

VOLUME • 71 NUMBER • 4 APRIL 1988

THE WITNESS

Healthcare in the 1990s: Who can afford it?

Charles Meyer

Call it not love

Roberta Nobleman

Namibia: Ground of hope

Nell Braxton Gibson

Letters

Rockin' heavens

As I gazed into the impish smile on Jan Pierce's face on page 22 of the February WITNESS, I found it hard to believe that this fine woman has left us. Your tribute to her was beautiful and helped to ease the hurt and shock we felt. Somehow I can picture her with John Coleman rockin' the heavens with laughter and joy — leaving only us mortals with the tears.

Carole Jan Lee
San Francisco, Cal.

Printed page bonding

When the February issue of THE WITNESS came I looked first at the Letters pages which continued on page 23. My eye then turned to page 22 and the photos of Janette and Susan Pierce and I smiled at the Short Takes note about mother and daughter, with whom I have had a passing acquaintance. Then I started over at the front of the issue — to page 5 — but the headline didn't make sense. Out of context with the note I'd just read on page 22, what was Mary Lou Suhor saying?

Then I understood and felt your grief, and my own, and thought of Judy Foley and all the people at *The Episcopalian*.

Because of my own writing, and correspondence, it is personal for me when THE WITNESS or *The Episcopalian* arrive. I feel the loss of Jan Pierce very much — even though our bond was the printed page. I guess that's a pretty good bond to have, and you spoke for many of us in your eulogy.

Beatrice Pasternak
New York, N.Y.

Sets example

Although I did not know Jan Pierce, your tribute acquaints me with her and I share something (wouldn't presume to share more) of your grief at her loss. All in all, I'd just as soon follow her example: Work for what I believe in until

I am used up and die in my sleep. Certainly I will remember you all in the prayers we say here at All Saints.

The Rev. Barbara Taylor
Atlanta, Ga.

Pierce memorial set

Janette Pierce's spirit was gentle and strong. She lived her theology, and her biblical understanding of justice led her to work for the empowerment of individuals — whether neighbors or friends, as well as groups — oppressed, poor, God's own.

As a person who saw herself, and was seen by others, as a pilgrim along the way, Jan was committed to the joy and to the zest and to the test of the Christian journey.

She had a way of translating "concepts" into action in her life and her work. And as a communicator she knew that what mattered was not just words and images, but truly caring about people and making a difference in their lives.

The gift of the Episcopal Communicators to support in her name a Third World women's presence at the Anglican Center for Women at the 1988 Lambeth Conference, is intended to honor her by expressing that concrete caring and biblical love-in-action which exemplified her life.

We ask WITNESS readers to join with us in making this tribute possible.

Leonard W. Freeman
Episcopal Communicators

(Those who would like to contribute to the memorial suggested above can make a check payable to the Janette S. Pierce Memorial Fund and send it to Episcopal Communicators, 600 Talbot Hall Rd., Norfolk, Va. 23505. It is also the intention of the Episcopal Communicators to establish an ongoing award to be offered in Jan Pierce's name from time to time, to a person who exemplifies the ideals expressed above. — Ed.)

WITNESS a godsend

Your magazine is a godsend for us Anglicans who lobby, or march, or protest in any variety of ways against injustice. For some of us, the issues include our own personal struggles, as well as outside of ourselves. All struggles are related in some way. Your magazine is showing this in its own special way.

A suggestion: Lots of "well-off" folks (including, I daresay, Episcopalians) have no idea of the kind of hell anyone goes through in this country getting on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or the like. As a victim of narcolepsy who cannot afford the medical tests I need to verify my need for the necessary medication I would require to function better — I have had to fill out forms and answer verbal inquiries that either humiliate or degrade one's dignity. To be asked who I associate with, what I read, where I frequent does not make me a free, respected human being. Many folks that have the attitude that the poor or welfare recipients are "good-for-nothing", who deserve nothing in this country, will nevertheless give to a charity overseas. They don't realize that need varies and respects no geographic boundaries.

Keep up your good work of educating us all about our struggles — and our victories as we make those connections of solidarity.

Sarah J. Tesch
St. Paul, Minn.

Help protect children

I recently co-authored a report, *Children in Israeli Military Prisons*, along with three Americans — Karen White, my assistant at Christ Church, and Dina Lawrence and Kameel Nasr, both from California (see December '87 WITNESS). Dr. Rosemary Ruether, prominent U.S. theologian, and the Rt. Rev. H. Coleman McGehee, Jr., Bishop of Michigan, contributed powerful state-

ments to the children's campaign report.

The document contains 16 cases of children and youths from the West Bank and Gaza who provided us with personal testimonies of torture and maltreatment while in the custody of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) or the Shin Bet, Israel's security police.

The Landau Commission recently found that the Shin Bet had used torture routinely for 16 years and then lied about it in court. Although the Commission's findings condemned the use of perjury in Israeli military courts, it recommended the continued use of physical violence to extract forced confessions from children and youths suspected of activities such as writing slogans on walls, singing nationalist songs, possessing nationalist literature, raising a flag, burning tires, making a victory sign with the hand, wearing the shape of Palestine on jewelry, throwing a stone, etc. The overwhelming majority of arrests in the occupied territories are children, youths and young adults who are suspected of one or more of these activities which are, in the main, legitimate forms of nationalist expression and do not constitute a threat to the security of the occupation forces. No arrest warrant, search warrant or court order is needed for any soldier to arrest any child anywhere.

Recently U.S. embassy officials congratulated the authors of the report. They believe the international media coverage it received was responsible for the recent indictment of five people for torturing children at the Ansar II prison in Gaza. However, conditions today may be even worse than before for children.

Please ask your government to intervene. Every member of Congress received a copy of the report earlier this year. Please contact your representatives and the House Human Rights Caucus.

We pray that you will do everything you can to help these children who desperately need your protection.

Rev. Canon Riah Abu El-Assal
Christ Evangelical Episcopal Church
Nazareth, Israel

New prison threatens

Thank you for the February issue with Helen Woodson's poignant article about her trips to various prisons during the three years she has already been incarcerated. It is possible she will endure even more such trips if she joins fellow activists such as Alejandrina Torres in a prison being constructed in Mariana, Fla.

In a recent article by Helen in *The Nuclear Resister* we read that a 100-bed high security women's prison is under construction for those whose "past or present affiliations, associations, or membership in an organization has been documented as being involved in acts of violence, attempts to disrupt or overthrow the government of the United States, or whose published ideology includes advocating violations of law."

Oppression and abuse of certain women is far from over. It's my guess it could get much worse soon.

The Rev. Paul Kabat
Scheller, Ill.

Irreligious reader?

I am not irreverent, though I am somewhat irreligious. Yet I think *THE WITNESS* is a most intelligible source of information on difficult and complex questions. But it also seems to me there is a sense of treading lightly; thus, to me most of the voices in *THE WITNESS* seem to be worried cries in the wilderness for they cannot be too clear, lest they undermine themselves.

I am sending \$10 for a subscription, for I don't want to be a freeloader altogether. The \$6 limited income subscription category is checked to indicate that

I live on social security pension and I am 73 years old. The rest is to help a little. Keep plying us with information and argument.

Frank Conte
Warren, R.I.

Subscriber sales pitch

A Lenten series in Los Angeles will include a presentation on the work I do as director of the Southern California Ecumenical Council's Interfaith Task Force on Central America. One of the actions I would like to include in my talk is to offer people subscriptions to *THE WITNESS*. Can you send me a small stack of forms for this purpose? At your Christmas special offer I got six new people to subscribe. Hope this will work also. Thank you for your wonderful articles. You are indeed, a witness.

Mary Brent Wehrli
Los Angeles, Cal.

Correcting herstory

Oops! *THE WITNESS* has been innocently perpetuating a harmless error that may vex those who share my compulsive need for accuracy. In the announcement about nominations for this year's Vida Scudder award (January issue) is the statement "she was confirmed by Phillips Brooks in Boston." Most people who know anything about Scudder today believe this to be true, but: Vida was *prepared* for her confirmation by Phillips Brooks, when he was rector of her parish, Trinity Church, in Boston. Brooks was not elected bishop until 1891, and I presume that Scudder was confirmed by Benjamin Paddock, who was Bishop of Massachusetts in 1875. This error appears in the article on Scudder contained in the distinguished biographical dictionary, *Notable American Women*, and is repeated elsewhere. But we might as well set the

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THE WITNESS



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Consciousness-raising in Guatemala

Guatemala City was the setting for the historic February meeting of the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church — the first ever held outside the continental United States. Set in the protected environment of a U.S.-run, luxury hotel with all the comforts of home — a McDonald's was just down the street — the Council might just as well have met in the States. But precisely to avoid this kind of isolation, at the request of Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning, Council members had fanned out across the Caribbean, Central and South America to experience life in Episcopal and Anglican dioceses before the meeting.

Judging from the testimony of most, the journey was a transforming one. Though many Council members have traveled extensively, this trip seemed to be especially emotional. The servant church in these regions is fervent, struggling to survive against what sometimes seems like impossible odds.

What many Council members saw in their travels could play a major role in shaping the church of the future.

Browning, in his closing speech, reminded those who had made the journey to remember that with knowledge comes responsibility:

"You have just visited with our sisters and brothers in Latin Amer-

ica. You have been invited into their homes and into their ministries. Your reports have witnessed to the power of this experience. Each of you now carries that story forward into the decision-making of our church. You also carry it into the conscience of those circles of political and economic decision. We cannot presume to speak for those who live and minister here. We can, however, with humility be the instruments through which their stories can be heard."

The need to build upon what was learned was apparent in report after report. There was much discussion about strengthening companion diocese relationships and partnership programs, because what were once, as one Central American Council member put it, merely abstract "line items in the national budget," had been witnessed as viable, growing churches. Another important issue was the subject of autonomy for Caribbean and South American churches. A Council resolution stressed that it was important to recognize "that the Church in the United States has a mutual responsibility toward this process of regional autonomy, requiring long-term commitment to it both in financial and human dimensions."

However, the greatest legacy of the Council's journey was the shar-

ing. Council members were overwhelmed by the warmth and hospitality of their hosts, even in the most humble parish. As one member thanked his host, he said, "Your missionary work was *to us*." And there was discussion of having missionaries come from Caribbean and Latin America to demonstrate the work of a truly servant church.

Meeting in Guatemala also brought home the fragile web that connects all of us everywhere. Crises in Panama, El Salvador, or Nicaragua were no longer just items on TV news — they were taking place across nearby borders, were tied to policies formulated in the United States, and affected people with whom Council members had shared meals, laughter and prayers.

Browning, the Church Center Staff and Executive Council deserve credit for meeting in Central America while the region is in turmoil. Despite the limited time frame, a definite consciousness-raising took place. It was encouraging to see the mostly White, upper-middle class Council membership respond with sensitivity to its task. Such an event, together with Browning's recent trips to the Philippines, China, and the Middle East, gives hope for the possibility of a less parochial, more just and open church. ■

Healthcare in the 1990s — Who

When Jesus told the man, “Take up your pallet and walk, he was unwittingly forecasting the paradigm for American healthcare in the 1990s. Taking up pallets is exactly what we will be asked to do if current trends continue — but we may not leave cured, as did the Biblical invalid.

The system of healthcare delivery in the United States has changed rapidly over the last three years and will continue to change, well into the 1990s. The church must seriously consider how it can effect changes in the system, and also prepare people to deal with the ethical and technical choices they will be required to make. For example:

- The American Hospital Association estimates that 10% of existing U.S. hospitals will close by 1995. This reduction will most affect the poor and elderly and the medically indigent. This latter group — estimated to be 30% of the population now — is growing as employment areas change from manufacturing, transportation and government (which provided extensive health coverage) to service fields which provide minimal, if any, healthcare benefits. While healthcare costs continue to rise, so does the number of people with insufficient or no coverage.

