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THE WITNESS

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EL SALVADOR
James Lewis
Renny Golden

**MEDITATIONS
ON THE CITY**
Barbara Taylor

there must not only be a vision of the
global family, but a sufficient sense
of belonging to the global family
so people will undertake risks
on behalf of that broad family.

ROBERT MC AFEE BROWN

Letters

Admires author

Just a brief note to say how delighted I am with the piece "On having an ethical baby" by Lesley Northup (October WITNESS). She's a brave woman, a fine priest (I'll bet), and a clearheaded person.

Every time I think I despair of any kind of significant action or leadership in the church I run across something like this to make me feel better.

I've been beating the drum in medical circles for Artificial Insemination by Donor (AID) for unmarrieds for a long time, and they are still leery of it, even though they despise the official Roman Catholic stand. Please tell the author of my admiration.

The Rev. Joseph Fletcher
Charlottesville, Va.

Selfish feminism

I have subscribed to THE WITNESS for many years and have learned much from the magazine about our society, but the height of selfish feminism was reached by Lesley Northup in her article. This unethical act on Northup's part closes one-year old Evan Northup's access to her biological history which may, at some time, become vitally important to her physical survival.

It may also be a severe psychological handicap as she relates to normal children who know they have two identifiable parents.

A woman has no exclusive parental rights. I'm surprised a doctor would participate in this act, and Northup may deeply regret this sin of unidentifiable promiscuity.

Of course, Evan should have been baptized and may an understanding God protect her life from the heights of selfish feminism. Sad, sad, sad.

Mrs. Edith L. Hatch
Minneapolis, Minn.

No unethical babies

Let's raise a multitude of Hosannas for Lesley Northup's "On having an ethical baby."

Let's also be quite certain the irony of the title is made explicit: there's no such thing as an unethical baby. There are, however, unethical, hypocritical, hypercritical and Pharisaic adults, who are apt to believe, among other things, that there *are* unethical babies, and that they should be punished, stigmatized, outcast for the (real or imagined) sins or lapses of their parent(s). Any child, including what some would call "a child of sin," is a sinless child, one of God's Holy Innocents.

Moreover, Evan's mother asks so many of the right questions, including two that are never asked, although they often should be:

Who is a parent?

Who should be a parent, and who should not?

Biology simply is not destiny in the realm of parenthood, and to actively or passively commit a baby to those non-, ill-, or malignly-equipped to be parents is a sin.

Finally, it's cheering to read that Northup's bishop "... has expressed some surprise and a little uneasiness, but unqualified support and respect." The uneasiness, nonetheless, makes me uneasy. I don't know whether people who are made uneasy by this joyous event are those chosen for high places, or whether high places tend to make them into the sort of people who are thereby made uneasy. I do, though, know the answer to the quandary and the unrest: for the sake of those called to high places, we can do no better than to abolish high places altogether.

But, if we must have bishops, let the Rev. Lesley Northup speedily be one. And thank God for baby girls!

Pierce Barker
Owings, Md.

Article sickening

This is sickening — and Lesley Northup is sick. What a disgrace not only to the Episcopal church but to *all* Christianity. There are many parentless children if her real desire is to be a single parent.

This is theology in action? Words fail me to express what I think of Northup and THE WITNESS. May God forgive you both! Take me off your list!

Helen K. Rowan
Thoreau, N.M.

Prayers for mother, child

The Rev. Lesley Northup argues persuasively. Nevertheless, I pray for her daughter, Evan, who may face the cruel taunts of unfeeling peers ("You don't have a father!" "You're illegitimate!"); who deliberately has been deprived a natural father's love and guidance as she grows up. No second set of grandparents for her; no full-branched family tree for her to take pride in; no masculine presence in her home to nurture her and complement her mother's affection.

I pray also for Mother Northup, who consciously has chosen not to share her parenting role with a partner; who will have to be all things for her child; and who will be especially tempted to smother Evan with attention and circumscribe her with possessiveness.

The Rev. David R. King
Elizabeth, N.J.

Raises concerns

It would seem that one of the reasons for publishing Lesley Northup's article on having a baby by artificial insemination was to invite comment. I am pleased that the church is finally addressing issues of human sexuality and the reproductive process and my motivation in writing this letter is to express my witness regarding the issue of artifi-

cial insemination and what I feel should be Christian moral concerns.

My first point would be that the well-being of the child must receive prime consideration over any right of a person, no matter how worthy, to bear a child. If this is accepted my next concern is that every child has a right to know his or her biological heritage, to know from whence he came and who the biological parents are. When I was only 14 we buried my father. I believe I had a right to know who he was, to love him and to mourn his death. As a social worker many years ago I had to deal with the difficult case of a boy who was illegitimate and whose mother had died. It isn't easy to be in this world without parents and yet he had a father somewhere. In this regard I would support a law like the Castberg law in Norway that obligates the State to establish the paternity of all children as a matter of right regardless of the wishes of the parents.

Also I have just published an article on child support that affirms the right of children to economic support from both parents regardless of the economic capabilities of either parent. This reasoning has to be the point of any child support legislation. Perhaps we should have a communal society in which the community as a whole and not the parents has full responsibility for child support but few modern societies have been able to structure themselves that way.

My comments have nothing to do with the fact that Ms. Northup is a priest. I have been an ardent supporter of women's ordination both here and in Australia, which I visit often. I also regard myself as a liberal and am an enthusiastic supporter of the Diocese of Newark report on changing patterns of human sexuality and family life.

Archibald Stuart
West Hartford, Conn.

What did Mary do?

As I read Lesley Northup's "On having an ethical baby," through my mind kept running; did Mary have an "ethical" baby? Mary's was certainly an instance of "alternative reproduction" — a sexless concept — the very first, in fact, artificial insemination, with God the "donor," and the Holy Spirit as the implant of the "seed" (Dr. Holy Spirit?). As with Northup, Mary could certainly have said, "The real issue, I suppose, is that I have done something 'different'." If Lesley Northup thinks she has problems with questions in this day and age of human reproduction "enlightenment", she should compare this with the problems with questions that Mary must have had to live with.

A Christian faith — and church — whose very being depends, starts and exists on an "alternate" form of reproduction should be dang careful about questioning and/or rejecting the alternative forms of reproduction available today. Roberta Nobleman might consider having a conversation with Mary on how she dealt with the snide questions, insinuations and reactions to her claim of who the father of Jesus was!

Abbie Jane Wells
Juneau, Alaska

Lesley Northup responds

Since the publication of "On having an ethical baby," I have been overwhelmed by the positive response from individual readers; I have been underwhelmed by institutional response. I have received numerous communications from Episcopalians and others affirming my option for parenthood and offering personal support; my gratitude goes to them, and to WITNESS respondents offering prayer (however sarcastically) and encouragement. I can certainly use both. Two of the church's institutional tentacles, however, have threatened to rescind my right to work under their

auspices. Neither has cited a reason for this proposed ban other than vague uneasiness; neither has offered me any form of due process. I find this disheartening, to say the least. Nonetheless, I remain utterly confident that I have committed no sin, crime or scandal in this matter — quite the contrary — and I continue to be optimistic about serving the church in accordance with its needs and my talents.

The WITNESS letters were varied and interesting. I was disappointed (if not surprised) that so many focused on my personal situation while evading the much more critical issues which it illuminates. I realized, of course, that my own story would generate emotional reactions, but my hope was that, by vulnerably sharing a part of my private life, I could provide an effective vehicle for broaching the important ethical questions surrounding parenthood. These still must be addressed — and on some level higher than the gut. We must overcome our tendency to throw up emotional smokescreens to obscure issues which threaten us, and find the courage to deal with them rationally and honestly.

The church must be willing to critically examine its comfortable assumptions about the "nuclear family," about biotechnological advances, about procreative norms, about parental identity. It is no answer to say that the church must be the bulwark of tradition against the tidal wave of modernism, or to fret about exaggerated "relevance." The issues raised by newly-recognized possibilities for creating loving filial relationships demand a carefully considered response from the institution which has for centuries arrogated to itself the right to establish societal norms in this regard. If the church sees itself as responsible for protecting "family values," then it must accept at least partial re-

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THE WITNESS



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Hits & Misses

Cheers and jeers to Episcopalians, well-known or not,
who have done things famous and infamous over the past year.

Misses

For those folks who lost their users' guide to the Gospel and can't quite get it right . . .

Episcopalians who missed the peace train:

National Security Advisor John Poindexter, NSC aide Lt. Col. Oliver North, and Ex-Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger were too busy shopping for weapons.

Episcopalian for President?

Pull the family into the bunker if it's George Bush, who has said he believes a nuclear war is winnable.

Glowing tribute to a nuke:

The Rev. Norman Elliot, rector of All Saints, Anchorage, Alaska, wrote a prayer for the commissioning of the new Trident nuclear submarine, U.S.S. Alaska. The prayer, engraved on a plaque, was presented to the crew on the ship's first official visit to its name state.

50 ways to leave your lover (at home):

The Episcopal Clergy of the Diocese of California, based in San Francisco, voted 381 - 6 last September not to invite the significant others of gay and lesbian clergy to the annual clergy and spouses con-

ference called each year by Bishop William Swing. Swing also said in a statement to the clergy that he would not vote for the marriage of gay and lesbian couples.

No sheilas in our club, mate:

For the fifth time in 15 years, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia voted down a measure that would allow women to be ordained as priests. The proposal had gained the necessary two-thirds majority in the Synod's Houses of Laity and Bishops, but the House of Clergy returned a majority of only 62%.

Hits

For those folks out there on the front lines in the struggle for peace and justice . . .

Keep an eye on 'em:

The Rev. Nan Arrington Peete rector of All Saints, Indianapolis has been selected by the Archbishop of Canterbury to be an observer with a voice at the upcoming Lambeth conference in England.

