

FRIENDS IN SAN ANTONIO

7052 North Vandiver at Eisenhower

February 2012

The Coffin of Justice Hugo Black

One of the Funeral Consumer's Alliance pamphlets describes the actions at the death of Supreme Court Justice Black in 1971. His daughter and her step-brother, with Justices Byron White and William Brennan, had the job of following his instructions that his funeral be simple, cheap, and with no open casket. They went to the Funeral Home used by many government officials to choose a coffin., and met in an "elegantly appointed" casket room.

In this there was a semi-circle of caskets. On the left was clearly the cheapest, a coffin covered with pink organza, satin bows and ruffled skirt, seeming "tasteless and frilly." As they were led around the semi-circle, asking their prices, the salesman essentially dismissed them as unworthy of a man of stature. At first, each was covered with more expensive cloth than the last. He moved on quickly to the final one, well-crafted, uncovered, and polished dark wood, softly spotlighted, on a velvet dais. This, he said was worthy of the last resting place of a Supreme Court Justice, He did not give a price, seeming to indicate that this was not of any concern.

This was a mistake. The group smiled, remembering Justice Black's clear instructions. From smiling, they moved on to a mirthful mood, thinking of him. This funeral was going to be **cheap!** Nothing else would do in his memory! Pressing the salesman, he told them the price of the final, "throne coffin": thousands of dollars. That was it; they spread out across the room, inquiring about prices. Polished wood was clearly out, so they went back to the cloth-covered ones.

Justice White began to focus on the first, the frilly pink one, horrifying the salesman, and asked what was underneath the pink organza. Well, said the salesman, it was just a plain pine box. He became befuddled when they then asked him what the differences were between all the covered caskets. He explained that they were all pine boxes. The best one, he said, had "better shape." They looked and didn't think so.

They went into a huddle. Somebody asked the others, "The cheapest one?" YES! They turned to the poor salesman and offered him \$165 for the cheap one with all the frills taken off. But that was impossible, he said, it would be terrible. This set them off. Under the poor fellow's eyes they pulled some off, then more, then they stripped off the bows, the skirt, everything except a few glued pink patches.

What was left was a very fine pine box, debris all over the carpet, Justice Black's wishes to a tee, though he would have had sympathy for the poor salesman. The box stood, plain and simple, in the middle of this pretentious room. The director of the establishment now understood their zeal, and was timid about asking about the pink patches. His funeral home's reputation was at stake. Now fully in charge, they agreed that the patches should be removed, at no cost.

The funeral was held at the National Cathedral, where the Dean understood and sympa-

thized with the aim of simplicity; no flowers or flag were placed on the coffin. Its cost was no reflection on the character and stature of the man whose body lay in it.

Loosely adapted from “*Simple and Cheap, My Father Said,*” by Josephine Black Pesaresi, Justice Black’s daughter, a Funeral Consumers Alliance pamphlet.

Among Friends, it is more usual that the burial or scattering of ashes be a family affair and simple, with no funeral. A memorial meeting is held afterwards, when convenient, at which friends and family may speak of their love for and memories of the dead Friend.



Personal News

Thomas fell and hurt his wrist on a running track. He had to have serious surgery but he’s recovering well. Gary was quite sick and unable to come to meeting. He has had to curtail his clients’ appointments. So it is a pleasure to say that Danayah, Colette’s granddaughter, is well enough to attend school at UIW.

Jocelyn, on a trip to Lesotho in South Africa, fell victim to mumps partway through. She arrived back safely, recovered enough that she was able to travel back with the rest of the group. They returned directly to college in Kansas,. Sounds like the trip was very interesting. Pam has had auditions at UT, Rice, and USC. So far all have gone well. She has three more coming up (Cleveland Institute of Music, Peabody, and Indiana). She is now back in Michigan, attending Ann Arbor Meeting.

Our other Pam, in her training to be a nurse, her avocation, has started working on a ward. She is finding it very rewarding.

In Meeting last month a sparrow flew into the large window and fell to the deck, where it fluttered for a while and then became quiet. Margarita went out to rescue it from any passing cats. Meanwhile it sat up. And when she appeared on her rescue mission, it flew off, doubtless groggy, but capable of rescuing itself from Margarita.

Jason, a neighbor at La Fiesta, kindly called to let us know that our mail box on Vandiver had fallen. He was concerned about our mail. James has been fixing it. You will now have seen that the City has been rebuilding the sidewalk, and they are replacing the mailbox. One of our problems is that our soil is only about 6" deep, above caliche. Not good for gardening or placing mailboxes. Nick Abowd, who has been doing our mowing recently, has been doing this at Mary Ann’s direction. We shall have to stake out the grounds to find who this Mary Ann is.

