

The Witness

Volume 82 • Number 7-8 • July/August 1999



*Journeys of the spirit:
the power and politics of pilgrimage*

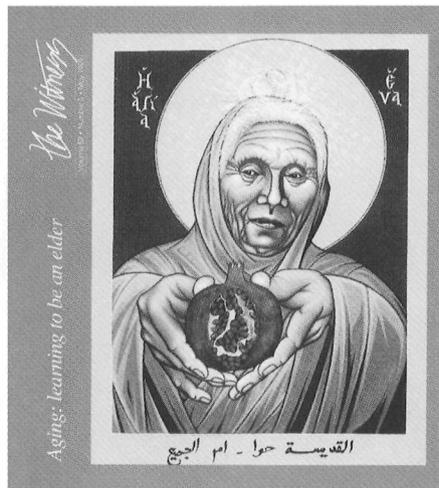
Aging: learning to be an elder

I WAS PLANNING NOT TO RENEW in a general cutback — then got the May issue on aging and loved it. This is not the place to “cut back!” Please reinstate me.

Gay Lloyd Pinder
Seattle, WA

I WRITE TO THANK Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann for her marvelous ministry and especially her work in *The Witness*. She is very much in my prayers for God’s real healing and has my respect and gratitude for her approach and attitude. I, too, am a great fan of Reynolds Price’s *A Whole New Life*.

Sam Hulsey
Fort Worth, TX



the needs of children. Enclosed is a copy of the “Children’s Charter for the Church” and supporting background materials. A video introduction can be obtained with these materials from Episcopal Parish Services (815 Second Ave., New York, NY 10017).

The Charter is a call to the church to respond in new and intentional ways to Christ’s mandate to care for, respect and bring all children to Christ. If we took it seriously it would revolutionize our ministries around children. A team of nine people from our diocese attended a conference on implementation of the Charter that was held last fall. We came away with a new commitment to work for change in our diocese and are actively trying to implement the charter here.

If your readers would like more information on this, please contact Robyn Szoke, the new officer for Children’s Ministry at the Episcopal Church Center in New York (800-334-7626). Readers may also wish to look at the yearly Children’s Sabbath program from the Children’s Defense Fund and some advocacy resources from Friend-

A national disregard for children

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MOST RECENT focus on children. It was typically well done. In support of your reporting, I would like to recommend a valuable resource for churches wanting to explore how they can respond to

Letters

Classifieds

Trinity College chaplain

Trinity seeks a Chaplain for our liberal arts college community. The Chaplain conducts regular services, provides counseling, coordinates the work of religious organizations, facilitates worship and spiritual observances for people of all faiths, and promotes spiritual life on campus through traditional and non-traditional ministering. We seek an energetic, persuasive communicator, with the enthusiasm and experience to work with a diverse student body and to anticipate students’ differing needs. Candidate must be an ordained Episcopal priest and should have an advanced degree. Prior chaplaincy experience not essential. Interviews will commence as excellent candidates are identified. Ideal starting date: Aug., 1999, but all applications accepted. Send applications and nominations to: Dr. Sharon Herzberger, Vice President for Student Services, Trinity College, Hartford, CT 06106, or fax to: 860-297-4229. Inquiries

may be made to 860-297-2085. Trinity College is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Women and minorities are encouraged to apply. Applicants with disabilities should request any needed accommodation to participate in the application process.

Promotion/development opening

Associate for Promotion and Development responsible for marketing, public relations, fundraising, grantwriting and endowment development at Kirkridge Retreat Center. For job description and terms, contact: Search Committee, Kirkridge, 2495 Fox Gap Rd., Bangor, PA 18013.

Order of Jonathan Daniels

The Order of Jonathan Daniels is an ecumenical religious order in the Anglican tradition of Vowed and Oblate lay persons of both genders, single, committed or married, living and working in the world, who are engaged in justice ministries. Write: OJD, P.O. Box 8374, Richmond, VA 23226 or <OrdJonDanl@aol.com>.

Episcopal Urban Interns

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1999-2000 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. 310-674-7700.

Stringfellow book available

A Keeper of the Word, edited by Bill Wylie-Kellermann, gleans the most significant of William Stringfellow’s work including never-before-published material. A Harlem street lawyer, social activist, writer and theologian, Stringfellow is enjoying new-found popularity. \$15 including shipping/handling. Checks/Visa/Mastercard to: *The Witness*, 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210; 1-800-300-0702.

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Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch, whichever is less. Deadline is two months prior to publication.

ship Press (800-889-5733).

Klara Tammany
Missioner for Christian Education
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland
Buckeystown, MD

Yugoslavia web site

AS MY FRIENDS KNOW, I am not real fond of war. The greatest damage seems done to people — often women, children and elders — who have nothing to do with decisions being made by those in power. And for us in the U.S. — so often the leading power in recent allied wars — it has been next to impossible to hear our global sisters' and brothers' voices over the clamor of guns and bombs.

But today the worldwide web has changed all that.

A friend in Oakland, Calif., kindly sent me this web address — www.keepfaith.com/ — that is a web site by Ivanka Besevic, a 74-year-old retired journalist in Belgrade. Her daughter in the U.S. is updating the site daily with e-mails from Ivanka and transcriptions of their occasional phone conversations.

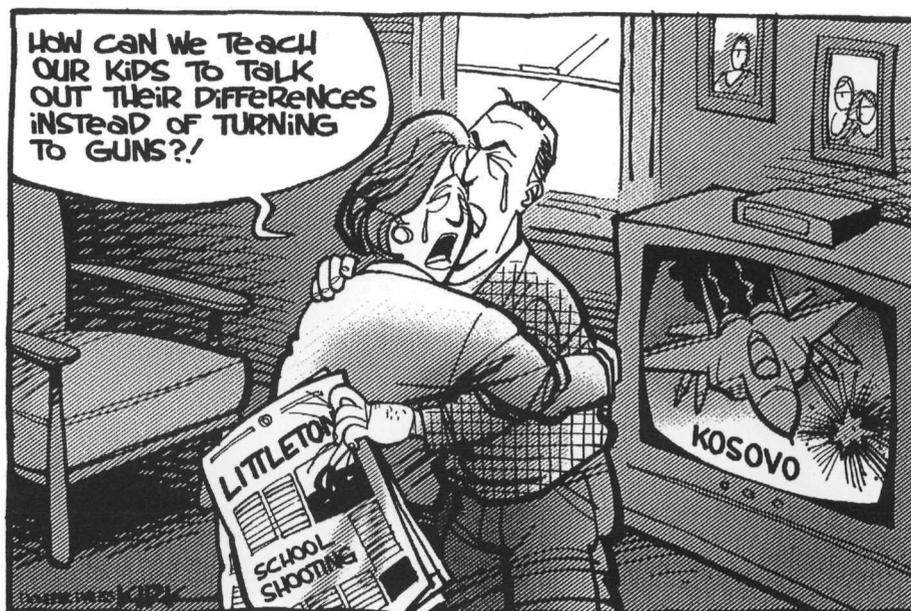
I trust her voice will move us all — whether to action such as e-mails to elected officials and protest marches, or simply to a deeper compassion for all persons caught in the middle of this tragic conflict.

If Ivanka's voice speaks to you, please send this URL along whatever strand of the web you can!

Patricia Lay Dorsey
<PLaydorsey@aol.com>

Deadly 'humanitarianism'

AS WITH U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN WWII (apparently the favorite comparison, although it has very serious limitations) and much like the low-intensity overt war against Iraq and the covert wars in other parts of the Third World, there's absolutely no reason to believe U.S. involvement in ex-Yugoslavia is for humanitarian purposes, despite the fact that President Slobodan Milosevic is a dangerous and dreadful dictator. This neither bears out in the present case nor does it hold water historically. If it were so, there were many other things that could and should have been done, both much earlier and quite differently. They



weren't because it isn't.

Indeed, U.S. intervention is having the opposite and disastrous effect of: creating more refugees, wounding and killing civilians and refugees, destroying vital infrastructure (such as roads, bridges, hospitals, utilities, media outlets, etc.), producing environmental disasters, using deadly depleted uranium/radioactive weapons, polluting ground water in addition to the Danube River and the Adriatic Sea, silencing Yugo dissent, excluding pacifist leaders and options, solidifying nationalist support, fostering jingoism, encouraging the heroin trade, skirting international law and snubbing the UN, ignoring world opinion, promoting U.S. hegemony, expanding the influence of the corrupt CIA, pushing a humiliated Russia into a corner, threatening international peace and security by (mistakenly?) triple bombing the Chinese Embassy and killing three Chinese journalists while injuring others (Peter Dale Scott claims a similar incident occurred in Hanoi during the Vietnam War), bombing Bulgaria, wounding Italian fishers, using racist rhetoric to compare Europe with the Third World, killing animals, bolstering already bloated military budgets and expanding the military-industrial complex, publicizing the "need" for NATO, experimenting with new weapons of

mass destruction, lying and misleading the public, reaffirming that social problems should be resolved with brute force, serving as role models to suburban teenagers, marginalizing and managing women, proving that might makes right in politics, thereby promoting the global arms race, diverting attention from other major problems (starvation around the world, U.S. war in Iraq, child poverty, lack of national healthcare, corporate welfare, decaying cities, environmental crises, growing inequalities, ethnic cleansing in allied countries such as Turkey and Indonesia), et al.

It is, unfortunately, becoming increasingly clear that NATO stands for No Action is Too Obscene! Let's stop the obscenity and return to the fine art of diplomacy. Let's stand for peace and justice!

Dan Brook
<CyberBrook@california.com>

Holy Week in Baghdad

I WAS WITH A GROUP WHO VISITED Baghdad over Holy Week 1999. We took medical supplies and medical books from Canada and the U.S. We took the medical supplies to the Red Crescent Society and the books to the Medical School at the University

continued on back cover

The Witness

Volume 82 • Number 7-8 • July/August 1999

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Cover: Participants in the Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage walk along the Gulf Coast. Photo by Skip Schiel.

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

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Risking new worlds

by Marianne Arbogast

Over the course of the past year, a small procession of walkers wound its way down the eastern U.S. coastline, then traveled inland to Florida. After sailing to Cuba, Jamaica, and Haiti (and some pressing further south to Brazil) they crossed the Atlantic, resuming their walk in Africa.

Those who took part in the Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage felt drawn to trace, in reverse, the journey of African slaves to this continent and, in so doing, to help reverse the spiritual legacy of slavery inherited by the descendants of slaves and slave owners. Their journey was a difficult one, undertaken with scant resources, major logistical uncertainties and astonishing trust in the ability of a diverse group of people to survive the rigors of such a trip together. In the tradition of pilgrimage, many kept journals and wrote letters. Their accounts reveal a full range of emotion: exhaustion, exultation, anguish — but, beneath it all, the sense of participating in a profound spiritual work [p. 14].

These pilgrims are among many today who feel a pull to leave home and ordinary comfort zones in order to be physically present in places of spiritual, social and historical significance. Such journeys often seem connected to aspects of history or human experience that have been neglected or forgotten, as if the earth itself beckons witnesses to the buried roots of human suffering and struggle.

In the U.S., a number of recent pilgrimages have focused on the history of

slavery. In addition to the Interfaith Pilgrimage, another “Middle Passage Pilgrimage” beginning in July of this year invites people to join an Atlantic cruise to witness a ceremony at sea, at which a monument commemorating slaves who died en route will be lowered to the floor of the Atlantic. Afterwards, the ship will continue on to Africa. And several years ago, historian Anthony Cohen chose to forego a typical research environment for a challenging personal journey along an Underground Railroad route [p. 18].

“Pilgrimage sites break away from the recognized centres of organized religion and from the control of their authorities,”
Virgil Elizondo writes.

Another increasingly widespread form of pilgrimage is the quest for a deeper connection with one’s personal or family history, and the earth places which are intertwined with it. *Witness* staff member Martha Dage traveled to Russia last summer on such a journey, returning with a stronger sense of family and spiritual identity [p. 22].

The recovery of lost but crucial pieces of human experience links these contemporary sojourns to more traditional pilgrimage journeys. Numerous Christian pilgrimage sites have sprung up in honor of Mary, in a church that has suppressed the feminine face of God. Often these sites have rested on the religious testimony of women, the young and the poor.

“Pilgrimage sites break away from the recognized centres of organized religion and from the control of their authorities,” Virgil Elizondo writes in his introduction to a volume of theological reflection on pilgrimage (*Concilium*, 1996/4). “Maybe they can be attributed to God’s sense of humour which keeps legitimate authority — whether ecclesial or academic — from taking itself so seriously that it confuses itself with God.” Pilgrim sites, Elizondo says, “witness to the limits of any official religion or theology which tries to corral and imprison the mysterious infinity of God’s love as it continues to be made manifest amongst us through the poor, the needy, the lowly and the unauthorized of society.”