Magna cum laude:

The Rev. Jean Dementi, terminally ill with cancer, received an honorary doctorate from the Church Divinity School of the Pacific for all

her years of love and service to the people of Alaska (see p. 22).

A just award:

The Rev. Seiichi Michael Yasutake of the Diocese of Chicago, received the Harriet Hanson Award from Synapses, a Chicago-based inter-faith network. The award, named after an 11-year-old textile worker in Lowell, Mass. who led a general strike of women textile workers in 1836, was created to show respect for little-publicized courageous actions. Yasutake was honored for his 40 years of work with refugees and victims of oppression.

No barriers to courage:

The Rev. Nancy L. Chaffee of the Diocese of Central New York is the head of a new Office of National Disability Awareness Ministry, based in Grace Church, Elmira, N.Y. Chaffee, born with cerebral palsy, persevered in a world that doubted her capabilities, completed seminary and was ordained in 1983.

(These are just a few of the folks who have come to our attention. We encourage our readers to let us know about others Episcopalians who deserve a jeer or a cheer. Many thanks!) ■

El Salvador: A shifting reality

by James Lewis

In August of 1985 I drove west from the center of San Salvador out the Alameda Franklin Delano Roosevelt toward the Plaza Las Americas. The van traveled up the hill from the poor section of the capital toward the lavish homes of the rich overlooking the city.

Just east of the Hotel Presidente was the traffic circle I'd come to see. I shall never forget it. There, in the center of the circle was a park with the huge stone monument reaching up toward the sky — the famous Monumento al Salvador del Mundo. The savior of the world.

On the top of the large stone pillar, with an etched-in figure of the cross, rested a globe. There, perched on top of the world, was the chiseled Christ standing like a huge conqueror looking toward the city center.

A man in a church refugee center told me later that this Jesus was a sign to him — the savior of the world with his back to the rich, looking out over the people he loved — the poor.

Just to the left of the monument, directly across the circle, were the golden arches of a McDonald's. A guard with an automatic weapon stood watch as people ordered hamburgers and fries.

Returning to El Salvador two years later, I discovered some rather severe changes in the country, beginning right there at the monument.

On Oct. 10, 1986, El Salvador suffered

the effects of a dramatic earthquake. Some 1500 people were killed and 10,000 were wounded. Over 300,000 persons were made homeless. Estimated damages, in the capital city of San Salvador alone, were \$2 billion.

When I returned to the circle and the monument, I saw that the quake had taken its toll. The tremors of that October day in 1986 had toppled the stone Jesus from his perch. A woman, accompanying me on my return visit, said that the large Jesus had not withstood the earthquake. He had fallen and broken into a million pieces.

Church officials were raising money to restore the exalted Jesus. Among the poor there was little alarm over His fall. A story circulated that Jesus never was meant to pontificate in such a dominant way over the world. In fact, this savior of the world served the poor better when he lay broken among them. The missing Jesus, the empty globe, was to them a hopeful sign. Like the broken pieces of the Eucharistic bread, pieces of the statue had been gathered up and taken to the homes of the poor. Gone, as well, were the golden arches and the armed guard. McDonald's had been closed following a workers' strike.

Reality had shifted in El Salvador over the past two years. There are other signs

as well.

Since 1985 there has been an epidemic of graffiti. Political slogans and a spate of black lettering screamed out from walls lambasting President Duarte and the killers of Herbert Anaya, El Salvador's recently assassinated human rights official. When I left El Salvador in 1985, the U.S. Embassy was being re-fortified with another wall and more extensive security. The October quake had done an estimated \$35 million worth of damage to that remodeled facility. The once-clean walls were now covered with graffiti, spray painted regularly by bands of protesters.

This rash of graffiti is remarkable considering the fact that since 1980 the Armed Forces, along with National and Treasury Police and the National Guard (not to mention the Death Squads), have been responsible for 60,000 deaths. Dissent in any form has caused people to be kidnapped, tortured and murdered. Thousands of people have been imprisoned, while others have just disappeared.

It is almost as if El Salvador, home to



The Rev. James Lewis, contributing editor of THE WITNESS, who authored the two pieces on the Israeli-Arab conflict in the November and December issues, this month reports on El Salvador. He traveled in November to San Salvador and the war zones on a trip sponsored by the Carolina Interreligious Task Force for Central America.

any number of volcanos, has been cracked open and the lava of pent-up rage and frustration is being sprayed out upon the once-silent walls of the city.

Another dramatic change has been the effects of the Central American peace plan put forth by President Arias of Costa Rica (the Esquipulas II Plan). Like the earthquake, this political development was unexpected. It has surprised and shaken the old political realities.

No one expects peace to come quickly to El Salvador. Armed struggle will certainly continue there because of the enormous U.S. military support and the fierce resistance by FMLN guerrillas. We supply El Salvador with \$1.5 billion worth of support a year — one million dollars per day. With over \$2 billion since 1980, El Salvador stands third in U.S. support behind Israel and Egypt. El Salvador is the U.S. front line of defense in the hemisphere against the communist bogeyman who has run wild over every phase of U.S. foreign policy since the end of World War II.

Esquipulas II has helped enable the return of two political leaders from the left, Ruben Zamora and Guillermo Ungo. Their return marks the beginning of a new political alliance with connections to the FMLN. Their return will also test President Duarte's claims that El Salvador is a true democracy. The new alliance could well alienate the military establishment which holds the real power in El Salvador. Zamora and Ungo could easily wind up banned or dead. The forces of democratic reform, encouraged by Esquipulas II, could expose Duarte for what he has become, a front man for the three most powerful forces in El Salvador — the U.S. Embassy, the Salvadoran military and the moneyed elite who continue to control the country's economy.

Perhaps the most significant change in El Salvador has taken place to the north. I do not mean the northern Chalatenango region. I mean Washington. If El Salva-

dor has been shaken by an earthquake, Washington has also been shaken. The Iran-Contra revelations have caused both Democratic and Republican leaders to question the direction of U.S. foreign policy in the region. Some of that questioning had its roots in a report issued back in 1985 by the Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus on U.S. policy in El Salvador.

That report, prophetic yet hardly noticed, concluded that despite massive increases in U.S. assistance to El Salvador in the years immediately preceding 1985, U.S. policy was a failure. The social conditions which gave rise to the conflict in El Salvador were not being addressed by our assistance. In fact, U.S. policy was perpetuating the civil war, thus encouraging violence and contributing to demise of the Salvadoran people.

Two years later, the issue was revived by the Caucus, the findings released in November. Five of the conclusions register high on the political Richter scale and must be confronted by citizens who are concerned about U.S. foreign policy.

- Three of every four dollars of U.S. aid are being devoted to the war. "Economic" aid is being used to support the war effort.
- Even though U.S. laws prohibit the use of economic and food aid for military purposes, the Salvadoran military has direct authority over the U.S.-funded "civic action" program.
- Rebel attacks have increased 29% over the past year. The military is not winning, despite our money and changes in Salvadoran military tactics.
- Living conditions have declined dramatically for a majority of Salvadorans. Half the population is underemployed or unemployed. One in every ten Salvadorans lives in refugee or squatter camps. One in every four children is malnourished.
- There are serious misuses of U.S. funding as well as corruption in program

supported by U.S. dollars. Party patronage and black market profiteering exist. Earthquake assistance provided by the U.S. has been mismanaged.

Since 1985, U.S. attention has been riveted on Nicaragua and El Salvador has slipped out of focus. The fallen Jesus, the graffiti on the embassy wall, the political turmoil around the Duarte government and the critical questioning of our own political representatives are signs that we need new glasses through which to view El Salvador and our involvement there.

There is true wisdom in the Biblical saying, "Without vision, the people perish." Any unwillingness on our part to correct our vision will surely result in the deaths of even more Salvadorans. ■

ECPC BOARD UPDATE

Robert N. Eckersley was named treasurer of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company at its December board meeting, it was announced by the Rt. Rev. J. Antonio Ramos, chair. The new treasurer is senior partner of the accounting firm of Eckersley and Eckersley, Scranton, Pa., and has been associated with ECPC since the days THE WITNESS was under the editorship of William B. Spofford, Sr.

Elected to serve another term on the board were Migdalia DeJesus-Torres, chair of the Department of Puerto Rican and Latin American Studies at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York; Chris Weiss, executive director of Women and Employment, Charleston, W. Va.; the Rev. Chester Talton, rector at St. Philip's, New York; and the Rev. Nan Arrington Peete, rector of All Saints, Indianapolis. Two new board members will be elected at the ECPC meeting March 18-19 in Philadelphia.

Also newly named as assistant editor of THE WITNESS beginning January 1 was Susan E. Pierce of Philadelphia. Pierce, whose article and features have appeared in THE WITNESS since 1984, joined the staff fulltime in May 1987.



Who was Silvia?

Final vow of obedience

by Renny Golden

*All of us together
have more death than they
but all of us together
have more life than they*
Roque Dalton

El Salvador is a land of machismo with eruptions of elite male power so violent as to jog memories of ovens belching the smoke of burning flesh. It is a country of martyrs. In such an atmosphere a woman whose name is remembered in thousands of religious services from San Salvador to Chalatenango, from east to west, from the Cathedral to the clandestine mass of the countryside, is either a saint or a revolutionary — or both.

Was Silvia Maribel Arriola of El Salvador a martyr or a fool? During a liturgy celebrating the anniversary of her death, her *comunidad de base*, base Christian community, sang a song they wrote for her: “Silvia, Where Are You Going?” It wasn’t a rhetorical question. When they had written it, they knew she was going to Santa Ana, an area of heavy conflict. But they had not known this was to be her final journey where safety, like cocoon layers, slipped off.

