

MANITOBA'S FIRST HOSPICE

by brian mcdonald

Hospitals are, by necessity, sterile, clinical and harshly lit. Due to the steady influx of patients and the large staff required to handle that volume, they are impersonal institutions, far removed from the comforts of home and hearth.

There are few people who would choose to die there.

Inspired by the work of organizations in England and the U.S., a Manitoba Hospice (house where travellers can lodge) Foundation has been

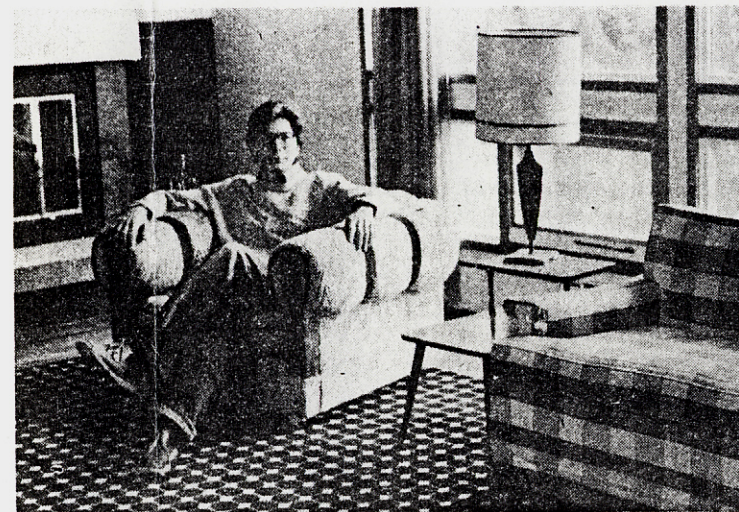
established - with the goal of setting up a home-care environment for people in the last phases of a disease - so they can spend their remaining weeks on earth as fully and comfortably as possible.

Jocelyn House

Manitoba's first hospice - named Jocelyn House - was initiated by a family whose experience with death has been extremely personal. 177 Egerton Road in St. Vital, located on a quiet and scenic bend of the Seine River, was the home of the Hutton fami-

ly and the place where Jocelyn Hutton died a home death of cancer at the age of 18. William and Miriam Hutton, Jocelyn's parents, have donated their home for the hospice, hoping that others will be able to face their deaths in that idyllic setting.

The Manitoba Hospice Foundation has approached the Manitoba Health Services Commission with a functional plan that outlines the way the Huttons and their supporters feel about the need for a Manitoba Hospice. It says in part that hospitals are primarily intended to cure disease and preserve life, so that death is a failure for the hospital system. It suggests that because the institutional structure of a hospital is designed to meet the needs of medical personnel rather than individual patients, the needs of dying patients are often ignored or handled in-



John Hutton in the livingroom of Jocelyn House

appropriately.

Death and dying part of life

The Hospice Foundation believes in the philosophy which regards death and dying as part of life, that facing the reality of our demise can be a healthy experience that fosters growth for individuals and families. And most important is the need to give dying patients the choice to move out of hospital into a home atmosphere that would provide "the intimate, personalized care that a family would provide."

Their ideas are echoed by John Hutton, the son of William and Miriam. "There is a need for someone who is dying to enjoy life," John says. "The hospice, the home atmosphere gives people time to prepare for death, both the individual and their family."

John says that Jocelyn House would provide care for a maximum of six people at one time, looking after them in the last phases of a disease while they were still mentally alert. The House would use volunteers as much as possible, to act as surrogate family members and all the resource personnel would be trained in the special needs of the dying.