This may even be true of a secular site such as Graceland, a major U.S. pilgrimage destination [p. 20]. Reflecting on the magnetism of Elvis Presley’s home, Ken Sehested notes his “redneck” roots and the persisting bias against those who share them.

But if the origins of pilgrimage are popular and spontaneous, its expressions are susceptible to domination by an array of powers. Examining the pattern of pilgrimage in the life of Jesus, Bill Wylie-Kellermann calls for vigilance to the domesticating influence of economic and political interests [p. 8].

Yet these very hazards may attest to the power of pilgrimage. It is dangerous to venture forth into unfamiliar places with open eyes and open hearts. It may well threaten the stability of entrenched worldviews and world systems. At least, many of today’s pilgrims hope so. **TW**



Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*, <marianne@thewitness.org>.

Following the spirit's compass

by Lauren Artress

Pilgrims are people in motion, passing through territories not their own — seeking something we might call completion, or perhaps the word “clarity” will do as well, a goal to which only the spirit’s compass points the way.

— Richard R. Niebuhr

The act of pilgrimage is as old as the human spirit. It is found in all the major religious traditions, especially during the most holy times of the year. The Jewish peoples walked long distances to be in the holy city of Jerusalem during Passover; the Muslims walked to Mecca to circumambulate around the Kaaba, the sacred stone where Mohammed sat when he became enlightened. During the Middle Ages, Christian communities packed up their belongings and fixed food without fat so it would not spoil. They wore special clothing and began the long walk to Jerusalem, completing what was a once-in-a-lifetime commitment to visit this holy city. These communities sang familiar songs and chants as they walked through the muddy road-less countryside. They wore passport-like medallions sewn into their clothes to identify themselves as pilgrims on a religious trek, not thieves, merchants or crusaders.

Pilgrimage became threatened once the Crusades made a battleground of Europe. After the Second Crusade, it became dangerous and, therefore, expensive to travel. The Catholic Church appointed the pilgrimage cathedrals to serve as the destination of peoples’ journey. Chartres Cathedral in Chartres, France — 80 kilometers

Lauren Artress is canon for special ministries at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco and creator of Veriditas, the Worldwide Labyrinth Project.

southwest of Paris — was one of the most significant pilgrimage cathedrals for many centuries. Our Lady of Chartres — as the Cathedral is specifically known — is a monument built in honor of Mary. She is envisioned in stone and glass 176 times. The labyrinth, a 42-foot circle with one clear, yet circuitous path to the center, was laid in the stone floor of the nave of Chartres Cathedral around 1201. Pilgrims would



enter and circumambulate around the cathedral and then enter the labyrinth to walk the path which was symbolic for the journey to God. The center of the labyrinth is named “the New Jerusalem” to underscore the pilgrim’s achievement of having reached the Holy City.

After the Middle Ages the act of pilgrimage lost its widespread acceptance. Western culture rebelled against the suffocating Christianity that governed peoples’ lives. The invisible world was rejected because it could not be seen through the empirical methods of the new science. Tourism became the accepted mindset for travel. Though pilgrimage continued in the 19th century — especially to places like Lourdes for people seeking physical heal-

ing — it became marginalized to the sidelines of a busy, preoccupied, extroverted, consumer-oriented culture. That is, until recently.

Pilgrimage is currently experiencing a revival in popularity. The renewed interest is due to several factors. One is the demise of the Berlin Wall and the opening of Eastern Europe. Another is the increase in the numbers of Muslims identifying strongly with the sacred city of Mecca. Perhaps the reason closest to home is the spiritual hunger that is becoming conscious in the Western World. Life is most meaningful when we are living a symbolic life, but we have lost our connection to meaningful symbols.

Tourism — the biggest industry in the world — is taxing our planet’s resources without delivering on the hoped-for fulfillment of finding deeper meaning. The knack of pilgrimage is to allow travel to become sacred, to see the world with fresh eyes and return renewed and nourished by a new vision of oneself. In his book *The Art of Pilgrimage: The Seeker’s Guide to Making Travel Sacred*, Phil Cousineau says that “the ambitiousness of the goal and the intensity of devotion ensure that the sight of new landscapes, the smell of novel foods, the encounter with unusual customs — all converge to create a new way of experiencing the world.”

This is what sets those on pilgrimage apart from the tourists. Tourists come to observe and take pictures, pilgrims endure at least minor discomforts to participate in something greater than themselves.

One can sing and pray with others at a sacred site, remember lost loved ones at the site of a tragic accident, walk a labyrinth on New Year’s Eve, join in construction of a new home supervised by Habitat for Humanity or travel to a distant place to help save wildlife threatened in an oil spill. The way one participates is determined by one’s own spiritual compass, directing each person toward meaning in their life. **TV**

Villanelle for a Corpus Christi Procession, St. Louis 1995

by Jennifer M. Phillips

Carrying sad Christ in his cabuchon of glass
past fifteen sites of murder in our streets
down fractured concrete, the city's sprung compass.

boys amble out of the brickfronts, eyes of isinglas,
our prayer a language from some faded, foreign star
carrying sad Christ in his cabuchon of glass

with eyes anticipating nothing, idly they pass
our brocade and battered hopefulness, scatter
down fractured concrete, the city's sprung compass.

We would call the roll of this remediable class
among the litany of the watching saints
carrying sad Christ in his cabuchon of glass

but they have vanished over the rubble grass,
behind the Ford on blocks, the burned garage,
down fractured concrete, the city's sprung compass.

Fifteen corners, the pavement plain, unstained
and unremarkable, where our prayers anoint the dead
carrying sad Christ in his cabuchon of glass
down fractured concrete, the city's sprung compass.

*Jennifer Phillips is the rector of an Episcopal Church
congregation in St. Louis, Mo.*



A politics of pilgrimage

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

Not long ago, I dug out an old journal notebook. It covered a period (20 years ago) during which I walked 230 miles with friends across much of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. We began in Wisconsin at the test site for a military antenna — an electrified grid signaling device, virtually the trigger finger for deep-running nuclear first-strike submarines like the Trident — and we ended at a S.A.C. base near Marquette where the next portion of it was slated for construction.

In between we camped along the road, spoke in small-town churches and halls, nursed blisters, showed a home-made slide show, were treated to potluck dinners and Finnish saunas, passed out leaflets, and discussed what kind of direct action we should undertake when we arrived at the base.

I think that journey could be fairly called, in Martin King's apt phrase, part of a "pilgrimage to nonviolence." Ironic, I suppose, that our faces should be set like flint toward a place of violence and death, a nuclear camp as it were. And yet we knew that place to be sacred earth, holy ground, albeit occupied and wired. Our hearts were intent on defending and reclaiming that holy space in the name of humanity. Even earth itself.

I mention the journal, not merely because of the spiritual connection between journaling and journeying, but because I came upon notes there for three little talks I gave around campfires on the way.

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is book editor for *The Witness* and author of *Seasons of Faith and Conscience* (Orbis, 1991) and *A Keeper of the Word: Selected Writings of William Stringfellow* (Eerdmans, 1994).

Gandhi's salt march

One of those was simply an historical recounting of Gandhi's Salt March in 1930, which was an early but decisive event in the campaign for independence from the British. Almost identical in time and distance to our own, he (and the building multitude) covered 241 miles in 20 days.

He led this mass walk to the sea, spent a night in fasting and prayer, then next morning bent down by the shore to scoop up a handful of salt — God's free gift which was at the same time illegal to

When Jesus enters the Temple, having finally arrived at every pilgrim's destination, he makes for the currency exchange to engage in a direct and dramatic action: turning the tables and reclaiming the space.

possess because it had been neither produced by the government monopoly, nor taxed. The *satyagrahi* began distributing leaflets on how to produce tax-free salt. Sixty thousand people were imprisoned for resistance. Eventually, waves of Gandhi's "truth warriors" proved unstoppable by British clubs in their nonviolent siege of the salt works. The back of English moral authority was visibly broken. Who would have imagined that by his simple and graceful act, holding aloft a handful of seasalt, the collapse of imperial rule could be set in motion?

Walking meditation

Another campfire discussion was about walking as contemplation, walking as a meditational posture, walking as prayer. The Zen monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, had already in those days circulated a little pamphlet of meditations for activists which included instruction in this kind of practice: "Walk in a way that prints peace and serenity on the earth. ... Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet." Yet, though he urged walking not in order to arrive, but simply to be walking, we had our eyes on a prize. We were making a beeline. The trick, it seemed, was to make our way of walking one with that goal, one with the Spirit we sought. To make the end and the means one. In a certain sense, we walked as an act of preparation, conditioning our hearts for crossing the line onto the base, cultivating with each step a spirit of nonviolence. (Compared to most other modes of transport, walking is literally the most nonviolent, treading lightly upon the earth). And ours was a walking intercession. We walked in the name of and on behalf of victims. We prayed their prayer step by step by step.

The pilgrim way of Jesus

The last talk was of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. That long walk has been the pattern and path of Christian pilgrims for near two millennia now.

His way of the cross (the Via Dolorosa), the place of crucifixion and the empty tomb have been the heart's yearning and goal for generations of travelers. And yet Jesus himself went up to Jerusalem in the company of pilgrims, a throng making their way to the Temple at festival time.

The Scriptures suggest that his own inner journey of prayer and faithfulness, overflowing with tears more than once, was one with that bodily walk. Little wonder that the early faith community named themselves "followers of the Way."

The synoptic gospels emphasize this

journey by making it the fundamental structure of their narratives. Jesus only goes up to Jerusalem once, but it is a big trip, the big trip of life and death.

In Mark it appears as a straight and immediate trek, albeit with discipleship teaching along the way, while in Luke the pilgrimage takes a rambling route through marginal and nominal communities with lots of eating and drinking en route. The film, *The Gospel of Matthew*, quite literal in its portrayal, represents Jesus hurrying on the road, teaching over his shoulder as he goes, with the disciples stumbling along behind in their struggle to keep up. In each of the synoptics a central crisis of identity — Who do people say that I am? — signals the advent of the journey, the turning of his face to Jerusalem. He joins the Passover pilgrimage with a certain intent of heart.

His own walk is disciplined and conscientious. Along the way Jesus is making preparations, inner and outer. He repeatedly alerts the disciples to the inevitable outcome, what they realistically may expect: The Human One will be delivered up and crucified. His teaching is urgent, building community in movement. When it comes time for the actual procession into town, preparations have been made (Mk.11:1-7, par.). When it comes time for the passover meal, preparations are again found in readiness (Mk. 14:12-16, par.). The implication is that his going up to Jerusalem is well thought through. Being in the company of the Passover pilgrims, remembering the walk to freedom, is intentional.

Passover was a singularly tense and

potentially explosive time in Jerusalem. Streets swelled with an unruly crowd, liberation tunes in the air. An uprising at passover time had been brutally crushed by Herod's son, Archelaus, in 4 B.C.E. He unleashed his entire army, including cavalry, against the crowds, sparking the

cern: "Not during the feast, lest there be a tumult of the people" (Mark 14:2).

Domesticating pilgrimage

The public tension, of course, was the manifest contradiction of walking to a freedom celebration while remaining under domination, foreign and domestic.

How could the ruling authorities keep the explosive tension under control? Posting a guard of soldiers? Partly. By making the high priest, festival officiant, virtually an imperial appointee? That, too. But primarily in the domestication of the festival — by making the feast of liberation and the collective pilgrimage serve the interests of big business, by turning it into the entrenched foundation of an urban economy.

Jerusalem was a one-industry town. Among the three main pilgrim feasts, Passover was the centerpiece of its life — the first-century equivalent of the Christmas rush (just to mention another commercially domesticated festival). The city's population of 30,000 could be inflated by several times that, to as many as 180,000 people. That's a lot of rooms at the inn. By Torah interpretation the "second tithe" was to be consumed within the city walls. Pilgrims from a distance would con-

vert the tithe to money and spend it at festival time. Around all this grew further commerce and an urban service industry. Moreover, the Temple was a massive stockyard and slaughterhouse: As many as 18,000 lambs might be sacrificed in the ceremonies. Think of the Temple workers involved: the money changers and sellers of animals, of course, but also



Gate into Old Jerusalem

Bill Wylie-Kellermann

notorious series of insurrections which erupted throughout Palestine that year. Josephus reports of the period a few years subsequent to Jesus' death that Roman procurators regularly posted a company of soldiers in the porticoes of the Temple to quell any threat. No wonder the eagerness of the chief priests to arrest and kill Jesus is mitigated by their uneasy con-

the stone cutters, carpenters, metal artisans, and construction workers engaged in the ongoing luxurious rehabilitation of the Temple and its precincts. Vested interests abide at several levels of class and status. The pilgrimage generates capital. Whence its evangel of freedom? All but dead and buried?