I first learned of Silvia’s life from Salvadoran refugees traveling the underground railroad to sanctuary in the United States in 1982. Later, on a trip to El Salvador, I discovered more about Hermana Silvia, a nun who was killed with 91 other victims of a ground attack and aerial bombardment by the Salvadoran army.

What was the point of Silvia’s risk when senseless killing has claimed more than 20,000 lives since her death? It is a question an outsider asks. For the community who knew her, the sisters she lived with, the soldiers who killed

her, she was not a puzzle. She died the ordinary death of thousands. Perhaps what intrigues was her intentionality; not a grim determination, but a kind of surrender to a path, a going along without looking back.

She died in 1981 at age 28 in Santa Ana, the town of her birth. Her family was privileged enough to send Silvia to an exclusive Catholic girls’ school, Colegio Guadalupano, in San Salvador. Silvia’s mother, who is a Mormon, now lives in the United States. Only Silvia and her father remained in El Salvador when the family left. Faithfulness to her people would cost Silvia her life, but not, says Sister Emma, who met Silvia as a youth, her death. “They couldn’t kill her. She’ll only die if we let her — if we fail to continue her work,” she said.

I met Sister Emma and Sister Luisa, who are members of Silvia’s religious order, after the Fifth Anniversary Mass commemorating Silvia’s death. “Religious order” is not exactly the correct designation. Silvia’s public vows were made to her *comunidad de base*, and as such bound her into fidelity to the people and not Vatican ecclesiastical authority. The menacing authorities to these communities are not the church, but the government and military, which are responsible for not only the death of Silvia but also of hundreds of members of the *comunidad de base*. For this reason I cannot identify their religious community, their names, or their base Christian church.

Silvia began her journey from a comfortable life not so dramatically as Francis of Assisi disrobing finery to take up the sackcloth of beggars, but more as an “accompaniment,” in Latin American terminology, a following the path of a people.

Silvia’s conversion began when she encountered *los desplazados*, the displaced refugees. She had entered a traditional order whose ministry was teaching and nursing in San Salvador. But she began to question her order’s dedication to healing the middle class corpus, to educating the privileged few.

Renny Golden is co-author with Michael McConnell of *Sanctuary: The New Underground Railroad* by Orbis Books.

Silvia first encountered *los pobres* when she took a group of students to an impoverished area, and met Sister Luisa, who would become her guide. Sister Luisa remembered that day:

"I was speaking with a group of women in our base community when Silvia asked to learn about these groups. She returned after that first visit. She wanted to know about our lives, why we did our work, who we were. Even while she was a teaching sister, she was drawn to the movement of Charles de Foucauld and developed a relationship with the Little Sisters of the Poor. When a person with this spirituality and this call to evangelization confronts the poor, a crisis starts."

The crisis was personal, and like a moth to a flame Silvia drew closer to life with the base community. She worked with the displaced refugees and returned to the convent later and later. The doors closed at seven and she kept extending the time, slipping in at the last minute. When the

If you have ever wondered what a Christian Base Community is and what it means in Latin America, read the story of Silvia, who was faithful to her community unto death.

Mother Superior insisted she come home at specified hours, Silvia insisted that the religious community become involved in her ministry. But she knew this invitation would likely be refused because the nuns were afraid that attending base community meetings would compromise their work as teaching and nursing sisters. And it was dangerous. Her superior requested that she at least cease wearing her traditional habit when going into the impoverished areas.

When it came time for Silvia's renewal of vows, she received a congregational letter suggesting she would be happier in another order.

And so Silvia left a safe and middle class lifestyle. Her option for the poor in the midst of explosive repression was not the inevitable following of a path that the entire church of Central America trod. Despite the stories of the martyred church of El Salvador and the assassinations of nuns and priests, the vast majority of Salvadoran clergy have not risked such choices. The martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero is still criticized by segments of the church who contend he went too far. Many of the clergy respect Romero but emphasize his more spiritual statements while ignoring

or forgetting statements such as: "Neutrality is impossible. Either you side with the Salvadoran people or you're accomplices in their death."

Silvia was a surprise, a gift the poor didn't expect. Living in a slum with four other sisters, committed to a half-time job to help pay living expenses, then working the other half of the day with homeless refugees pouring into the impoverished area of the city, added to base community meetings at night, left Silvia little time for contemplative prayer. The people had become her prayer, and she theirs. One woman I spoke with, one of the Comadres — Mothers of the Disappeared, reflected on Silvia's life:

"I remember her patience and how she came to the people 'suavemente,' softly. She was rich. I'll never forget this, never; Silvia used to come to where I was living. She had ulcer pains and was almost doubled in half, but she wouldn't stop. I don't know how she could keep going."

At the same time that Silvia was working with the base Christian teams, mass popular organizations were rising and this "provoked tensions in the heart of the church," according to Luisa. Previous to this the *comunidad* had been shaped by the witness of Martin Luther King and Gandhi. "But at that moment," said Luisa, "practice challenged theory. We had to deal with popular organizations and the military organization of the FMLN (national liberation forces). We had to enter, with our people, into the question of where we stood."

It was during this period that Silvia met Emma and her youth group in the Mejicanos barrio in San Salvador. Emma reflected on that early meeting when, at age 16, she attended the traditional Way of the Cross which was being led, incredibly, by a woman:

"We had always had a traditional Way of the Cross but Silvia's reflections were very different and beautiful. It made an impression on me that a woman so young was leading the Way of the Cross. Also I'd never seen a religious who was with the people and not cloistered. I spoke with Silvia and I said, 'Who are you? Why have you come?'"

This first encounter with Silvia was simple and powerful for young people with spiritual ideas, living in a country at war. In life and death Silvia was just a step ahead. But what attracted the youth, according to Emma, was not her charisma but her love. "Silvia truly identified with us. Besides being a friend, she was a sister we could share with. We could go to confession with her better than with a priest."

Emma recalled the weekly lunch meetings of her group with Silvia, sitting under the trees at Planas de Rendero where they spoke of their hopes and dreams. "We were

searching for a life in which our spiritual longings could be fulfilled,” Emma said. “Silvia was the occasion of awakening my vocation. What I was looking for was a life of community, working with the poor to give support to the people who in turn would give me my life.”

Silvia’s journey would reach beyond Mejicanos, the city and into the countryside and the war itself. She had been working in an area at Tutunichapas with a lay minister named Alfredo. As Alfredo explained their pastoral work, I pictured an odd couple — this lumbering bear of a man and tiny Silvia. He explained that rapidly expanding repression catalyzed the pastoral team’s decision to divide the group and go into the countryside. They went to three different zones: Zapote, San Roque and El Amate. Silvia lived at El Amate for a year, immersing herself in the material and spiritual life of the people. After a death threat from one of the right-wing paramilitary groups, Silvia became a pilgrim, traveling from one small community or family to the next, never staying too long lest her presence draw danger. Silvia, like so many others, had finally become *quemado* — “burned” or marked.

By 1980, according to Alfredo, “the struggle had become more intense, and that’s when Silvia decided to do pastoral work in other zones of the country. Silvia, another sister and three priests split up to go into these difficult areas, with Silvia going to Santa Ana.”

Her little community of sisters affirmed her decision. Sister Luisa explained that Silvia’s journey “had reached a point where people asked her if she could provide pastoral accompaniment in one of the war fronts. We prayed for discernment and decided it would be appropriate for us to be with the people in this way.”

While working in Santa Ana, Silvia continued to return to her base community in San Salvador. As the human needs of people under siege grew desperate she returned to one of the *comunidad* families in San Salvador at the end of December, 1980. She asked one of the mothers if she would come out to Santa Ana and bring two of her older children for work. That mother, Marta, told me of the visit:

“It was a few days before she died that she came to our house. She asked that some of us return to the countryside to minister. I remember we were in the kitchen and told her we’d wait to make the decision. If we’d gone with her we’d be dead now.”

Hermana Emma explained in more detail the circumstances of Silvia’s death. Shortly after Silvia began working around Santa Ana the soldiers in the garrison there mutinied and joined the FMLN. The FMLN then took over the town of Santa Ana. During this period Silvia gave a talk in

the town plaza on the theme of Christian commitment. A woman religious thus addressing the assembled people, the mutineers and the guerillas was comparable to a 12-year-old boy standing in the temple to lecture Jewish elders on the meaning of the scriptures. Such revelation evoked epiphanal amazement in both cases. Emma comments, “Those guys were struck that a religious woman was in a place like that . . . they were amazed at the strength of a faith that prompted her to such a commitment.”

After the mutiny everyone understood that the army would return bent on reprisals. The townspeople prepared to depart or continue with the guerillas. When many of the people Silvia had worked with decided to go with the guerillas, Silvia went along, offering her nursing skills to care for the wounded. They ran for seven days and seven nights, with the army in direct pursuit. By the end of the week, air cover and reinforced troops were overtaking the exhausted group. On Jan. 17, 1981, they were trapped, and aerial bombardments and ground attacks killed 92. Their bodies were burned and thrown into a common grave.

When Silvia’s base community received word of her death, they were stunned. But from the poor barrio of Mejicanos came the deepest response. Two members of the youth who were especially dear to Silvia took up her fallen banner, lest it waver even for a day. Sister Maria and Sister Emma entered Silvia’s religious community and publicly vowed themselves to obedience, charity and poverty to the God of the poor.

Sister Emma remembered:

“At the moment we learned Silvia had been killed the youth group came together to reflect on her life. At that moment Sister Maria and I asked to be accepted into the community. Two boys from our group who intended to enter seminary went to the war front and they’re still there. Three more stayed in the city and participated in the base community ministry. The other four became afraid and left the work.”

I asked Emma if there is a marker on Silvia’s common grave because I wanted to visit it. “No,” she said, “the zone is still controlled by armed forces so we can’t find it. But when the revolution triumphs we will make a pilgrimage to that site.”