- If current trends continue, by the year 2000, 80% of U.S. hospitals will be affiliated with or owned by four major healthcare purveyors. Independent hospitals will either be struggling or non-existent. Implications here may parallel the choice between GM, Ford and Chrysler.

- In contrast with the family doctor, an independent practitioner who made house calls, had a limited armamentarium, sometimes used the hospital as a recuperative resource, and worried about finances last, we are now presented with the salaried physician who will see you if the pre-certification screener has validated the need for the high technology testing to verify that your disease does not warrant hospitalization (according to your insurance company).

- Average length of stay (ALOS) for inpatients has dropped from 7.6 days in 1984 to 6.5 in 1985. It is estimated to decline to 5.9 in 1990 and 5.6 in 1995. ALOS for maternity patients in California is reported to be less than six hours. Open heart patients are discharged in one week.

The Rev. Charles Meyer is Assistant Vice President, Patient Services, St. David's Community Hospital in Austin, Tex.

A recent Austin heart transplant patient was discharged in 14 days. Cardiac catheterization may soon be an outpatient procedure. Chemotherapy is given in the physician's office or through a pump at home. Hospital occupancy rates, therefore, have declined from a national average of 170 admissions per 1,000 population in 1982, to 148 in 1985, with an estimated drop to 123 by 1995. If these trends continue, by 2000 there will be half the hospital census of 1975, resulting in thousands of empty beds, and 700 fewer hospitals by 1995.

- Between 1983 and 1984, the number of hospital employees dropped by 60,000, and continues to fall. Patients are having the same illnesses and similar treatments as before, but they are hospitalized less often, for shorter periods of time, with less staff available to care for them.

There are seven identifiable areas where changes have impacted healthcare delivery:

- 1. Financing.** Until 1984, Medicare bills were paid retrospectively by the government. A patient came into the hospital, ran up a bill, the hospital submitted it to Medicare which reimbursed reasonable costs. But there was no incentive to control expenditures, and costs skyrocketed. Congress then enacted legislation to change to a system of Diagnosis Related Groups (DRGs) under which hospitals would be paid *prospectively*.

Thus, when a Medicare patient is admitted, the hospital knows ahead of time that this broken hip will be allowed 14 days and pay \$7,400. Heart attacks are allowed four days and pay \$5,300. Carcinomas of the lung are allowed seven days and pay \$3,500.

In addition, each Medicare admission is reviewed by the government; if deemed unjustified, the hospital is denied reimbursement. If the hospital continues to accept “unjustified admissions” it can be further penalized by an intensified review and progressive sanctions.

Private insurance companies are also beginning to adopt this system but are requiring “pre-certs” — pre-admission screening to certify that hospitalization is warranted. Even so, insurance usually no longer pays for an overnight stay before surgery. Hospitals have responded by setting up their own system of pre-certification and have opened “same day surgery units” where patients check in at 5 a.m., have their lab tests, and go to surgery at 8 a.m.

can afford it?

by Charles Meyer

These changes in financing are not without benefit. Hospitals have become more fiscally prudent and responsible to public scrutiny. Medical practitioners have learned that medicine can treat more quickly and efficiently. Some conditions that heretofore "required" lengthy stays were based more on convenience than need. Consumers are learning that prevention of illness is in their own best personal and economic interest. But benefits must be balanced against burdens; and the burdens, as usual, are borne by those least able to support them.

When the DRG plan took effect, government planners estimated that 30% of U.S. hospitals would close. Between 1980-85, 54 hospitals did so each year.

And we have not begun to imagine the effect of the AIDS epidemic on healthcare financing and delivery of service. American Medical International, a for-profit corporation in Houston had to close down the Institute for Immunological Disorders for AIDS patients after one year due to the incredibly high cost of treatment. The Institute's losses last year were over \$8 million, \$5 million of which was due to providing care for indigent people.

2. Inpatient to outpatient. In order to control costs, meet changing requirements of Medicare and other insurers, and better utilize facilities already in existence, hospitals are actively shifting from inpatient to outpatient admissions. In 1980, St. David's Community Hospital performed 50 outpatient and 600 inpatient surgeries a month. In 1985, there were 500 of each. By 1987, total outpatient procedures exceeded inpatient by 300. Nationwide, there were fewer inpatient days in 1985 than in any other year in the last 10 years.

We are performing surgical procedures today (cataracts and lens implants, D&C, breast, tissue and bone marrow biopsies, etc.) that five years ago were thought to be possible only through inpatient hospitalization.

A spin-off of the demand to cut costs by lowering the length of stay and discharging people sooner — "quicker and sicker" — is the burgeoning home health industry. Home care services (homemakers, 24-hour private duty nursing, nurse's aids, sitters, daily R.N. visits) are supporting the need for outpatient treatment, recuperative and rehabilitative care. Often these agencies are owned or operated by the hospitals themselves, as a way to recoup the

loss of revenue from the decreasing ALOS.

In addition, hospitals are diversifying into services/businesses such as fitness centers, sports medicine programs, birthing centers, day surgery, senior services, durable medical equipment, physician office practice management, property management, nursing homes, minor emergency centers ("Doc in a box"), psychiatric centers, and even catering enterprises from the hospital kitchen. Other innovative programs will develop as more inpatient beds remain empty.

3. Independent hospitals to multi-hospital systems. As with any other major industry, large companies are buying up small companies. Thus, many failing hospitals, especially in rural areas, are purchased by national healthcare chains to provide "feeders" to their larger units, or to become specialized units such as nursing homes or recuperative and rehab centers, which receive discharged patients from the larger hospital.

Traditional advantages of acquisition apply to the healthcare industry as well. Multi-hospital systems can negotiate better purchase prices for supplies, or even buy and/or manage their own supply company to control costs at the front end. Money for renovation, new facilities, and high technology can be obtained at substantially lower interest rates when sought for many hospitals by a system. Management practices may be more consistently controlled by a system that can assure adherence to policy by bringing in a new manager from another corporate hospital. Diversification of services is more practicable at the national level than the local one.

But the down side of multi-management also applies. Such hospitals may be less sensitive to local community needs or styles of doing business. Corporate boards in Memphis, St. Louis and New York respond more slowly to local requests so that the hospital with a local board of directors may have a competitive edge in fast corporate decision making. Management may be handled more efficiently, or at least more sensitively, by a local rather than a regional or national vice president.

4. Technology. The peculiarly American fascination with technology has led to rapid advancements in medical treatment from lithotripters to magnetic resonance imagers and lasers. Americans expect and demand high tech treatment as a part of the medical armamentarium. They expect it

miraculously to provide diagnosis and cure, and are willing to pay any price for it, if the percentage of our GNP spent on such treatment is any indication.

In 1967 the United States spent 6.4% of the GNP on healthcare. The 1987 rate was near 11% — over one billion dollars a day — and the figure is projected to reach 12% by 1995. Canada spends about 8.5% and Great Britain 5.5% of their respective GNPs on healthcare — and our mortality and morbidity statistics per population are nearly identical. A large part of the higher cost of American healthcare can be attributed to equipment that is technically sophisticated, extremely expensive and rapidly obsolete.

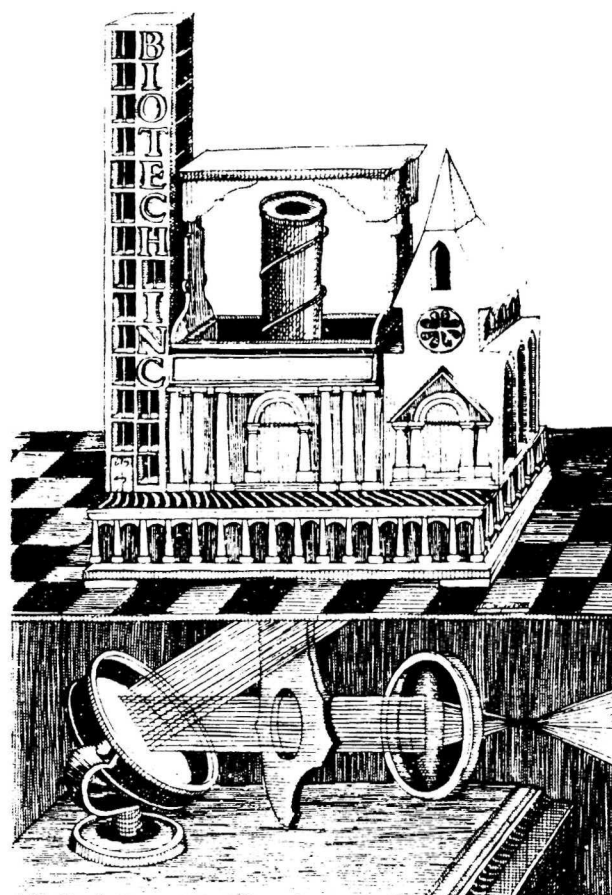
A rather insidious ramification of increased technology is that it prolongs the dying process. Since 80% of deaths occur in healthcare institutions, Americans now stand an 80% chance that their death will be decisional rather than natural. Someone, probably in an ER or ICU, will have to make a decision whether to withdraw or withhold life support. Hopefully the patient will have voiced a preference or signed a Living Will to indicate how much extraordinary technology ought to be used.

5. Medical practice. Over the past 30 years medical practice has shifted from an emphasis on the community to the individual. Treatments and preventative programs such as immunization, refrigeration, and environmental health precautions, all of which focused on treating large numbers of people, have given way to CAT and MRI scans, cardiac catheterization and transplantation, hyperbaric oxygen chambers and lithotripters, all of which are focused, at high cost, on treating one individual.. As much money was spent to make one artificial heart as was spent to rid the world of smallpox. The family doctor has been replaced by an internist and several "Specialists."

In addition to the move from community to specialized, individual treatment, the high technology and business orientation of modern medicine no longer attracts the independent entrepreneur. In fact, it is estimated that by the year 2000, 80% of physicians will be salaried — by HMOs, PPOs, or other groups of physicians and other healthcare purveyors in joint ventures to capture their share of the patient market.

Indicative of the change in practice is the present severe nursing shortage across the country. Women and men may be reacting to the type of pay and hours offered, the depth of training and responsibility required to perform well, and the kind of nursing they will have to practice (minimum contact, maximum efficiency), by staying away from nursing schools in droves.

As American medical practice shifts from a service to a



business ethic, patients can expect to come to physicians and hospitals for treatment rather than care.

6. Age. We are currently witnessing The Greying of America, i.e., When the Baby Boomers Hit Golden Pond. At the beginning of this century the average lifespan was 47 years; today it is 75 to 80. The population of persons over 65 doubled between 1950 and 1980, and will do so again by 2030 when over a fifth of the nation will be over 65. Sociologists are now referring to the young old, the old, and the very old (over 90) as new classifications for aging persons.

And yet, only one third of medical schools offer specialties in geriatrics and only 2% of students specialize in that field. Medical schools are also still focusing on treatment of acute illness rather than the chronic illness doctors will face in their future patients.

As illness tends to be postponed to later and later ages, patients often present multiple problems with ensuing complications that may not be covered by the DRG system. Patients are older and sicker, and require more care and observation — all this in a time of financial constraint and tighter staffing.