When the city comes into view, according to Luke, Jesus begins to weep. And when he enters the Temple, having finally arrived at every pilgrim's destination, he makes for the currency exchange to engage in a direct and dramatic action: turning the tables and reclaiming the space. This is no undisciplined outburst, but the longstanding design of his heart. The house of prayer has become a den of thieves. The place of pilgrimage has become a dead end. The festival of freedom has become a political and commercial captive.

It is almost as though, in confronting the powers, Jesus calls to the feast: "Come alive." To the authorities: "Let my people go." And to the pilgrims: "Walk to freedom."

A political economy of religious tourism

Ten years ago I sat on the steps of the Temple contemplating that event. My partner Jeanie and I had travelled there as participants in an interfaith human rights delegation. We had met with folks speaking from many different sectors in the conflict. We had journeyed to camps and a hospital in Gaza, a Jewish settlement, a Christian town in the occupied territories which had been sealed off for its organized campaign of tax resistance, a kibbutz, and a peace community with an interfaith school.

We'd met with representatives and Knesset members from Likkud, Labor and right-wing orthodox parties, members of the Palestinian National Council, plus the American Consul General. Our group had sat with Palestinian prisoners, hospitalized children with bul-

let wounds, and professors from universities closed by the occupation. Of course, we saw lots of church people and clergy, joining them in worship of various traditions. And we'd met with extraordinary nonviolent activists and human rights advocates carrying on against crushing odds.

Holy Land pilgrimage is not only big business in the economy, it is virtually subsidized by the state as Israeli public relations.

Yet this walk through the remains of the Herodian temple was the first talk with an archeological scholar, and something was stirring in me. We were hearing of arches and stone-cutting techniques, but I couldn't help imagining a biblically literate holy land tour combined with an astute awareness of Galilean peasants both then and now, one alert to issues of justice in the book and on the ground. Hermeneutics and history. A pilgrimage of head and heart. Not Jesus in a first-century vacuum. Not human rights without recourse to scripture and prayer.

Actually, most churchly tours to Israel and Palestine are substantially politicized, unbeknownst to their pastoral leadership. Holy Land pilgrimage is not only big business in the economy, it is virtually subsidized by the state as Israeli public relations. Of course, airfares are kept low by a subsidized airline with which others compete. Pastors and their spouses usually travel free in exchange for organizing the group stateside. And there are free FAM (familiarization) tours, usually including a hotel package, sometimes offered to entice group leaders and give them an advance sense of ersatz expertise.

The consequence is a seductive indebtedness, a no-questions-asked trust-

ing of the travel agency.

And the actual cost is high. It means seeing a certain view, a certain guided itinerary, most likely on a pre-arranged and unchangeable schedule. Which is to say, it means not seeing certain people and scenes. It means staying in a hotel in West Jerusalem (and perhaps never comprehending that Arab East Jerusalem is part of the occupied territories). It means never having any actual contact (in worship, conversation or hospitality) with Palestinian Christians, second- or third-class citizens, who are also among those enduring the slow transfer out. (A recent book by Hilliard and Bailey, *Living Stones Pilgrimage*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1999, is a guide book designed precisely to overcome this deficit).

Above all, it means being in the hands of a Jewish tour guide. One version of a statement widely attributed to Moshe Dyan goes, "I'd rather have a Palestinian in the cockpit of an F-14 than at the microphone of a tour bus." For the last 30 years, since the 1967 War, hardly any Palestinians, Moslem or Christian, have been licensed as guides. Their number is dwindling through the attrition of age and death. Pious pilgrims have social reality defined for them by guides. Social space can be marked as "safe" or "unsafe," and so to be entered or avoided. A sight pointed out on the right can obscure barbed wire on the left. A security checkpoint for closing down and sealing off an area can be viewed as little more than a toll booth. The official narrative tells the state's sanctioned story — and it is worth the price of a couple of tickets.

To be honest, I found the Christian holy sites singularly unmoving. At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, for example, in the Old City, two orders of monks worked loud competition, chanting aggressively to outdo one another in clashing musical idioms. In my head I

kept hearing, "He is not here! He is not here!"

An oddly impressive fact about the Holy Sepulchre is that when Omar conquered Jerusalem for Islam in the seventh century he was invited to pray in the chapel. But he declined, saying that if he did, his followers would destroy the shrine to build a mosque on the site of his prayer! He went some measure away and knelt down. There, today, stands the mosque of Omar.

The same may be said for the Churches of the Annunciation, Nativity, and Gethsemane. I simply wasn't drawn in or held. Though I would love to have contemplated the Jerusalem skyline at length from the "Gethsemane" grove of trees on the Mount of Olives, its tightly secure formal garden escaped my interest entirely. I did hunger for a unity of spirit and prayer with the host of Christian pilgrims who had bowed their hearts here or there, but I really wanted oneness with them as brothers and sisters who joined the incarnation, who took up the cross, who lived the freedom of the resurrection, not simply ventured out to honor or touch its empty cave or rock.

A pilgrim after all

There were three places I found myself deeply moved. One was Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Monument. To be sure, the memorial does function in the iconography of state theology, telling a sanctioned pre-history. It is the obligatory first stop, explaining and justifying. The museum concludes its walking tour of images with the raising of the Israeli flag.

Still, the place, or its equivalent, is not to be missed on any adequate tour of the

20th century. The thing is rightly done, putting history and art in the service of genuine memory. It grants room to take counsel with one's own soul. So often on the trip, in the hospitals or the camps, we encountered the reality of suffering. My eyeballs, in those moments, seemed made of glass, never yielding to tears. But at the



Israeli soldier

Bill Wylie-Kellermann

memorial, space is carved out and silence preserved. Here I was able to weep.

In the art museum is a room of children's drawings made in the European ghettos and the camps. I stopped before this watercolor rendering: the dark world of the camp, dingy with the smoke of the dead. Angling down left to right is a narrow shaft of light which serves as a

pathway out. At its base is a body pale and prone. A woman in gold leads strongly by the hand another failing figure in blue. She points upward to a tree or beyond. Suddenly come my tears, the weight of the entire memorial and its history pressing them up and out.

The other two places which did move my heart unexpectedly were the Dome of the Rock and the Western Wall — the very places from which the sparks of Middle East conflict fly upwards.

From West Jerusalem the entrance to both the Dome and the Wall are the same, but a simple structural bridge keeps the two streams of pilgrims from contact. Everyone entering the Plaza of the Western Wall must pass through a metal detector and the alert eye of armed Israeli Defense Forces. The Moslems go down, then up a stairway and over.

The Dome of the Rock was built on the leveled surface of the Temple Mount. Inside is the rock on which their ancestor Abraham (yes, one and the same) came near to sacrificing, as they have it, Ishmael. It is also purported by tradition to be the rock on which Mohammed stood when he

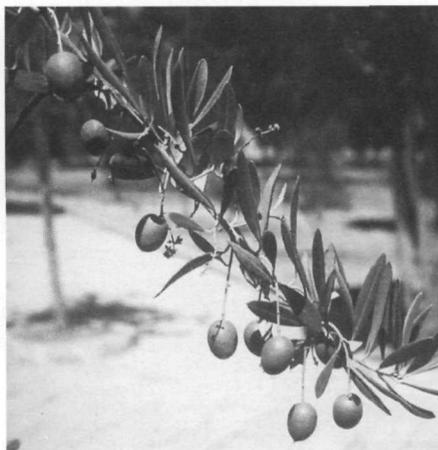
ascended into heaven. Jeanie and I accidentally violated the sanctity of the Dome by kissing just outside the door. Security guards scrambled toward us, walkie-talkies in hand. "The man in the red shirt is kissing a woman!" I apologized genuinely and vociferously.

What I liked about the Temple Mount was its contemplative spaciousness.

Jeanie first pointed it out to me. Here was a holy place with room to move, places to sit, children dancing and playing, pilgrims streaming by.

I didn't expect to like the Western Wall, often called the Wailing Wall, the famous section of exposed stone from the Second Temple where faithful Jews come to mourn and pray. I knew of the Arab homes confiscated and demolished to make its wide plaza. But we went on Sabbath eve.

My head covered with a paper skull cap the wind threatened to snatch, I went to pray. The wall is worn smooth by touching. Worn smooth by many with whom I knew I'd agree about some things (the fidelity of God and the gift of the book) and yet disagree about others (politics, perhaps, and state



Olive branch

Bill Wylie-Kellermann

theology and two-state solutions and so on). When I put my palm to the wall, prayers welled up in me. They poured forth unbidden. For our daughters, for a friend in the Tel Aviv hospital, our

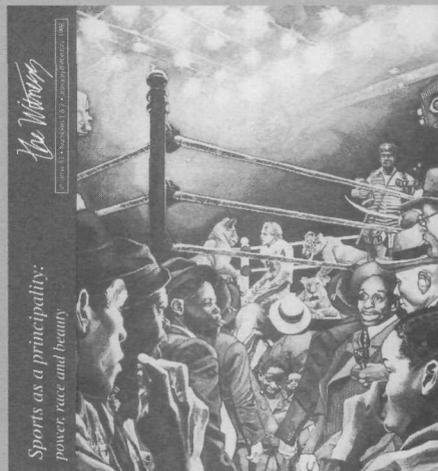
delegation, the people who had met with us (many taking risks to do so), for the divided families shouting across the border in Gaza, for Israelis acting with vision and for truth, for the soldiers who are barely older than the Arab youths who throw the stones, for the prisoners of Ansar 3, for the survivors of holocaust, for the presence of justice, for an end to nuclear weapons here and in my own land, for the coming alive of my own church and tradition, and for some clear leading about how I might offer even a gesture of peace.

All these were prayers arising from and set free by my journey. The inward arrival of an outward walk. Those prayers live within me yet. As a pilgrim, after all, I carry them home. **TW**

Associated Church Press praises *The Witness*

The Associated Church Press honored *The Witness* with four awards at its annual convention this past April. An award of excellence went to *The Witness*' department, "Witnesses: The Quick and the Dead," based on profiles in 1998 by Marianne Arbogast and Julie Wortman. ACP judge Nancy Moffett of the *Chicago Sun-Times* said the series "glows with [the subjects'] own words," illuminating their struggles for the benefit of readers' own reflections.

Three awards of merit went to freelance writer Christopher Cook for his feature article in the March 1998 issue on "America's Welfare Capitalists," to Bill Wylie-Kellermann for his guest editing of the January/February 1998 issue on "Sports as a Principality" and to Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann for her interview with Michael Moore, "Roll the cameras no matter what I say,"



"On the eve of the Superbowl, The Witness dares to argue that sports are too often the object of our misguided love."

featured in July/August 1998.

"On the eve of the Superbowl, *The Witness* dares to argue that sports are too often the object of our misguided love," noted ACP judge Ed Golder (*Grand Rapids Press*) of Bill Wylie-Kellermann's sports issue. "In an issue that probes the dark underbelly of this American religion — from violent metaphors to multi-million dollar player contracts — the writers bring their faith to bear in fresh and creative ways."

Judges praised Christopher Cook for making a "persuasive case that privatization is turning public assistance into a profit-making venture for corporations," and highlighted the "lively and literate" way Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann got beneath "the stock replies of a much-interviewed subject" in her conversation with *Roger and Me* director Michael Moore.

Watch out for Tinky Winky!

If the anti-gay Christian Action Network (CAN) has its way, TV shows like *Will & Grace*, *Dawson's Creek* and maybe even *The Teletubbies* will carry "homosexual content" warning labels. CAN petitioned the Federal Communications Commission in March to add an "HC" warning label to the TV ratings system.

The TV ratings system features letter-based warnings including "L" for profane language, "S" for sexual content, "V" for violence and "D" for suggestive dialogue. It was devised and is administered by five of the major broadcast networks — ABC, CBS, WB, Fox and UPN. NBC and other networks have refused to adopt the system. But because the system is voluntary, and was devised by the networks, only they have authority to change it.

That didn't stop the Christian Action Network. Because some TV broadcasters already place warning labels on programs containing violence, sex and adult language, they should warn parents about gay content as well, CAN President Martin Mawyer said in announcing his idea. Mawyer, a former staffer for the Rev. Jerry Falwell, made his pitch less than two weeks after Falwell warned parents that the Teletubby Tinky Winky is gay because he's purple, sports a triangular antenna and carries a red purse.

Other shows that would earn an "HC" rating from CAN include *NYPD Blue* and *Spin City*. It is unclear whether CAN would insist that C-SPAN be rated "HC" during appearances by openly gay Reps. Barney Frank, Tammy Baldwin or Jim Kolbe.