Perhaps the sharpest elucidation of Silvia’s life is captured in the song her community wrote, “Silvia, Donde Vas?” — “Silvia, Where Are You Going?”

*Don’t seek me in my tomb
I am among the people
I go opening furrows
Of a new history . . .*

Short Takes

U.S. pressures Arias

The Nobel prizewinner — Costa Rican President Oscar Arias — is paying dearly for his role as architect of the Esquipulas II Peace Plan. According to published reports the Reagan Administration has embarked on strong economic and political retaliatory measures against Costa Rica including: the suspension of \$140 million in U.S. aid legislated for Costa Rica for the last six months; the placing of strict bans and restrictions on Costa Rican exports, harming foreign exchange earnings; a delay in naming a new U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica; and, for the first time, the refusal by the United States to advocate for Costa Rica with U.S. commercial banks. This has led to a rejection of Costa Rican loan rescheduling by the banks and ineligibility for further loans. This has also resulted in agreement holdups with the IMF, and World Bank loans.

Update Central America 11/87

Red menace

I think the most critical special operations mission we have today is to persuade the American people that the communists are out to get us. If we can win this war of ideas, we can win everywhere else.

Michael Kelly
Deputy Assistant Secretary
U.S. Air Force

Get on board

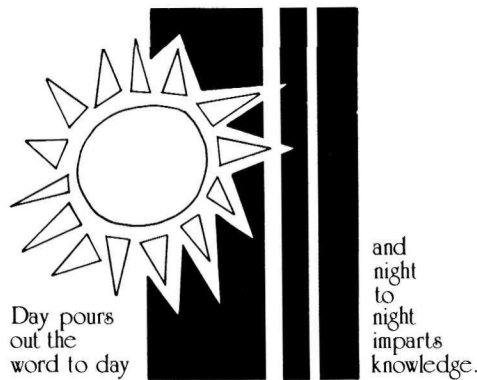
My friends, I believe that this church is on the move. We have got our act together and the message from everywhere I go is that it is time to get the show on the road. The train is leaving the station and it's time either to get on the train or continue to sit on your bags.

The Most Rev. Edmond L. Browning
to the Episcopal House of Bishops

Apple pie dialectic

Racial injustice is as American as apple pie. But so is the struggle against it.

Kenneth Clark



CIA bribes journalists

According to Edgar Chamorro, former head of communications for the Contras, "approximately 15 Honduran journalists and broadcasters were on the CIA payroll and our influence was thereby extended to every major Honduran newspaper and television station." In his affidavit submitted to the World Court in September 1985, Chamorro said that the same tactic was employed by the CIA in Costa Rica in an effort to turn the newspapers and television stations of that country against the Nicaraguan government.

Carlos Morales, a Costa Rican professor of journalism and editor of the University of Costa Rica's liberal weekly *La Universidad*, said that at least eight Costa Rican journalists, including three "top editors," receive monthly payments from the CIA, either directly or through Contra groups.

In 1977, after a Senate report disclosed that the CIA had maintained working relationships with 50 American reporters over a period of years, the agency announced new rules that barred it from entering into "any paid or contractual relationship" with U.S. journalists, including freelancers and stringers. However, the regulations did not address relationships with foreign journalists, or forbid agency operatives to pose as foreign journalists.

Utne Reader 9-10/87

The future isn't what it used to be.
Anonymous

Baby boomers' legacy

We are the generation that was given Auschwitz for a baptism gift and Hiroshima for a christening present.

Rita Mae Brown

'Covert' means intervention

No one pointed out that covert actions are seldom, if ever, carried out to protect the United States from imminent danger. They are, instead, the black glove of U.S. intervention. A list of U.S. covert actions is a record of bloody intrusions into the affairs of sovereign nations: Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, the Congo in 1960, Cuba in 1961, Indonesia in 1965, Vietnam in the 1960s, Chile in 1973, Nicaragua in the 1980s. None of these countries threatened the United States.

Nor was there more than fleeting mention of the fact that most covert operations are kept secret *only* from the American people . . . The Iran-Contra arms conspirators did not hesitate to share their intrigues with foreign governments and international grifters, while going to extreme lengths of concealment and deception to keep the public, the Congress, and even their own colleagues in the Executive branch uninformed.

The Progressive 9/87

Nicaraguans 'threatening'

Human beings do terrible things out of fear. And the U.S. government is frightened. We do pose a threat. On July 19, 1979 we walked into the White House with mud on our shoes and used the familiar *tu* form. We patted them on the back and said we wanted to be their friend, we wanted a new relationship based on equality.

Miguel D'Escoto
Nicaragua's foreign minister

Guess who said it

Many people don't know where their rights stop.

Gen. Williams Regala
Haitian strongman

Opening 'spaces of peace':

The risk of returning home

by Minor Sinclair

El Salvador, a country ravaged after eight years of civil war and 62,000 civilians killed, a place where death takes domain over life, is holding out for another miracle.

The tiniest — and perhaps bloodiest — country in Latin America has had its share. Seven years ago there was the power of the words of the converted, some say, Archbishop who admonished soldiers in arms saying, "Do not kill your brother!" Archbishop Oscar A. Romero was himself gunned down two weeks after calling for an end to the violence.

Four years ago in La Palma, hope arose as the two belligerents in the conflict — the FMLN/FDR guerrillas and the Duarte government — sat down at the same table, shared a carton of fried chicken, and dialogued for a solution to the civil war.

Then a year ago, during a three-day ceasefire over Christmas, two brothers came home to a small village in Chalatenango to celebrate Christmas. They left their guns at the front door and took off their uniforms inside — one made in the United States and the other stitched in the mountains in the heart of guerrilla-controlled territory. The ceasefire was a miracle that lasted three days.

The next miracle — tenuous as it is — is unfolding in five repopulated villages in the northern provinces of Chalatenango, Cuscatlan and Cabanas. There, more than 4,000 ex-refugees from refugee camps in Mesa Grande, Honduras have returned to their formerly abandoned lands and, bracing themselves against the violence crashing down around them, are trying to rebuild their homes and their lives. It is the largest repatriation effort in the history of Central America.

"We are no longer refugees. We are Salvadorans!" cried a middle-aged woman who, after living for the past seven years in refugee camps, crossed the small bridge at El Poy, which divides Honduras and El Salvador. The woman's simple statement only hinted at the jubilation and fear

which marks the new phase of El Salvador's eight year-old civil war.

In a dramatic conclusion to a nine month struggle to return home, Salvadoran refugees packed themselves and their few belongings into 110 trucks and buses which started to roll from the Mesa Grande refugee camp in Honduras at 4 a.m. on Oct. 10, last year. Passing the border immigration checkpoint and dozens of military roadblocks in El Salvador, the refugees counted on a small presence of international observers and their theoretical rights as repatriating refugees in order to successfully complete the first stage of their journey.

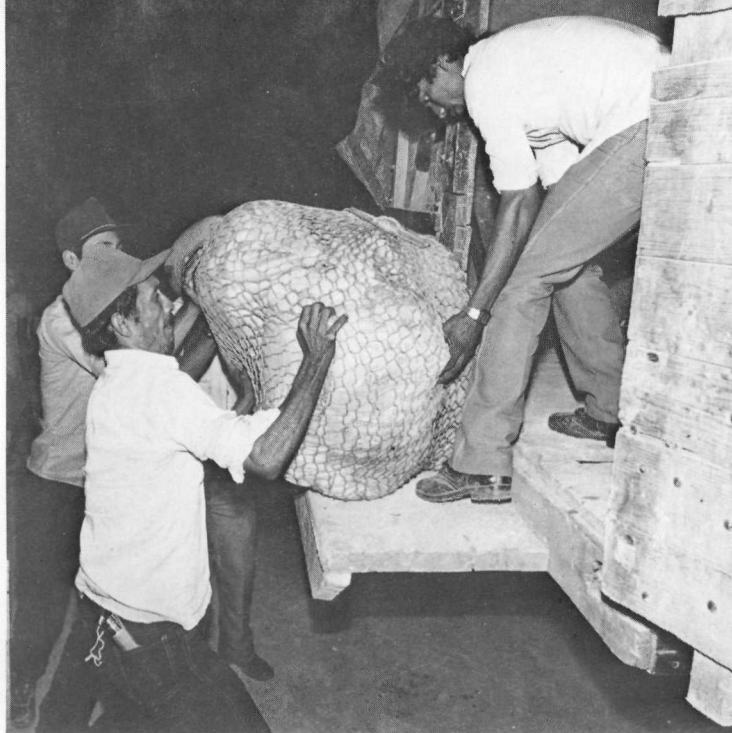
The "en masse" repatriation was opposed at every step by the Salvadoran government which charged that the refugees were "manipulated" by "pseudo-political groups" and characterized the intended repopulation sites as "oases for terrorists." Only at the 11th hour, after intense international pressure, did the government acquiesce and permit the repatriation.

The refugees had appealed to the international community in their bid to return home, believing that by returning as a large, organized community with strong international support, they would be able to carve out areas of neutrality. This would create conditions of security which do not exist at present. Since their initial appeal a year ago, the refugees had insisted they would return with or without official permission from the Salvadoran and Honduran governments and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Nearly all the approximately 20,000 Salvadoran refugees in Honduras have lost family in the war. They carry with them memories of the massacre at Rio Sumpul in 1980 when 600 refugees fleeing into Honduras were slaughtered by Salvadoran and Honduran troops. Again, in 1981 while crossing the Rio Lempa, 40 refugees were gunned down or drowned in an attack by Salvadoran ground troops and helicopters. Every refugee can recite chilling stories of bombing, captures and disappearances.