Several governmental responses will probably be forthcoming. Medicare will be adjusted so that recipients will

receive benefits in proportion to their income, be required to pay a higher deductible, and meet a needs test to receive benefits. Also, because 70-80% of Medicare is spent in the last year of the patient's life, there will be government pressure to limit care, ration high technology, and perhaps even define quality of life.

7. Competition and marketing. As government regulation has diminished, healthcare purveyors have invested heavily in marketing their services and allowing the marketplace to determine which of them will remain in business. An unfortunate result of this trend is a capitulation to the business ethic, where the patient is a "product."

The pendulum is already beginning to swing back, however. Hospital "guest relations" programs, modeled after the hotel industry, are burgeoning in an attempt to treat "customers" well so that they will provide return business to the institution. Healthcare providers are beginning to see (or remember) that patients come to their building not just for treatment but for care.

Guidelines for the future

In order to prepare for the current and coming changes in healthcare delivery in this country, the following guidelines may be helpful.

- **Don't get sick.** Although facetiously stated, this admonition is quite seriously given. Money invested in prevention earns high interest in both quality and quantity of life. For example, it is estimated that for every \$1 spent in prenatal care, \$3 are saved in Intensive Care Nursery services.

Diet and exercise are the most obvious factors over which we have control in disease prevention, and the last ones people want to change. If "the body is the temple of the spirit" it may be important to do more careful temple-tending. Decrease your cholesterol intake. Lower caffeine and sugar intake. Walk, run, jog, swim for 15 minutes a day (preferably under a physician's supervision.) Learn to manage stress levels at work and home. Have a periodic physical. Wear seat belts. Stop smoking.

- **Review health insurance plans.** Has your policy kept up with the changes mentioned here? One woman had to pay for her entire regimen of outpatient chemotherapy because her insurance, an old policy, only covered the treatment as an inpatient procedure, which was not permitted by the doctor or the hospital.

Is pre-certification required? By whom? What limits are included in the policy? Is it affected by DRG-like rulings? Does it cover outpatient surgery, home care, durable medical equipment? At what levels? What procedures now must be done in outpatient centers to be covered? How does the

policy interface with Medicare?

Many hospitals now offer special programs for senior citizens. St. David's Prime Time program, for instance, offers free insurance review, as well as assistance in filling out the maze of Medicare forms. Availing oneself of such assistance is also a good way to visit the hospital before its services are needed.

- **Learn and lobby.** Stay informed about the healthcare decisions being made by local hospitals, and HMO's, as well as by state and federal governments. It is no longer possible to be an uninterested bystander in this field. At some point, everyone will have a personal, vested interest in type of coverage, length of stay, quality of care delivered.

Alternative healthcare delivery systems are already being considered by private and government groups. A letter to the editor in the *New England Journal of Medicine* from physicians at Case Western Reserve School of Medicine (10/22/87) indicates a movement for change from within the medical profession itself:

The only reasonable solution to current problems is a unitary, national system . . . A national system could help us deal with such neglected issues as the maldistribution of medical resources, the declining quality of care to the urban poor, and the cost of medical education. It is time to address . . . national health insurance and a national health service and to debate their relative merits.

The national church also has a responsibility to be a part of this debate. Stand on your pallet and talk.

- **Modify expectations.** The seven changes discussed above have forever altered the way healthcare is delivered, and are only the first volley of the coming revolution in American medicine. At the same time, a major shift is occurring from paternalism to patient autonomy; a change from being taken care of, to taking care of ourselves; from being told, to making informed choices. As limits are placed on use of technology, and healthcare resources are rationed, patients and families will be required to rely more and more on each other.

Lowered expectations of physicians and hospitals will help patients accommodate to short stays, low staffing, restricted reimbursement, co-payments, rationed availability of technology and the idiosyncrasies of a national health service.

Churches can be valuable resources for establishing supportive relationships with persons receiving extended home care, or who are recuperating in intermediate care facilities because they no longer qualify for acute care inpatient re-

imbursement.

If we are not careful, by the time we are in need of our pallet, it may not be there at all, or we may not qualify to lie on it, and there may be no one around to help us when we do.

- **Educate and model.** Coffee hours, study groups, adult classes, special sessions, all are possible means through which the church can educate its people regarding these changes and their impact on individuals and the community. Hospitals and other healthcare purveyors usually have speaker's bureaus to provide information about any of these areas of interest. Chaplains or other hospital personnel can provide a particularly Christian perspective on the dilemmas facing us in the years ahead.

Churches need to create a parish system to support parishioners who are in various levels of the healthcare system, from illness to inpatient/outpatient to home care to when they return to the community.

Lift another's pallet and help.

- **Die at home.** As technology becomes increasingly able to provide artificial life support systems for dying persons, more and more deaths will become "decisional" rather than "natural." Someone will have to decide when to withdraw or withhold respirators, artificial hydration and artificial nutrition. New definitions of suicide and death will have to be developed. Thus it is important to make wishes known regarding extraordinary interventions, life supports, and terminal care. There may even come a time when patients with terminal episodes will no longer be admitted to acute care facilities simply to die.

Sign a Living Will. Talk with your significant other and the religious community concerning your feelings about dying and life support. Then, get a Durable Power of Attorney which designates someone to make healthcare decisions when you become incompetent. Make funeral arrangements. Talk with clergy about the service. Decide about organ donation (many states now have "required request" laws for cadaveric organs). Consider the emotional, financial and social cost of prolonging death.

The AIDS mortality rate, projected to reach 300,000 by 1995, will force more systems to support the development of home death. These numbers will overwhelm the current healthcare system. Alternatives to hospitalization will certainly include hospice, home healthcare and other supportive arrangements for dying outside healthcare facilities.

Die on your pallet at home.

- **Take up your pallet and walk.** Politically, the future of American healthcare is in our voting hands. Unless a national health service is developed, there will evolve a two

tiered system of healthcare, one for persons with money or insurance, the other for the one third of the population who are medically indigent.

As we are confronted with more autonomy, we will begin to see physicians not as authorities but as consultants in our treatment. We will have to become active, even aggressive, partners in healthcare decision making, carrying our own pallet or arranging for a supportive community to do it with, and eventually for us.

Though more and more decisions will be demanded of us, nowhere in our society are we taught *how* to decide. The church must be a role model of prudent, caring, ethical healthcare decision making. Whether facing the dilemma of over-the-counter abortion pills, gene manipulation, organ transplants, or refusal of treatment for a terminal illness, the church must bring its system of ethical obligations to bear on public policy. Otherwise the alternative will be a healthcare system driven entirely by business ethics and pecuniary interest.

One thing is clear: Choices will have to be made. We can make them now or we can make them later. If we make them now, we can be assured of making some mistakes as we stumble with our pallet in hand down the road of equitable access and resource allocation. If we make them later, we can be assured that others will be making them for us, and we may end up with no pallet at all. ■

Consultation to lobby in Detroit

The Consultation, a coalition of 11 independent interest groups within the Episcopal Church, will present a collective voice and a progressive platform during the 1988 General Convention in Detroit, as it did in 1985 in Anaheim. The Coalition raises social and economic justice issues to help shape the future mission of the church, according to the Rev. Barbara C. Harris, executive director of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, convener of the group.

One of the key areas member organizations will be monitoring (related to several stories in this issue of THE WITNESS) is the report of the Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health. It deals with human sexuality (including family planning, pre-post- and extra-marital relationships, and homosexuality); AIDS, abortion, bio-ethical issues, the aging, and institutional racism. With regard to the latter, THE WITNESS will examine in its May issue how racism impacts church and society — six years after the Episcopal Church Conference on Racism.

Also related to this issue of THE WITNESS, the Episcopal Women's Caucus will be working on General Convention resolutions concerning sexual abuse, domestic violence, hate crimes, the Civil Rights canon, and welfare reform.

The Consultation will meet April 21 and 22 in Philadelphia to round out its platform.

ECPC dinner will hear noted actress

Vinie Burrows, internationally acclaimed actress and activist will bring her one-woman show documenting the struggles of oppressed people to the Episcopal Church Publishing Company awards dinner on Tuesday, July 5 during General Convention.

Burrows, a veteran of seven Broadway shows, several off-Broadway productions and international festivals in Paris and Berlin, has conceived, produced, and directed seven solo productions to date. She has appeared on more than 2,000 campuses in the United States, Europe and Asia. Two years ago Actors Equity Association honored her with the Paul Robeson Award in recognition of her commitment to human rights and her use of the arts to create understanding and respect for diversity.

Vinie Burrows is also a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) permanent representative to the United Nations for the Women's International Democratic Federation. She is a founding member of Women for Racial and Economic Equality and helped organize the UN Decade for Women's final conference in Kenya in 1985.

Her solo production "From Swords to Plowshares" links peace and poetry; "Africa Fire" combines African myths, songs and folk tales; and "Sister, Sister" describes the struggles and importance of women worldwide.

Burrows, who creates much of her own material, also acts as her own manager, carrying a portable computer on the road to handle bookings.

She told Judith Green, Mercury News Theater writer, that her understanding about the impoverishment of women and children worldwide enriches her as an actress, giving her depth and compassion. "For example, when I play Medea, an exile, I see Namibian women and Palestinian women as well. Also, Medea has a very modern speech about the experience of women who were, in classical Greece, considered the property of their husbands. Three thousand years ago, and some of the problems were still the same!"

ECPC will present awards for outstanding contributions to the social mission of the church during the dinner, in the name of three noted Episcopal social activists. They are William Scarlett, former Bishop of Missouri; Vida Scudder, educator, organizer and social reformer; and William Spofford, Sr., former editor of THE WITNESS. Award winners and further details about the dinner will be announced in future issues of THE WITNESS. ■



Vinie Burrows

Star-spangled suffering

by Mary Lou Suhor

The longed for moment had finally arrived. I had taken the FAA skydiving course and at 3,000 feet, static line hooked, was being summoned by Pete, my instructor, to leave the Cessna as “Jumper No. 3.”

Winds aloft were stronger than I had anticipated, and I leaned forward to maintain my balance, fearing to be blown prematurely from my narrow perch. I worked my feet along the tiny ledge, my hands along the wing strut. Now, thrusting my right foot into the air and balancing on my left, I awaited Pete’s command.

“Go!”

I yelled, “Feet, hands,” jumping and spreading my legs, pushing off with my hands, then “arch,” — curving my back — “1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000 check.” In five seconds, if all went well, I was to be dangling under a red and white rectangular parachute, without twists in the lines, the slider just above my head. If not, 21 seconds remained to self-activate the emergency chute.

There was no time for fear — too much to do up there. After determining my rig was in order, I was overcome with wonder and exhilaration as I took in the scene below — a stunning autumn landscape of oranges, browns, gold, and green. I was drifting over some of the most fertile acres of God’s creation — Pennsylvania farmland.

Turning the chute toward the airport landing area, I thought, Jeannette Piccard must have experienced such moments in her balloon. Though the descent was brief, these were unforgettable, heady moments for this child of the Depression, fulfilling dreams of

youth. To fly a plane was my ambition since I was 12, but lessons were out of the question in a large family struggling for subsistence and a good education. Now, having solo’d in a Cessna and experienced the joys of flight, it was karma as much as anything that found me pursuing my avocation with the same elan that I pursue my vocation of journalism.

I checked the landing area — right on target. At 15 feet I gave a mighty tug on the toggles to stop my “wing” from flying.

Thud!

“Uhh-hhh. The jump was terrific; gotta work on those landings,” I mused.

I had landed hard and flat, first on my feet, then backwards on my “arse,” instead of gently rolling into a parachute-landing-fall.

“Jumper No. 3, are you all right?” asked the voice on my headset. I waved, but remained on my back, thinking I just had the wind knocked out of me.