— Tony Varona, *HRC Quarterly*,
Summer 1999

Terminator technology

Monsanto, the large agro-chemical company that brought us toxic pesticides, Agent Orange and other environmental disasters, is at it again. This time, the company is attempting to increase its profits by ensuring that farmers are forced to buy seeds every year, rather than saving seeds for replanting as farmers have done

for millennia.

In March 1998 the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Delta and Pine Land Company, now a Monsanto subsidiary, were granted a patent on a genetic engineering technique commonly referred to as "terminator technology." Plants engineered using this technology would contain a gene for a toxin that will render the seeds sterile. In addition to the resultant economic burden on farmers who are forced to buy new seed each year, there are environmental risks involved. Scientists warn that the trait for seed sterility could transfer to surrounding plants, thus spreading sterility through the ecosystem and posing an irreversible threat to biodiversity. In regard to "terminator technology," the United Nations Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP IV) urged "Parties, Governments as well as civil society and public and private institutions to consider the precautionary approach in its application." The fact that the USDA may receive royalties from this technology gives the agency a financial incentive to work for the industry's benefit, even at the expense of farmers and the environment.

The corporations involved in genetic engineering would have us believe that these new crops are a panacea for the world's hunger problems. However, the evidence suggests otherwise. By favoring farming systems that diminish plant diversity and promote large-scale industrial agriculture over family farming, developments such as terminatory technology will threaten the food security of farm communities worldwide.

— Naomi Perian, *Greenpeace Magazine*, Spring 1999

Newspaper carriers: outside the law?

In their weekly internet column "Focus on the Corporation," Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman report that a 1994 Newspaper Association of America survey found there were about 450,000 child and adult carriers in the U.S. and that only 5.9

percent of carriers were covered by workers' compensation.

"The reason newspaper carriers are not covered by workers' comp is simple enough," say Mokhiber and Weissman. "In a decades-long campaign, the newspaper industry has successfully sought to exclude newspaper carriers from workers' comp laws, minimum wage laws, workers' safety laws, right up to and including social security laws."

University of Iowa Professor Marc Linder exposed the situation in an article published in the *Loyola Poverty Law Journal* entitled, "What's Black and White and Red All Over? The Blood Tax On Newspapers — or, How Publishers Exclude News Carriers from Workers' Compensation" (August 1998).

Linder sent his article to reporters and columnists around the country who had covered his research in the past, but was told they would never get the story past their editors. One reporter proved the exception: Associated Press workplace reporter Maggie Jackson interviewed Linder and others about the newspaper delivery-workers' comp issue and wrote the story. Her bosses at AP, a cooperative of newspaper companies, "spiked" it, Jackson said.

"When asked about the workers' comp problem, newspaper industry executives argue that since carriers are independent contractors and not employees, the carriers must assume the risks," say Mokhiber and Weissman.

Linder says that he found a few newspaper executives willing to treat carriers as employees and provide them with workers' comp coverage — among them independently owned publications such as *The Columbus Dispatch*.

(Focus on the Corporation is posted at <www.essential.org/monitor>.)

short takes



African dance at the farewell ceremony at the Leverett Peace Pagoda

Daniel A. Brown

Portraits from a pilgrimage: reversing the Middle Passage

From May, 1998 through May, 1999, participants in the Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage traveled, in reverse, the route by which African slaves were brought to the American continents. The pilgrimage, initiated by Clare Carter, a nun of the Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Order, and Ingrid Askew, a member of an African-American theater group, drew about two dozen core walkers, along with hundreds of others who joined the pilgrimage for a day, a week or a month.

From the New England Peace Pagoda in Leverett, Mass., the pilgrims walked down the coast to Georgia, where they traveled inland, stopping at significant sites of the civil rights movement.

The mayor of Richmond, Va. publicly apologized for the history of slavery in the city in a ceremony welcoming the pilgrims.

Bishop Desmond Tutu addressed the group in Atlanta, Ga, telling them they were walking the pilgrimage "to say to the world, 'Don't forget.' We are not going to forget so that we may heal the pain and the anguish. We are not going to forget so that we never repeat this. Let this never again happen to any of God's children."

After traveling by bus to Key West, Fla., the pilgrims took boats to Cuba, Jamaica and Haiti. After a respite in Puerto Rico, most of the group flew to Cape Verde, an island off the coast of

Africa, while eight continued down to Brazil. From there, two found passage on a ship crossing the Atlantic, and others traveled by plane. In Africa, the pilgrimage route included Senegal, The Gambia, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria and South Africa.

The following reflections, excerpted from letters and journals of four of the pilgrims, offer glimpses into their experience of the journey.

Daniel Brown: Differences in perception

The pilgrimage is undergoing serious growth pains when I arrive. After an initial euphoric honeymoon, the group has found itself below the Mason-Dixon line, visiting sites of auction blocks, slave rebellions and executions. These locales traumatized the African-American members while eliciting a jarring curiosity from their European-American allies. No-



Bill Ledger, a Vietnam veteran from Dorset, Vt., comforts Tizita Assefa of Ethiopia who has placed herself in the stocks at Old Williamsburg to reconnect with her enslaved ancestors.

Daniel A. Brown



Pilgrims pray at the Old Slave Mart Museum in Charlotte, S.C.

Skip Schiel

where were these differences in perception more visible than at Old Williamsburg Village, Va. Like Sturbridge, Williamsburg is a living history museum of colonial America, with period costuming, prim shops and hordes of tourists. In the center of town are the stocks and pillories where families can insert themselves for a great photo-op. To me, it's all very quaint. Our procession spontaneously sidetracks over to the stocks. I'm about to jokingly put myself in them when I hear the sound of anguished cries rising from the black women near me. Several of them have fallen to the ground, weeping. I stop in my tracks, then slowly back away. Other women wordlessly take water and slowly bathe the wooden edifice, a ritual cleansing of its pain, blood and terror. They are encircled by their brothers and sisters as the Buddhist monks

immediately form an outer circle of prayer around them. The air becomes electric. Several white men in colonial costumes and tricorne hats wander by, oblivious to this transformation happening in their midst. Ramona Peters (Nosapocket), of the Mashpee Indian nation, shocks us by naming a reality deleted from the history textbooks. Her eyes flash as she speaks: "Is this what you want to see in the middle of your town? People brutalized and humiliated. Violence as entertainment. They did this to their women, their children, their African captives and anyone who dissented. And they are still doing this to us today!" She is so upset, she is shaking. Tizita Assefa, an Ethiopian woman of immense grace and dignity, quietly places herself in the pillory. Creating connection with her African ancestors, tears roll down her eyes and stain the bleached,

grey wood. Bill Ledger, a veteran of both the Vietnam War and earlier pilgrimages, puts his camera aside and lovingly begins to caress her face. It is an act of compassion and bravery, happening at a time when some black participants have expressed their leering about their white counterparts even being present at such an emotional outpouring. But we seem to be carried along by a spirit larger than ourselves here.

Prayers are said, libations are poured in the African tradition of honoring ancestral spirits, and the walk is resumed.

Renay Mercer: Pregnant with blessings

Spiritually, this journey has been trying. At times it is difficult to be on the land where my African ancestors gave their



Foot massage, Trenton, N.J.

Skip Schiel



Boat crossing to Cuba

Jennifer Iré

lives in order to feed white capitalism.

Toward the end of the U.S. portion of the journey we traveled from New Orleans, La. to Natchez, Miss. While in Natchez we fasted and were in silence for three days. We stayed on an old plantation and slept in the slave quarters. The evening that we broke the fast and silence, we held a ritual to honor our ancestors who had given their lives on that land. Part of the ritual was an altar that was made up of bricks that the enslaved Africans made with their own hands. At the center was a brick that had the imprint of one of their hands. During this ritual several pilgrims offered prayers, flowers, drumming, dancing, incense and candles in order to give honor and respect to God and the ancestors. I felt overcome with spirit, and danced around the circle of the group. When the dancing had stopped within me, I felt the spirit of one of my male ancestors telling me, "Renay, you

are pregnant with many blessings. All you have to do is trust." This is what this journey is about for me.

Gregory Dean Smith: Symphony of drums

In South America, we have covered many of the sites germane to our African ancestors: ports of disembarkment, whipping posts, plantations, cathedrals built by Africans, African burial grounds, slave quarters, holding cell areas. We have walked this earth, eaten, laughed, shared stories and exchanged cultural experiences and histories with the people of Bahia, Brazil. There were more Africans brought here than anywhere in the world.

We met the founder of a movement called *Filho de Gangi* (Sons of Gangi). Beautiful black women and men who are devotees of Gandhi wore all-white robes. Nearly 6,000 of them walked in a proces-

sion during Carnival de Bahia. Another group that showed what a black procession should look like was *Ele Aye*. Thousands of women and men dressed in two-piece white outfits with colorful prints of drums and dancers elegantly designed on them. Each section of drummers was led by the master drummer who walked backwards while conducting his orchestra. There were fine, beautiful sisters, wrapped in gorgeous white-printed sarongs, moving and dancing in rhythmic unison to the drums as they moved down the street.

Carnival Bahia is a continual symphony of drums, all kinds of drums and string instruments. Even the young kids practice their rhythmic patterns on the drums and in Capoeira (the martial arts/dance) much like the youth in North America practice their rap and hip-hop dance.

There are many kids sleeping on the streets. There are many reduced to beg-



National Dance Company of Cuba welcomes walkers and performs traditional African dances of the Orishas (sacred deities of Africa) on the grounds of a former slave plantation.

Jennifer Iré

ging, young and old alike. A legion of trinket sellers swarm the tourist, all selling the same items to survive. Yes, racism is alive and well in Brazil. Neoslavery is accomplished here just as in North America.

Kathleen Anderson: Door of no return

Friday, we held a ceremony on Gorée Island, Senegal which included many people of this island community. Several traditional drummers led our procession around the island, culminating at the seaside in front of the so-called Door of No Return. With us, walking back through the slave house came the thousands of ancestral spirits we've collected coming through the U.S. and the Caribbean, as well as those raised up as we drummed our way around the island. Reversing the exit of our ancestors, coming back through

Reversing the exit of our ancestors, coming back through the Door of No Return, deeply impacted the African Americans and the Africans in our entourage.

the Door of No Return, deeply impacted the African Americans and the Africans in our entourage. As one young man remarked, "Never has anyone come back through that door. Thank you, this should become an annual event." Imagine, Africans from the Diaspora, Africans from the motherland reentering the door so many thousands of our ancestors departed from expecting never to return again. Imagine the tears which flowed from our

eyes, the rejoicing which ensued, the whoops and shouts, the rhythmic beat of the drums celebrating our return home. In the vestibule of the house of slaves, pilgrims and community members danced rejoicing.

This is a powerful journey. Last week as we walked to Albreda, The Gambia in the high heat of the sun, I couldn't help but think of those captives who walked this same route to the slave ships.

With each step through the powdery, dusty red earth I thought of them chained together, walking into a hell they could never have imagined. I thought too of Josee and Nelson — the Bahai and her husband who hosted 17 pilgrims in their home in Cape Verde — escaping war-torn Guinea-Bissau with their two small children. There is so much work to be done to undo the legacy of slavery. TW

Tracking the Underground Railroad

by Leah Samuel

For six weeks in 1996, Anthony Cohen took what was essentially a very long walk, physically retracing the steps of thousands who used the Underground Railroad to run away from involuntary servitude and gratuitous cruelty.

While Cohen happily admits to having gained much, this pilgrimage to the past had not been his intention, at first. He had only meant to study history, not live it. In his senior year at American University, Cohen's interest in African-American history prompted him to study the Underground Railroad.

"I wanted to focus on an aspect of history that was largely unrecorded," he explained. "But the Underground Railroad was a secret system, and therefore there was little written evidence of it."

Much of the written material Cohen did find were either fictional accounts of slave travels or books highlighting the abolitionist movement. But Cohen wanted to find out where the Underground Railroad was — the physical layout of the routes that slaves traveled as they left the southern U.S. and found the way to Canada.

Cohen's first stop took him through the libraries, courthouses, and archives of his native Maryland. During the years of American slavery, Maryland was a free, or non-slavery, state.

"Any slaves coming up the east coast

would have to pass through Maryland," Cohen explained.

"So I started looking through old newspapers and found runaway slave notices. I noticed horses and wagons were used, disguises were used, as well as black and white accomplices. I found out about a Quaker community near our county who helped slaves escape,

Intrigued by the story of Henry "Box" Brown, a slave who had himself shipped from Virginia to Philadelphia, Cohen decided to take part of his trip in a box, enlisting friends to ship him from Philadelphia to New York. It was an incredible ordeal.

and kept diaries from that period. I went to the courthouse and found [records of] people who had been tried and convicted of harboring slaves." Assisting slaves in escaping was a federal crime at the time of the Underground Railroad, a fact that made even more remarkable its existence and its success.