And not all of the memories are history. In the past year the Central American Refugee Center has documented the

Minor Sinclair is a staff person with the Central American Refugee Center in Washington, D.C., which recently received a grant from the Episcopal Church's Coalition for Human Needs for work with Salvadoran refugees. He recently spent six weeks in El Salvador, his fifth visit.



cases of 26 former refugees who, returning to El Salvador from Honduras, have been captured, tortured and imprisoned. According to the refugees, over 100 returnees have been similarly detained.

The leadership of the refugees, known as the Committee on Repopulation, has established conditions which they view as indispensable for a safe return:

- the right to return as an intact community;
- the right to return to their places of origin and work without harassment;
- the right of unrestricted travel within El Salvador;
- the right of neutrality with no military posts, forced recruitment, bombing or machine-gunning in their villages.

Clearly, the Salvadoran Armed Forces would prefer that the refugees not come back. Their places of origin, which they fled seven years ago, lie in the most conflict-ridden areas of the country. Their return would counter the military policy of clearing civilians out of combat areas to make free-fire zones.

General Blanton, head of the Salvadoran Army, sees the five repatriation sites chosen because they would serve as "a strategic chain of support for the FMLN." Sending a clear warning to the returning refugees, on Sept. 1, the Salvadoran Air Force bombed and strafed one of the intended repatriation sites, Santa Maria, Cabanas, for three hours, killing one civilian, Victorio Benitez, and injuring six of his family.

Including outright military force, the Salvadoran government tried every means available to prevent the community



Photos above show some of the 4,000 Salvadoran refugees in Mesa Grande, Honduras packing to return to their homeland to open "spaces of peace" in present war zones.

repatriation from taking place. The government cabled the UNHCR and the Honduran government to ask their help in blocking the move. On Oct. 8, two days before the scheduled repatriation, the UNHCR withdrew its participation, citing lack of government cooperation. After intense international pressure, including telegrams from the World Council of Churches, appeals from 54 U.S. Congresspeople and dozens of paid ads in Salvadoran newspapers, the government sent an official delegation to Mesa Grande to meet with the refugees.

Addressing a gathering of more than 2,000, an official of the Ministry of the Interior demanded that the repatriation be "gradual and orderly." The refugees replied: "When you forced us to flee with bombs, you did not force us in an

Continued on page 23

Cities 1988: The new

From the very beginning, cities have been the best and the worst of places, vessels for a concentrated humanity that is capable of the best and worst under God's sun. And, for most of us, the city we love is also the city we sometimes hate, but it is the city to which we have been called and the city that we want, somehow, to save.

I landed in the city by chance, not plan. When I was ordained a few years back, the only parishes open to deacons of my gender were urban ones, parishes full of people who leave their harmonious neighborhoods and drive downtown because they want the discord or at least the diversity of the city. They will put up with the racket for the richness of the place, and are willing to be disturbed by it all.

Before long I, too, was disturbed: by how much there was to do, by how complicated the problems were and how elusive their solutions; by how hard it was to measure any progress at all, never mind success. I was especially disturbed by the people who came tapping at my doors and yelling through my open windows, wanting food, wanting money, wanting chiefly to be reckoned with. I set aside time every day to see those I could and found myself defenseless in the face of their intricate stories. Even if I did not believe them I was astonished by their inventiveness and found it hard to deny them anything.

My discretionary fund dwindled but I clung to the notion that I was helping people, that if I gave them what they said they needed then they would go forth from the church better able to

solve their problems. I thought I was fixing them, or helping them to fix themselves, and I bid each of them goodbye as though I was releasing a young bird I had raised.

They began to return, with new injustices or variations on the old ones, and brought their friends. My name got loose in one low-income housing development and I spent a whole week dealing with half a dozen eviction notices from the same landlord. Slowly and painfully it dawned on me that the harder I worked the more work there was to do. It was the beginning of my wisdom about urban ministry. Forget what your parents taught you about how a job well done stays done. In the city, a job well done simply earns you 10 more, and none of them stay done.

That hard work breeds more work is only one of the paradoxes of the city. There is a theological one too: The city is at one and the same time the object of God's historical wrath and of God's promise. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem more than once, as Jeremiah and the others did before him. Their prophecies against the city are thinly veiled torch songs, the songs of lovers who have offered themselves and been rebuffed. God has been half crazy in love with Jerusalem since first laying eyes on her, but she has been unfaithful. Thus God's promise — and wrath.

According to holy writ there are



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wilderness

by Barbara Taylor

three chief places where God reveals God's self to us — on mountaintops, in the wilderness, and in the city. The air is thin in the first, there are wild beasts in the second, but the city may be the hardest of all to recognize the presence and activity of God. There is a lot of sin; for one thing, a lot of sadness and lost-ness and disorder. And there are a lot of distractions, not least of which is our busy-ness, our scrambling efforts to feed all the hungry we meet. It is hard to stay attentive to God's activity when we are half dead from our own.

But this is not new. Sometime around the beginning of the fourth century there were Christians who began leaving their cities for the deserts of Egypt and Palestine and Syria. They decided they were not strong enough to remain in the city without conforming to its appetites. They looked upon urban society as a shipwreck, from which they must swim or lose their lives. So, led by a farmer's son named Antony, they moved into the desert, where they worked on their own appetites. Their stories come down to us as the stories of the desert mothers and fathers, and they are frequently misunderstood as life-denying ascetics.

What they were, instead, were holy gypsies, pilgrims in search of that heavenly country hinted at by the author of the letter to the Hebrews. In faith, the desert mothers and fathers moved to the desert looking for a *verbum salutis*, a saving word, but what they really hoped to find was the new Jerusalem. They lived in caves and supported themselves by weaving baskets. They kept their mouths shut, for

the most part, but people were constantly seeking them out for their wisdom, accumulated from lives of unceasing prayer. They ate little and loved a lot, and were known for their charity toward everyone.

My hunch is that they have something to teach those of us who have refused to abandon ship, who are still bailing water and patching holes and looking for God in the gorgeous wreck of our cities. At first glance we do not have much in common. The desert folk left their cities, after all, and we are still in ours.

But what defined a city in ancient times were its walls. The very word "city" in Hebrew means "an enclosed place," and what a city was good for was defense. Under attack, people fled their fields and villages and headed for the nearest city. The gate of any city, though on its perimeter, was in fact its center, the place where access to the city was controlled, where vendors sold their wares and beggars begged for alms.

The desert, on the other hand, was a place without walls, a place of desolation or ruin where demons roamed, a lonely place populated by jackals, vultures, ostriches and wild asses that brayed at the moon. To live in the desert was to live undefended, to expose yourself to the elements and sleep lightly, surrounded by a whole crowd

of spirits that might wish you well but more likely wished you dead.

I believe that the city and the wilderness have swapped places these last 16 centuries, or at least have drawn closer together. The city's walls have fallen; it is no longer a place to go to be safe but a place to go to be challenged, to wrestle the modern day demons of corruption and excess, the beasts of homelessness and despair.

So maybe the desert mothers and fathers have something to teach us after all. Their motto was "flee, be silent, and pray," but that is the "what" of what they did. The "how" may matter more for us, because everything they did was characterized by a kind of light-handedness, an ease and buoyancy that made them saints in their own time, although sainthood was the last thing they would have desired or thought they deserved.

Detachment, laughter and humility are three practices that sustained the desert mother and fathers so long ago and may preserve our urban lives even now.

Detachment may be the most troublesome of the three, since most of us have learned the word to mean something like coldness or indifference. Detached? Au contraire! We are involved, committed, we are Christ's body on earth, bearers of the Holy Spirit, commissioned to make disciples of all nations. But that is where the problem begins, because the opposite of detachment is attachment — to our own expectations, for instance, or to our own compulsive way of doing things, to the satisfaction of our own needs and our own ideas about the way

things and people and cities ought to be. Above all, we tend to get attached to results, to the elusive fruits of our labors, and that is not good for us.

What the desert folk knew that we have largely forgotten is the value of a certain *apatheia* — not the absence of care but the presence of so much care that we give up our own desires and disappointments for the sake of those whom we serve. With a little detachment, we meet them not where they ought to be but where they are, and we meet them with no thought of how we can fix them, but only, perhaps, of how much God we can discover in them. This kind of detachment is a kind of indifference, insofar as it ceases to matter to us whether or not the world conforms to our requirements; cease to choose our chores on the basis of how effective they are likely to be; become careless in the accounting of our rewards. We do what we can and then we rest, waiting to see what God will reveal to us next.

Abbot Pastor, one of the desert elders, was asked by a brother: "How should I conduct myself in the place where I live?" The elder replied, "Wherever you may be, do not desire your word to have power before you and you will rest."

We have been called, not to swim away from the beautiful, battered ships of our cities but to stay with them, and to look for the presence of God in them at all times and in all places. It requires a certain detachment, a certain independence from all the perils that have never been under our control. But above all it requires a certain freedom from our own hopes and wants, however noble they may be. "You did not recognize God's moment when it came," Jesus says to Jerusalem, but it is hard to recognize God's moment while we are consumed with making the most of our own.

Abbot Lot came to Abbot Joseph and said, "According as I am able, I keep my little rule, and my little fast, my prayer, meditation and contemplative silence; and according as I am able I strive to cleanse my heart of thoughts: now what more should I do?" The elder rose up in reply and stretched out his hands to heaven, and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire. He said, "Why not be totally changed into fire?"

Fire versus burnout

Those of us in urban ministry read and hear a lot about professional burnout, that creeping deadness of the soul that narrows our vision and extinguishes our energy until it is all we can do to get out of bed in the morning. We are sitting ducks for it, the trade journals tell us, for at least four reasons: 1) our jobs are never done; 2) our results are hard to measure; 3) our expectations are high — not to mention the expectations others have of us and 4) most of us do not get to choose whom or even how we will serve. We are not psychotherapists who may stop when our 45 minutes are up, or physicians who may decline new patients when our case loads are full. We are baptized Christians who have promised to seek and serve Christ in all persons. On what grounds do we turn away from someone in need, and to whom do we say no? Given the ubiquitousness of our Lord, it is a sobering question.

