

Easy Essays
By Polly Mann

Text copyright © 2013 Polly Mann

"In remembrance of the late Mary Shepard, who worked ceaselessly for a truly free and unencumbered press."

Table of Contents

Polly Mann accepts peacemaker award

Polly goes home to Arkansas and finds Walmart

Tracing my roots

Confronting racism in myself and others

My memory of Lois Swenson

Memorial service held for Lisa Jean Niebauer

Shame in Okinawa

Drama and political discovery

Materialism

Climate change and political headwinds

The cost of a college education

Getting to know Sallie Mae

Welfare activist brutalized by Capitol Police

Ellison proposes a Robin Hood tax on Capitol Hill

Save money. Save lives. Stop jailing pot smokers

Who can the U.S. military legally kill when not engaged in a war?

The right to refuse to kill

Uri Avnery

Islamophobia

Did you know ... ?

Clyde Etta (Briggs) Simpson

Changing her name

Polly Mann accepts peacemaker award

Polly Mann's speech accepting "The Peacemaker of the Year" award from The Fellowship of Reconciliation on Sunday, Nov. 13, 2011 [abridged]:

Thank you, Fellowship of Reconciliation for this wonderful honor. I wonder if one reason I was chosen was the sheer number of years in which I've been engaged in peacemaking.

Like many of you, I suspect, I live a divided life—as described by the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci—with the pessimism of the intellect and the optimism of the will.

As we know, there is no blueprint for peacemaking. I remind myself of a mother duck walking along the shore of a pond, bewildering onlookers who see her frantically flying over them, dipping low, quacking furiously. She appears to be absolutely crazy and then the onlookers see the fox skulking nearby. The mother duck is trying to confuse that fox. She has no plan but she knows the danger. We know the danger and it's called war. So here I am with this obsession to move this country to abandon war, walking on this path with no markers, no blueprints—trying everything. My mission—our mission—trying to end war, is totally irrational to many.

Some of my actions were: walking around Lake of the Isles with a sign around my neck reading "Troops Out Now"; writing the president of the University of Minnesota for permission to hold a WAMM fundraiser in his home benefiting Palestinians, citing a recent fundraiser for a Zionist group; acting as a southern colonel in a street theater performance having to do with Anita Hill and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas; and attending a Nebraska demonstration against nuclear silos in a muddy, muddy field where one of the demonstrators said, "'Say, Grandma, what are you doing here?" and I was only 50 years old then.

We really should rename Women Against Military Madness, for the military is but the mercenary for capitalism. The mission of the far-flung U.S. military with approximately a thousand foreign bases is not to protect U.S. lives—really!!! Who has the military strength to challenge Uncle Sam?? The military protects our things. And we are propagandized by the day, by the hour, by the minute, of the importance of our things—our houses, clothes, travel. An important part of the propaganda is the need to be the

top in whatever we do—own the best car, travel to the most exotic spots, have the smartest children. In other words, to compete. I truly believe that when we, personally, abandon competition we're on the way to true peacemaking.

Probably the most bizarre of my activities was to run for the U.S. Senate in 1988. I knew I couldn't win, but I wanted to discuss the issue the other candidates would not, that issue that is most important to you and me—war. It was most successful. Of course I didn't win, but it was a great campaign. Many, many people were involved and I had a progressive platform with planks covering every major issue. I thought because I was a legitimate candidate, paid the necessary fees and so forth, that the media would cover me. The Twin Cities media did not. They made it clear that running for public office is comparable to a horse race. If you're an unknown with a slim chance of winning, they are not interested. It's those two favorites, that's the race they're interested in—not the issues. However, the small-town papers throughout Minnesota who don't have a lot of news gave my anti-war message front-page coverage.

As we all know, speaking out forcefully for nonviolence is not easy. But there is one great reward that is often overlooked and that is the wonderful, wonderful friends you meet along the way. At my advanced age you especially appreciate and are grateful for them. Today I have the most wonderful friends of my entire lifetime. I know the most dedicated and generous people imaginable. It is a reward unto itself. The journey has been not only rewarding but fun—real fun getting to know you. If people realized how much satisfaction can be found through association with like-minded, peace-loving people, we would be joined by millions.

Thank you.

Polly goes home to Arkansas and finds Walmart

BY POLLY MANN

Pole Cat Creek, Toad Suck Park, Pig Trail Scenic Highway and Eat Buck Nekkid Barbecue—these were some of the highway signs my friend and I encountered on a recent trip from the Twin Cities to Hot Springs, Ark. It was a memorable vacation. The most interesting place we visited was in the town of Bentonville in northwestern Arkansas, home of Walmart, Sam Walton’s corporate empire.