Between 30,000 and 100,000 African-American slaves freed themselves this way between the 1830s and the end of the Civil War.

"After about six months of research, I was able to reconstruct a number of different escape routes," Cohen said. "So basically, I wrote my paper for my senior thesis and thought that was the end of it."

After he graduated, Cohen went to work for the Montgomery County Historical Society. A director there read Cohen's paper and asked him to use it as a basis to write a guidebook for people taking driving trips through the area. After the book was published, Cohen found himself called upon to speak to schools.

"One time, a kid thought that because I knew about all these escape routes, I was a runaway slave," he laughs. But it was that innocent misunderstanding by an imaginative child that led Cohen to seriously think about using his research to recreate the fugitive life of those before him who were determined to no longer be slaves.

He got help with the trip from the National Parks and Conservation Association, with the goal of eventually creating a series of historic Underground Railroad sites. The NPCA supplied Cohen with a cellular telephone, a toll-free telephone number and a web site where he could document his progress, and where history buffs and others could track his journey.

Cohen chose one of the Underground Railroad routes he had originally mapped out. From May 6 to June 15, 1996, he traveled from Sandy Spring, Md. to Niagara Falls, Canada. Though much of the trip was on foot, Cohen also went by horse, boat and train, seeking out the most historically accurate modes of travel. He met people along the way who, hearing of his effort, took part in their own way.

"I met people in their 80s and 90s, who as children in the early 1900s, met some of the escaped slaves," he said.

Leah Samuel is a Detroit-based freelance writer.

"Sometimes, these people would show me where their parents and grandparents hid slaves.

"I was taken in by people who were very good to me," Cohen said. "They would get me something to eat, let me make long-distance calls, let me sleep or sit up and talk. I got really close to people, then said goodbye in the morning. You found and lost your home day by day. I thought, 'How could anybody stand this?'"

"When traveling that route, I realized that the Underground Railroad was not all good," he added. "While it took you away from slavery, it also took you away from your family, and everything you knew, for the promise of something you didn't know."

Cohen's journey was filled with much fear and uncertainty, and no guarantees. Often he didn't know where his next ride or sleeping place was coming from. Sometimes, people he thought would come through for him did not.

WISHING YOU HAD HELD ON TO THAT OLD ISSUE OF THE WITNESS?

The topics explored in the pages of *The Witness* seldom go out of date. And study groups interested in a particular issue are likely to find a number of back issues which pertain. We still have copies available for most back issues. To order, send a check for \$3 per copy ordered to *The Witness*, 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. To charge your back issue to Visa or Mastercard, call (313) 841-1967, or fax (313) 841-1956.



Anthony Cohen

This was similar to the experiences of slaves, Cohen concluded, and he soon learned to accept his emotions as they came.

Because he was particularly intrigued by the story of Henry "Box" Brown, a slave who had himself shipped from Virginia to Philadelphia, Cohen decided to take part of his trip in a box, enlisting friends to ship him from Philadelphia to New York. It was an incredible ordeal. With only his cell phone and a bottle of water, Cohen lay folded up in the box as it was loaded onto a train, bound for New York.

"Workers came and sat on the box, the weather was hot and I was sweating," he said. At one point he witnessed, through an air hole in the box, an unlocked freight-car door sliding open during the train ride.

"I thought I was going to fall out," he said. "I kept thinking that if the box fell out I would die, but that if I stayed in the box, I'd die from the heat."

When Cohen's box arrived in New York, it was mistakenly marked for further travel to Long Island, but he

was rescued by friends who found him and pulled him out. By that time, Cohen had become so dehydrated that he was unable to urinate for almost three days.

"I kept thinking, 'My God! I was in the box for six-and-a-half hours and Henry Brown spent 26 hours in his box,'" he said.

Cohen engaged in numerous conversations along his way. "I think history and identity are important to people," he says. "People I met would go into their feelings on race, and they were really honest. One white man who heard my story confessed that he owned a piece of land in the 1960s, and when a black couple came by to buy it, he told them it had been sold, under pressure from his neighbors. He said he regretted doing that, but that he was glad he lived long enough to see people differently."

"I also met an old woman from Germany who, as a child, was taught to play games based on the Underground Railroad," he said. "She told me her parents taught her the games so they could prepare for hiding Jews during World War II."

Cohen is working on a film documentary and a book about his trip. The web site (www.ugrr.org/wwwhome.html) continues to gain the interest of those wanting to know more about the Underground Railroad. Meanwhile, Cohen hopes to raise money for the restoration of some of the safehouses the slaves used.

"History, I think, is a measuring stick to show us how far we've come," he said. "When we lead our daily lives, history is the here and now. But we can find within ourselves a connection to the past, a time when there was no political correctness. We in America talk about being a multicultural nation, but mentally, we're still trying to get there." **TW**

'We shall all be received in Graceland'

by Ken Sehested

I'll never forget the experience. Our interfaith delegation of Jews, Muslims and an assorted variety of Christians had eaten a late dinner in a downtown restaurant in Zagreb. We had been invited by the Franciscan Abbot of Croatia to lead an interfaith service for one simple, dramatic purpose: to declare that the God of Roman Catholics, of the Orthodox and of Muslims — the dominant and warring religious subcultures — shared no part in the violence engulfing the region.

My roommate and I were walking to catch the trolley, making our way back to our borrowed apartment. Then, out of the shadows, a guest joined us. His appearance was that of the homeless; his face and voice, of mental dysfunction. But not in the least bit menacing. Jovial, in fact.

We quickly sensed he was wondering where we were from, no doubt having been intrigued at the sound of our odd-sounding language. "I'm from Pennsylvania, in the U. S.," said my friend Charlie, a resident of one of the Bruderhof communities. "And I'm from Tennessee," I said, speaking slowly and distinctly, vainly hoping that my modulation would make it easier to comprehend. The furrowed brow and shake of the head from our gentle inquisitor indicated his incomprehension.

Then an idea came to mind: "I'm from Memphis," I said. Suddenly his face was illuminated with recognition, and he

Ken Sehested is executive director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America and lives in Clyde, North Carolina.

roared out, "ELVIS!", and began a swivel-hipped pantomime. You'd be surprised at how many times Elvis, and his Graceland home, have served to "locate" me in the mind of those who know little U.S. geography.

I've been to Graceland myself, during my eight-year Memphis residency. Well ... not exactly inside Elvis' actual house, which happens to be the second-most visited house (behind The White House)

in the nation. But I've carted many out-of-town guests there — including Baptist pastors from Ireland and from Cuba, and a touring group of South African anti-apartheid activists, each of whom said they'd dreamed of going for years.

I was stunned when I first learned how spectacularly popular Graceland is as a ground zero for pilgrims. Nearly three-quarters of a million people visit annually, 25,000 of those for the August anniversary of Elvis' death. They come from around the world. Even Israel has an Elvis fan club.

Evidently, one of the currently popular impersonators is a lesbian who performs Elvis tunes accompanied by her band, the Straight White Boys. Another — "El Vis," from Mexico — has cut

A disowned history of oppression

In a recent article in *Newsweek* magazine, one of their finest writers used the epithet for the poor, white, rural working class of the South in the lead article, stating, "President Clinton can bark orders like a redneck drill sergeant." I wrote a letter of protest. An inquiry as to why it was not published might be appropriate.

Is it because the larger culture, the allegedly sophisticated culture, needs and will find or create someone upon whom to place the blame for our interminable racist society? "We are not racist. They are the racists. Not government. Not commerce and industry. Not the media. Not the mainline churches. They, the rednecks, are the racists."

In Virginia at one point more than 70 percent of the white population was of indentured stock. While African Americans created a conscious culture out of their slavery — history, art, literature, music — the poor white, ashamed that his progenitors had been

brought to these shores as servants, would be apt to tell the grandchildren their ancestors landed at Plymouth Rock. If a redneck were to deny and conceal her own slavery, then she had to dwell on the slavery of others, and with manipulation by the gentry deem herself better because of skin color.

Here is the real tragedy. Race has been the trump card used to keep the poor white and the poor black as enemies. The phenomenon, the music, the life of Elvis Presley, with all its foibles, sought something he simply intuited by being redneck, sensitive and brilliant — to heal that rift, to bring the two to see that their tragedies were one and the same — the same pain, the same maltreatment and exploitation, the same enemy that continues to promote the cleft between them for political and economic gain.

— Will Campbell, at an Elvis Presley symposium in 1995, later published in *Baptist Peacemaker*

numerous albums. The King's appeal is extraordinary.

The majority of those who make the trek are, like Elvis himself, residents of the lower end of the economic spectrum. The scholars say that Graceland's appeal is precisely because Elvis represents the archetypal poor-boy-who-made-it-big.

The Memphis Chamber of Commerce is happy to be among the beneficiaries of such projection (Graceland rakes in \$90 million in annual revenues). The city's keepers of higher cultural standards are simply embarrassed at having "Redneck Heaven" as a symbol of the city.

We Southerners can be a bit touchy about our backwater, redneck image. You remember that Jeff Foxworthy joke: "You might be a redneck if ... hail hits your house and you have to take it to the body shop for an estimate." Then again, you might be a redneck if ... yuppies get rich making fun of you.

Unlike the "n" word, referring to African Americans, or the "w" word for those crossing the Rio Grande from Mexico, or even the "g" word for Asian-Americans of all sorts, no one ever bothers to substitute a single-letter abbreviation for "redneck."

Have you ever considered where the word comes from? In an earlier genteel age, the vast majority of "white" Southerners were not. Given the agricultural economy of the region, and the inability to own slaves even if they wanted them, most spent long days in the sun, bent over, neck exposed. The skin's discoloration was the inescapable mark of one's class.

I've always thought it odd that political progressives have warm, romantic associations with foreign-sounding words like peasant or *campesino*. Yet the closest English-equivalent is redneck.

Peasant dresses and shirts are the stuff of boutiques. Rednecks shop at Goodwill and Salvation Army.



Elvis fans queue up in front of Elvis Presley's Graceland mansion.

Reuters/Jeff Mitchell/Archive Photos

We progressives are as fickle as the rest, I guess. I'll never forget my astonishment when, having fled my homeland as a student to embrace the cosmopolitan life of New York City, I arrived just in time for pointy-toed cowboy boots to come into style in Greenwich Village, and country music star Hank Williams Jr. to showcase at The Bitter End. Mesquite-grilled cooking, and later, "Cajun food," became the culinary rage in The City (as New Yorkers are wont to say). In West Texas, where I grew up, mesquite wood was what you used to barbecue if you couldn't afford the luxury of store-bought charcoal. And down the bayous of South Louisiana, where I went to high school, Cajun food was what the mongrel-breed illiterates out in the swamp ate.

I keep hoping that the few major funding sources for peace activists will develop a predilection for Southern drawls. But so far *The New Yorker* magazine's caricatured map of the U.S., which denotes little evidence of intelligent life between the coasts, continues to shape the cultured mental grid of sophisticated

progressives and reactionaries alike.

Like most pilgrimages, my own involved a journey of great physical and cultural distance. But like T.S. Eliot's explorer, I have arrived back where I started, "and know the place for the first time."

And because of that I am acquainted with the incredulous response, in John's Gospel (1:45-46), to Philip's claim to have "found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth."

"Can anything good come from Nazareth?" was Nathaniel's sarcastic retort. Nazareth, it would appear, was within the borders of first-century Palestine's redneck country.

You'd be surprised at what's going on in the Nazarethian backwaters and along the "blue highways" which are folded into the fabric of the land between the coasts and out of the glare of big-city lights. As Paul Simon says in his "Graceland" song: "I've reason to believe we shall all be received in Graceland." **TW**

Coming home in Russia

by Martha Dage

On August 3, 1998, I board the plane from Copenhagen to St. Petersburg. I stare at my fellow passengers. These must be Russians. What will I learn about them? What will I learn about myself on this trip?

Making my way to my seat, I am struck by one man's face. It bears an uncanny resemblance to a picture I have seen of my father at a similar age. My father, who was born in St. Petersburg, and whom I met only once, when I was already an adult.

Larissa Radetskaya, my English-speaking guide, greets me warmly at the St. Petersburg airport.

She and I sit in the back of the car speaking English, while Anotoly Garshin, a Russian, in whose apartment Larissa has arranged for me to board, and his friend, the driver, sit in front. Their appreciative laughter greets my first Russian sentence. "*Ya gavaryou tolka nemnochka pa roosky.*" (I speak only a little Russian.)