And yet we know well the consequences of not saying no: our tempers flare, our health fails, our cynicism grows like a weed and the quality of our service eventually stinks. We spend a lot of time planning vacations and sabbaticals still a long way off, do not sleep well at night and sometimes have trouble breathing. Worst of all, we lose the knack of hope. We see the

dark side of things and shield our eyes from the light. Spring arrives and what we notice are the baby birds dead on the sidewalk, or how fast the flowers fade. What we hear in church on Sunday or what we say there begins to sound like wishful thinking, whistling in the dark. Something has to give.

While the word "burnout" is a new one, the phenomenon is as old as time, as old as Psalm 55. The psalmist is panic-stricken and speaks of a heart torn with anguish because of violence and strife in a city filled with trouble, mischief, rumor, scandal and spite. The psalmist wants a refuge in the wilderness, a sanctuary to hide from the storms of life. "Oh that I had the wings of a dove, to fly away and be at rest."

Detachment is one of the virtues of the desert mothers and fathers that allowed them to hold their lives lightly, to surrender their expectations of the way the world ought to be, to give up their striving to get what they wanted in favor of learning to want what they got. It is one of the cures for burnout, and modern-day clinicians tell us about a few more.

Characteristics of the hardy

The phrase they use is "hardiness," a frame of mind exhibited by people who seem immune to stress, who function well under the worst of circumstances and bounce back fast when they are laid low. The scientists who study these people suggest that they have some things in common: chiefly, a sense of purpose and belonging. They are people who have found something to love, something to which they can commit their lives, and they are people with strong ties to others. They work hard but they do not work alone, and they believe in what they are doing. Loners and cynics do not, apparently, rate very high on the hardiness scale.

Then there is self-esteem. Hardy



Kindness
and truth
shall meet;
justice and
peace shall kiss.

people have a realistic notion of their strengths and weaknesses and seem satisfied with the balance. They have found the fertile ground between thinking they can do nothing and thinking they can do everything. When they sit down at the end of the day they look first at what they have accomplished and only then at what still waits to be done. They treat themselves at least as kindly as they would treat a stranger.

Empathy is another characteristic of hardy people. They are forever giving their adversaries the benefit of the doubt, forever trying to see things through other people's eyes. They are not half as interested in how they are different from other people as how they are the same. They say "us" a lot and "them" not much at all. They tend to greet people they do not know like long-lost kin.

Finally there is humor, which we may define as an acute sense of proportion. Hardy people do not take themselves or anyone else too seriously. They laugh a lot, at least partly because they are good at seeing the cartoons we are as we live our lives. But their laughter is more radical than that; they also laugh to make outrage tolerable, to defy the powers that be,

and to remind themselves that who they are is not dependent on how the world treats them. By choosing to laugh when they might just as well cry, they have the last word, and what they proclaim by their guffaws is that there is more to everything than meets the eye.

It is this kind of anarchical laughter that the desert mothers and fathers did so well. They never tired of tricking the sightseers who sought them out; they did everything they could to ruin their own reputations. If the tourists came to see ascetics, then the hermits would rustle up a banquet worthy of a Southern Baptist Sunday School picnic. If, on the other hand, visitors came to collect some wisdom, the hermits would begin to weave their baskets.

They may have been mischievous, but they were never mean. They simply could not stand to be revered, and enjoyed themselves immensely as they tarnished their own images.

One of my favorite stories from the desert goes like this:

Once there was a disciple of a Greek philosopher who was commanded for three years to give money to everyone who insulted him. When the period of trial was

over, the teacher said to him, "Now you can go to Athens and learn wisdom." When the disciple was entering Athens he met a certain wise man who sat at the gate insulting everyone who came and went. He also insulted the disciple, who immediately burst out laughing. "Why do you laugh when I insult you?" said the wise man. "Because," said the disciple, "for three years I have been paying for this kind of thing and now you give it to me for nothing." "Enter the city," said the wise man, "it is all yours."

We have been through the same gate; we too collect our insults for free but, please God, we are able to laugh about it, to recognize the exquisite if sometimes painful humor that drenches all our days. The psalmist hankers for wings with which to fly away, but these are not the wings that are offered to us. What we are offered instead are the wings of a broody hen who longs to gather us as her own dear children. Beneath her life-giving breast there is room for all Jerusalem. All we have to do is let her gather us, and recognize her for who and what she is. All we have to do, with joy that rises up and spills out of our mouths, is say, "Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord."

(Next: How the Bible begins in a garden and ends in a city; how humility helps to prevent burnout on the way to the new Jerusalem — in the February WITNESS)

Resources

Biblical readings about the city: Genesis 11:1-9; Psalms 46; Hebrews 11:8-16; Luke 19:41-44; Psalms 55; Matthew 23:37-39.

Another resource: *The Wisdom of the Desert*, Thomas Merton (New Directions, 1960).

A bridge builder moves on

John H. Coleman, Jr., noted Episcopal activist and director of the Peter-Paul Development Center in Richmond, Va. died of a heart attack Nov. 22 while crossing the Martin Luther King Bridge to keep a preaching engagement.

"The bridge" was highlighted by Bishop Peter James Lee as an apt symbol for the life of his diocesan city missionary — the first lay person to hold that post: "John lived as a bridge, connecting power and poverty, white people with black people, the privileged with the dispossessed. His ministry touched many, many lives. We have been enriched permanently by his life."

For John Coleman's friends, Thanksgiving came one day early as they jammed St. Paul's Church for a service of Thanksgiving to God for the gift of his life. His home parish church of St. Peter's in inner-city Richmond was too small to hold all his friends. Some 700 people, including 100 clergy and four bishops, came to rejoice in his memory. The Rev. Ben Campbell, who knew Coleman for 17 years, recalled that there had not been that many vested clergy at a funeral since that of the late Bishop of Virginia, Robert B. Hall.

Coleman had served as assistant to the Bishop for Social and Urban Ministries since 1986, but it was the Peter-Paul Center, which he founded in 1979, that consumed his time and his being.

Coleman was the heart and soul of the Peter-Paul Center. His ministry focused particularly on working with young people in the mostly poor and Black Church Hill section where the Center was located. He ran activities

like an after-school program, a summer Bible study program, an adult Bible study and community discussion group. Coleman's purpose was, as he once said, "for people to get in touch with what they have to offer."

Coleman lived simply. He never owned a car and didn't know how to drive. He took buses everywhere all over Richmond, and "knew everybody," recalled Campbell. The day he died friends were driving him from St. Paul's, where he had just finished preaching, to St. Peter's. The car was crossing the Martin Luther King Bridge "when a heart attack took him in mid-sentence," Campbell said. "He was laid out on the sidewalk in front of a public housing project. The many friends he had there came out to be with him.

"He was able to go virtually anywhere in this city, from public housing projects to banks and corporate offices. He worked with kids from the projects and rich white school kids. He always stayed himself."

The Rev. Ed Rodman, executive director of the Episcopal Urban Caucus, called Coleman "an uncommon man with the common touch" and remembered a man of unswerving faith:

"John Coleman was one of those people that you knew was a Christian. John was an evangelist in the best sense of that term, in that there was a consistency between his words and his deeds. He certainly fits modern understanding of what a saint is all about. He was also an excellent urban minister who did not need a collar to authenticate his vocation. All of us who have been touched by his witness have not only been enriched but also



John H. Coleman, Jr. and daughter Christa in front of EUC Booth at General Convention, Anaheim, in 1985.

humbled and therefore have a responsibility to remember him in our actions. Heaven is a better place today and we are the poorer."

Coleman was involved in many church and community organizations in his Diocese and on a national level, including the Commission on Ministry, the Evangelism Committee, the Union of Black Episcopalians, Head Start, the Richmond Redevelopment Housing Authority, the Task Force on Evangelism Among Blacks in the Church, the Episcopal Urban Caucus, Black Diocesan Executives (BLADE) and the APSO Urban Unit. He was

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Laying it on the table

It was the Monday before Thanksgiving. The pink telephone message slip stared back at me from the top of my desk. Its few terse words aroused an initial mixed feeling of anger and despair — “John Coleman died of a heart attack yesterday morning.”

By the end of the eleven o'clock news that night and a half dozen long distance phone conversations later, I had given vent to most of the sadness I felt and began to reflect on the John Coleman so many of us knew and loved.

This is the second occasion on which I devote the space of this column in tribute to a departed co-worker with Christ. The first, two years ago, was to the Rev. Pauli Murray, the first Black woman priest ordained in the Episcopal Church. This time, I cite John H. Coleman, Jr., not nearly as well known, yet equally unique and important in his own right. Happily, this issue of THE WITNESS carries other tributes to John, much more eloquent than mine, but no more heartfelt and sincere.

John, physically dead at age 55, was, in the words of the Rev. Paul M. Washington of Philadelphia, “what the

Gospel is all about.” Living, loving, working for the kingdom, this plain-spoken, folksy bear of a man was an inspiration to many, especially in the Black church. No string of degrees or other impressive academic credentials followed his name. He didn't need them. Although without an undergraduate degree, a year of graduate study at Goddard College in Vermont did earn him a master's in the psychology of community programs. However, his primary designation — *Christian* — was sufficient. And that's what he kept telling us over and over by the way he lived, by the way he worked and by the way he loved.

Founder and director of the Peter-Paul Development Center, housed in St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Richmond's East End, John also served as assistant for social and urban ministries to Bishop Peter James Lee of the Diocese of Virginia. His work in the Richmond community was well-known, especially with young people in the city's Church Hill section.