Blessed with a high tolerance of pain, I was able to carry the gear to the hangar, collect my solo certificate and log book, and drive the 50 minute trip home from the airport.

Three hours later, the situation had shifted dramatically. Unable to walk, I was assisted by a neighbor to the nearest hospital emergency room. Somewhere through anxiety attacks, I heard a nurse say, “You have a compressed fracture of the L-1 vertebrae and will be in the hospital 10 days or so. Since you can move your fingers and toes we don’t expect complications. We’ll give you a morphine shot now for the

pain.”

“I guess I’m lucky I didn’t break my back,” I offered.

“Well, basically, that’s what you’ve done. You’ve broken your back.”

“Oh, dear God!”

With those words I entered the world of pain, interrupted only by morphine shots every four hours.

Having been absent from that world since an operation in 1973, I tried to surrender to the healing process — physically and spiritually.

But severe back pain is not necessarily an arena where logic prevails. Early on one can just lie there and suffer, like a wounded animal.

Excruciating pain. Muscle spasms. Suppressed cries and groans. A most cowardly response. Wasn’t I the one who had written about political prisoners who suffered electric shocks and torture? About mothers giving birth under subhuman conditions in Third World countries? What was this compared to that? My poet-brother’s words came to mind: “Our star spangled sorrows are in the kindergarten of the world’s woes.” But my theology had not caught up with my condition. I could hardly wait for the four hours to tick off to get the next shot of blessed, temporary relief.

The pattern was predictable. Stabbing pain. Reach for the triangle on a trapeze overhead. Squeeze it and hang on for dear life as the chain links rattle. Check the clock. Two more hours to go until another pain killer. Try to think of something else. Try to pray; connect somehow in the “Mystical Body” with a sister undergoing torture — that she might find courage



through my pain, that I might find salvation through hers.

I try to say a few words to my roommate but am in too much pain to communicate on any meaningful level.

Awareness of the gravity of my condition arrives with the dawn. I can't get up without assistance and only with great pain can I transfer back and forth to a portable commode. How would I ever be able to function when I returned from the hospital? Would my insurance cover all this? Would we make the December deadline for *THE WITNESS*? What is God trying to tell me through this experience? Depression sets in.

A medical team comes for my roommate to take her to dialysis. She carries a rosary her daughter gave her. "I'll trade prayers with you," I say, waving goodbye.

"You got it," she waved back.

But prayers don't come easily. Perhaps one must be content to let the pain be the prayer at this point.

Within a short time, my roommate becomes more real to me, between our bouts with pain and our sharing. She is reacting adversely to medication, and

while I sleep, she copes with night fever. The next morning she cries:

"Whoa-sa!"

It was a word I was to hear often from her. She is stricken in the bathroom and can't leave on her own. I ring for help.

Today she has spiked a day fever and nurses arrive to wrap her in an ice blanket.

Now God has caught my attention another way. "No, not Elaine!" I cry and pray a little less abstractly.

Her fever abates.

My spasms attack and the chain above my bed rattles as I grab and hang on for dear life.

"You OK, Mary Lou?"

"Whoa-sa," I answer and she laughs.

Having found a common language to express a common pain, we communicate on a deeper level. She asks, "If somehow you knew about all the pain following the parachute jump, would you do it all over again?"

"That's a tough question, but I'll try to answer it with another. If you were given a car and you knew there was a possibility that you might have an accident or even be killed in it, would

you give the car back instead of driving it and enjoying it?"

"That actually happened to me," she said. "I had a car accident, then had a premonition I'd have another if I drove on a certain day. But I did it anyway — and had another accident."

We laughed. Our bonding grew over the days. Her family "adopted" me, and I marveled at their closeness and caring.

Several healing days later, physical therapy brought me to where I could walk trussed in a back brace — supported by a walker — and lie down with greater ease, but I still could not sit with any appreciable tolerance. Worse, now I had to wean myself away from drug dependency and there was no easy way. "Take the pain," the doctor and nurses advised.

A cinch, I have a high tolerance for pain, I thought. Horsefeathers! Another descent into Dante's inferno.

This time, a brother in an accompanying ward ministers to me. One night my sleep is broken by his voice yelling, "Fire, fire." Then the sound of footsteps running down the hall. Silence. A few minutes later the same voice, "There's no fire. I'm locked in my room, but there's no fire." More footsteps. The night nurse came in to reassure me. "There's an alcohol and drug rehab unit nearby and someone just hallucinated; but all is well."

Now I join a *community* of brothers and perhaps sisters trying to kick drugs in the next ward. Pain spasms hit and I grab the triangle. The chain rattles for all of us.

When I awake, Elaine is getting ready for dialysis. "I envy you," she says. "You were just sleepin' aback." We chat as I drink prune juice and scoop raisin bran from the bowl on my chest. "And I envy you your regular trips to the bathroom," I counter.

Not even the psalms are bringing me

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Executive Council in Central America Nicaragua: On retreads and prayers

by Susan E. Pierce

The sun set in a blaze of gold and red every night behind the mountains that ring Guatemala City. The 10th floor balcony of the hotel allowed an unobstructed view. Below, cars and trucks honked and screeched a counterpoint. In the color-coordinated, sanitary hotel room that could have been in St. Louis or Boston, a Presidential press conference was on TV, via satellite from the States. Ronald Reagan was explaining to reporters how important it was to support the “freedom fighters” in Nicaragua. I switched to another station — a young Judy Garland was leaning against a hay wagon, head thrown back, singing “Somewhere over the rainbow.” There was fantasy on all channels.

I was in Guatemala for a meeting of the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, the first held outside the United States. Before arriving in Guatemala, I had spent four days in Nicaragua, traveling with Council members Nell Braxton Gibson and the Rt. Rev. Furman Stough, and the Rev. David Perry, a staff member from the Episcopal Church Center. Groups like ours had gone out to visit every Episcopal diocese in the Caribbean and Central and South America, and came together in Guatemala City to share their experiences.

It proved to be a fascinating, frustrating journey. Even the briefest trip through Central America makes it clear that the truth lies somewhere between Oz and Kansas, and the reality in Central America involves a welter of local politics, superpower manipulations, and the weary, serious task of survival.

“In as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these . . . you have done it unto me.” Matthew 25:40

The Rt. Rev. Sturdie Downs, Bishop of the Episcopal Church of Nicaragua, deftly spun a lug wrench as he replaced a bald, cracked tire on the diocesan-owned Toyota Land Cruiser with a spare that was marginally less battered. Bishop Downs was taking his four U.S. Episcopalian visitors to the Department of Matagalpa, two hours northeast of Managua, to visit two parishes.

The decrepit tire was left at a roadside repair shop, whose sign said, “Se Vulcaniza.” Since the United States, once Nicaragua’s largest trading partner, has imposed a total trade embargo, the entire country moves on retreads and prayers. Crammed along with us in the back of the Land Cruiser was a plastic bucket full of diesel fuel. For those lucky enough to have a vehicle, chances of finding gasoline were slight — the ration was only 17 gallons per month — and the chances of finding diesel even slighter. As we bounced along the potholed road, Downs said cheerfully, “Matagalpa is a war zone, you know. I hope we don’t hit a mine!” I moved an extra inch away from the diesel fuel.

It was apparent that Nicaragua is a country operating under incredible duress, trying to rebuild after decades of exploitation by the Somoza dictatorship, and wracked by the *contra* war and the trade embargo. Symbolic of how the long struggle has severely taxed the country’s resources are the overgrown vacant lots and shells of ru-

ined buildings found all over downtown Managua — the still-unrepaired damage of the devastating 1972 earthquake. The ruins are a legacy of the Somoza regime — he and his National Guard diverted millions of dollars of earthquake relief from abroad into their own pockets.

The Episcopal Church in Nicaragua evolved from the Anglican Church, which came with British colonists who settled in the Atlantic, or Miskito, Coast region. Anglicanism spread to central and eastern Nicaragua, but remained mostly a colonial religion, the choice of diplomats and multi-national executives. Downs told us that by 1950, the church had become so racist and divided that the Anglican bishop at the time shut all the churches down. Many congregations re-formed as the Union Church until the 1960s, when a petition was presented to join the Episcopal Church.

As a result, the church is relatively young in most of the country. “There are about 12,000 Episcopalians in Nicaragua, and about 600-700 in Managua,” said Downs — small numbers when compared with millions of Roman Catholics, the dominant religion. A young, energetic man, Downs, an Atlantic Coast native, is fluent in both Spanish and English. Travel is difficult, but he said he tries to reach as many churches and missions in the region as possible.

Skilled at stewardship, Downs sent each of us to attend Sunday services at different churches around Managua. I went to Todos Los Santos at the Diocesan Center, within walking distance of the Intercontinental Hotel. My

host was the Rev. Ennis Duffis, another Atlantic Coast native who, luckily for me, spoke English. (Like many U.S. travelers, I was continually embarrassed at my inability to speak my hosts' language, while they often spoke mine easily.)

The conversation at the church that morning was about the economy — the main topic of interest all throughout our visit. A week before we arrived, the Nicaraguan government had revalued the country's currency, the *cordoba*, in an effort to deal with runaway inflation caused by the war and the U.S. trade embargo. Now \$1,000 of the old money was worth \$100 new. The exchange rate for U.S. dollars had gone from 70 *cordobas* to the dollar to 10.25. My first night, when I ordered a bottle of local beer at the hotel, I was shocked to discover the cost was \$8. Prices in the street turned out to be little better.

The congregation at Todos Los Santos was chiefly women and children, which was the case in almost every church we visited. Annette, a parishioner and student at the seminary at the Diocesan Center, gave me a quick tour and then stopped to talk to a group of women waiting for the service to start. The prices were so high, everyone agreed. Nothing to buy, except where black market goods were sold. Someone said there had been a big demonstration at the Mercado Oriental — people were angry at the black marketeers and the outrageous prices they charged. The women laughed when I told them how much a beer was at my hotel. "You'll have to drink water," they said.

People kept arriving all during the service. The gasoline shortage and the scarcity of public transportation made getting to church a victory in itself — a constant sight was long lines of people waiting patiently at bus stops. Duffis explained that the church's location

was inconvenient for many parishioners, because it had been built in what was originally an upper-middle class area, and, "Many of our people don't come from here."

The homily Duffis preached that morning touched on the economic turmoil. He talked of Jesus going into the wilderness and being tempted by the devil. "Times are difficult now, but don't be tempted to take advantage of your neighbor," Duffis told the congregation.

After the service, I spoke to a woman from the Atlantic Coast who said, "People are making a lot of fuss about the new money, but I think it will pass. The government is taking care of those who don't have enough."

As people were leaving, Duffis distributed rice and beans, surplus from the food donated by an ecumenical group to help feed seminarians at the Center. One woman dropped a few beans from her bag. When her daughter saw this, she ran back to carefully pick them up, one by one.

