become the remaining mortgage, started to accumulate. With the seller holding the mortgage we continued the payments, but all the time felt we were taking two steps forward and one back because of the structured agreement that had to be met.

Because of Bryce's long standing in the community and the people he knew in advantageous places, we started to seek out a bank mortgage. Our two local banking institutions (Saco & Biddeford Savings and Biddeford Savings) imparted to him the knowledge concerning the venture being undertaken and both committed to making a sizeable donation should we find the necessary backer. With the help of Cliff Purvis, a

member of the bank's board of directors, and time, we were able to meet the necessary terms laid out by Rivergreen Bank, in Kennebunk, for a bank held mortgage.

As we started to gain momentum in seeking out any one that could possibly help with the funds needed to fulfill a dream, Bryce talked, asked, cajoled, begged, borrowed or stole (not really) from anyone he thought could help.

At this point he, of course, approached long time friends and confidants Ken and Violet Cormier the owners of Funtown /Splash Town U.S.A. an amusement park, a short distance up on Maine Street. How they met, the friendship, trust and respect they had for each other would in itself fill a chapter. Needless to say Bryce did approach them but the timing for a donation was not possible. They were introducing a new exhibit into the park. Ken, after listening to Bryce, expressed his disappointment for not being able to support his long time friend. Ken did, however, in the end exceed any monetary donation we may have received.

Being a business man and knowing that this fund raising had to be kept out of public view if we were to have a shot at pulling the purchase off, offered the gift of knowledge. He gave the pantry two of his top publicity staff people, Kim Hutchinson, his daughter and Ed Hodgden to put together a marketing tool of brochures, logo design and time that eventually combined with our own efforts. This proved to be a winning combination. All necessary printing needed was completed at the park. At the end of this project, Ed presented the pantry with a \$1,000 check from Ken and told us if any future publicity was needed to contact the office.

During this period in June of 2005, Mary Tucker, using her connection with Thornton Academy art department asked that as a community project, they could have some of the students duplicate our new logo on the entire picture window facing the main road. This could be viewed by all. They jumped at the chance, with their teachers students spent a few hours with us and produced a work we are all love. We thank them all.

In the fall of the same year Mary and Stan approached Bernard and Bella Cowan the owners of Sam's Place a local paint store on Main Street for help. The building was starting to look shabby and needed painting. After looking the building over, he told them it required a special base primer in order to keep the finish coat looking its best. They then, as a donation, gave the pantry everything necessary to complete the task from scraper to finish blue coat. Bernard and Bella even supplied the paint needed to finish the inside of the new extension when it went up in 2007. If I were asked to estimate the total donation to the pantry I'd say about \$2,500 would be about right. They have since retired to North Carolina and we wish them a long, happy and peaceful retirement.

Foot note: during the fund raising period a donation /fact finding web site for the pantry was set up as follows. www.FuntownUSA/SacoFoodPantry.com. This along with everything else they provided was our “golden parachute”.

Chapter 11 – Rolling stock required

With expansion and using my van or a rented larger truck when needed it was time to move up. On 6/15/06 a 2001 Blue Chevy Venture body type SV with 173,295 highway miles on it at the time was received used from Galos Chevrolet. We were going to purchase it but Bryce told Mark Galos we would letter it as being donated by the company. It would be seen as a rolling advertisement for his dealership. This van travels all over town seven days a week and reaches into Portland and Sanford as well. It cost \$450.00. We gave Mark a check from the pantry in order to clear the paper work and clear Galos of any liability as we took it “As IS”. We then received a reimbursement check from Mark and an extra \$50.00 to boot. Way to go Bryce! By removing the rear and a jump seat in the middle we could move a good amount of freight, and if need be we made two trips to get all the food necessary. Needing an inspection and some major work done on it Saco Valley Auto Care (Mike and Judy for short) did the overhaul and squashed the bill of \$650.00. They also serviced it every 3,000 miles at no charge. This is their way of giving back.