Bentonville is the ultimate in “company towns,” with Walmart “the employer,” directly or indirectly, of most all the population.

Bentonville, population 19,730, has become a major tourist stop in recent years because of “Crystal Bridges,” a world class art museum founded in 2005 by Alice Walton; it’s located just outside the town and opened just last year. There must have been several hundred people in attendance the day we were there. There is no entrance fee. In the building, we were greeted by a past middle-aged smiling woman—no doubt a local volunteer—who directed us to the proper line where we waited a good 15 minutes to pass through to the next individual, a genial, again past middle-aged African-American man, who warned us not to stand closer than 6 feet from any exhibit, to get rid of any chewing gum and “to have a nice day.”

The 201,000 square feet museum, costing \$800 million, and designed by a renowned architect named Moshe Safdie, is twice the size of the Whitney Museum of Modern Art. Its collection is worth hundreds of millions of dollars and features American art from the colonial through the contemporary periods. Among the artists whose work is featured are: Gilbert Stuart, Thomas Eakins, John Singer Sargent, Max Weber, Robert Henri, Lyonel Feininger, Thomas Hart Benton and Andy Warhol. The building consists of a series of pavilions, wrapped around two creek-fed ponds, which house galleries, meeting and classroom spaces, and a large, glass-enclosed gathering hall. Most of the exterior walls are of glass and overlook 120 acres of pine and oak trees, manicured lawns and lucent ponds.

There are 120 full-time employees—one for each acre?

That the Walmart company will continue to fund the museum is evident by its recent contribution of \$20 million to cover all entrance fees for all time. Of course Walmart can afford it. It is the world's 18th largest corporation and the largest public corporation, ranked by revenue. It is also the largest retailer in the world and the largest private employer in the world, with over 2 million employees.

The company, founded by Sam Walton in 1962, also owns and operates the Sam's Club retail warehouses in North America and has 8,500 stores in 15 countries. Its employees total 2.2 million. Each week, about 100 million customers visit Walmart's U.S. stores, attracted by its low prices.

Full-time Walmart employees earn an average of \$10.78 per hour, but starting pay can be much lower—placing some employees with children below the poverty line. Among employee grievances are the low level of health coverage or overpriced health insurance, poor working conditions, and anti-union policies. It has an employee turnover rate of 70%.

Back in 2008, the company agreed to pay \$640 million to settle 63 federal and state class action suits which alleged that Walmart systematically denied employees' overtime pay. In May of 2012, the company was forced to pay \$4.83 million in back wages and damages to 4,000 employees it had illegally denied overtime. Walmart is Mexico's largest private employer, with 209,000 employees.

According to a recent New York Times story, a 2005 investigation by the company uncovered that the U.S. Department of Labor ordered Walmart to pay \$44.8 million in back pay and fines to thousands of employees illegally denied overtime. Just a few years earlier the company had to pay \$34 million in back pay to 87,000 employees. The company's low-paid employees, in need of help, are often forced to apply for publicly funded benefits such as food stamps and Medicaid. The National Employment Law Project uncovered widespread abuse of low-paid temporary laborers working in warehouses. Human rights groups criticize Walmart for its use of sweatshop labor in China.

And then there's discrimination. Last year Walmart beat a class-action suit by thousands of its female's employees on a technicality, but

documents revealed the company routinely discriminates against women. In 2005 the company paid an \$11 million fine for mistreating immigrant employees.

Today it appears Walmart has resorted to another strategy. It involves giving contributions to politicians, hiring lobbyists, mounting public relations and ballot campaigns to win public support. In the past decade, Walmart has contributed more than \$11 million to candidates for President and Congress, political action committees and political parties. It has also pumped millions of dollars into conservative think tanks and lobbying organizations, including those representing the National Rifle Association. This is understandable since Walmart is the country's biggest seller of shotguns and ammunition.

In order to gain the support of community groups in opening stores, Walmart dramatically increased its charitable philanthropy. Its U.S. contributions jumped from \$270 million in 2007 to \$873 million last year. Following are some of these groups: NAACP, the Urban League, Goodwill, Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, Meals on Wheels, Chrysalis, Children's Hospital, as well as several Asian-American organizations.

Though there have been many efforts among employees to organize, they have come to naught. In lieu of a union, a loosely knit association of about 5,000 Walmart employees have formed the Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart). It lacks the right to bargain on workers' behalf, but it does receive some financial and technical support from the nation's largest retail workers union—the United Food and Commercial Workers.