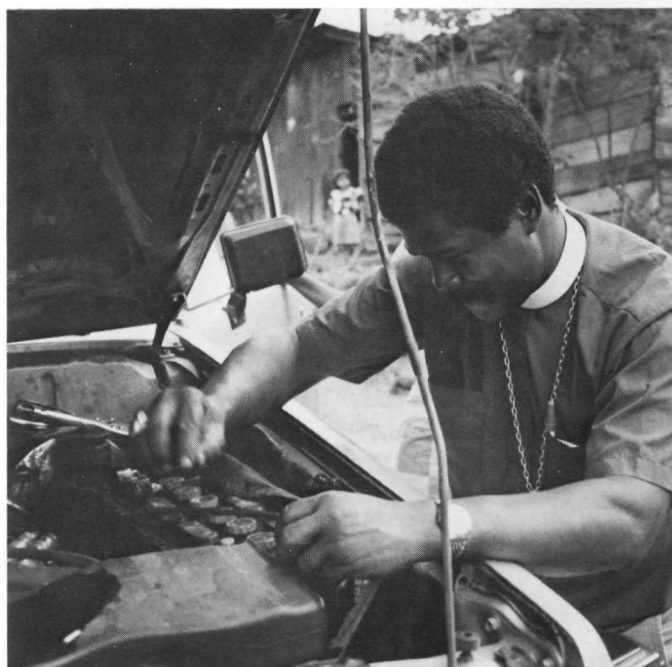
Later that day, the whole group went to visit a church in Barrio Sierra Maestra, a neighborhood in Managua that has lost more people in the *contra* war than any other barrio in the city.

As we jolted and bumped down the rutted dirt streets, we saw rows and rows of Sandinista flags hanging overhead. "The flags mean a funeral. There is a funeral held every Saturday and Sunday," our driver Alvaro, a deacon and schoolteacher, explained.

The Church of Santa Maria Virgen in Sierra Maestra was a small wooden house. Women and children filled the rough-hewn benches and stood against the walls. The little church was filled with music as the congregation sang throughout the service, using songs from the *Misa Nicaraguense*. The altar was surrounded by flowers, and a statue of Mary hanging on the wall smiled at the congregation. The smell of wood smoke scented the air.

Downs invited us to speak to the congregation, and each of us tried to convey how grateful we were to be there and how we had come to learn from them. After the service, Downs asked if anyone else wanted to speak. A woman came forward and said quietly, "We are happy to have you visit us. Now we know that the church in the United States is in solidarity with the people of Nicaragua."

As we sat in the tiny yard behind the church, suddenly plates of rice and



The Rt. Rev. Sturdie Downs, Bishop of Nicaragua, ministers to the diocesan jeep's ailing battery.

meat appeared. Meat was 20 *cordobas* a pound, and when the standard minimum wage was 550 *cordobas* (\$54 U.S.) a month, this was a considerable gift. When someone dropped a plate of food there were universal, but quickly stifled, gasps of dismay. As the sun set, darkness fell quickly. Like most areas in Managua, the barrio experienced almost continual electric blackouts and scheduled water cutoffs, due to the oil shortage and frequent *contra* attacks on power stations.

Upon our return to the hotel, Stough talked about his morning visit to a church in Puerto Sandino, a port city where people have work when ships dock, and there are very few ships these days. "I saw some kids at a table with a pile of something white in front of them. I looked closer and saw it was rice — they were cleaning it one grain at a time."

Stough not only met with average people, but had an encounter with the famous as well. Our hotel was the place where foreign and Nicaraguan dignitaries often met, and Stough found himself on the elevator with Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto, a Maryknoll priest. D'Escoto noticed Stough's clericals and they chatted briefly. As D'Escoto was leaving, he asked, "Bishop, will you pray for us?" Stough replied, "We pray for you every day. Will you please pray for us?"

Even a quick visit to Nicaragua gives a sense of how the war casts its shadow across every aspect of life. Billboards exhorted, "We will never surrender," men and women in uniform were everywhere, anti-aircraft cannon dotted the ridges of hills. Since the 19th century, the U.S. military has been in and out of Nicaragua like a revolving door. The revolution against Somoza lasted from 1977 to 1979 and the *contra* war has been dragging on since 1981.

Scars of war are everywhere —

buildings pocked with bullets holes, people on the street in wheelchairs or crutches, an empty shirt sleeve or pant leg. The Sandinista government offers social services as it can, providing clinics, schools, literacy training, but 65% of the economy is diverted to the war, and resources are strained to the limit. Downs does what he can to supplement the government programs and help alleviate the hardship. Women at a church had asked one of our group for help in getting children's clothing and a set of curtains for the church. Downs, when he heard about the request, said, "Yes, the children must have clothes. But for curtains they can raise the money themselves." He added, with a smile, "They would not have asked such a thing if I had been there — they know my position."

"I am sure that we are united to Christ in his servant ministry to the world. A ministry that understands that in today's world you don't just give a man a fish. Even teaching him how to fish isn't sufficient. He must be enabled to comprehend the importance of sharing the fish." The Rt. Rev. James H. Otley, Bishop of Panama.

We left at dawn to make the trip to Matagalpa. We left the hot, dry brown hills and fields around Managua behind and traveled up into the cool, lush green of the mountain forests. In the town of Matagalpa, our guide was Father Garcia, a former Roman Catholic Delegate of the Word who had left to become a deacon in the Episcopal Church. Garcia's nickname was "Monseñor" because of his dignified bearing and penchant for always wearing a cassock. Clergy in Central America often dispense with clericals — wearing vestments in the muggy heat quickly becomes uncomfortable. A native of Matagalpa, Garcia shared the lot of the people.

When he read the lessons during the service, he read slowly, with many

pauses. "He doesn't have a lot of education," said Downs, "But he is a good man and he knows the people. If I send seminary graduates out here, they don't stay. I would rather lift up a man like him from the people."

The church of Espiritu Santo was in Barrio Sandino, which twisted its way up the side of a steep hill. Originally named Barrio Chorizo, it was a narrow place stuffed with houses. The church, in a small house donated by a parishioner, was basically four stucco walls and a tin roof. Frangipani hung from the altar; an embroidered banner, in English, said "God catches us all in his net"; and curtains, made of white plastic carefully trimmed and snipped to create a lacy border, hung over the benches that served as pews.

The second church we visited was Santa Maria Virgen in La Tuma, a tiny village in the mountains near Matagalpa, a coffee-growing region. We passed mules and horses laden with bags of coffee beans as we drove along the spine-shatteringly bumpy but mercifully unmined road to La Tuma. When we arrived, Garcia, who rode with us from town, went into the two-room cinderblock church building, grabbed a metal lid and began mightily banging on it with a stick to summon the parishioners. The church soon filled with children and a few women; because it was a weekday, most of the adults were working. Garcia apologized for what he felt was a poor showing, but Downs was pleased to see so many children. Like every other church we visited, the children knew the words to the hymns and chanted the responses. "Children are the hope of the church," said Downs. Sandinista patrols would pause outside the church to listen to the children's spirited singing.

We had to leave soon after but we could not say goodbye until a woman

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Counting the House

The Prayer Book Society, which bills itself as the largest lay organization in the Episcopal Church, not only has put lay deputies to the General Convention on notice, but it has managed to insult them in the bargain. The Society's president, a clergyman, alleges that many resolutions with extreme viewpoints are passed at the General Convention because "many of the laity attending don't fully understand the content or simply follow the directions of attending clergy." Most Episcopalians, he contends, are conservative traditionalists beset by a radical clergy.

In a recent press release decrying the lack of morality among the church's hierarchy, the Society has announced its intention to track and monitor the votes of bishops and deputies on key resolutions and other pieces of legislation at the General Convention. This will be done via a sophisticated computer program which the Society has developed. Their votes will then be reported to individual parishes, hometown newspapers, radio stations and television news departments. "It is important," PBS notes, "that those who vote radically are not allowed to hide within a faceless convention . . . that they understand when they return to their parishes, they will be held accountable by their friends, neighbors and families."

Can't you just see and hear it all now on the six o'clock news in

Podunk? "This, ladies and gentlemen, just in from Detroit, scene of the triennial gathering of Episcopal eagles. Jenny Chigger from the Church of St. Judas Iscariot in the Vale has disgraced her parish and diocese by voting for the radical idea that almost 10 years after its official adoption, everybody in the Episcopal church should worship from the same Book of Common Prayer. Chigger's vote will probably signal the exodus of hundreds more Podunk Episcopalians from the pews of this avant garde denomination which, according to one traditionalist organization, embraces immorality and other ecclesiastical monkey shines. More on Ms. Chigger's outrageous behavior at eleven. Join us then."

The Society charges that "in the past some very silly and heretical resolutions have passed the Convention because the leadership" (brainless as well as faceless, it would seem) "wanted to please one or more extremist elements." Well now, I've attended the last eight General conventions and can't recall much in the way of radical legislation, let alone heretical. "Silly," yes — like a resolution to deny ordination to homosexuals while continuing to ordain them anyhow — but "heretical," no.

While the Prayer Book Society is watching everybody else via their computers and roving television crews (smile, you're on candid camera), it

should be fun to watch the new 3-R bunch, Episcopalians United for Renewal, Revelation and Reformation. As reported earlier, this coalition opposes, among other things, the ordination of "practicing homosexuals and the normalization of homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle." If, as informed estimates suggest, as many as one in ten males (and a slightly less percentage of females) are homosexual in orientation, it would be interesting to know if Episcopalians United counts any gay men and lesbians on its board or among its membership.

According to the Prayer Book Society, the central question before the Detroit Convention will be a very simple one: "Will the House of Bishops and the leadership of the Episcopal Church be willing to take a firm stand on traditional moral values such as the sanctity of marriage, the separation of church and state and the divinity of Christ?" The church has already affirmed the first and somehow I thought the second was more of a political expediency, and the last a theological given.

With these two groups looking out for the interests of the church and everybody assured of back-home media exposure, we might see some interesting posturing as the House is counted. Counting the House is one thing, but the God of justice is the one to whom the House is ultimately accountable. ■

Call it not love

by Roberta Nobleman

At one point in his life, T. S. Eliot could not seem to put pen to paper and complained loud and long to all his friends. They consulted Homer Lane, the American analyst, who advised: "Tell your friend Eliot that all that's stopping him is his fear of putting anything down that is short of perfection. He thinks he's God!" At first Eliot was furious. But then he sat down and wrote "The Waste Land."

I can sympathize with Eliot because this story has been milling around inside of me for the last four or five years, needing to be written down "perfectly." When I told author Madeleine L'Engle, she advised me to put it into a disguise through another character and thus protect myself. It was good advice at the time. I was not ready to write my confessions.

One of the early church fathers said that Mary conceived through her right ear, and I do understand that because there is a voice right now telling me to write my story. And perhaps it is Mary's — the powerful Mary of the Magnificat — who sits beside me now as my sister, and guides my pen, as I tell the story of incest with my Dad when I was a child.

It all began when I was about 7 or 8 years old, in England where I was born. My mother was evacuated to Oxford during the war and my father was away fighting, so I did not know him at all until 1945 when he retired from the army and began to run a small

newsagent's store. My two brothers were born in quick succession. My mother was not well, but mostly I believe she was lonely and bored. So, on Wednesday evenings, she used to go to the movies alone, leaving the children with my Dad. Once my two little brothers were in bed, it all began and continued for about two years. Incest in a family rarely happens just once, for where sex is readily available at home, it's like drinking sea water — one is left with a raging thirst for more.

The key to all incest stories is secrecy. I was "Daddy's special girl" and this was "just between us"; besides, who was there to tell? Sex was never discussed in our house. I did not even know the name for what was happening to me, or even the parts of the body involved.

Church? Yes, I went to Sunday school. My mother went to church occasionally, my father never. But there I learned of a God who was also called Father, and I wasn't sure that I could trust Him either. I was sure that what Dad and I did in secret was dirty and wrong.

I used to have some comfort from a statue of Mary and I was envious of my Roman Catholic cousins. I remember looking longingly at those boxes that said "Confession," wishing that my church provided a little quiet place where you could "go tell." I know now, of course, that the average confessor of any denomination would be totally nonplussed in dealing with a little girl and her story of sexual abuse. And how do you tell father about father? He will probably tell you to con-

fess it to Father.