Even more important, perhaps, was his philosophy and his strong belief in people. A few years ago John ad-

dressed a worship service in Philadelphia sponsored by the diocese's aided congregations and missions. Dependent on the diocesan budget for much of their support, many of these congregations suffer from low self-esteem. If we remembered nothing else from that sermon, we went out from the Church of the Savior with John's thundering words of encouragement ringing in our ears: “Everybody has something to bring to the table.”

It was this philosophy, this faith in humanity that enabled John to raise the hopes of many, to remind us of our calling, and to inspire us to use our gifts — whatever they might be — as he used his and to boldly bring them and lay them on the Lord's table from whence they came.

We will miss seeing and hearing John at gatherings such as the Episcopal Urban Caucus Assembly, the annual conference of the Union of Black Episcopalians and the General Convention of the church. However we will never be without his wit and wisdom, his “cornbread psychology” and his abounding and abiding love for all of God's people. Well done thou good and faithful servant — Rest in peace.

Continued from page 18

also Jubilee officer for the Diocese and was the first Black elected to represent the Diocese as an alternate deputy for General Convention.

A Richmond native, he served in the U.S. Navy and studied sociology at Virginia Union University. He was a graduate of the National Institute for Lay Training at General Theological

Seminary in New York City, and had a master's degree in community organization from Goddard College, which he attended under the sponsorship of the Episcopal Church. ■

A wellspring has gone dry

by Deborah Harmon Hines

I don't exactly remember when or where John Coleman first appeared in my life. It seems that he has always been there. As near as I can recall, I first remember being conscious of John at a meeting of the Episcopal Urban Caucus. John ambled or waddled up to me — for that is the way John walked — and said, "Well, Debbie, I want to talk to you about the Union of Black Episcopalians." I wondered, "Who in the world is this, as wide as he is tall? He's awfully bold." Little did I know, but soon came to learn, that I was in the presence of a prophet. *(A prophet is without honor in his own land.)*

That encounter was typical of many, many more between John and me over the years. I came to know John as being a very direct, no-nonsense kind of man. I also came to know John as a man of God, endowed by the Holy Spirit, who openly and unashamedly professed his salvation in the Lord, Jesus Christ.

John was an enigma. He did not comfortably "fit" in the Episcopal Church. He definitely did not fit the Gallup profile of a typical Episcopalian. He carried a Bible with him everywhere he went, and knew his Bible well. John was unsophisticated by Episcopal standards and was unimpressed by those who supported and promoted those standards. John was a

Christian first and foremost. People often misjudged or underestimated John because of his folksy ways. But John did his homework, and was well read.

Prone to wearing overalls and sitting on the floor by the door (like Ralph Ellison's "The Spook Who Sat by the Door"), he was often overlooked. But, he was dedicated and persistent. I remember the time John was elected an alternate deputy to General Convention. In that post, expenses were not picked up by his diocese. John did not travel in airplanes, and rode the bus to General Convention. He checked into the local YMCA. One of the regular deputies from his diocese fell ill and *(like the wedding guest who took a lowly seat at the banquet table and was invited to a seat of honor)*, John was elevated to regular membership in the deputation and as such was moved to one of the convention hotels. John just felt it was his responsibility to be there. *(Many are called, but few are chosen.)*

John was also a storyteller, who told stories in a language we could all understand and identify with. John was a lay theologian and a preacher; he interpreted the word of God for many of us who were too lazy to do it for ourselves. John told the simple truth. That was his primary job in this church, to remind us of all the things that we already knew and tried hard to forget. He called the shots as he saw them, stripped bare and basic. On any board or committee on which he

served, he would not allow the discussion to become too tangential, too ethereal, too superfluous or too intellectual. We were all subject to his staunch sense of stewardship: bishops, presbyters and lay people alike. We were there to do God's work: to bring hope to the hopeless; faith to the faithless; justice to the oppressed, and peace to the earth.

Just seeing John made you want to smile on the outside and on the inside. John made you feel good to be alive because his love of God and for God's children overflowed. You couldn't help but feel it. "Big John," because his heart was so big, was especially supportive of me, another lowly lay person, in the Episcopocratic bureaucracy. His special bear-sized hugs made you feel that he had been carrying them around all day just for you. They always came just when I needed them.

Well, John's gone home to be with the other prophets. He doesn't have to carry these temporal burdens anymore. John has left us a wonderful legacy of faith in the face of adversity and the true meaning of salvation. John will be deeply missed by the Union of Black Episcopalians and the Black church, and the Episcopal Urban Caucus. The Episcopal Church is richer for his gifts. When we finish crying for ourselves because John is gone, we can rejoice in his life and witness, and get on with his and the Lord's work. John was a wellspring from which we all drank. *(You don't miss your water, 'till your well runs dry.)* ■

Dr. Deborah Harmon Hines is national president of the Union of Black Episcopalians.

Letters . . . Continued from page 3

sponsibility for defining and refining what they are; it must at least be willing to enter into the debate. The discussion will continue in any event. It is better that the church be a true participant in this process, or it may find, as American Roman Catholicism is discovering, that it has lost its claim to moral authority and become a caricature of itself.

Evan and I are doing splendidly. Since so many respondents expressed concerns for Evan's welfare, perhaps I should offer some personal reassurances. Evan continues to flourish and live a very normal life. She has frequent interactions with adults of both sexes, including my family and close friends, who provide strong, positive role models and lots of affection. She has a close, loving relationship with a neighboring family which provides her with day care, playmates and a rich intercultural experience. Neither sheltered nor neglected, she is rapidly developing into a cheerful, bright, sociable, well-adjusted, inquisitive little toddler. Her lopsided family tree — with roots stretching through Richard Stockton, Roger Williams, and most of the European royal houses — should be verdant enough to sustain her in a future when, I devoutly hope, such things will have lost their power to define the value of a human life. She certainly risks less, both medically and ancestrally, than the millions of adopted, abandoned, or orphaned children throughout the ages who have found that life can be sweet even in the absence of a wall-sized genealogical chart.

Finally, I have no fears that Evan will feel peculiar among her peers as she grows. In our immediate neighborhood alone, there are at least half a dozen small children engendered the same way she was. Many other live in single-parent families, extended families, step-families, foster families, and a wide variety of situations which are "non-traditional" only by the standards of a small and dwindling segment of the cultural spectrum. There even seems to be cause for hope that such pejorative terms as

"bastard" and "broken home," spat out by adult mouths, will no longer be able to wound children of the next generation as they have in the past. It is, perhaps, the particular Christian gift to dwell perpetually in hope.

**The Rev. Lesley A. Northup
Washington, D.C.**

(As a result of Northup's WITNESS article, The Washington Post ran a front-page story on her. She has been invited to appear with Bishop Paul Moore of New York on CBS-TV and was interviewed by the British Broadcasting Company as well. — Ed.)

Kudos from prison

The chapel here at the Central New Mexico Correctional Facility has been the recipient of THE WITNESS for quite some time. The men, as well as myself, enjoy the fresh look at contemporary religion, through the eyes of some very talented writers.

We would like to continue receiving THE WITNESS, although our current subscription has expired. There are no monies available for this purpose, so we write to request a complimentary subscription. For whatever may be possible, we thank you in advance.

**The Rev. William L. Puder, Chaplain
Los Lunas, N.M.**

(THE WITNESS subsidizes requests from prison chaplains and prisoners for complimentary subscriptions, as above. We depend on our sustaining subscribers (\$25/year) and fundraising to finance this effort, and we are grateful to all our donors. — Ed.)

Miss those guys

In the Sept. WITNESS, I read about former editor Bill Spofford. I recall him, Joe Fletcher, Dean Robert Parsons, Massey Shepherd, etc. I wish we had some of those type of guys today in the church; less mitres and copes.

Incidentally, I was 80 years old in July and just made a trip to Nicaragua.

**V.L. Livingston
Portland, Ore.**

Back Issues Available:

• **Central America in agony:** Articles on U.S. involvement in the area, including F. Forrester Church, son of the late Sen. Frank Church, on his father's fight in Congress to expose CIA covert activity during the 1970s; Mary Lou Suhor's account of her meetings with women and children in Nicaragua, many of them survivors of Contra violence; and a look at U.S. military build-up in Honduras. Also: Map and chronologies detailing the history of the turmoil in Central America.

• **Eleven myths about death:** Lead article by the Rev. Charles Meyer discusses: Pulling the plug is suicide/murder; To die of dehydration or starvation in a hospital is inhumane; Dying is 'God's will'; Where there's life, there's hope and seven other myths about death which serve as impediments to decision-making concerning life support systems. In this issue also: the Rev. Glenda Hope's reflection, Why fast for Lent — or anytime.

• **AIDS: The plague that lays waste at noon,** plus articles on the rights of gays and lesbians in church and society. Authors include John Fortunato, Zal Sherwood, Anne Gilson, Dom Ciannella, Madeline Ligammare.

To order, fill in coupon below and mail to THE WITNESS, P.O. Box 359, Ambler PA 19002.

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The Rev. Jean Dementi, lifelong Alaskan missionary, receives CDSP doctorate *honoris causa* from the Rev. Bradford Hall, chair of the board.

CDSP honors Jean Dementi

The Rev. Jean Aubrey Dementi was presented the degree Doctor of Divinity *honoris causa* from the Church Divinity School of the Pacific Nov. 17, in Fairbanks, Alaska. Dementi, who spent her life in ministry to the people of Alaska — in the bush as well as in cities — is terminally ill with cancer.

The Rev. Bradford Hall, chair of the CDSP Board, and the Rev. Canon Roswell Moore, president of Province VIII and board member of CDSP, flew to Alaska to make the presentation at the Pioneer Home.

Dementi began her Alaskan ministry in Nenana as a mission nurse and lay pastor. Two years later she was asked by the bishop to be the administrator of Hudson Stuck Memorial Hospital in Fort Yukon. For 18 months she was a dentist, surgeon and diagnostician until a doctor could be recruited.

