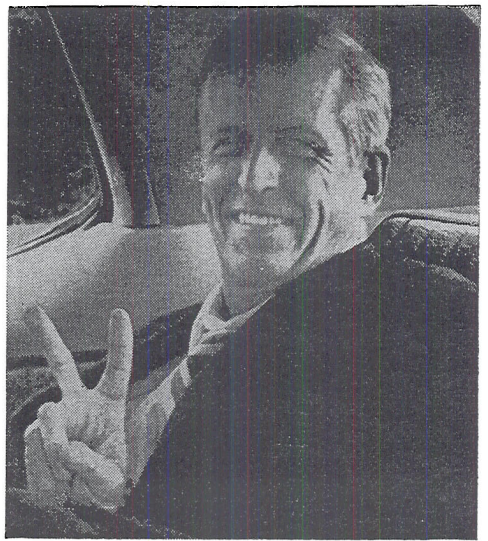




United front: Sister Elizabeth, the Berrigans—Jerry, Dan, Phil



A Family Affair

For the fourth time in as many years, Father Philip Berrigan stood before a judge last week and heard sentence passed on him. The scene was the Federal courtroom in Harrisburg, Pa., where a deadlocked jury split 10 to 2 last April in favor of acquitting Berrigan and six co-defendants on charges of conspiring to kidnap Presidential aide Henry Kissinger. The jury, however, did find Berrigan and Sister Elizabeth McAlister guilty of smuggling letters in and out of the Lewisburg, Pa., penitentiary—a violation of prison rules that have been substantially liberalized since their indictment. Even so, Judge R. Dixon Herman sentenced Berrigan to two years in prison and Sister Elizabeth to one year.

The sentencing could mark the beginning of the end of the Berrigan clan's legal problems. Government prosecutors announced last week that they would not seek a retrial of the "Harrisburg Seven" on the conspiracy charges. And because Father Phil's new sentence will run concurrently with the one he is already serving for destroying draft-board records, he could be paroled by January.

Trials: If Berrigan is set free then, it will be the first time in three years that he and his brother, Father Daniel, have both been out of jail. Their years of antiwar activity have brought painful consequences—loneliness and separation from family, friends and community—is the way Daniel Berrigan sums them up. Even within the family, he admits, "the war has set up terrible tensions." The oldest of the six Berrigan brothers—Thomas, 60, and John, 58—are veterans of World War II who strongly support U.S. policy on Vietnam. But for the rest of the Berrigans, the trials and tribulations of Dan, 51, and Phil, 49, have been a source of family solidarity.

Last month, the two other Berrigan brothers—Jerry, 53, an English professor in Syracuse, N.Y., and James, 55, an en-

gineer in the Virgin Islands—joined a demonstration in Harrisburg to protest the nineteen-week delay in sentencing Phil. And next week, Dan will publish a new book, "America Is Hard to Find,"* showing through poems, essays and letters how most of the Berrigan family came together under stress.

"You are with us for the greatest days we have known," Dan declares in a letter to his mother, now 86. "I thank God with all my heart that He spared you for these days at our side." In a foreword to the book, Jerry Berrigan contends that his mother paid dearly for her loyalty to her two priestly sons. When Dan was on the run following his own conviction for vandalizing draft records, Mrs. Berrigan checked into St. Joseph's Hospital in Syracuse for surgery on a broken hip. As Jerry tells it, FBI agents hovered outside her room, reasoning coldbloodedly that if she were dying, her fugitive son would be sure to show up. Instead, Mrs. Berrigan rallied but, according to Jerry, some members of the hospital staff became her new persecutors. When she asked for assistance to the bathroom, he complains, one "patriotic" nurse upbraided her for half an hour.

At home, Jerry Berrigan, his wife and four children were under constant surveillance by FBI agents, who sometimes watched the house from five conspicuous telephone company trucks parked nearby. But after the fugitive priest was caught and sent to prison, the family proudly visited both brothers behind bars. "What a fundamental and salutary raising of consciousness for those kids!" Jerry writes. "To have seen and heard and felt the sick pulse of American society—to have kissed and held the hand of men who, perhaps alone, know the cure."

For inmates Dan and Phil, the eighteen months they shared in the Danbury, Conn., prison were a boon; not since their childhood had they spent so much time

in each other's company. "Our shared legal jeopardy deepened our friendship," Dan told NEWSWEEK's Religion Editor, Kenneth L. Woodward, last week. "I was surprised by Phil's strength, his patience, his ability to respond to the uneducated and criminals."

In his new book, Daniel Berrigan keeps returning to the need for a new basis of family and community solidarity. When he writes a public letter to his fellow Jesuits, he hails them not as colleagues, but as "brethren, who have been for these 30 years my bloodline, my family, my embodied tradition and conscience." He also marvels at the risks accepted by the families who harbored him from the FBI. Resistance, for Berrigan, has become a style of life to be shared—by families as well as friends—and, in the end, a perspective from which to understand the Gospel afresh. "The saints were right," he concludes. "Their best moments were on the run, in jail, at the edge of social acceptability."

*191 pages. Doubleday. \$5.95.