Janice and Fred have married! Warmest congratulations to them! But they will live in Kerrville, which may reduce how often we see them.

Somerset High School, where James works, was featured in the *Express-News* when a Christian group started meeting in the outside amphitheater before classes each morning. James says, “This just started...hard to assess. I was pleased to see it. There needs to be other clear models for behavior among the youth culture ..more leadership....”

Meeting for Business

In the December meeting the clerk spoke of the forum to help M&O to write the State of the Meeting Report to SCYM and singled out journaling as one focus of the forum.

The Nominating Committee report was accepted with the proviso that other changes should be expected. The matter of exactly how the Religious Education Committee will be constituted and how it might be helped is still unsure and advice would be welcomed.

The Treasurer reported that Meeting’s financial deficit had been reduced and he hoped that the year would be ended in balance with an enhanced cash flow reserve. The Grounds Committee was happy that the Meeting workday had been very successful, with everything completed. The

Peace and Social Concerns committee spoke of arrangements for the MLK march and Meeting expressed appreciation for its work.

Meeting closed in silence.

At the January meeting for business, items were projected onto a screen. Arrangements for meeting the next day for the MLK March were announced. The Religious Education Committee circulated a sheet which gave its focus for First Day School and Adult Education, the two to be wrapped around. The sheet summarized different religious calendars. In February the focus will be on Origins.

M&O's report was given by Janet, in Gary's absence. It expressed thanks for the forum given by Julia and Jen in preparation for writing the State of the Meeting Report to SCYM. Three queries were given for focus. Worship sharing, journaling, and sticky notes proved to be useful tools for participation. Comments included gratitude for the shared worship in meeting, the value of community, but lamented the lack of contacts during the week. Friends felt the need of more social service. The reading of queries was found to be helpful and to deepen worship.

Knowing that Val was due to leave for foreign locales again to continue her work with QPT to promote peace rather than the use of violence, M&O took a moment to honor her years of service toward these goals and to represent the ideals of our Society.

The treasurer was able to report that Meeting's year had ended in the black, despite extra unexpected charges, but that we should be careful in the coming year to pare our expenditures so that we may be more ready to help others not so fortunate.

The clerk asked each committee to set three goals for 1012 and described the projection of items on the screen as increasing accessibility to reports. She announced that special saquakers.org e-mail addresses for some meeting officers were being set up (see below.) Holding another garage sale will be considered at Meeting for Business next month.

Meeting closed in silence.

Papers

"Papers" is a documentary film of undocumented youth and the challenges they face as they turn 18 without legal status. 65,000 undocumented students graduate every year from high school without "papers." These are young people born outside of the United States who were educated in American schools, hold American values, know only the U.S. as home and who, upon high school graduation, find the door to their future slammed shut. It is against the law to work or drive. It is difficult, if not impossible in some states, to attend college. They live at risk of arrest, detention and deportation to countries they may not even remember.

Currently, there is no path to citizenship for these young people. Community organizations around the country are working to change immigration policy on behalf of these young people. Watch out for the film if it is shown anywhere here.

Forums

We had two important speakers at forums last month. In the first, Jean Nation, President of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of San Antonio, with Mary Bowman, told us of the work of the Alliance. She spoke of the grief at a family member's death and the ease for a salesman to take advantage of this. She gave helpful examples of using the Alliance for her close family. The body, she pointed out, is just that, not the person who has gone. We are sitting ducks, and she demonstrated this by giving us a sheet of prices from a September mortuary survey. In this, prices for a "Full Funeral with Casket," \$1,365 through FCA, ranged from \$1,730 to \$6,485 (omitting the outlier at \$18,500,) and, for "Immediate Burial," \$1,065 from FCA, from \$1,215 through \$16,450. Caskets could cost as much as \$35,000 or as little as \$250 from FCA. She suggested that the basic requirements did not vary much, though the price did. FCA members do not pay the non-declinable

fee which gets added to the basic prices listed above.

Lifetime and nationwide membership in FCA costs \$35. It is a non-profit organization, all volunteer, with numerous pamphlets and a newsletter, FCA Newsletter Quarterly; a blog, The Daily Dirge; and a website, www.funeraladvice.satx.org. The pamphlets, some placed in the entrance, include Tips for Saving Funeral Dollars, What Shall We Do with the Ashes?, No One Wants to Talk About Death, The Most Important Part of Funeral Planning, Recycle Your Medical Devices, What You Should Know About Embalming, Organ and Whole Body Donation, Environmentally Friendly Death and Funeral Choices, etc.