"You will be changed," a friend had predicted as I prepared for this trip. She cited the suffering and poverty of Russians as the reason. However, at no time during my week in St. Petersburg do I see anything horrifying or even surprising to me, since I live in inner-city Detroit

The one exception is the arrival at Anotoly's apartment. There is nothing really wrong with the apartment itself. It has adequate space and plumbing and a telephone, which, if one shouts, is perfectly serviceable. It's just that from the outside, it looks nothing like an apart-

Martha Dage teaches Spanish at Friends School and has worked part-time in *The Witness'* Detroit office for two years.

ment building.

We turn into a courtyard which appears to be at the back side of a factory.

"This is Anotoly's door," says Larissa, indicating an unlikely opening at the side of one building.

Gradually it dawns on me that these are not warehouses but residences.

Inside Anotoly's door, I find myself in a pleasant, light-filled apartment with white walls and parquet floors. My room is simple and clean. An icon hangs above the couch which my host quickly folds out into a bed for me.

Anotoly, a chemistry professor whose small salary necessitates that he offer

My sister and I, though we are foreigners who speak little Russian, are always accorded a warm smile of recognition or even a courtly bow, when we explain to Russians who our grandmother was.

hospitality to foreign visitors, is a charming host. He speaks simply. Having studied one year of college Russian, I can usually understand him.

After being plied with much food (unavoidable for a guest in Russia), I am left alone for a few hours to rest in the apartment. I am delighted to have the solitude. I stare out my window at the framework of a building rising from the mud. It will be a library some day but my host is not sure when, since it has already been un-

der construction for seven years.

St. Petersburg. I breathe in and out. I am euphorically grateful to God to be here.

It's hard for me to say when my fascination with Russia began. It had always been there, waiting beneath the surface to blossom, ever since I learned at the age of 6 from my American mother that my father, whom I had never met, was Russian. It took root more deeply and painfully when, at 13, I learned more. His aristocratic family had been forced to flee Russia for their lives at the time of the revolution. He and my mother had not married. He didn't acknowledge me as his daughter.

My interest in Russia seemed to disappear altogether for about 10 years when, in my 20s, I became deeply involved in the mysticism of the omniscient, impersonal God of Eastern religion.

When I returned to the Episcopal Church in my early 30s, curiosity about my father surfaced again. Finally, I searched him out and talked with him once. Politely, in his accented yet intimidatingly fluent English, he acknowledged that it was possible I was his biological daughter.

He told me the family medical history and his mother's maiden name. But, after that, he never answered my letters. Then he died.

In my early 40s, I still felt missing pieces, gaps in my sense of identity that wanted filling.

Following leads from the one conversation with my father, I located his other daughter, my half sister. There followed three years of correspondence, phone conversations and visits back and forth between my sister and me. Now we know each other, like each other even.

"Marta, your sister's on the phone," shouts Anotoly, who is back in the apartment, knocking at my room door. My sister is on the phone. My sister! For me!

In St. Petersburg! A fine line of excitement, energy zings through my body from my toes up to my head.

"Hello!" I shout into the phone.

That first evening, Larissa and my sister and I do what residents of St. Petersburg love to do on summer evenings. We walk around gazing at the beautiful city in the light that never fades. We stroll along the banks of the majestic Neva River. We see the Bronze Horseman, the statue of Peter the Great of whom Pushkin writes. We stand in the Isaac's Square with St. Isaac's Cathedral on one side and Catherine the Great's palace on the other.

"Does it look the way you thought it would?" asks Larissa.

I ponder the question. The grand scale of the buildings, the spacious squares and the wide avenues of the city remind me of Scandinavian cities I've seen. And yet, from time spent in India, there is something I feel and recognize here as Asian.

Finally I answer that I didn't have particular expectations. It's more as if there was always a blank space inside of me waiting to know just what St. Petersburg looked like, what it felt like. Now, these broad vistas, this indefinable evening light, the sounds of automobiles and gentle Russian voices are gradually filling that space.

It is marvelous for my sister and I to be here together. Unlike me, she was raised with a sense of herself as Russian, yet the iron curtain rendered St. Petersburg as impenetrable to her as it was to me.

Now we can freely visit the Hermitage Museum where the furnishings and coaches used by the tzars appear more grand than in a fairy tale, and where we stumble upon four rooms of Picasso in the Impressionist Section. We climb to the top of St. Isaac's Cathedral where we see the whole city spread out before us in a stately expanse.



Martha Dage [center] visits her Teleios partner Evgenia Kuzmina [left] and her volunteer, Olga Rubis [right]. The Teleios Foundation is an Episcopal Church program working with the Orthodox Church in St. Petersburg by connecting older women, seminary students or needy families there with sponsors here. For more information write: P.O. Box 7213, Shrewsbury, NJ 07702; e-mail <teleios@aol.com>.

One day I am taken to visit my partner in the Teleios Fund, a *babushka* (grandmother) for whom I send regular financial support. Vera Sorokina, the Russian administrator of the program, escorts me up the six flights which my 80-year-old partner must climb daily. My partner lives in one room of a communal apartment. She and her caretaker have prepared tea for me with tomatoes, cucumbers, watermelon, bread and even sweets. Since these women have very little money this is, to me, a holy meal — and indeed, we stand facing the icon corner and say the Lord's Prayer in Slavonic before we begin.

Another day, my sister, Larissa and I slosh through mud and rain (typical

weather) to St. Petersburg University. I have made contact with Oxana Vahromeeva, a young woman whose subject area is womens' history at the university. She has found the student records of our grandmother, a Bestuzhevsky student, one of the first women to attend this special womens' college of the university. From among the very wealthy and

the nobility, only intellectually capable women could attend the Bestuzhevsky courses. These idealistic young women introduced progressive ideas, such as health care for the poor, into the larger society. Even the Soviets taught about the Bestuzhevsky students in a positive light. My sister and I, though we are foreigners and speak little Russian, are always accorded a warm smile of recognition, or even a

courtly bow, when we explain to Russians who our grandmother was.

Now Oxana ushers us into a one-room museum. Historical photos and books line the walls, while a magnificent, tiled Russian stove presides in one corner. Soon we sit together in her office while she graciously serves loose tea without a strainer in ill-matching plastic cups. Instead of sugar we are offered varenia, fruit preserves, to sweeten it.

We give Oxana copies of our grandmother's passports, letters and some pages of literary criticism she wrote (which a Russian friend in America has described as "a treasure" for their exquisite use of the Russian language). She gives us a copy of our grandmother's diploma and

other records.

Our exchange is a warm one. Russians are generally grateful for any bits of their history lost through Communism. For me, every time I hear Oxana refer to “your grandmother” I grow a little inside. It confers on me something I’ve been missing all my life, a sense of my Russian identity.

My week is now almost over. I reflect on my friend’s prophecy that I would be changed in Russia. Although I’ve seen beautiful sights and been warmly received by hospitable people I don’t feel fundamentally changed.

Sunday morning I head for the liturgy at St. Nicholas Cathedral. I get off the bus and cross a little square. The blue domes of the cathedral emerge from behind the trees. There’s an ineffable freshness in the air.

The church has two floors where two liturgies are being simultaneously celebrated. I go up to the second floor. I am happy to find that, although I don’t understand the Slavonic, the melodies be-

ing sung are familiar from the Orthodox church I have attended in America. I can find myself in the English/Slavonic liturgy book I’ve brought along.

I stand taking in the particularly Russian combination of grandeur and intimacy which surrounds me. The vaulting iconostasis hides the priest. Icons, illumined by the warm glow of candles, nestle in corners and by pillars around the church. Worshipers stand, in no particular formation, on the thickly carpeted floor. The choir’s a cappella singing is so lovely that it produces in me an inner fluttering which I recognize as an indication that I’m overdosed. My senses cannot fully register this glory.

Celebrating the Eucharist, after the priest repeats the words of Christ, “This is my body,” and “This is my blood,” he then offers Christ’s body and blood back to Him with the words, “Thine own of thine own we offer unto Thee on behalf of all and for all.” Many worshipers prostrate to the floor and I

do, too. The choir begins to sing so beautifully that I am almost physically dizzy.

From deep inside me, pushing aside everydayness, a passionate yearning to merge myself totally into God wells up. I feel certain that this yearning is not only in my heart, but that it is the collectively experienced meaning of our liturgy. This is the same feeling that fueled all my years of involvement in Eastern religion. Never, even faced with the undeniable truth that the Eastern religious group I belonged to was an exploitative cult, have I been able to deny that I was touched to the very core of my being by God when I was there. That experience has remained an inner barometer, measured against which, all my subsequent 15 years of Christian worship have always fallen short.

But now, unexpectedly, I am reunited to my first spiritual awakening. I know what part of my soul is Russian. I’m home!

The next day I leave Russia, changed. **TW**

Pilgrimage culture shock

They all laughed hard. Not uncharitably, mind you, but lustily and joyously; and I really did not mind. Though, if the truth be told, I was confused because the cause of their laughter was myself. And yet, so far as I knew, I had done nothing funny, nor did I look unusual to myself.

For it was a pilgrimage, wasn’t it? We all were to assemble at a given address, on that particular date, to go to the shrine of the Martyred Jesuits in Auriesville, N.Y.

Well, here I was, with my hobnailed boots, a knapsack, and a precious gourd of water. What was so funny about that? Finally, one good soul exclaimed, “Katie, you don’t mean you thought we were walking to Auriesville! That’s hun-

dreds of miles away. We are going by bus, you nut ...”

It was, I confess, my turn to look astonished, and finally to laugh. A pilgrimage by bus! I had never heard of such a thing. And in my lifetime I had made many pilgrimages.

A pilgrimage was a sort of prayer: an act of penance, thanksgiving or praise. How all this could be accomplished in a short bus ride was more than I could figure out. But then I was in America and not in Russia. I climbed meekly into the bus.

As we rolled through a beautiful countryside, I was back in the soft pastel-shaded summer of northern Russia.

The family walks with us to the village green. Here the rest of the pilgrims are assembling, all dressed alike. All are bare-

footed. They may be, and sometimes are, princesses and dukes or peasants and paupers. But no one can tell which is which.

We start chanting the litanies — we will keep that up at regular intervals all through the journey. In between the litanies there is great silence, in which each talks to God in their own way.

The bus lurched. Someone laughed. In the back of the bus someone started to sing “Mairzy dotes.”

My hobnail boots were heavy on my feet, my knapsack heavy on my lap. My heart was heavy with a strange sorrow. Maybe it was just homesickness.

— *from My Russian Yesterdays, by Catherine de Hueck Doherty, Madonna House Pub., Cumbermere, Ont., Canada.*

Pilgrims' tales

Dream pilgrimage

In February, 1937, when I was 14 years old, I became very ill with scarlet fever. Out of the seven children in our family, only the two oldest escaped the disease. My younger brother, age 4, died at its hands. On the night of the day on which he had been buried, the fever raged in me and I was close to death. I was unconscious for a time and then I was in a state of sort of semi-consciousness.

During this period I was aware that I was in my bed in my home and very ill, but somehow not far from me was an open field with a large round pit with a low wall that was rounded at the top enclosing the pit. Ladders were placed at different points around the wall of the pit and small dark scantily clad men were busily climbing up and down the ladders, going in and out of the pit.

They were not at all frightening, just intent on what they were doing. Although the pit was tranquil in appearance I somehow thought it must be hell and the little men had come to take me there as soon as I died. But I had complete certainty that I was not going to die although the doctor, nurse and others surrounding me were quite uncertain about whether or not I was going to pull through. I recovered from the illness and amazingly I had no permanent ill effects, although my temperature had been well over 108 degrees.

The image of the round pit and the small men remained with me after my recovery. The fact that I continued to wonder about its meaning, I believe, was evidence that the interpretation of its being hell did not explain the true meaning.

Forty years later, when I was 54, I was visiting friends in Santa Fe. One day we went to Bandelier National Monument

with its ancient Indian ruins. As we walked into the canyon, one of the first things I saw was a round, walled pit, that looked very much like the pit that appeared to me in my illness. I asked, "What is that?"

I was told that it was a *kiva* which was used by the Indians for religious activities. I felt that at last I had some inkling of the meaning of the strange apparition I had had on the night that I came so close to death.

I feel sure that there was some connection between these small

dark men, their ceremonies in the *kiva*, and my healing. A few years after the visit to Bandelier, I had the opportunity to move to Santa Fe and I felt drawn to do so. Occasionally, I go back to the *kiva* in Bandelier and just feel its energy and sit quietly by its side, still wondering about the precise connection between it and me.