I do recall sitting on the beach one day with my school friend, and I finally blurted my secret out to her. But she said her big brother did that to her, too. So, with the wisdom of 10-year-olds, we both agreed that was the way men were, and you just had to put up with it. I think it was sharing with my friend and the fact that we both laughed about it that enabled me tell my mother . . . and the abuse stopped. My father was furious. I shall never forget the anger in his eyes. Years later I realized how brave my mother was because apparently she said that if he touched me again, she would go to the police.

His response was, "They'd never believe her; she's only a little girl." And my mom told him that in that case, she would leave him and take the children with her. She didn't. She hung in there too.

Adolescence came and went. I don't believe it was any more traumatic for me than for anyone else except that my parish priest refused to let me be confirmed with the rest of the girls because I asked the wrong questions and refused to accept all the catechism! I was confirmed finally at the age of 17, but still questioning, as I do now, why my church seemed to view only men as made in God's image. I could never understand that the normative human experience is male. If I was a "son," or part of the "brotherhood of mankind," I certainly didn't have much of a say in that system. Even as a teenager I had a deep sense that somehow the Feminine Principle had been repressed and held down, used and abused in

Roberta Nobleman is an actress noted for her performances of *Julian* and *Solo Flight*. She is currently appearing in a new offering, *All That I Am*.



The author circa age 8

much the same way as I had been held down and forced to do things that were distasteful and frightening to me, denying my full humanity.

In all the years that followed I pushed the incest into the darkest corner of my soul. It was only recently when I started working on the one-woman show I perform as Julian of Norwich that healing began. Julian's understanding that "as truly as God is our Father, so truly God is our Mother" put me in touch with my deepest self — the Christ within me. I had already memorized St. Luke's Gospel and was acting it out all over the country, and this great cloud of witnesses for St. Luke's story spoke to me too! Simeon's words to Mary — the sword of the Spirit piercing Mary's heart laying bare the secret thoughts of many; the woman with the issue of blood who dragged her shame-filled body with its "tainted sexuality" from one doctor to the next for 12 years; or the bent-over woman whom Jesus calls from the women's section of the synagogue to come and stand in their midst and praise God; Mary Magdalene, sniffing out her perfumes and oils even through her tears and making her way to the tomb; not to mention all the nameless women who cared for children and cooked meals and scrubbed

the floors of these early church homes, making it possible for the Gospel to spread.

Lastly I must mention the Rev. Jeanette Piccard, whom I am privileged to portray in the play "Solo Flight." Her persistent question, "Are women people?" calls forth obedience to the Holy Spirit that makes all else pale. Playing Jeannette has helped me find Roberta.

Four years ago I found myself a spiritual director who refused to accept that "it" (I couldn't even say the word "incest" in those days) had not hurt me. I was in therapy for two years. I think I can now call myself a survivor, not a victim, and it's a title I wear with humility and pride. The breakthrough came for me in January 1986, when after months of feeling cold and dry and what the mystics call the dark night of the soul, I finally sat down one Sunday after Eucharist and wrote my father a 12-page letter pouring out all the anger and bitterness of 33 years.

The next day I went to see "The Color Purple." That made me angry too, because the book was so truthful and simple and feminine. The film was patriarchal-Hollywood, in spite of the valiant acting by Whoopi Goldberg and others. So for Alice Walker, for Celie, *I stuck the letter in the mailbox*, and a great sense of exhilaration and release went through me: This is for you, too, all my sister and brother survivors, I thought.

Since then when I have shared my story in public and been approached by certain people afterwards, I have only to look at their faces to know why they come to me. The bonding between us must be something akin to holocaust survivors, or children of alcoholics.

It was the beginning of the prodigal daughter's journey home; I had come to my senses. I had said "No" to all the

self-abuse, the loneliness, the terror.

This past year has been the most extraordinary of my whole life. There have been two trips to England. The first time I was not able to mention the letter. It lay between myself and my Dad like a great unspoken *hurt*. But in the following trip Dad and I did speak of the incest. It is very hard for abusers to do anything but deny what they have done, but forgiveness can happen when the humanity between people is restored. To my surprise I found that all the anger had drained out of me, like the pus from a very old wound. I found myself looking at my father with mercy not with blame. Sexuality is such a mystery — bound up with I love you, I hate you; you attract me, you repel me; I need you, I despise



The author portraying Jeanette Piccard in *Solo Flight*.

you and, where families are concerned, the bonding of like and like is often overwhelming — my Dad and I are alike in so many ways.

I want to tell you what a great guy my Dad is, how proud I am of his courage and good humor, how funny he is, and warm and optimistic, how we used to act out plays together and he would write the most wonderful poems; how much I understand that the incest came out of his own terrible childhood, years of fighting in the Army, awful frustration and boredom when I was a child and he was trying to be a businessman, and also a real fear of death.

So why am I writing this? Because incest is a *sin*. It hurts deeply, tearing great holes in the fabric of any family life, creating patterns of behavior that make Jesus weep. Even as I write these words my fears drop away. One of these days I see my Dad and I holding one another, having a good laugh together, with nothing between us but the love God intended between father and daughter.

Jesus understood through knowing the Father, that in truth those who crucified him “knew not what they did.” The sins of the fathers and mothers are passed down from generation to generation. Everywhere the ceremony of innocence is betrayed. Along with letting go of the anger comes the release of the blame, to oneself and to the other.

It’s part of a life-long process. I’m still very new at this and understanding that the only justice/judgment resides with God alone is a fearful thing. Purification fills us with terror, as in the call of Isaiah, the call of Mary. Acceptance of the call is a terrible responsibility.

There is no hierarchy of suffering — this is not even something that happens just to women. When I finally shared my story with my own parish

family (it came out of my struggle as a lay reader with sexist language), a fellow parishioner told his story of sexual abuse when he was a child. A man had taken him up on the roof of the apartment building where he lived, assaulted him, and then held him over the edge of the roof making him promise never to tell — or else — a real pinnacle of the Temple experience.

When I performed “Solo Flight” at a seminary and we discussed afterwards whether Eucharist could ever be an act of “tender, loving defiance,” I shared my story. The only Black seminarian came up to me afterwards to say that he too shared “my secret.” It was the first time he had told anyone, and he said, “I’m going to be ordained in six weeks, how can I be a priest like this?” I hugged him and tried to assure him that this was a gift that he could bring to the priesthood. Given the statistics on incest, one in 10 children are abused. In

Resources

Incest survivors seeking help should check the crisis hotlines in their local telephone directories for listing such as Child Abuse Hotline, Rape Crisis Center, Women Organized Against Rape, Battered Women’s Center, etc.

For lobbying and public advocacy, The Justice Campaign has been organized to secure public funding for abortion for victims of incest and rape. Among those serving as convenors are Bishop Walter D. Dennis, Episcopal Suffragan of New York; and Bishops William Boyd Grove and Leontine Kelly of the United Methodist Church. The Episcopal Women’s Caucus is a sponsor of the group. Deborah J. Barrett, Esq. in Washington, D.C. is coordinator. The group’s phone number is (202) 638-1706.

For General Convention legislation watchers: The Episcopal Women’s Caucus will be sponsoring a resolution on domestic violence.

the average congregation on a Sunday morning there are bound to be people who carry this hurt around inside them. We have all heard sermons on homosexuality and abortion; have you ever heard one on incest? Was it a really hot topic at your last diocesan convention?

As Mary sought out Elizabeth, so the wounded healer, ordained or not, can bring compassion and understanding to the hurt person. The tacit agreement for hundreds of years of church history was “If we don’t talk about it, it can’t be happening.” St. Paul told women to keep silent in church. One of the things we have kept silent about is incest, and it happens in the nicest of families. Good church-going Episcopalians abuse their children just as much as anyone else. I think that one of the great advantages of having more female leadership in the Episcopal Church will be a prophetic call to deal with this great injustice. A woman bishop would help. A practical way to do this, and a creative approach, would be for the Episcopal Church to lay out the money to do a big nationwide TV special on incest and to follow up with a phone-in for children and adults at an 800 number so that people would have a chance to tell their stories.

The Episcopal Church is singularly qualified to pilot this project. We began with a quarrel with Rome over marriage and sexuality, and in the present furor over women priests, we are dealing with fundamental sexism. Yet in our very reserved Common Prayer Book way we can do some uncommonly good things. I’m a very proud Episcopalian, and I think we are equipped to accept the challenge. I do not think we can afford to leave this deeply spiritual matter to social services and secular psychology. The church has understood that abortion is church business. Why not incest? ■

Incest statistics

— Studies suggest that about 40 million Americans, about one in six, may have been sexually victimized as children. This includes 25% to 35% of all women, and 10% to 16% of all men.

— Immediate effects of sexual abuse include sleeping and eating disturbances, anger, withdrawal, and guilt. Some children also exhibit sexual preoccupation and have numerous complaints — rashes, vomiting, or headaches — without medical explanation.

— About 50% of women survive incest without long-term ill effects; 50% do not.

— As a group, women who were sexually abused as children have lower self-esteem than others, and are more anxious, depressed, and guilt ridden.

— Since girls in our society are abused more commonly than boys, perhaps it's understandable that women, as a group, have lower self-esteem than men.

— Girls who are abused are more likely to be later victims of rape or attempted rape. Boys are more likely to become aggressors.

— Most sexual abuse occurs to those between 9 and 12, although 2-and 3-year-old victims are not uncommon. Victims are most traumatized if their abuser is between the ages of 26 and 50.

From "Shattered innocence"
Psychology Today 2/87
Quoted in *Daughters of Sarah*

The Used Woman

by Sharon Swedean Muhlenkort

Read John 8:1-11

A woman holds a water jug and wears a long skirt and shawl. The shawl is over her head at the beginning, around her shoulders by the end. She speaks:

This morning when I was on my way, he wanted to talk with me. And he said he wanted to lie with me.

I did what I always do.

I did what I learned to do with my father.

I pretended I was somewhere else, and hoped that it would go quickly.

And when they found us there, when they caught us, they took me with them.

They took me with them to the temple area and they made me stand there with all those people. They told everyone what I had done.

I hated whatever it was within me, whoever I was that caused this to happen. I wished I was dead. I longed for them to throw the stones and to do what I deserved.

Then this man there — this man that they called Jesus, he got angry with them. He got angry and they went away.

I was left alone with him. I was afraid for what he might want from me.

But then he said, "Woman."

And there was a softening in me, a softening that made me hope he might forgive me. And so I looked up at him — looking into his face.

But when I saw his eyes I did not see forgiveness. When I looked at him

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and he looked at me, I knew that he saw more in me. He saw parts of me that I had never shown anyone.

He saw a part of me that I never knew existed. He saw my hope. He saw my ability to love.

And then when he said, "Go, but avoid this sin," I knew what he meant. I knew I was to avoid this sin of letting someone else use me. This sin of just going along with whatever somebody else wanted. Just cooperating. I did it this morning when that man wanted to lie with me. I just went along. And when they came, when the scribes came, I just followed them. I followed them into the temple area.

Not once did I stop and say, "Don't do this." Or, "I don't want to do this."

I just went along with them. And everyone looked at me with such hatred. And I believed that too — believed I was what they were telling me I was.

When Jesus looked at me he saw my goodness. He saw parts of me that I had never paid attention to. He gave me the freedom to use those parts of myself . . . to believe that I didn't have to let them do to me what they wanted to do to me. I don't have to let someone else decide who I am or what my life means.