Foot note: Interesting fact: When we passed it on, in September of 2008, the mileage was 187,495. We put on a total of 14,200 miles on this car in the two years of use and never went further then one trip to Lewiston in the North or two trips to Wells in the South. All other miles were put on mostly in the area of the pantry.

Chapter 12 – A dream fulfilled

Because of the overwhelming support of every one we approached for donations, for this most necessary and worthy cause, the over \$200,000 to not only pay off the entire mortgage but provide a cushion for the future was raised in a little less than a two year period. When the mortgage burning was, symbolically held on December 6, 2006, someone asked Bryce how we managed to pull it off raising all the needed funds

in such a short period of time. Bryce jokingly took out his handkerchief, pretended to put a piece of onion in it, held it to his eyes and in a weeping voice said something like, will you please help us we need money to feed the poor and needy. Also on this historical day, during the festivities, it was my honor and privilege, though unbeknown to the rest of the board and surrounded by many of our supporters, that in my address I was able to put forth the proposal, that because of his dedication to the pantry, the building that we could now call our permanent home be named the Bryce G. Milne Sr. Building.

On a personal note

Over the years at various times and for different reasons I have been asked why I devote so much time to the pantry. Here with the space and time to share with others is the reason in its entirety.

When I was working for a salary, time was mine in order to provide for the ones that came first, family. I knew there were pantries and soup kitchens operating but it didn't have a direct effect on me or my family; therefore, it was a fact that was pushed back in my mind. They were there for others and made news on the TV at supper time.

After retiring here and with free time I soon became involved with the pantry. Over the course of time I expanded the time donated and that is why at this point in time I was at the pantry on a warm Friday morning in August 1998. I had been running food up for distribution to keep it going till closing. I kept passing two women sitting on the bench seat in the waiting area and letting others pass first. I learned later that one was a new client that had to be registered and the other her social worker.

After they were enrolled and the order filled, I offered to help get them out to their car. It was then I learned they were going across to the CSI building opposite the church. I did so until reaching the door. It was at this point, having no experience with this service that I was stopped from taking a step inside and was asked to put the packages down. No men were allowed as it was a place where women and children were sheltered for their safety.

The women I helped at this point took my hand shook it and said thank you. I have been thanked many times over the years but always as a courtesy not like this woman at that "moment in time". The look in her eyes, on her face and the sound of her voice as she thanked me, all lifted me to another place. I, in a small way, had made a difference in this woman's life and as I turned to leave I could feel myself choke back the tears that welled in my eyes. That dear reader is why I keep going back hoping, that some day, I will see that in another time and place for it is a wonderful experience. One that I hope everyone can experience in their lifetime.

Chapter 13 – Expansion time

A year slipped by and with a client base expanding, even more rapidly than before. More food as well as an addition to hold the food turned from wishing to desperate need. During the warm summer months both Bryce and I stored any overages we accumulated in our garages with no problems. During the cold Maine winters though that could not be done and a heated outside module was rented at \$129.00 per month. The five months needed to get through and gain protection for the much needed extra food was great but we felt the money being spent was a waste of resources that could be used better elsewhere. A way had to be found to expand and so in June 2007 the handkerchief and onion were taken out again and an addition to the original building started to materialize.

Using long, good standing relations as his bargaining chip, Bryce started to tap into the construction field. A local surveying company Dow & Coulombe spent about three hours mapping out the property lines. We found out we had more than we figured. Architectural Designer Bob Mohlin, drew up the plans and then redesigned them again when we found out from city planning that the line set backs were changed some years back. The original two sections were grandfathered in but the new had to meet current codes. Trades Center contractor Bob Demers went over the plans and discovered that the roofing shingle requirements were wrong. Eventually it would have been caught but it would have required a waste of time and man power.

C.D. Armstrong, owner of Deering lumber, upon receipt of the plans figured out the amounts needed and the cost involved. We received some as a donation and the balance at about cost or slightly higher. The installers remarked they could not find a twist in the material sent. Delivery arrangements were also made, of the materials to cover a few day's of work, to prevent theft as the property is semi- open. Wood structures, closed (when this part was written) due to the economy down turn, donated the trusses needed for the roof.