Embalming is not normally required; a cheap casket can be obtained at Costco and Walmart, and ashes can be scattered wherever the landowner gives consent. And, the FCA watches out for national and state mortuary laws lobbied for by commercial interests.

She recommends the book, *Final Rights*, by Joshua Slocum and Lisa Carlson, "exposing consumer abuse, financial exploitation of the bereaved, and how government regulators can't be counted on to protect the grieving."

Jilani Chaudry came to speak to us about the experience of San Antonio Muslims after 9-11. He said that there had been no terribly bad experiences but that there was greater apprehension, at times downright fears. He himself no longer donated to Muslim causes for fear of being told that they supported terrorism and that they could be on the government's list. People in mosques no longer discussed anything openly for fear that an FBI informant might be present. Some Anglo converts to Islam no longer attended mosque for some unexplained reason.

Soon after 9-11 he had suggested to his wife that she no longer wear a head scarf, but then changed his mind, feeling that living in that much fear was no way to live. Asked how a Muslim woman would feel if an Anglo woman smiled at her, he said this would be interpreted as a friendly gesture, not as trying to coax her into rash statements. He had had some trouble with the mother of one of his son's friends but it was not clear that this stemmed from anti-Islamic sentiment.

His account was very much appreciated and he expressed his thanks for being invited to speak to us. A third forum on the State of the Meeting is described above. And on the 26th Nancy Black Sagafinejad will come to speak to us about Quakers and the Law. She has recently published a book on the subject, so we are very fortunate to have her come.

Miscellany

Nicholas Kristoff, speaking at Swarthmore College, a Quaker school, was surprised when a student asked him if it would be immoral to look for jobs at banks. Kristoff quotes a Pew poll which found that only 50% of Americans were positive about "capitalism," and young Americans, 18-29, were more positive about socialism than capitalism. So, "grasping capitalists" are making socialists out of these young Americans. He warns them that banking is essential to modern life and has produced great benefits for it.

After the Vietnam war students had very negative views of the military and intelligence agencies, meaning that these then became saturated with ideological conservatives. It would have been better, he says if more "Swarthmore idealists" had become generals and CIA officers.

He goes on to say that the political problems Romney is having with his low taxes are structural problems of taxation rates rather than his. We may find out.

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Amartya Sen points out that, while Third-World countries bear the responsibility for their own violent conflicts, the arms they use come from a trade sponsored by the First World nations. The Human Development Report of the 1994 UN Development Program demonstrated that the five permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States) were the top five exporters of armaments. They accounted for 86% of conventional weapons exported. What other explanation is needed for the difficulty in control-

ling the trade?

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“Insight on Conflict” is an online resource on local peacebuilding in conflict zones worldwide. The site is published by Peace Direct, a British NGO that finds, funds and promotes local peacebuilders. This month’s edition features a collection of articles on peacebuilding in Somalia, the role of women in traditional dispute resolution in Afghanistan, critical steps in the fight against crime in Guatemala, mediating conflicts with religious dimensions, and more. To receive the email newsletter each month, email [joel@insightonconflict.org](mailto:joel@insightonconflict.org).

The article identifies 20 countries which have experienced such conflict between 1989 and 2003, in 10 of which mediation has taken place. Since then the list has clearly lengthened, now including Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, and Yemen.

## Our E-mail

We now have e-mail addresses of our own:

Clerk@saquakers.org

Treasurer@saquakers.org

Recording@saquakers.org

Webmaster@saquakers.org

This is so that messages of lasting importance can be kept on our office-holders’ records and transferred to different office-holders when the next ones take over. The addresses are now on our Meeting Directory. But, if you want to call them and speak to them, we advise you not to use the Meeting phone number. Note, we even have a Meeting master, but with authority only over the website.

We are also on Facebook at [San Antonio Quaker Meeting](#). And you can reach us at Twitter: @SAQuakerMtg

Though we, the editorial we, of advanced age and Quaker gravity, do not quite understand what that means.

## A Disputed Prayer

It is sad, yet understandable in view of the constitution, that this prayer has to be removed from the auditorium wall of Cranston High School in Rhode Island:

“Our Heavenly Father,

Grant us each day the desire to do our best, to grow mentally and morally as well as physically, to be kind and helpful to our classmates and teachers, to be honest with ourselves as well as with others. Help us to be good sports and smile when we lose as well as when we win. Teach us the value of good friendship. Help us always to conduct ourselves so as to bring credit to Cranston High School West.