— from a letter by a Roman Catholic sister in her 60s, in *The Archetype of Pilgrimage* by Jean Dalby Clift and Wallace B. Clift, Paulist Press, © 1996 by *The Institute for World Spirituality*



Native street procession, mural by Prefete Dufaut

Womb of the Goddess

Goddess rituals sometimes involve pilgrimages to sacred places. Non-native North Americans are beginning to recognize the deep loss we suffered when our ancestors were uprooted or uprooted themselves from lands that held memories stretching back through the generations. The earth holds the energies of the beings who have lived upon it. Sacred places hold the dreams, visions and hopes of all the people who have visited them. The idea of pilgrimage stems from this

fact. A pilgrimage can be as simple as returning each year to a favorite park at a specific season. Some non-native Americans have also begun to visit the places known as sacred by Native Americans.

Many from European-based cultures gain sustenance from visiting sacred places in Europe.

One group of women traveled together to Crete to contact the energies of ancient cultures that celebrated the Goddess. During their pilgrimage, they hiked together up the side of a mountain to a small cave called Trapeza. Archaeologists say this cave was inhabited in Neolithic times, six to eight thousand years ago. The women were aware that caves were once viewed as the womb of the Goddess, the opening to the center of the earth, the place of mysteries.

The Trapeza cave has two small unfolding rooms. The women gravitated to the smaller one, placing candles and a terracotta image of a Neolithic Goddess on a stone in its center. Libations of milk and honey were poured on the rock, and a song was sung. Then each woman spoke all the names she could remember of her motherline. "I am Carol, daughter of Janet, daughter of Lena, daughter of Dora, who came to the United States from Germany, granddaughter of Mary Rita, daughter of Elizabeth who came from Ireland," and so on around the circle. This was followed by the naming of female mentors and friends.

As hundreds of female names echoed off the walls of the cave, the group sensed its connection to Neolithic women who may have sat in a circle in that same cave, remembering ancestors.

— *from* Rebirth of the Goddess: Finding Meaning in Feminist Spirituality, *by* Carol P. Christ, Perseus Books, 1997

Mount Kailâsa

Kailâsa is a temple of the Absolute. Unlike any mosque, cathedral or shrine, it is not man-made. Kailâsa simply is; it stands there. It has been discovered as a sacred symbol by most of the South Asian religions (Bon-Po, Hindus, Jainas, Buddhists, Sikhs, etc.). But it was already there.

Many pilgrimages are hazardous, but this one is especially risky. Neither modern rescue facilities are available

The overwhelming presence is that of the Earth. She is there with the moon and the sun, and there are the stars that move around — smoothly and without hurry.

nor the traditional ones, since the long route of pilgrimage from Katmandu, Kodari, Nyalam, etc. has practically no pilgrims. The subjective aspect of this experience is that one has to be prepared to risk one's life — especially if one is not young and not trained in walking at high altitudes.

But if during the night the subjective awareness prevails, during the day the objective awareness is overwhelming. For hours and days the scenery is timeless and the landscape is out of history. All human concerns tied to temporality dissipate. Human history, both personal and collective, sinks into irrelevance. The immense valleys, the distant peaks, the lack of trees, the rocks and rivers, the vast highlands, all exist without history. They don't come from an origin and go to an eschaton. They are simply present.

In our modern times, most of human existence is lived on the river-bed of

history. Most of our human actions are goal-orientated and our lives are eschatologically conditioned. We seem to live for tomorrow, to work for the future and act in view of some goal to be attained in time. Death frightens because death frustrates all our projects and interrupts our dreams. We live projecting, believing we go somewhere in history. All this disappears in the high plains of Tibet. It is not that history stops. History is simply not there. Life is of the present. If you have to live life to the full, you have to live it today without waiting for the morrow, without reserving energy for the future.

The overwhelming presence is that of the Earth. She is there with the moon and the sun, and there are the stars that move around — smoothly and without hurry.

The pilgrim goes "there" just to go there, just for nothing — and if one has the secret desire for "merits" (*punya*) one is soon disappointed. The pilgrim interrupts all the chores and "important" activities of ordinary life and is not even sure to be able to resume them after the journey.

Paradoxically enough, the pilgrimage helps us realize that the way is to no-where, that it is now-here. It is the first step that counts. And each step is the first — and the last.

— *from* A Pilgrimage to Kailâsa and Manasaras, *by* Raimon Panikkar, Concilium, 1996/4, SCM Press Ltd. and Orbis Books

Has your address changed?

PLEASE let us know if you have moved! Returned magazines cost us money — and you frustration!

EDS honors Wylie-Kellermann

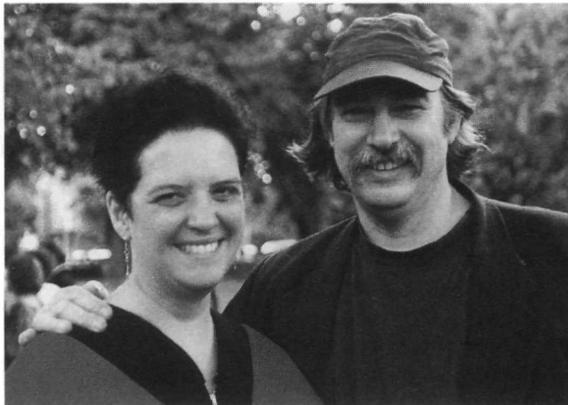
The Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., awarded *Witness* co-editor Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann an honorary doctorate for her social justice commitments during the seminary's commencement day festivities May 27, 1999. Louie Crew (champion of the full inclusion of gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered Episcopalians in the life of the church), Rena Weller Karefa-Smart (a lifetime proponent of global ecumenism) and Roy I. Sano (a United Methodist bishop who has been a longtime advocate for multiculturalism and racial justice) were also honored.

Fredrica Thompsett, the seminary's dean of students, commended Wylie-Kellermann for her honorary degree with the following observations:

"Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann, yours was a childhood and adolescence saturated with the life and politics of the Episcopal Church — your father, Sam Wylie, was the chaplain at Brown University when you were born and he later served as Dean of The General Theological Seminary in New York and Bishop of Northern Michigan. It was perhaps inevitable, then, that at Columbia's School of Journalism, following undergraduate work at the University of Michigan, your nose for incongruity led you to choose as the subject of your master's thesis an analysis of the relationship between New York's St. James Episcopal Church on Madison Avenue and St. Anne's Episcopal Church in the Bronx. This project marked the beginning of a career devoted to a search for this nation's — and this church's — conscience, a search that has taken you into the streets and to military installations, science laboratories, picket lines and courtrooms.

"Your first job out of journalism school, with Associated Press, took you to Detroit, a city which has claimed your heart and

commitment ever since. After covering the Republican Convention in 1980, you became involved in an effort to save Detroit's Poletown community, an immigrant neighborhood of 4,200 residents occupying 465 acres with 144 local businesses, 16 churches, two schools and a hospital. When General Motors proposed to raze this historic



Jeanie and Bill Wylie-Kellermann

J. Wortman

enclave for a Cadillac plant, the only group opposed to the project were the residents: Poles and blacks who together waged a fruitless struggle against the powers that be. You were arrested for an act of civil disobedience in a Poletown church that was destroyed in the course of this struggle. Your book, *Poletown: Community Betrayed* (published by the University of Illinois Press in 1989), chronicles and analyzes the Poletown struggle. The film *Poletown Lives!*, which you co-directed and wrote, won first prize in the American Film Festival for Social Issues Documentary.

"Since 1981 you have lived in the neighborhood of Detroit's Catholic Worker community. You fell in love with Bill Kellermann when you and he were arrested during an anti-nuclear arms vigil at Williams International (which manufactures Cruise Missile engines) during Advent 1983. The early energy of your courtship was marked by your efforts

to get yourselves handcuffed together when you were taken to court.

"During your time in jail you began writing Michigan's bishop, Coleman McGehee. He subsequently asked you to join his staff to work on social issues. Later, from 1985-1991, you became editor of the Diocese of Michigan's newspaper, *The Record*. In 1991 you became editor of *The Witness* magazine and co-editor in 1997, offering the church an unpredictable and often courageous challenge in matters of justice, spirituality and resistance. In 1996 you were a founder of Readers United, started as a community response to the Detroit Newspaper strike, which helped facilitate 300 arrests in support of strikers.

"You have always sought to teach your daughters Lydia and Lucy that prayer, praise and protest are a part of daily existence whatever a person's age and so have included them on solidarity trips overseas and at local protests and Advent vigils. And now, as you battle to survive the assault of a brain tumor, you are teaching them that there is much to be learned in every situation,

including and perhaps most especially when our lives are most threatened. 'Some things won't be changed,' you have written, 'and some things deserve to be protested even if they are unlikely to change — life is short and younger people generally take it too seriously, chasing their tails when they could be giving thanks.'"

The seminary's faculty had recommended Wylie-Kellermann for the honorary degree, Thompsett concluded, "in recognition of the gift that her continuing resistance and sustained spiritual journey have been to us all."



EPF activists arrested at Nevada test site

A dozen members of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship (EPF), including EPF vice president Janet Chisolm and *Witness* co-editor Julie A. Wortman, were arrested on Mother's Day, May 9, with an estimated 156 other protesters at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site. The civil disobedience, which involved crossing into the test site, was part of a Healing Global Wounds "Honoring the Mother" gathering aimed at drawing national attention to continuing radioactive poisoning of Western Shoshone land by the U.S. government.

Before the crossing, Ian Zabarte, of the Western Shoshone National Council, put test site officials on notice that they were trespassing on Shoshone lands and were in criminal violation of international law. The arrestees were detained and released on site.

Around 350 people participated in the three-day Healing Global Wounds event May 8-10. EPF sponsored a one-day

conference on nuclear issues in Las Vegas on May 7 and celebrated a Eucharist at the test site boundary on Mother's Day morning.



Members of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship gather to celebrate a Mothers' Day Eucharist just outside the Nevada Nuclear Test Site.

J. Wortman

On Monday, May 10, 175 people participated in a Western Shoshone occupation of the test site by entering the site, erecting a teepee and joining in a Sunrise Ceremony led by Corbin Harney, the spiritual leader of the Western

Shoshone Nation. Another teepee was set up over five miles inside the test site perimeter, high on a ridgetop overlooking Mercury, Nev., the community which serves test site personnel. A third teepee was erected well inside the front entrance to the test site.

Lands for the Nevada test site were seized from the Shoshone in 1948. One hundred families were forcibly relocated from lands guaranteed under the 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley. This was only the second time since 1947 that the Shoshone were able to have morning prayer on this portion of the property, which covers 1,250 square miles.

— *Healing Global Wounds/Shundahai press release, <www.shundahai.org/HGW>. (Healing Global Wounds is a multi-cultural alliance of organizations and*

individuals seeking restoration of respectful, sustainable living with the Earth. HGW, which is part of the Abolition 2000 Global Network, coordinates spring and fall gatherings at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site.)

We welcome you, but not your gun

The State of Utah has one of the most liberal concealed weapons laws in the nation. It is legal for someone to carry a concealed weapon into a church, synagogue, or mosque. But this year the legislature informed the religious community that if you do not want to have guns brought into your worship services, you must publicly post your desires.

Recently, congregations in the Episcopal Diocese of Utah have been receiving a large enameled metal sign that says: "The Episcopal Church Welcomes You But Not Your Gun." In the top corner is the Episcopal shield and in the center is a gun in a red circle with a line through it.

Utah's bishop, Carolyn Irish, has convened a meeting of religious leaders in the state to ask the Governor to call a special session of the legislature to look at our gun laws with the hope of having them tightened. To this end this group of religious leaders, with funding and initiative from the diocese, hosted a vigil for peace at the State Capitol on April 29. It was geared for young people to share their feelings about violence in their schools. We had a couple hundred people show up (plus all the local media). There were about 12 speakers, all high school or college students. It was a very powerful and moving evening.

— *Lee Shaw (Shaw is an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of Utah, <WinstonLS@aol.com>.)*

Speaking out against the bombing

As church agencies such as Action by Churches Together work to provide food and other aid to refugees of the Kosovo conflict, people of faith here in the U.S. continue protesting the U.S./NATO aggression in the former Yugoslavia. Writes *Witness* reader Dotty Dale of Bellingham, Wash.: "Three of us invited others of various faith communities to meet and consider how to speak out against U.S. bombing of Yugoslavia. Twenty responded! In less than two weeks we gathered 400 signatures and \$2,000 for a half-page ad in two local newspapers. We were not alone. We just needed to find one another."

Middle passage

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Middle Passage, a novel by Charles Johnson, Scribner Paperback, 1998.

Rutherford Calhoun left New Orleans in 1830, stowing away on a ship to Africa, not as a pilgrim, but in order to avoid a marriage to a Boston school teacher that was forcefully suggested by his creditors. Nonetheless, the trip changes him profoundly.

A gambler, a drinker, a ladies' man, Calhoun was a smart, well-educated and recently freed young man who felt he had been wronged by his brother's choices and planned to capture as much adventure and wealth as he could on his own.