My personal solution for Walmart employees would be for them to declare themselves a charitable organization designed to help poor people such as Goodwill and Catholic Charities and solicit funds, and hold fundraisers. Of course, the people the organization would be providing economic assistance to would be Walmart employees. They might even have a volunteer to stand with a donation box each day as people enter Crystal Bridges. But somehow I don't think that would go over too well with the company.

Tracing my roots

BY POLLY MANN

A friend recently asked me if I would say a few words at a meeting focused on homosexuality. Sure, I said, thinking I would add to my remarks mention of my twin nephews who died from AIDS. My first knowledge of homosexuality was vague whispers when I barely knew what sexuality was, much less homosexuality. My mother's comments about the two men who shared an apartment above ours was that they "should get over it." The society has come a long way since then in recognition that this is a human and natural characteristic. In some indigenous populations the homosexual was considered a prophet, one having special gifts.

This conversation brought to mind so many values and beliefs that I hold which are so very much different, maybe even opposed, to those I was taught. Much of my education has been in dispelling so-called truths of my youth.

Since I was born and raised in the South, among the first myths to which I was exposed was racism. I was never really "taught" that people of color were inferior to white people; situations occurred that made it clear. Only white people lived in the area of manicured lawns, big houses and well-lighted streets. I knew nothing about the quality of education that took place in the separate but equal schools for people of color, but the condition of the dilapidated buildings alone would have given me an indication if I had even thought about it. The reception area of my grandfather's medical office was divided into white and colored. Our colored "help" called me "Miss Polly" and I called them by their first name, too, omitting, of course, the "Miss." It would be years before I would hear about the 40 acres and a mule promised African Americans at the close of the Civil War—a promise never kept, a promise most likely that was never meant to be kept.

Classism was almost as strong in our home but I don't believe it was as egregious. Once, I brought home from grade school a friend who was very poor, revealed not only by her clothing but by her "hillbilly" speech (for example, pronouncing the word "iron" as "ahrn"), and I learned that evening over dinner not to bring her home again. It wasn't spelled out but I

got the message.

I'm not sure I can blame my schoolteachers altogether for some of the biased political views my education left me with. I think we all know people afflicted with the same kind of blind nationalism. I graduated from high school believing that the United States was not only the most wonderful country in the world, it was a country that was very seldom wrong. Now, I knew about slavery and I knew about the treatment of the indigenous people of this continent, but I told myself they were but tiny blips on a landscape of perfection, not to be counted.

As for our economic system, I simply wanted to be rich, very rich. When well-to-do relatives visited from out of town, we urged them to take us driving down main street so our friends could see us in an expensive car. Women hadn't begun to make it as doctors, lawyers or CEOs during my adolescence and your best chance of being wealthy was to marry a rich man, an admonition given me daily by my grandmother. The only truly wealthy so-called "eligible" man I ever met was over twice my age and about twice my size—so much for that!

I suspect the people who compose the Occupy Minnesota movement would roll their eyes around and maybe snicker at my childish desire to be rich. They'd be right to do so. But an enormous amount of people justify the chasm that exists today between the vastly rich 1% of Americans and the 99% of the others; they believe that somehow they might, just might, move up into that 1% category somehow.

As for politics, there was only the Democratic Party and I can't remember any discussion of politics over dinner ever. My mother's job was affected by politics, but it pertained only to the poll tax, which was mandatory for voting. Then, my mother worked for the county in which we lived and, as a result, she had a "poll tax list." This was a list of poor people whose poll taxes were paid by a politico (I never knew or even asked who) and on election day my Mother drove the voters to and from the polls, telling them en route who they were to vote for.

As for religion, my town was almost totally Protestant. There were a couple of Catholic churches and a synagogue. While my family did not socialize with Jews, they "accepted" them in much the same way they did

the peculiar Catholics. One of my aunts married a Catholic and it took the family a while to get accustomed to this. As for the nonviolent message of Jesus, it was never addressed. As a Christian you didn't lie or cheat or steal or kill (that is unless in the military). Period.

I have given more than a little thought to the above-described social system and think I have developed a determination to work against these beliefs, which I consider destructive.

One principle that my jazz musician/social worker mother impressed upon me was that if somebody did something hateful to me I should respond by doing something even more hateful to them. One reading of the Quaker tract "Speak Truth to Power" convinced me this was all wrong. The Quakers' answer was forgiveness.