Oh, do you know what it reminds me of? It reminds me of that story of the people — you know, that story about the Egyptians who told them that they were slaves. If they had believed that, they never would have left for the promised land.

I've got to tell my friends — I've got to tell them.

Tell them how he looked at me — tell Rebecca and James. We don't have to be what they want us to be anymore! ■

Namibia, ground of hope

by Nell Braxton Gibson

Namibia, a nation bordering South Africa, has for years been a battleground for the conflict between the South African Army and SWAPO (Southwest African People's Organization), a group fighting to free Namibia from South African domination. As an observer for the Partners in Mission Consultation, I went last year to visit two dioceses in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa — the Diocese of Johannesburg and the Diocese of Namibia. The following is an account of my travels through the war zone in northern Namibia, where I witnessed the work of the church and experienced the hardships endured by those who struggle to survive in the area.

The Diocese of Namibia encompasses 1 million people — 90,000 of whom live in the northern part of the country. The diocese stretches beyond Namibia's geographical boundaries into southern Angola.

Late in October, we arrived at Odibo on the Angolan border, and spent the next four days there. On our first day, the Rt. Rev. James Kauluma, Bishop of Namibia, quickly involved me and my traveling companions in the life of the local church, St. Mary's. That day, he and Bishop Eustace Kamanyire of the Diocese of Ruwenzori in Uganda confirmed 200 persons. Just before the service, Bishop Kauluma told me to prepare a speech bringing greetings from the Episcopal Church in the

United States to the 1,500 people assembled in the church. He then asked Kamanyire to preach the sermon. When asked what the text of his impromptu sermon should be, Bishop Kauluma replied, "Whatever the Lord puts in your heart."

Odibo was the first missionary station established by the Anglican church in Namibia in 1924. By 1979 the war between Namibia and South Africa had resulted in the destruction of the grounds, the pipe lines and all electricity. We lived there without running water, electricity or newspapers. We would have been completely out of touch with the rest of the world had it not been for the small portable radio which Bishop Kauluma brought and turned on each morning as we ate breakfast.

The grounds at Odibo tell a story of a once beautiful place with flowers, trees, a seminary, a school and a well-run hospital. Today all that remains are sealed wells, bullet holes and the rubble left by the bombing which took place there. In a touching tribute, a sparsely furnished parish house wall displays a black and white photograph of former Presiding Bishop John Hines.

Archdeacon Philip Shilongo is the only priest brave enough to remain at Odibo, carrying out a remarkable ministry with his wife, Penny, and daughter, Lilly, and various orphans and homeless people whom the Shilongos have welcomed. Everyone adheres to an imposed 7 p.m. curfew. In the midst of the desolation, the Shilongos' hospitality is quite moving. I remember one night in particular when the heat was nearly unbearable. Another

visitor, Father Geoffrey Moorgas, who was sharing one of the two bedrooms in the archdeaconry (the other being occupied by the bishops), asked if he might take his mattress outside and sleep. He was told he could not because it was too dangerous. The next morning we discovered that because they had given up their rooms to us (Lilly Shilongo and I shared a room in the guest house), the women — including Mrs. Shilongo — had slept outside. They continued to do so during our entire stay there.

At night South African soldiers could be heard around our sleeping quarters — their guns and rifles sounding as metal hit against metal. We heard them emptying their spent shells upon the ground, heard the weight of their boots against the hard earth. We listened to their muted conversations and were sometimes caught off guard as their raucous laughter pierced the still night air. Airplanes patrolled the border during the night and helicopters patrolled during the day. In the midst of it all — in the midst of us all — was the unmistakable assurance and presence of God. The experience was moving, powerful, amazing.

Nearby where we lived there remained a small reservoir with the only available water for people in the area. On the day we went to the reservoir, many people had spent most of the day walking to collect water for drinking and cooking. A pig lay bathing in it, cattle drank from it and we were told that South African soldiers came and bathed in it. When the reservoir runs dry — which does not seem a long way off — there will not be any water left in the area.

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Nell Braxton Gibson

The war zone is intensely hot and dry — Namibia's north is almost entirely desert. The heat can be so stifling and the dust so thick that one has to keep gum or hard candy in the mouth in order that the throat does not become too dry to breathe.

No signs mark the roads — there really are no roads. Bishop Kauluma directed his driver over sand, following previous tracks or making new ones. He knew which way to go without a map. A few years ago this route was filled with land mines. Five of us traveled through the desert in a five seater truck with a flatbed in back. As we drove we picked up people all along the way, dropping them off as we reached their destinations or carrying them with us to the church service we were headed for. As we stopped to pick up passengers we could see the pride on the faces of the people when they realized it was their bishop offering them a ride. Once in a while we overheard the youngsters whisper to one another, "It's our bishop!"

Bishop Kauluma is a remarkable human being. He is deeply spiritual and lives out the strength of his convictions to the fullest. He has a quiet manner and regal bearing. His people hold him in high esteem and he loves them without exception. His sense of ministry comes from his own profound understanding of what it means to

minister to people — be they young, old, well-to-do, poor, black, white or colored. At St. Mary's Church, when nearly a hundred small children under the age of five crowded into the crossing to witness the service, it was Bishop Kauluma who patiently gathered them several at a time and sat them lovingly around the freestanding altar. When he had finished there were three consecutive circles of children and infants seated close to their bishop. During the Offertory of the same service, Bishop Kauluma left and returned with glasses and cold water for Father Moorgas, Bishop Kamanyire and me, explaining that it was too hot for us to attempt to sit through the service without water because we could easily become dehydrated in the intense heat.

In Onekwaya we visited a new missionary school which replaced the one destroyed at Odibo. The school is the result of funds made possible by the Dioceses of Hawaii and Alabama. Students must walk for many miles to attend the school. This year for the first time both breakfast and lunch are offered. Parents pay so much of their salaries for tuition that they cannot afford to feed their children more than one meal a day, so the school has taken the responsibility for the other two meals which are prepared outside under a large tree.

At Engela we visited the Lutheran hospital where there are 200 patients, 14 nurses and eight midwives. The only male we encountered during our visit was the x-ray technician. Many doctors are fearful of working at Engela because it is on the Angolan border. The nearest doctors are 70 kilometers in one direction and 90 in the other. The area is filled with Angolans who come across the border bringing tuberculosis with them. The hospital has no running water and what medicine there is could easily fill

a small eating table.

We visited with Lutheran Bishop Kleohpas Dumeni whose brother had been murdered at the Angolan border three weeks earlier. He spoke to us of the need to continue the strong ecumenical ties which exist in Namibia and of his support for the ministry of women and of laypeople. He, too, is a gentle, committed human being full of strength, patience and understanding.

Namibia is an armed camp in many respects. One cannot drive anywhere without encountering soldiers with rifles. On the roads leading in and out of the cities we constantly passed convoys of armored tanks and trucks filled with armed soldiers. At one stop only a barbed wire fence separates Angola from Namibia. On the side facing the Angolan border stands a South African tower staffed by armed soldiers. On the other, not 50 meters from the tower stands a Namibian elementary school. We were told that when SWAPO attacks the army base, soldiers turn their guns on the school children.

As we traveled through this incredible territory with Bishop Kauluma, he explained how important the church building was to the people. He said that in times of great despair and frustration, people can look and see the church and have hope. We were told of one group of people newly arrived in an area who said to one another, "Before we build our own houses, we must first build God's house."

On our last day in the north, Bishop Kauluma took us to the area where he grew up. After explaining how the people live, gather corn, store it, grind it for meal and cook it, he showed us his newly built home and introduced us to his relatives. As we were about to leave he walked out onto a small plateau which looked over the vast expanse of desert stretching to meet the blue horizon. He reminisced, "When I

Namibia: A century of resistance

- Namibia has been enslaved by outside powers for more than 100 years, first by Germany, then by Britain, which turned over control to South Africa to administer as a "trust territory."

- In 1966 the United Nations voted by a massive majority to end the trust mandate and ordered South Africa to leave, aware of its systematic violation of human rights in Namibia. South Africa's response was increased militarization, with 80% of the population now subject to martial law.

- Namibia is among Africa's most Christian countries; some 75% of its people are active members of congregations. Lutherans make up more than half of Namibia's population, followed by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists and other denominations, all active in their support for independence from South Africa.

- Individually and through participation in the Council of Churches, Christians are also remarkable for their ecumenical attitude to the theological and socio-political problems presented by Pretoria's occupation. When Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu visited in October, 1987 he was warmly received by churchpeople of all denominations, both in the war zone and in his travels throughout the rest of the country.

- In recent years, church and government have been at loggerheads. The churches have issued joint statements on torture and have upheld the people in their struggle, for which they have been punished. Two Lutheran printing presses have been blown up, the Council of Churches offices have been ransacked and set on fire, churches have been burnt down, and church members, including pastors, have been killed, tortured, imprisoned without trial. Bishop Kleophas Dumeni of the Lutheran Church in the north, was one of several church people whose name appeared on a death list. Anglican bishops have been expelled, church leaders and workers have been refused passports, and at times imprisoned for their stand against the occupation.

Namibian Christian Communications Trust

was a boy, I had only to know the names of my cattle and the color and number of my goats. I had no knowledge of anything outside this small world."

When I asked how he had learned of other things, he said that one day a visitor had come to his village and told him he could make money if he learned to read numbers. By reading numbers he could get a job in the mines where the men were known only by the numbers assigned them. So Bishop Kauluma had gone to the missionary school at Odibo to learn to read numbers. At this point in the story, feeling perhaps that he was becoming too nostalgic, he turned and with a marvelous twinkle in his eye,

said, "But you know these missionaries — once they get hold of you . . ."

Remembering Namibia and especially Odibo, I am reminded of a lovely homily New York's Bishop Paul Moore gave during a staff Eucharist, concerning Aelred of Rievaulx. In speaking of the peace Aelred found at Rievaulx — a peace which had been lacking in his life — Bishop Moore said that each of us carries a special place within us which is sacred to us. It may be a place like the Cathedral at Chartres, or a monastery, or the place where we were born or simply a place where we have felt the intense presence of God. As he spoke, I realized that special place deep within me is Odibo. ■

Nicaragua. . . *Continued from page 16*
ran to a house to bring us glasses of freshly-squeezed juice. Whatever people had, they would share with us. On the road back to town, there was suddenly a sharp crack off to the right. After a moment, Stough said, "I've heard that sound too many times not to know what it is — that's gunfire."

There was a definite sense of living life on the edge in Nicaragua. Despite this, everyone we met was cheerful, friendly, ready to laugh and share a good joke.

A tireless and thoughtful host, Downs was eager to show us as much as possible during our short stay, ably assisted by volunteer drivers Isolina and Alvaro. He deeply loves his country. But, he said, "I worry about the future sometimes." However, no matter what divisions have been caused by the war and economic difficulties, he talked about the church as being part of a healing process:

"I believe the church has got to include everybody — rich people and poor people. The church has got to stand for justice and peace, for the rights of the people."

When asked if he believed in the ordination of women, he said emphatically, "Yes, I have no problem with that. In fact, I find women more dependable than men. If I ask a man to do something, I get a lot of excuses. If I ask a woman, I know she will try with all her power to get it done. I don't even have a problem with a woman bishop."

The day that our group was leaving, he took us to Lake Jilola, a park outside Managua. Downs sat quietly under a palm tree as we swam. As we were leaving, he looked out over the lake and said, "This is my favorite place. I come here to think. It helps me."

(Part II — Executive Council meeting and the work of the church in Guatemala in the May WITNESS.)

Short Takes

Redemption in '88?