In 1955 she moved to Shageluk with the title "nurse evangelist." At first, hesitant about accepting a woman as their liturgical leader, the people of Shageluk were won over by her love and concern — and by her ability to pull teeth without pain.

She was the first woman in Alaska to be ordained a deacon (1972) and in 1977 she became Alaska's first woman priest. From 1978 to her retirement in 1985, she was the pastor of St. Jude's, North Pole.

The new honor is one of many that have been bestowed on Dementi during her lifetime. In 1983 the University of Alaska awarded her an honorary Doctor of Humanities, and the Episcopal Church Publishing Company presented her with the William B. Spofford award during the 1985 General Convention in Anaheim. ■

orderly fashion.” Then the refugees began slaughtering their chickens and loading the vehicles in preparation for the move. They were going with or without government permission.

Faced with the determination of the refugees, and with offers of assistance pouring in from abroad, the government acceded to the demands for a large-scale repatriation just a few hours before the refugees were to embark. The UNHCR also agreed to participate “100% in all phases of the repatriation.”

Overcoming some logistical foul-ups, all of the refugees succeeded in returning to their homes after a four-day journey. After some moments of heated altercation, such as when the military prevented the refugees from going to the National Cathedral to celebrate a scheduled mass, the repatriation passed largely without major mishaps or military involvement. A North American religious who accompanied the refugees described their arrival in Santa Marta:

There was only jungle to greet us. You had to clean back the growth, throw away the stones to be able to sleep on the ground. In seven years of abandonment, it seemed as if everything had disappeared; but shortly people began to discover hidden tanks of water and buried grinding stones. In a few hours, life began again.

Inevitably, as the world’s attention shifted to other hot spots and the international media pulled out of San Salvador, a different mood set in. The military routinely blocked the delivery of foodstuffs and building materials provided by the Archdiocese of San Salvador to the repopulation sites. Initial promises by the government to extend identification papers known as *cedulas* to the refugees were not acted on.

On Oct. 26, Francisco Rivera, a schoolteacher, was pulled out of his house on the outskirts of Arcatao, a town near the repopulation sites, and shot to death. The Archdiocesan Human Rights Office attributed the death to the First Military Detachment.

Rivera’s killing is one of more than a dozen documented incidents of human rights violations, harassments, and military cordons intended to intimidate the repatriates. On Oct. 17 Archbishop Rivera y Damas was turned back at a military roadblock and prevented from entering Guarjila, one of the repopulated sites. On Nov. 11, there was heavy bombing near two other repopulation sites, Las Vueltas and San Jose Las Flores. The following day, a bomb dropped on a bean field in a nearby village, killing a youth, Faustino Orellano Miranda, and wounding two others.

Ironically, while the Salvadoran military unveiled its latest — and one of its largest — counterinsurgency campaigns, which involved 40,000 troops under Operation Concordia (these same troops were responsible for the violations against the repatriates), the civilian government trumpeted repopulation efforts as a feather in its human rights cap. The Ministry of Culture and Communications released a slick documentary entitled “The Greatest Repatriation in Latin America,” and President Duarte called the repatriation a step towards “perfecting democracy” in El Salvador.

The refugees’ repatriation is unprecedented. Their move, in the midst of continuing violence, challenged the conventional wisdom that refugees should wait until the dangers subside before returning. It also refutes the widely-held perception that refugees are passive, helpless victims without the ability and power to affect their own destiny.

Perhaps most significantly, the refugees’ action challenges the Salvadoran military government which, through bombing raids, massacres and scorched-earth military operations in past years, has forced hundreds of thousands of peasant farmers to flee. Repopulation of abandoned villages confronts the military’s policy of creating free-fire zones where any presence can be characterized as guerilla unit and military target.

The Committee for Repopulation has appealed to the international religious community for protection and assistance. In the United States, a number of organizations and religious groups such as the SHARE Foundation of Washington, D.C., and Catholic Charities of the San Francisco Archdiocese have launched a Going Home campaign whereby American religious people are organized to accompany the refugees in their effort to return and rebuild.

In a country where only one of the 62,000 political killings has been solved (two National Guardsmen were imprisoned for the killing for four North American churchwomen) personal guarantees of safety are irrelevant. This is true for visiting U.S. citizens or repatriating refugees. Though El Salvador is not still living in the macabre times of the early 1980s when 1200 bodies a month appeared on the streets, the civil war rages on. Real reforms in the justice system, land tenure, and in human rights protection have been shunted aside year after year. The country has hardly reached the point where its displaced and its refugees — 30% of the population — can return home without fear.

Yet the refugees from Mesa Grande, consciously, deliberately and without ambitions of martyrdom, are trying to put an end to war by opening “spaces of peace,” and in their own way, work for a new society. In El Salvador, it is time for another miracle. ■



William Spofford, Sr.



Vida Scudder



William Scarlett

Nominations sought for awards

The Episcopal Church Publishing Company is seeking nominations from WITNESS subscribers for three awards to be presented during the General Convention in Detroit in July. The awards are named in honor of William Scarlett, Bishop of Missouri from 1930 to 1950; Vida Scudder, prolific writer, educator and social activist, and William Spofford, former editor of THE WITNESS.

Candidates are being sought whose action/involvement has been pointed toward the root causes of oppression, deprivation, and need, and who emulate the courage shown by Scarlett, Scudder and Spofford — who were at the cutting edge of social mission during their lifetimes.

Nominations should be sent to the Rev. Barbara C. Harris, Executive Director, ECPC, P.O. Box 359, Ambler, Pa. 19002, *to be received by March 1.*

Following are brief biographical sketches of those in whose honor the awards have been named:

Bishop Will Scarlett's entire ministry was spent on the cutting edge of Christianity's response to the issues of injustice, discrimination and oppres-

sion in the world of women and men. He was a ceaseless battler against the abuse of power, both in the church and in the social order. He coupled this intensity with a profound devotional life which he shared weekly in the Cathedral with the clergy of the Diocese of Missouri and any others who sought it. Bishop Scarlett was the founder of the Church League for Industrial Democracy.

Vida Scudder wrote these words in her autobiography, *On Journey* (1937): "For the ultimate source of socialist convictions was and is Christianity. Unless I were a socialist, I could not honestly be a Christian, and although I was not sure I dared call myself by that name, I could use no other."

Among the several threads running through the story of her life, this is the most persistent. From the time she was confirmed by Phillips Brooks in Boston to her death in 1954, she sought relentlessly to place herself in the arena of social action. Teaching, social work, and writing were her three main competing outlets. To her credit are at least a score of books on socialism, literature, religion, and the saints as well as many poems. St. Francis, more

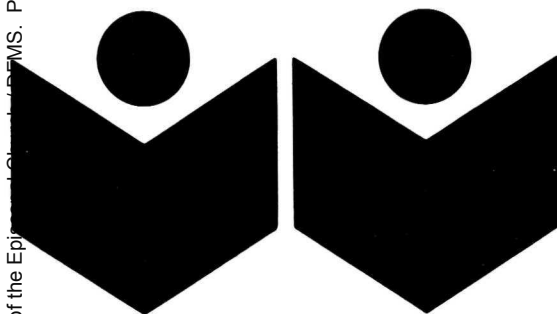
than Marx, was her mentor as she realized that the poor were leading her closer to the reality she sought in life and through who she discovered her own capacity to love.

William Spofford, Sr., noted early editor of THE WITNESS magazine, was an Episcopalian priest who not only made history as an investigative journalist, but was also center stage to bear the brunt of the witch-hunting and red-baiting of the '50s.

As a reporter he knew a great many whom the world called "great," but he was nourished as well by his contacts with union organizers, and down-and-outers in various urban skid rows. His son, Bill Spofford, Jr., wrote, "He had a great grace in opening up a friendly, pastoral conversation with those who served him clams in the Fulton Fish Market or the true believers in the bleachers at Yankee Stadium. I have a hunch that the Christ he knows wasn't clearly divine but was always a Wanderer in the dusty roads, meeting people and trying to make them whole, urging them to await the Kingdom and be actively about the business of building it."

THE WITNESS

1987 Index



Social justice advocate for 70 years

THE WITNESS has been speaking out on peace and justice issues for more than 70 years, and our index of articles for last year illustrates our continuing advocacy for and with those who suffer discrimination.

Librarians, researchers and students have found this tabulation helpful in the past. We have most issues from 1987 available, should new subscribers recognize a particular author or topic which they would like to acquire for their files.

The articles under Social Action and Theology illustrate the praxis of **THE WITNESS** — our emphasis on the action/reflection theological model.

THE WITNESS is also indexed by Religion Index One, a publication of the American Theological Library Association. University Microfilms International of Ann Arbor, Mich., reproduces this publication in microform: microfiche and 16 or 35 mm film.

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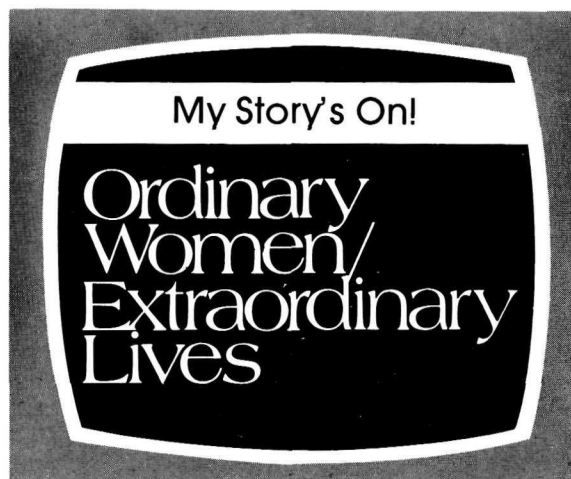
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