

## INSTRUCTOR WORKS BODY AND SOUL

By Jack Carmichael

While the world seems to be going awry, people like Joan Englander are helping meet the needs of our frail elderly, who've long been neglected.

Englander leads seniors in simple exercises, sings to them while playing the tamboura, an East Indian four-stringed instrument that produces soothing music, and holds impromptu discussions "to focus their minds, helping them to be lucid." She interacts with seniors one-on-one.

Ask her the motivation for her work, and she'll tell you it's because she has discovered many older persons consider themselves useless.

Seniors in nursing homes ask her, "Do you call this living?" Englander tries "to help call forth a meaningful contribution from these people, so they feel they have something to give."

Englander's travels have influenced her career today. She has traveled extensively in India, Egypt and Israel. It was a meeting with Mother Teresa in Rome that reminded Englander that the poor are not only in Third World countries. "They are right here with us, needing our hearts to love and our hands to serve. We are not welfare workers, we are God's workers."

After witnessing human suffering during her travels, Englander decided to "give up my egocentric way of life and do things for others." For the last 12 years she has been doing just that. It hasn't been easy to recruit others to work on behalf of those in nursing homes.

"Those of us doing this work hope we can inspire others to join in the effort," said Englander. A petite, delicate lady, she has boundless energy as she moves from person to person and class to class. She believes love is what we must give to one another even though it is often difficult to love someone you don't like and to teach others to do the same.

"They must be able to feel or call up compassion in order to feel they have something to give rather than feeling useless," said Englander of senior citizens.

It has been said the eyes are the windows of the soul. Watching Englander's eyes as she works with a senior citizen, her genuine interest is apparent. She believes

individual attention to the emotional and spiritual needs of the elderly is equally as important as medical treatment.

For Englander, an East Indian expression—"When you serve others, do it as if the person was your closest kin"—has influenced her work. Englander said it has helped her develop a closer relationship with seniors. She also explained she works with the frail elderly in hopes that the elderly in the future will have a better experience. "We may find ourselves needing the emotional and spiritual benefits, too, as we grow in age."

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