As one scandal after another unfolds, it is clear that President Reagan presides over one of the most corrupt administrations ever. Whether measured by the ranks or sheer numbers of officials who have come under ethical suspicion and criminal investigation, the amount of sleaze is awesome. Precise comparisons to the Grant, Harding and Nixon Administrations aren't possible or necessary. The Reagan Administration rivals them all for official lawlessness, contempt for law, and playing loose with the truth.

Yet, where is the outrage? The President greets each new disclosure with silence. The Attorney General is in no position to hurl ethical stones. Even those who seek the White House next year, Democrats and Republicans, seem subdued in their criticism. These silent voices scream their own message, the wrong message. . . The absence of condemnation by the White House cannot be excused on grounds of loyalty. Failure to condemn can only be read as tacit acquiescence. And why are the Presidential candidates quiet? Aren't they offended by talk of pardons? Will they pledge the ethics act and defend the independent counsel law? Despite the fog of apathy that surrounds these disgraces, Americans surely want cleaner government. It is now up to those who seek leadership positions to turn the shame of 1987 into the redemption of 1988.

The New York Times, 1/3/88

Contras R Us

Did you see the ad for Toys R Us in yesterday's paper? Right next to the special on form-fitting diapers was one for a video game called *Contra*. "Become a Freedom Fighter and battle for your beliefs," the ad read. "Ages 6-up."

Clark DeLeon

The Philadelphia Inquirer, 3/11/88

Quote of note

There is nothing more horrifying than stupidity in action.

Adlai Stevenson



Panthers ditch Medicare

The Gray Panthers — a network of more than 70,000 Americans working to improve the quality of life for people of all ages — have called for the elimination of Medicare in favor of a new comprehensive National Health System. Maggie Kuhn, above, national convenor, explained that 37 million Americans — mostly the young and the old — have no health insurance at all. Because of their inability to pay, critically ill patients are being turned away from hospitals daily, many of them to die.

Even those with Medicare, Medicaid, or private coverage are never completely protected, she said. A severe extended illness can still wipe out a lifetime of savings — and the President's so-called "catastrophic illness" insurance program barely begins to solve the problem.

A National Health system is the only way Americans of every age will ever be guaranteed the quality medical care which is their right, Kuhn said.

Gray Panthers pamphlet

Women bishops pre-Lambeth?

Participants at a recent conference at the Episcopal Divinity School on women bishops in the Episcopal Church have vowed not to wait for a world-wide meeting of Anglican leaders next summer at Lambeth before seeking the election of women candidates. Bishop H. Coleman McGehee, Jr. of Michigan invited advocates of women bishops to organize an election campaign as his diocese prepares to elect his successor in May. And the Rev. Carol Cole Flanagan, president of the Episcopal Women's Caucus, urged that women be proposed in all five dioceses that will choose bishops before Lambeth, including Iowa, Southern Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan.

Inside the American Scene, 2/5/88

Creative minds have always been known to survive any kind of bad training. — Anna Freud

Why cry in wilderness

The ancients tell the story of a great-hearted soul who ran through the city streets crying, "Power, greed, and corruption. Power, greed, and corruption."

For a time, the attention of the people was riveted on this single-minded, open-hearted person for whom all of life had become focused in one great question. But then everyone went back to work, only slightly hearing, some annoyed.

One day a child stepped in front of the wailing figure on a cold and stormy night. "Elder," the child said, "don't you realize that no one is listening to you?"

"Of course I do," the Elder answered.

"Then why do you shout?" the child insisted, incredulous. "If nothing is changing, your efforts are useless."

"Ah, dear child, I do not shout only in order to change them. I shout so that they cannot change me."

Joan Chittister, OSB

Foundations, Vol.III, No.3

Punctuality's shortcoming

The habitually punctual make all their mistakes right on time.

Laurence J. Peter

Suffering . . . Continued from page 13

solace. Elaine suggests that citrate of magnesia might be more helpful at this point, and that her sister could bring me some.

As they roll her off to dialysis I give a thumbs up sign. "We're going to make it; we're fighting this pain together."

"One difference," she says. "You're here because you chose to be here. I had no choice."

Her comment provided substance for my meditation that day. Frequently peace activist sisters jailed for non-violent protests at nuclear sites have told me that they have heard the same words from sisters of color. Can we bond in spite of the difference and be healed together in the struggle? How can we work at change to achieve justice for those who have no choice?

As WITNESS deadline looms, my doctor finds me somewhere under articles to be edited and proofs to be read. "I hurt my back; I'm not brain dead," I explain. He grins and sets the release date.

Just as my discharge day neared, Elaine received a phone call from her husband with the shocking news that his mother had collapsed and died at a church service. It's my family, too, now and we say the 23rd Psalm through tears. A barrage of family calls weaken her and she begins to hyperventilate. I ring for help. Suddenly Elaine is moved to an intensive care unit. I struggle from bed for a hug. We vow to keep in touch and have lunch after we've both recovered.

When I made my re-entry into the office Jan. 6 — my Epiphany too — a big "Congratulations" sign hung over the door. I accepted it, if only for managing the "forever" flight of stairs which had kept me working at home

until then. Everything disabled activists Nancy Chaffee and Jane Jackson and Cyndi Jones have been saying in THE WITNESS became true of my life.

Of course, all items desperately needed were one inch out of reach; bathroom doors would not accommodate my walker; more places than I had ever dreamed were non-accessible; and grocery shopping was a back-breaking experience. God bless friends, neighbors, and WITNESS "family" for seeing me through.

I would mentally award myself the Olympic gold after my first shower, first shampoo, first non-TV dinner, as I graduated from walker to cane to brace only. Spending Christmas away from the gathering of our family clan in Louisiana especially took its toll, as did grieving over the deaths of my friends, Jan Pierce and Brooke Mosley, whose funerals I brokenheartedly hobbled to within seven weeks of each other.

Winter has been cruel in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. My thoughts have ranged sorrowfully between Bernice Reagon's words, "They are falling all around me, the strongest leaves of my tree" . . . and Coleridge's "a thousand thousand slimy things lived on and so did I."

Still, spring nears, and lunch with Elaine moves closer to reality. As Easter brings its message that Christ has triumphed over suffering and death, my prayer is that there may be hope for the butterflies — and for all God's slimy critters as well. ■

MOVING?

Keep THE WITNESS coming by sending a corrected mailing label from a recent issue to: THE WITNESS, P.O. Box 359, Ambler PA 19002. Please send it at least six weeks before you move.

Letters . . . Continued from page 3

record straight here!

When *My Quest for Reality*, her autobiography, was published, Scudder was 91 — long beyond her years as a Wellesley professor and *agent provocateur* for Christian Socialism. "Mortifying experiences teach me all too often how dim is the light of Time in which my old mind moves." Yet her "old mind" was still quick to insist that Christians dare not evade the tension between tradition and change, continuity and revolution. Were she with us today, I wager she would be taking groups of students to Central America, still stubbornly refusing to blunt reality with euphemisms.

She once claimed that General Convention almost drove her to the Quakers, but her presence drew standing-room only crowds to programs set up by the Church League for Industrial Democracy at the 1919 Convention in Detroit.

Scudder, of course, could never be a Deputy; but like many women of her day (and since) she played a vital role in church affairs, both from behind the scenes and in the spotlight at such "unofficial" church gatherings. Unfortunately, history books concentrate on "official" happenings, so Scudder and other women had all but disappeared from our collective memory until Mary Donovan ("The Feminist Dimension of the Social Gospel," February '87 WITNESS) and a rising generation of historians of women came along. Hurrah for them, and for ECPC and THE WITNESS for keeping Scudder's name alive in the award.

Pamela Darling
General Theological Seminary
New York, N.Y.

To reprint Teska

I liked Bill Teska's article in the February issue about his interactions with Konstantine Kharchev, the USSR's Councilor for Religious Affairs. I remember his conversation about the visit

in Moscow and how excited he was about seeing him and having the interview. Teska gives good insights into some of the changes that perhaps are coming about as a result of Gorbachev's leadership. It is an effort to correct the mistakes of 50 to 60 years of bad leadership. Could the Conner Center have permission to reprint the article in our newsletter in the near future?

Thank you for your continuing good work in a number of areas, including that of informing us about religion in the USSR.

**The Rev. Don Nead
West Lafayette, Ind.**

(THE WITNESS has reprinted its issue entitled, "God and Mother Russia" (11/86), and added the Rev. William Teska's interview with Konstantine Kharchev as an update. It is now available at \$1.50 — see description in ad on this page. — Ed.)

Ups the ante

I would just like to take this opportunity to thank you for the chance to receive the magazine at limited income rates while I was a student and last year as a Volunteer Corps member. I can now afford the full subscription price and hope that some day I will be in a financial situation to be able to be a sustaining subscriber so others may have the same opportunity I was given. Thank you!

**Diana Schryver
Washington, D.C.**

Learning Center fans

I want to thank you for the donation of THE WITNESS that you have made to our Learning Center here at the Iowa State Men's Reformatory. This gift will be greatly appreciated by all of our students, clerks, and faculty in the years to come. Our best regards to all the people in The Episcopal Church Publishing Company who helped to make this donation possible.

**Dr. Byron H. Thomas
Director of Education
Anamosa, Iowa**

BROTHER For Steve

The fifth greatest of all was shadowboxing on our beds, you swinging a haymaker, me flopping in feigned agony, then rolling and whipping out a jab, you falling and groaning. We did it for hours. Or, at least, until Dad rumbled from the rec room, "Hey, you guys, get to sleep."

The fourth greatest was building the tree fort down by the creek, wielding axes and hammers with Boy Scout finesse, standing back and admiring our three-tiered fortress. Plotting strategy for taking over the world.

The third was ripping down the mountain trails together, racing, edging, yodeling, screaming, careening down upon Mom and Dad (in full snowplow saunter), and pulling up short in a snow shower.

The second was watching you in your Navy whites, taking vows with the woman of your life, you holding the emotion steady on course.

But the greatest of all is now, you nearby, so eager to talk, to laugh, to remember.

— Mark R. Littleton

Monthly love message

I look forward to each WITNESS — I generally read it cover-to-cover the day it arrives. It's a welcome renewal that the message is love one another. Keep up the spirited good work you're doing.

**Virginia Vockel
Lincoln, Mass.**

Back Issues Available:

• **God and Mother Russia:** Major articles by Sovietologist Paul Valliere, Bill and Polly Spofford, Mary Lou Suhor on their visits to the U.S.S.R. in 1986; includes statistics on major religious bodies in the U.S.S.R. and on Soviet women. Also contains Dr. John Burgess' assessment of the 1986 Human Rights seminar sponsored by the National Council of Churches in Moscow. 28 pages.

• **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.

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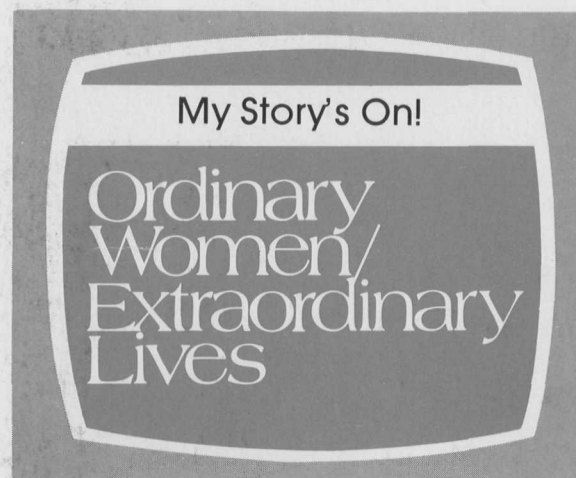
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