

Two Hundred Honor Rev. Gracie

Patricia Murphy

1967

More than 200 peace, civil rights and church activists honored David M. Gracie at a testimonial dinner Friday, July 21, as the Rev. Gracie prepared to leave Detroit for a new job with the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania.

The gathering represented a wide cross section of Detroit's "Left" community, ranging in age from late teens to late sixties, and in ideology from pacifism to revolution. They came to listen to perhaps the one man in the city who could speak to, and listen to, all of them.

Rev. Gracie delivered his "own eulogy," as he put it. He talked about growing up in Detroit, and how and why one could not grow up here, as in other cities, without becoming both a racist and a militarist -without even knowing it.

He told of staying with a Negro woman who was the first to move to Cherrylawn Avenue, of the mobs who had gathered at her home. He said, "White folks are scary."

He told of his "brief career in cold war espionage with the U.S. Army" and how it had led to pacifism. "I admire tremendously these young men in Detroit who are able to find that position prior to such involvement," he said. He asked for unity among the many groups with which he has worked, remarking, "The language I use to describe our common experiences may be meaningless to you; but we can act together and value the common struggle."

The unity of the evening, however, did not appear complete. Different people responded to different sections of the speech, and he acknowledged this difficulty in remarking that as more people arrived, he was tempted to cut another paragraph from his prepared text. The tribute to the man was that the people's affection for him served for a while as common denominator across the barriers of age and ideology.

Rev. Gracie has been especially known in Detroit in the past two years for his role as Chairman of the Draft Counseling Center and for making his church, St. Joseph's, available for the Freedom School during the Northern student boycott. He is on the Board of Trustees of People Against Racism, and his actions have made him an outspoken advocate of revolution within the church.

fifth Estate

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