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Our Cover this month is a freehand drawing by
our Faculty Nurse, Mrs. Landivar.

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THE DIGGERS: PAST AND PRESENT

JAMES E. STRAUKAMP, S.J.
Assistant Professor of History, U.S.F.

To all who read the newspapers, who walk the Haight-Ashbury streets, who work in the police department, who are part of many social organizations, the title "Diggers" has become a commonplace. This group in their membership, in their activities, and in their manner of living have been debated, praised and blamed. For me, an historian, they have taken on a special significance outside social considerations. In teaching seventeenth century English history, I have in the past made mention of the Diggers—of that era and not of this. So this semester I felt it necessary to look more deeply into our contemporary movement as well as into that of three centuries ago. Specifically I wanted to clarify the principles of the English group and, by questioning our own social activists, to see if there is any doctrinal or historical connection. First, then, I will give an account of interviews with some of our neighbors, especially with "Apache" and Art Lisch. Secondly, I will explain what the Diggers in "Merrie ole England" did and what happened to them.

The Diggers of San Francisco, from what can be learned, got their name from "those who *dig* things." ("Man, I dig it!"). There seems to be little organization, certainly they are not affiliated with any one church group as such or any of the local social programs. A spontaneous spirit to answer some of the area's needs has brought and is constantly bringing together various "hippies" to help one another find food, lodging and a sense of belonging. In general they believe in the equality of man, no matter what age, race, background or religion. "Self-help" has become very much a part of their philosophy as has actual digging. At present they are cultivating empty plots, planting carrots and the like. On a grander scale they have started to develop three different farms in California. These farms are not to be a retreat from the city and its problems but a source of food and a place of rest for those who might need it. Constant movement between farm and city is envisioned.

Further, they believe in non-violence and respect for authority. Efforts are made to find missing people and they hope to establish a means by which they might help reconcile par-



Father Straukamp interviews two present-day Diggers.

ents with their rebellious children. They seem to be looking toward a society of love and cooperation as might be seen in this *graffito* scribbled on the basement wall in one of their communes: "At some early-morning hour the misty moods of the shadows will recede and the light of love will shine upon all peoples; and with the shadows will pass the hate, the prejudices, the war and the suffering of the billions of items that make up the human society; all of these items will be united by the everlasting bondage of love into a beautiful fullness. Each person shall be unto his own, but each will stretch himself out to others."

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In no way do I want to praise or blame these Diggers. There is no intention in these lines to state whether all or any live up to their ideals or to some Christian code. I am merely reporting what the Digger spirit is said to be. From what follows, however, there certainly can be seen a number of interesting parallels with their earlier namesakes.

Now, what of the seventeenth century group? The information for this part comes from three pamphlets in the Sutro Library and from a book on the Digger movement written by L. H. Berens.

The Council of State in Westminster received a report from Henry Sanders that on Sunday the eighth of April, 1649, four men appeared on St. George's Hill near Cobham in Surrey and "began to dig and sowed the ground with parsnips, carrots and beans." During that week more people joined in the activity so that by the fifteenth there were some forty men and women cultivating, planting and building shelters.

Since only a few months before, the English under Cromwell had executed their king and set up a Commonwealth, the Council of State was a bit concerned as to what this might mean. Officers were directed to investigate. Their findings were such as to make one write to his superior, "indeed the business is not worth the writing nor yet taking notice of." Two of the Diggers, Gerrard Kinstanley and a Mr. Everard (described as "no other than a made man") appeared before Lord Fairfax to justify their actions.

In brief, they explained that all the land of England had been taken away from the rightful owners, the Anglo-Saxons, by William the Conqueror in 1066. Since the monarchy had finally been replaced, the Diggers were claiming the land which belonged to them as their own "by right of creation." Besides, the land on which they were working was unused

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Common Land (acreage set aside for all the villagers to use) and they had no intention of interfering with the farms of the neighbors. Everard emphasized that no man was excluded from their group "and all those that will come in and work should have meat, drink, and clothes, which is all that is necessary to the life of man; and that for money, there was not any need of it, nor of clothes more than to cover nakedness." This spirit found expression in a verse of the "Diggers' Song":

With spades and hoes and plowes, stand up now, stand up
now,

With spades and hoes and plowes, stand up now;
Your freedom to uphold, seeing Cavaliers are bold
To kill you if they could, and rights from you withhold.
Stand up now, Diggers all!

For the most part they seem to have been left alone by the authorities, possibly because the promised swelling of their ranks to tens of thousands never materialized. They were not, however, left in peace by their neighbors. We have an account of one such attack on 11 June, 1649. The title of the pamphlet in which this attack is lamented should give some idea of what the Diggers found in carrying out their mission. "A Declaration of the bloudie and unchristian acting of William Starr and John Taylor of Walton with divers men in women's apparrell, in opposition to those that dig upon George-hill in Surrey. The author, probably Winstanley, in ringing words accused England of forgetting the message of Scripture: ". . . thou now begin'st to fight against the Lamb, the Dove, the meek Spirit, the power of love, and wilt not willingly suffer that Prince of Peace to have a house to dwell in upon earth (which is human bodies), but seekest to emprison, beat, kill or else to with-

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draw all assistance of favour from them." But, he warns, time will tell "whether love or hatred, freedom or bondage" is stronger. And so they also sing this theme in their song:

The club is all their law, stand up now, stand up now,
 The club is all their law, stand up now;
 The club is all their law, to keep poor men in awe;
 But they no vision saw to maintain such a law.
 Stand up now, Diggers all!