Amen”

A seventh grader wrote the prayer in 1963 and the graduating class presented the wall poster as a gift. A girl who lost her faith when her prayers for her mother were not answered successfully sued for its removal. It made her feel that she did not belong there. She is now being reviled.

We hope that these beautiful hopes can be expressed without contravening the constitution. And that the girl who sued agrees with the hopes while disagreeing with the theology, while those who revile her read it again.

## Women, and Men

Peggy Drexler, in Reader Supported News, has written of “The Religious Right’s Problem With Women.” She refers to recent events in Israel, where eight-year-old Naama Margolese was

insulted and spat on, as she walked to school, by ultra-Orthodox Haredi men who found her bare arms so immodest that they screamed "whore!" This has now been called a struggle for the soul of Israel.

She compares ultra-orthodox Israeli men with the men of the Taliban, asking what it is about women that these men find so threatening? Her conclusion is that these men, while claiming to protect women, are really oppressing them to protect themselves from their own, anti-religious, sexual urges. [In the West, the thought of women preaching roused similar fears.]

But this "protection" then develops into brutal oppression, involving slicing girls' noses off, throwing acid in their faces and forcing schoolgirls back into a burning building because they are not dressed modestly. They shame their families, so – they must be violently suppressed. And she does not exempt modern America from prejudice against women, comparing support for insurance reimbursement for Viagra with none for birth control pills. "As someone said: if men got pregnant, birth control would be a sacrament."

She implicitly suggests that, in fact, free, healthy, sexual, productive women would strengthen a society. As Quakers, we have found this to be true. Yet we have traditionally dressed modestly and, as Jilani told us, he and his wife have avoided taking their son to beaches where modern American women are to be seen so close to naked. And, with the number of fatherless babies, have we in Western societies entirely progressed?

## Concrete Help

Charles Kenny, writing in *Foreign Policy*, describes a project in Mexico in which mixed concrete worth \$1.50 per home was given to families with dirt floors. They covered their floors with it. Kids in the houses experienced a 78% drop in parasitic infection, diarrheas dropped by half, anemia by more than 80% and scores on cognitive tests went up by more than a third. Mothers reported less depression and more life satisfaction.

Just because of a little concrete. Now it is a program, "Piso Firme," (Firm Floor,) spreading through Mexico. So little, done the right way, can do so much.

## "This is no life"

Taken, and abbreviated, from Gideon Levy in *Ha'aretz*, an Israeli daily newspaper, as quoted in the website [www.spiritualprogressives.org](http://www.spiritualprogressives.org):

"The tiny Jordan Valley village of Khirbet al-Tawil, surrounded by encroaching Jewish settlements, launched a hunger strike to make the world notice their distress. A member of the Palestinian Legislative Council from Nablus, Najat Abu Baker, came to tell residents that they were not alone, and to thank them for their determination to hold on to their land, which otherwise would have been stolen long ago. And she also had a message for the Israeli people: These villagers will not fight the occupation alone.

The stone ruins of the ancient, magnificent houses in Khirbet al-Tawil attest that Palestinians lived here for centuries. The villagers recall the stories of their ancestors who lived here, but the Jewish settlement of Gitit is encroaching from northeast and Itamar is expanding from northwest; Nativ Hagdud, Yafit, Tomer and Patzael, the settlements of the valley and the surrounding slopes, are gradually choking off the Palestinians' agriculture in the valley.

Somebody offered what seemed to them to be a revolutionary suggestion: The whole village would go on hunger strike. They decided on a 24-hour fast. From dawn to dawn, the entire village would gather at the mosque and let nothing pass between their lips.

Much of the village's lands were stolen long ago for Gitit and other settlements. The Civil Administration issued the most recent demolition orders two weeks ago. In the neighboring communities, residents report harassment by settlers who sic their dogs on the shepherds to drive them off the grazing grounds near the settlement.

The village head, Bani-Jaber, says Israel wants to change the land's designation from farmland to a military training area. Afterward the Israel Defense Forces will give the land to the settlers, and it will be rezoned as farmland for its new owners. That is what happened in the past.

First, all the lands west of the road to the settlement of Ma'aleh Efraim, at the entrance to the Jordan Valley, were expropriated; now the same is being done to the east. Seventeen eviction and demolition orders have already been delivered to Khirbet al-Tawil homes, and its case is being heard in court.

'They don't give us a chance to live here,' the head of the village sighed, and his friends nodded in agreement. That is why they decided on the hunger strike.