The ship he impulsively boarded, the *Republic*, was, it turned out, heading to Africa to pick up slaves for the return run. An awkward situation, but Calhoun wasn't known for his sense of solidarity. In fact, the "wrong" committed by his brother was that when their master was dying, they were assured their freedom and the older brother was invited to say what he would like out of all the man's possessions. Calhoun had dreams of wealth and servants, but his brother chose to share the wealth with all the African Americans in their area. Calhoun was livid.

With some of the best writing I have encountered in years, Charles Johnson describes the innerworkings of Calhoun's mind as he learns the psyches of his shipmates — educated officers and uneducated, violent misfits in the crew. He then exposes the thoughts in Calhoun's

mind as the Africans are loaded on board, members of a rare and accomplished tribe, the Allmuseri.

The reader also learns that the Allmuseri's influence reached the crew long before their bodies were loaded on the boat. They were rumored to be extremely capable and powerful spiritually, only captured because they had been starved by a drought for three years. The white crew was edgy and afraid, wondering if the tribe members could shape-shift, could break their chains with their wills, could bring on madness amongst their captors. Worse yet, with the 40 slaves, the captain also brought on board a large crate about which he would say

The white crew was edgy and afraid, wondering if the tribe members could shape-shift, could break their chains with their wills, could bring on madness amongst their captors.

nothing but which required to be fed.

Calhoun, by virtue of his education, becomes a confidant of the self-centered captain and of the first mate. Likewise, by the color of his skin, Calhoun was able to have a relationship with at least one of the captured Allmuseri.

Several mutinies are planned — at least one by the ship's crew which believes, probably rightly, that the captain's plans will bring them all to their deaths. But there are other factions amongst the

crew, and the heaving misery and latent power of the 40 captives.

The reader, like Calhoun himself, can't figure out where Calhoun's allegiances lie. The captain, who knows that he will die, asks Calhoun to keep the ship's log, so that the three men who funded this journey will have an account of the captain's faithful effort to bring the cargo back. In the process, he confides the name of the funders — one of whom is the very African-American underworld boss who was ready to force Calhoun to marry the school teacher. Calhoun is stunned that a black man would make money off the enslavement of other black people. This may be the first glimpse of solidarity we see in him.

To avoid the conflict of interests to which he has committed himself, Calhoun hands a key which he believes will unlock the chains to one of the Allmuseri he has gotten to know.

The author's writing about language, about cultures, about the ways that the Allmuseri have changed the crew and the ways the crew have changed the Allmuseri is fascinating. Gradually, Calhoun begins to see that his brother could easily be one of these principled Allmuseri men. And now an Allmuseri girl child has laid a claim on his heart. Finally, with all the intrigue, blood lust and danger at sea, Calhoun concludes he has had enough adventure. He's even looking back at the school teacher with a different understanding.

So, as with all good pilgrimages, the one who undertook the journey comes home changed.

TV

review

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor of *The Witness*, <jeanie@thewitness.org>.

For the past three years Rosemary Williams has led American women into such countries as Haiti and Bosnia to confront first-hand their own material wealth and what it costs them. The stark contrast between what they own and what others live without often triggers a stunning reappraisal of their lives.

For Williams, leading such pilgrimages flows directly from her own experience with personal wealth and the meaning of money. And the changes she sees in women who travel alongside her are akin to what has gone on — and continues — in her own life.

“What happens on a trip to Haiti or Bosnia is that it is harder to come home [to the U.S.] than it is to leave,” said Williams, who leads the Women’s Perspective division of the nonprofit organization called Ministry of Money.

“When you go to Haiti, of course you see the poverty, the desperation, the lack of food and hospitals, the lack of clean places to just sit and think. But when you come home you realize that at the flick of a finger you can have anything you want. It becomes harder to adjust to the privileges of this country.”

The privileges have been many for the 62-year-old Williams. She attended Manhattanville College in New York, a private girl’s Catholic school which has drawn students from elite Catholic society families, including Jean Kennedy and Ethel Skakel Kennedy. After her marriage, the Brooklyn native moved to Con-

“Something happens to you when you go to a place like Haiti. We see things back here at home that we’ve never seen before because we walk around with blinders on.”



Rosemary Williams

Putting money in perspective

by Kate DeSmet

necticut with her husband, giving birth to five children and raising their family with comfortable means, good schools, and vacations at some of the best resorts.

After Williams and her husband divorced, she studied economics and became a banker and financial planner.

Williams loved to shop, with a particular eye for buying clothes that matched the seasons of the year and the styles of the times.

Then, in the late 1980s, she accepted an invitation to speak at a luncheon sponsored by an Episcopal women’s church group. She offered advice on managing money. Afterwards, the pastor handed her an envelope containing information about a group called Ministry of Money. The organization, based just outside

Washington D.C., has been conducting workshops since the early 1970s examining the meaning of money in a wealthy western society. The ministry believes how we value money is often reflected in our relationships, our mental health, our search for God.

Williams was intrigued and decided to volunteer as a financial planner.

“I couldn’t believe that I actually had an opportunity to combine my spiritual beliefs with my technical knowledge,” she said. In the mid-1990s she was hired to lead the Women’s Perspective unit, which focuses specifically on money and spirituality in the lives of women. For Williams, the job shift was also a major life shift.

“I gave up a career as a financial plan-

*Witnesses,
the quick and the dead*

Kate DeSmet is a locked-out *Detroit News* religion writer.

ner, which means I earn less money, I travel a lot, I don't buy what I used to. I don't think I need as much as I used to think I needed. And I've seen this happening to a lot of the women when they come home from our trips."

To date, Williams has made 26 trips to Haiti, the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. There have been only a few trips to Bosnia, in part because of the ongoing fighting and violence in the war-torn Balkans. Williams' trips are for women, although Ministry of Money sponsors similar trips for both genders. More than 700 travelers have taken part in what the ministry refers to as "reverse pilgrimages" since 1982.

"The idea isn't so much to go to Haiti to do good for others, although that's part of the plan," Williams said. "But once we get there and become part of the daily fabric of life we discover how much is being done for us, how much we learn from the people, especially the women."

This past May, a return trip to Haiti was scheduled around visiting a hillside community developed more than 10 years ago by a group of Roman Catholic nuns. The pilgrims, who stayed in Haiti for approximately seven days at a cost of \$1,500, worked in the local embroidery factory, the hospital and school, and an orphanage.

With the help of an interpreter, the American pilgrims get involved in the Haitian women's day-to-day life. Yet, Williams added that it is impossible to work with the same stamina or strength of the women of Haiti.

The degree of work astounds the American pilgrims who, on recent trips, have included a retired United Church of Christ minister, a middle-aged female farmer from Iowa, college students working on doctoral dissertations, and one young mother who had never crossed the borders of her own home state.

"Even though we get women from all

different backgrounds they all seem to choose this experience for the same reason—it has to do with the meaning of life and how we're connected to other people in the world," Williams said.

"And something happens to you when you go to a place like Haiti. We see things back here at home that we've never seen before because we walk around with blinders on."

She recalls a trip Ministry of Money made to Haiti with both men and women. The group walked past a village of immense poverty and proceeded to climb a hillside where the houses of the wealthy

*"I realized just for us
to have coffee that morning
somebody had to roast, shell
and grind the beans."*

were located. At the top of the hill, the group could look down and see both the wealthy homes and the desperately poor village below. A man in the group began to cry.

"He said he had never noticed before that back home (in the States) he lived on the hillside, that he had wealth and that he had never noticed those who did not," Williams said.

On another trip, the women traveling with Williams were offered an opportunity to take a bath in a Haitian village with no running water. Williams said a young pilgrim returned from her bath in tears. "I couldn't understand why she was crying and she said, 'No one has ever taken care of me like that. Even when I was in the hospital the nurses didn't care for me like that.'

"I didn't understand what she meant. Then I was taken to a three-walled cinder-block stall that contained a bowl filled with water. I took my clothes off and threw them over a wall. A Haitian woman

came in with a bar of soap and a cloth and I thought I was just going to wash up. But she began to wash me. It was the most loving, gentle experience I'd ever had. It was incredible that someone would take care of me so personally. They gave up their beds for us, they bathed us. I understood what the young girl meant — no one had ever taken care of me like that before either."

Then, one morning after breakfast in a village home where they were staying, a woman traveler asked if she could take home some of the good coffee they'd been served.

"Within the next 15 to 20 minutes we heard this loud banging in the backyard," Williams said. "There were two women picking coffee beans and a young man pounding the beans with a stick. I realized that just for us to have coffee that morning somebody had to roast, shell and grind the beans. The women get up at 3 or 4 a.m. and walk miles with enormous buckets just to get water.

"When I came home I realized how I can just get up, walk to the bathroom, flush the toilet, have healthy water, plug in the coffee maker, and get the newspaper delivered. What I can do in this one hour they couldn't do in one day."

Such experiences have led Williams to simplify her own life, to cherish relationships over material things, and to travel deeper along the paths where she feels led by faith.

"I'm going to places I don't understand, and I'm walking into situations that I don't know how to deal with, and I'm depending on God for guidance, seeking the spirit and moving with the spirit," she said. "I had to give up a lot to do this, but I don't miss those things I had before. I don't yearn for the cars, the clothes, the gadgets, the jewelry. I'd say my faith has increased a thousand-fold and I'm not done yet. I can see myself doing this for a very long time." **TW**

Letters, continued from page 3

of Baghdad. This is prohibited under the sanctions. We visited the children, who, according to UNICEF, are dying at the rate of over 200 per day due to the sanctions. There may soon be a whole generation of people missing. Iraq is in the grips of worldwide corporate greed. It is over oil. The Gulf War was the result of Kuwait stealing Iraqi oil. The world's producers supported Kuwait. After the war the embargo was imposed. The killing continues until Iraq privatizes the oil, so that the oil companies have control. The people and their leaders have been demonized by the world media.

We met with a representative of the Middle East Council of Churches. He told of what a wonderful country Iraq was before the Gulf War. The highest grade of social services and health care in the Middle East. The war and sanctions are destroying the people.

We visited the Humanitarian Office of the U.N. We learned of the Oil for Food Program of the U.N. which only provides \$177 per person for a year. This is to cover food, medical services, shelter and education. Totally inadequate.

Iraq has a choice to stop the killing by privatizing the oil reserves and turning them over to the transnational corporations.

Going to Iraq was a road to Damascus experience for me, an Anglican.

Jim Pence
Vancouver, BC

Littleton school shootings

AS A PARENT, FORMER HIGH SCHOOL teacher and coach, I am horrified and moved to tears regarding the tragedy in Littleton, Colo. The fact that this could have happened anywhere is particularly appalling. With eight school shootings taking place in the past two years and now this, the worst outbreak of school violence in this nation's history, one must surely pause and wonder what is going on.

This tragedy is a symptom of a very deep problem within this country. Our congress and state legislatures, led by right-wing conservative politicians, have fostered a culture of death and punishment for the last two decades. The nations' and the states' highest courts have wiped their feet on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Individual freedoms and safeguards are being lost at an appalling rate. State-sponsored terrorism (against its own citizens) is the root cause (and model) that perpetuates this extreme expression of anger and hate. An anger born of alienation, rejection and hopelessness. Police have become paramilitary units designed to wage war against citizens. Unrestrained police-spawned violence has extended from coast to coast, with a California teen shot 19 times while sleeping in her car and in New York, an unarmed man shot 41 times. Senseless draconian drug laws and heavy-handed enforcement have resulted in over 900 thousand people in prison. With the recent proliferation and expansion of death penalties at the federal level and stampede at the state level to get "on board" with the feds

holding out the carrot of "tough-on-crime legislation," the baby is being thrown out with the bath water. Just what do you expect? The United Nations, The European Union and Amnesty International have all cited the U.S. for human rights violations in regard to its death penalty stance and the rate at which its citizens are being incarcerated. Violence begets violence and please do not trivialize or underestimate this most basic of all facts.

As a nation we need to change and to heal. We need to stop all of the violence at the state and federal level of sponsorship. We need to rethink our philosophy of crime and punishment. We need to deal with one another at a human and caring level. We need to adopt a policy of reconciliation and forgiveness, not retribution and punishment.

Milton L. Rice
Norfolk, MA

Restorative justice

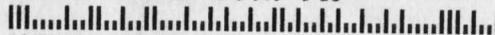
JUST FINISHED READING your November 1998 issue on prisons, etc. Your readers may be interested in a conference the Diocese of Washington is sponsoring on restorative justice to be held at Washington Cathedral on October 15-16, 1999. We are working with the national office of the NAACP, the Restorative Justice Institute, Prison Fellowship International and the Campaign for an Effective Crime Policy. For information people can call me at 703-671-7610.

John Frizzell
Alexandria, VA

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