I'm convinced that war is the greatest evil of our day and we are not going to eliminate it until enough people are determined that we must. This means accepting some beliefs that are common to all the great religions of the world—i.e., all humanity is one; we are all brothers and sisters; we all have the same needs for food, love, housing, etc. I believe that once racism is truly at bay we'll be on our way. For Americans this means action. My present action is to urge everyone I know to read "The New Jim Crow" by Michelle Alexander, which is as important today as "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was during the Civil War.

The present political system seems to have grown so much more antagonistic, almost pugilistic, that one wonders how democracy can work. But it's the only system we have. How can ANYONE justify the huge huge amounts of money—almost half the annual budget—going to the Pentagon as funds for the needy are cut?

Confronting racism in myself and others

BY POLLY MANN

There she was on Stephen Colbert's show. She was beautiful. Photographs can be doctored up, but I'd seen too many of her (including the one on the book cover of "The New Jim Crow") to be unaware. Michelle Alexander is one beautiful young woman. Besides which she's smart—college professor smart. That's what she is—a college professor at Ohio State University, who's written this phenomenal aforementioned book. Not too long ago she was on Amy Goodman's "Democracy Now".

But don't get sidetracked, as I obviously have been, by Michelle's beauty. It's her message that's most important. "Jim Crow" may be a vague phrase to many of you, but I grew up in Arkansas where Jim Crow was a reality. Not a human being was Jim Crow but rather an "it"—unwritten proscriptions that denied black people equality under the law. The polite term for black people then and there was "colored people." Their drinking fountains, bathrooms, schools and even eating establishments were designated "for colored people," and should they attempt to enter those used by the rest of the population, that is, the white part, they would be removed and not too gently removed, even perhaps with police escorts.

Michelle Alexander has provided the American people with a carefully researched book showing how black people, especially black men, have been incarcerated at rates and under conditions so blatantly unfair and illegal that it is a national disgrace: It's the New Jim Crow, Segregations Through Incarceration. The book's importance might be compared to "Uncle Tom's Cabin," an 1852 anti-slavery novel, which some say "helped lay the groundwork for the Civil War." It incidentally established some unfortunate stereotypes that are still with us. "The New Jim Crow" has not yet achieved a comparable success, but it should.

The racism that I grew up with was inculcated from birth. The presence of a patient, hard-working African-American servant was as unthinkingly accepted as the presence of the daily newspaper every morning at the front door. She cleaned house, contributed to the making of the meals, cleaned up after every meal, made beds, scrubbed floors, etc. A maid I particularly remember was a wonderfully good-hearted and good-

humored woman we children called "Nettie." She called me "Miss Polly." The relationship between the adults of my family and a procession of "Netties" was lop-sided, to say the least. Salaries paid them were miserably low, but they managed to survive. If they became ill, some member of my family would see that they got medical care and I remember my mother bailing out one woman who had landed in jail.

Actually, there were two servants in our home; the second was a washerwoman who spent two days a week washing and ironing all of the dirty clothing and linen of that family of nine. At the end of her first day, all the washing was left on the backyard clotheslines to dry. We children had to remove the clothespins, put the dried clothes in large baskets and bring them into the dank dark basement. I hated this task and tried all kinds of maneuvers to avoid it. (That's right. I was pretty spoiled.) The next day the washerwoman returned to iron all the clothing, including my grandfather's starched white shirts, using a series of flat irons, which were heated over a gas jet. Oh yes, we had an electric iron, but my grandmother did not trust the washerwoman's ability to use that iron. (I know. I know. I'm just telling it as it was.)

I never knew any young people of color as I was growing up. Undoubtedly, some of the series of maids had children, but we never met them nor was there ever any mention of them. There were no African Americans on the police force or in the fire department. Even the military remained segregated through World War II.

There was no dramatic moment at which I realized that all humanity is one and that we are all endowed with the same weaknesses and capabilities. It grew out of my acceptance of nonviolence during World War II when I worked for several years at an army camp. It was there that the futility and stupidity of war caught up with me. If all humanity is one then we are all equal.

I remember one incident during this period of flux when a friend and I were on a bus going from Arkansas to Louisiana. A young black mother got on the bus carrying a baby in her arms. There were no vacant seats on the bus. I said to my friend sitting beside me, "I'm going to get up and offer her my seat." My friend replied, "If you do I will never speak to you again." And so I sat. Shortly a young soldier gave her his seat. There have been other

occasions when I have disappointed myself, and a few when I behaved well.