Before this journal was printed, I am happy to say, Wood Structures was re-opened for business. Mike McKinney of Cement Foundations, Steve Gay excavating, Dayton concrete suppliers all joined forces to put in the foundation. After it had set for a few days the rain came and when finished left a puddle about three feet square and less than a quarter inch deep in one area. The rest of the floor was bone dry. After the framing was installed Dana of St. Ours & Sons electric, had his crew install the wiring and eventually the lighting, when the interior walls were finished. Steve Garland of the former Garland oil contributed the heater that was needed. During the month of January at -22 degrees with the heater set at the lowest point before pilot we can hold the temperature at +50 degrees. The walls are packed with R19 and the dead space between the ceiling and roof with R36. All these companies with three framing men Leon "Tubby" Clark (Bryce's son-in-law), Richard "Dick" Morin and Mark

Conway, hired by the pantry, all joined forces to erect the much needed addition to a pantry, now serving over 500 people a month, in about three weeks time.

When the main part of the extension was finished Tubby along with Robert Burns, (yes that's his real name) and visiting here from Northern Ireland, were hired to do other work desperately needed because of the corner cutting cost by the previous owners. The entire rear wall of the middle section facing our neighbor was removed, rebuilt, replacing that part where a garage door from the previous owners was located as they used it to park their trucks inside. Through conversations I learned it was an auto parts store and then a propane distribution center. They also took care of the wall facing the Cumberland Ave. side as well as a portion on the yard side. We also did a desperately needed black topping on Cumberland Avenue side and the new receiving door in the new section because of improper drainage. While the rear portion was opened Vic's moved in the cooler donated by Wal-mart. Unable to change it to a freezer, the expense involved and not needing it as a cooler, we made it into a dry storage unit for larger sized items that are given to larger families.

Foot note: Looking back at a steady increase of clients and changes in the economy over a number of years since moving into the building, the monthly number of families served grew from approximately 150 in 2004 when we first occupied the site to an average of 260 a month in January, 2009. In the year 2008 we knew we were serving more each month and by year's end found we were averaging 44 new people every month. This increase in families also changed with regard to make up. During the early years families were made up mostly between one and four people and even that favored the lower end. We are now seeing much larger families seeking help. This, of course, is reflected in the number of people being served which now in mid 2009 averages about 600 a month.

While putting these figures to paper my mind again went back to 1996, when I first started, at that time we thought 150 people a month was a staggering figure, how times have changed. And the mission continues...

Chapter 14 – Upgrading the rolling stock

In August 2008, with the van seeing better days and with what seemed to be an endless list of clients, the need for more places to be covered for donations, coupled with the fact it wouldn't pass inspection, without pumping more money into our Blue Hauler, we started looking for a bigger van to do the heavy lifting. After searching for a few months we found one at Galos that Bryce got down to \$11,500 or there about, pulled the money out of the account and then begged enough from our faithful, caring,

supporters to put it all back. A nine passenger van, which was needed, because of the man power needed to accomplish a given task. When altered, by taking out two rows of seats, it created a space for forty eight banana boxes. This became a good freight hauler for us and the last piece of equipment Bryce procured for the pantry before his passing in October, 2008. The old one, originally planned to be scraped, we donated to Jodi Bissonnette at York County Food Rescue, for her fast pick up work when her truck was too big. She was able to get all the work needed, free of charge from a mechanic, by just paying for parts. We try not to waste anything.

Special people we remember

We remember Irene Lamarre who managed the volunteers from 1991 until we moved into Shaw's after the 2000 fire. She did the phone work to make sure the pantry was covered, though at that time only two volunteers were needed and if someone was out with a substitute not available she did the subbing. After Joyce and Nan took over, as volunteer coordinators, Irene did the re-packing along with the cleaning of the refrigerators and freezers. She was just the right height for the job. One day while doing one of the chest freezers she bent over to wipe the bottom. Doing so her feet came off the floor and she remained balanced there before she could rock herself off and out of the position. The area we now use for our coffee pot is named in her honor. Irene's place will be remembered, as will she, for her dedication to the pantry until her passing in 2005.