On Saturday they gathered at the mosque. Nonprofit representatives, local politicians and local television crews showed up. Even the president of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society came. IDF soldiers also came, and confiscated his ID papers. For those 24 hours, they were all together in the mosque - women, men, and children. One 10-year-old boy, Daya, participated in the hunger strike. Asked why he went on strike, he replied: 'Because this is no life.'

They'll do it again if necessary. Nothing changed in Israel, they concede. But some international organizations and governments support Israel because they do not know enough about the village's suffering - so maybe the strike changed that.

The coordinator of government activities in the territories stated: 'The Khirbet al-Tawil compound is located in Area C, and has an agricultural designation. Part of it is under a military closure order and in fire zones, and was built without permits and contrary to the master plan.

'Over the years, 28 stop-work orders were delivered for illegal construction. During 2012 one stop-work order has been delivered against a tent that serves as a storage space, and since a legal building permit was not presented, the supervisory subcommittee decided to issue a final demolition order for the structure, while granting a 30-day extension.'"

[www.spiritualprogressives.org](http://www.spiritualprogressives.org) is the website of an organization led by Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of *TIKKUN* magazine, rabbi of Beyt Tikkun synagogue in Berkeley and San Francisco, Sister Joan Chittister, a Benedictine nun and longtime social justice advocate, and Cornel West, professor of religion at Princeton University. *TIKKUN* is a bimonthly Jewish critique of politics, culture and society, supporting peace and justice in the Middle East.

The Civil Administration was established by the Israeli Army in order to administer the civilian life of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory.

## **Crayons and Us**

We could learn a lot from crayons...  
Some are sharp, some are pretty and  
Some are dull. Some have weird names,  
and all are different colors,  
but they all have to live in the same box.

## **Bechuana – Botswana**

In 1947 Bechuanaland, northwest of South Africa, was a British protectorate. Seretse Khama, the young king of the Bamangwato people after the death of his father, was in England studying. He married an English girl in 1948 in a civil ceremony, because all London churches closed their doors to the couple, and he created a crisis. The South African government and tribal elders were determined that he should not return to Bechuanaland as king, and the British government exiled him and his wife, Ruth Williams, unless he renounced his succession. His uncle, the regent, demanded that he return and that the marriage be annulled.

In 1949-50, in London, Ken followed his case with great and sympathetic interest and, one day, when he was in a London news theatre and the lights went up, he saw Seretse and Ruth get up and leave the cinema. "It gave me a great thrill just to be near and see them and my thrill was

certainly justified.”

At a *kgotla* (tribal meeting) in 1949 the marriage was approved, in 1956 they were allowed to return just as private citizens, and in 1961 Seretse founded the Bechuanaland Democratic Party which swept the 1965 election. In 1966 the country became the independent republic of Botswana with Seretse as the first president and he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth – Sir Seretse! He and Ruth were very popular. With the aid of the *kgotlas* he instituted liberal policies and good government which lasts to this day. Recently it was commented that a new AIDS treatment was to be tested first in Botswana because it had the best government in Africa.

He died in 1980. The *kgotlas* operate by seeking consensus. A chief said later that they were “slow but they worked.”

"Lefatshe ke kereke yame. Go dira molemo tumelo yame.  
The world is my church. To do good my religion"

An inscription to be found on Seretse Khama's grave.

## Calendar, February, 2012

Meeting for Worship is held on Sunday at 10 a.m., followed by refreshments and a Forum discussion at 11.30, usually lasting until about 12.45. Children are invited to join worship for the first fifteen minutes, after which they may go to join with the Young Friends program. Child care is available during Forum.

- 2 Thursday ..... Midweek Meeting, 6.30, meetingroom.**
- 5. Sunday ..... Potluck lunch at 11.30.**
- 12. Sunday ..... Forum – Journaling continued; new queries.**
- 19, Sunday..... Meeting for Business.**
- 26, Sunday ..... Forum – Nancy Black Sagafinejad, Quakers and the Law.**

Each Thursday, at 4-5 pm, a silent peace vigil is held at the corners of S. Flores and Commerce, one block west of Main Plaza near City Hall.

Clerk: Jen Osborne, (210)320-5210; e-mail : [clerk@saquakers.org](mailto:clerk@saquakers.org).

Newsletter Editor: Ken Southwood, (210)828-1513; e-mail: [jksouthwood@grandecom.net](mailto:jksouthwood@grandecom.net)

Website: <http://www.sanantonioquakers.org>

Donations may be made to Friends Meeting of San Antonio, P.O. Box 6127, San Antonio TX78209.

Meeting telephone for meeting times or to ask for other information: (210) 945-8456