I must give credit to Minnesotans for most of my re-education. It certainly wasn't textbook type learning. For example, years and years ago, I was talking to a close friend about racial differences and I said something to the effect that, "Of course, black people can't help it if their brains are smaller than those of white people." (Yes, I actually said it.) My friend was silent for a minute and then she burst out laughing. I was puzzled. She explained, "You're far too intelligent to make comments like that, much less believe them."

Today, I am keenly aware of the presence of racism in our society. It has not gone away. While ostensibly all the benefits of this democracy are available to all citizens, regardless of their race, sexual preference, gender, etc., the inequities of the past have not been eliminated. The African-American slaves freed by the Civil War were never provided any recompense at all. Most could not read and were not educated. The economic gap has not been closed in the past 150 years. Had each liberated slave received the disputed 40 acres and a mule (worth about \$50,000 today), who can say what the result would have been.

The current slow-down of the economy has unduly affected African Americans. A 2011 study released by the Center for Responsible Lending presented data to support the claim that African Americans and Latinos are more than twice as likely to lose their home as white households. I'm not convinced that this is because African Americans are less savvy than whites but because the system has, once again, exploited them.

Democracy is not democratic when it comes to African Americans. Recently I received a traffic ticket that I disputed. As a result I had to visit the magistrate's office where early one morning I found myself one of a minority of about three white people waiting along with about 15 African Americans to talk to a hearing officer. Obviously, there are not more African-American drivers than white in Minneapolis, yet the proportion was certainly not represented here. The answer is obvious. African Americans are being targeted.

In general, young African-American men are being profiled wherever they are. If you have any doubts, attend a meeting of the organization

Communities United Against Police Brutality.

So we're back to where we began. What do you think would have happened if Amy Senser* had been a black welfare mother? I contend she would have been incarcerated weeks ago and would be serving a jail sentence today. Questions? Read Michelle Alexander's book for answers.

**the wife of a former major league football player convicted of two felonies in the hit-and-run death of Anousone Phanthavong*

My memory of Lois Swenson

BY POLLY MANN

The last time I saw her was several weeks ago in my living room with two of her old friends who, years ago, had taught school with her at Robbinsdale. They were trying to convince her to buy a unit and move into the Kenwood Isles Condominium (minimum age 55) where she'd possibly be my hall neighbor. She smiled agreement. Lois Swenson smiled a lot. But to occupy my building, she'd have to sell her house and its contents, much of it derived from her frequent dumpster divings. Shaking her head she said, "I'll think about it."

A few weeks earlier when she had provided me a ride to the monthly meeting of People of Faith Peacemakers, she was driving a new car. As I remember, her brothers had either forced her to get rid of the ancient, beat-up one she'd had or they'd given her the car. "Excuse me, just a minute," she'd said as she removed an old non-working electric fan and a cardboard box filled with plants of some sort from the front seat of the car and placed them on the back floor of the sedan, filled with other miscellaneous material some could call junk. Lois was taking the fan to a friend who'd repair it, after which it would be given to a needy family, and the plants for her yard were being thrown away by city workers from a downtown site at the end of the blooming season.

She knew the dumpsters where treasures, not trash, were most common. Her favorite time to dumpster dive was when students left the various Twin Cities colleges for summer vacation. Rugs, furniture, canned goods, clothing—she'd find this all plus much, much more. And she knew people who could use them.

But that was just one aspect of the unique person who was Lois. She was a clearly defined member of the local peace community and her face was ever-present in demonstrations for peace and justice as well as planning meetings. A faithful member of the Lutheran Church, she was, in addition, supportive of all churches who supported justice and world peace. I think she could just as easily have been Roman Catholic or Unitarian. Religion was not an intellectual pursuit for her. It was a down-to-earth daily and hourly practice of goodness and mercy.

She could be impulsive. I remember that on one particular occasion when we'd set a time to meet, she was about 20 minutes late. She explained, "I was driving by this Lutheran church where I know the pastor and I decided I should just have a quick visit with him. We had a wonderful conversation about peace and what his church was doing about it and what it wasn't and why." "How did you get in to see him?" I asked, knowing that church officials are usually not open to the casual visitor. "Oh, we've been friends for years," she said, "but it had been a long time since I had seen him?"

She had traveled to Central America and Africa, not as a tourist but as a peace activist. A complete obituary would carry information about these trips. Her accommodations in these countries were not those most Americans demand. She wanted to experience life there as the local people did. For example, some part of an African journey was via truck. As a result she was quite active in immigrant communities.