In another of his pamphlets Winstanley gave an account of a like incident. This time the conflict was with Parson Plat who was lord of the manor of Cobham and, therefore, George Hill was in his lordship. Winstanley tried to win over the Parson with an elaborate collection of Scripture texts. The Parson proposed to go home and reflect on their meaning in relation to the Diggers. But instead of being won over to the group's non-violence and communism, he returned with a number of farmers who beat and kicked the Diggers, and destroyed their shelters. A pregnant woman lost her child in the fracas. Besides



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violence the Parson made use of various legal stratagems to rid his territory of these people: vagrancy, begging, disturbing the peace, etc. Winstanley could only question the sincerity of Plat's Christian belief by referring to one of the Parson's sermons in which he preached on the text "live in peace with all men, and love your Enemies." The Diggers certainly had all such incidents in mind when they chastized their attackers in the following lines of their song:

The Lawyers they conjoin, stand up now, stand up now,
 The Lawyers they conjoin, stand up now;
 To arrest you they advise, such fury they devise,
 The devil in them lies, and hath blinded both their eyes.
 Stand up now, stand up now.

The Clergy they come in, stand up now, stand up now,
 The Clergy they come in, stand up now;
 The Clergy they come in, and say it is a sin
 That we should now begin our freedom for to win.
 Stand up now, Diggers all!

In the end it seems that "force" won out, at least as far as the Diggers were concerned. During the following year they gradually disappeared as a group from the scene. But the message of Winstanley did not end in 1650. His words apparently were germinal for another sect that appeared at the same time. The people of this new movement called themselves "The Society of Friends" and later received the name of "Quakers". Because Winstanley's writings tell us so much of this more radical doctrine within the Puritan movement, I would like to conclude with some words on his teaching.

Gerrard Winstanley was born in Wigham, Lancashire, in

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1606, the son of a cloth trader. He died sometime after 1660 in Coybrook not far from St. George's Hill. During the period between 1648, when his first pamphlet appeared, and his death, he turned out thousands of words on his theology, his social philosophy and, in *The Law of Freedom*, contributed one more Utopian essay to political theory.

In his first works Winstanley established his belief in the interior spirit as the vital force in the life of a Christian. Reason, as he liked to refer to the Supreme Being, guided all, although he cautioned that ". . . this word Reason is not the alone name of this spiritual power; some may call him King of Righteousness, or Prince of Peace; but I can and do call him Reason." Amongst other principles for man to live by he praised that of equality. Like the Quakers who followed, the Diggers refused to take off their hats to any man because "he was but their fellow-creature."

Moving from purely theological considerations Winstanley at the end of 1648 addressed himself to social problems. He wrote against capital punishment, spoke in favor of a classless society, and espoused common ownership of property. He built his ideal world on a basis of communism much like that of the early Christians. To those who would listen he told of a vision in which God commanded that all must "Work together: Eat bread together: Declare this all abroad." In keeping with this he drew up a set of precepts which included "All well affected persons that joyn in Community in God's way, as those in Acts 2, v. 44, and desire to manure, dig and plant in the waste grounds and commons, shall not be troubled or molested by any of us, but rather furthered therein." It is not hard to see, therefore, that some Englishmen inevitably started to dig on St. George's Hill that Sunday morning of April eighth, 1649.

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Last month, the BULLETIN published an article entitled, "LOVING THE PAST TOO LONG: LAYLAWS," by Professor Thomas Schaefer and Mr. Michael Enfield. It was an attack on certain ideas presently advocated by some Catholics, who may or may not speak Dutch. Schaefer and Enfield, two of the campus's most pronounced conservatives, used the medium of satire to counter these ideas, persuaded that the best way to fight a silly notion is to TREAT it as silly, laugh at it, laugh it to death.

In future, to reassure those who may have been disturbed, the BULLETIN assures all that by and large we are a conservative Catholic publication, especially in theological matters. If any of our writers should use satire (an accepted literary form) to convey his message, please join us in enjoying our little joke.

EDITOR.

DISTINGUISHED TEACHER

JERRY LUDDEN, USF

Dr. Mel Gorman, professor of chemistry at the University of San Francisco, received USF's first annual Distinguished Teaching Award, a purse of \$1500 with a scroll.

The presentation was made by Rev. Charles W. Dullea, S.J., President of the University, at a faculty-staff dinner held on campus April 19.

Dr. Gorman, 56, has been 40 years at USF as student and teacher. He was in the first class to enroll on the present campus in 1927.

In tribute to Dr. Gorman, the scroll read by Father Dullea noted that "for 36 years he has been a living symbol of the desire for excellence . . . a distinguished example of a dedicated Christian university teacher."

Dr. Gorman was selected for the award from nominations made by USF faculty members, administrators, students, and alumni.

Dr. and Mrs. Gorman live at 2142 16th Avenue, San Francisco. He received his master of science degree at the University of California, Berkeley, and his Ph.D. at Stanford University.