We remember a gal who has not only been one of the pantry's staunchest supporters but to this day is still a volunteer and at times on short notice been there when called upon. Her name is Virginia Bagley but to us just "Ginny". She is one you could count on but when she came through the door all she asked in return was a cup of coffee and a place to hang her coat, in that order, thanks Ginny.

We remember and thank Quick Print, located on the North West side of Main Street near Hannaford's. They on different occasions have donated their expertise in printing our different required forms and the printer of this journal.

Chapter 15 - A time to remember

The Thank You Afternoon Tea, for the volunteers, that was planned twice for some time in 2008 was finally held on May 13th 2009. The passing of Helen in August and Bryce in October, so close together, made for a long winter and some serious adjustments. Although their knowledge was passed on to all on the board, it was now up to us to fit that knowledge into our individual lives by making the transition, from

the old guard to new, as flawless as possible. We do this for the good of the clients we serve, so their lives as disrupted as they may be, would not be further impacted.

On that day, we with the professional assistance of Wendy Cannon, a local water color artist were able to exhibit Bryce's portrait. We placed Helen's portrait in the pantry on May 6th 2006 when we held a luncheon at Most Holy Trinity parish hall in recognition of her many years of service to the pantry as well as the city of Saco. Bryce's would also now be placed there and both these pillars of the pantry are forever in a place of honor for all to see.

Chapter 16 - The dream lives on

Now that a period of mourning has passed the time for healing must begin. What better way to heal oneself but to continue the work of caring set forth by both Bryce and Helen. Over the 12 years associated with him as neighbor, friend, co-worker and mentor, we became like brothers.

Hopefully our relationship has been close enough and we have learned enough from both to carry on the work that became their life long passion. We wish to continue that one burning desire to not only help but to lift up a fellow human being going through a difficult time in their lives. By their open way of talking to people both he and Helen, with hearts filled with compassion, each in their own way were able to bring a dream to reality.

Now they are gone from us, but because in working with them each volunteer at the food pantry, knowingly or unknowingly have within them a bit of both. We will carry on the work they both assumed many years ago. Their mission is now our mission, their dream our dream and the mission and dream live on.

We take this opportunity to acknowledge all, who though not mentioned, have by countless donations of time; talent and support over the years continue to make this dream a reality. Though not physically present know that you are part of the pantry's life. That we the board members and all those we serve, in one voice can only say, "thank you and God bless".

And that dear reader brings you to the end of a trip through the first twenty seven years of the pantry's life. Someone, I hope, in the future will continue posting segments about its life in the ensuing years. As an after thought I will keep posting different thoughts and recollections as they come to mind and I encourage others to add to this journal as the different stories come to mind. When additions are made I encourage the posting person to include the date or as close to it as possible to continue the time line.

Foot note: A personal feeling; on Wednesday June 10th 2009, while lying in bed trying to get back to sleep, the visitor Flora and I had, on the preceding Monday evening, made me realize that this journal had come full circle. The visitor, which we hadn't seen in about seven years, was Anne Ordway, the daughter of Ruth Whitehurst. Ruth was the one that put us up in her home when we moved here from New York to start retirement life in Saco. She is also the one who told me stories of the town in her den on Saturday mornings while killing time waiting for Flora and mom to finish the shopping at Shaw's. She was also the same one that on one occasion left two messages on Bryce's phone to call her as she had someone that she thought would work out well at the food pantry. I never liked that woman; I loved her, but never liked her. I had to say it.

The working title I used "A Journal through Life" could now be scrapped and the new title using Bryce's own words at the time of The Church Fire "A Phoenix Rises" could be used as it was a perfect fit. I have been fortunate enough to see the life of the pantry, before the 2000 fire that destroyed it and now as it rose from the ashes to the way it is today. I also realized that in some way, somewhere, some how, both Bryce and Helen were still watching over the pantry they loved.