We had many gloomy conversations about the state of the world, both environmentally and politically; yet she always radiated good humor and hopefulness. I am trying to erase from my mind what her last moments on earth must have been like. The police reports say she died from a beating. Who? Who would have committed such a heinous act? Only someone who was either mentally ill or crazed with drugs. And I know, really know, that if she were able to talk to me and I began to castigate her murderer she would have cautioned me, "No matter how hard it is, we human beings have to forgive."

Memorial service held for Lisa Jean Niebauer

BY POLLY MANN

On Dec. 2, at the AIDS Memorial Grove in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, a memorial service was held for Lisa Jean Niebauer, who died Oct. 29 from cervical cancer.

Present at the ceremony, along with about 100 friends, were four of her five sisters; her son, Christopher Mattheis; her grandson, Cole; and her partner and companion for many years, Mindy Oppenheim. Lisa's name had been added to those of several thousand etched in a large cement circle in the center of the grove—the names of individuals who have died of AIDS plus names of partners and families. One of Lisa's two brothers, Brian, died of AIDS.

When I first met Lisa, in the early '90s, she had just completed a master's degree in theology from the College of St. Catherine. She was active in Women Against Military Madness, especially in justice issues; a charter member of the Women's Political Alliance; and president of the Linden Hills Food Cooperative, where she organized a successful capital fundraising campaign. She was part of a Twin Cities group of women who attended the 1992 World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet held in Florida and of another group who attended a peace conference in New York.

She loved to dance and she loved to listen to jazz.

In 1992 she sought the DFL endorsement for the fifth congressional seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, a position that had been held for 14 years by Martin Olav Sabo. When the DFL convention finally endorsed Sabo at three in the morning, Lisa ran in the DFL primary as an unendorsed Democrat, receiving 30% of votes. Central to her campaign was her belief that a female representative could best address issues important to women and children. Her other issue was putting an end to war. Jan Pester of St. Paul, chairperson of that campaign, says, "I have never worked with anyone as formidable as she when it came to getting something done that she considered right and just."

Shame in Okinawa

BY POLLY MANN

“Arrest of two U.S. Soldiers in Rape Case Threatens to Fan Okinawa’s Anger,” read the headlines in the Oct. 17 issue of The New York Times. Instantly my mind returned to the two exceptional Okinawan women I met some 25 years ago who were in the Twin Cities attending a peace conference. Because of them I developed an interest in Okinawa, which remains with me to this day. Rummaging through files and what-not, I found an old address book and the name of one, Nobuko Karimata from Naha City, Okinawa. But more about her later.

One event that many people of World War II vintage usually recall about Okinawa is the Battle of Iwo Jima, one of the bloodiest battles of the war. It was the only battle of that war in which the overall American casualties exceeded those of the Japanese, although Japanese combat deaths were three times those of the marines. Of the 22,000 Japanese soldiers only 216 were taken prisoner.

Okinawa is one of hundreds of the Japanese Ryukyu Pacific Islands. One fourth of its population was killed during the war. It is about 30 square miles in size and today has a population of 1,318,218 people. Its mild climate, plentiful beaches and modern accommodations have made it favorable to tourists. It has an educational system that includes, besides public schools, Montessori, international, religious and music schools, colleges and universities. Its economy, though not up to that of mainland Japan, is good.

The U.S. Kadena Air Base is the home of the Air Force’s largest combat wing—the 18th Wing—and a variety of associated units. Nearly 18,000 Americans and more than 4,000 Japanese employees and contractors make up Team Kadena. The base’s estimated economic impact upon Okinawa’s economy is more than \$700 million annually, which would make its presence acceptable to the Okinawans, one would think. But it does not.

Also under contention is the 1,200 acre Futenma Air Base located in the heart of Ginowan City (population 3,600), with 18 municipal facilities, which include schools, hospitals and community centers. Inhabitants are subjected to daily training flights and soil and ground water pollution. Relocation of the base has been under discussion for many years but at present the discussion is “up in the air.”

Seventy-four percent of the U.S. military bases found in Japan are located in Okinawa. Twenty percent of the Okinawa Island alone is occupied by U.S. military bases. In addition, airspace and a vast ocean area are available for training purposes. This occupation and its ramifications are extremely unpopular with Okinawans. For example, in December of 2011 for three days protesters blocked the entryway to governmental offices in connection with an environmental impact statement from the Japan Ministry of Defense. Acquiescing to the protesters’ demand for a face-to-face meeting, Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima accepted delivery of the report because “we have no alternative but to handle it appropriately.”

Opposition to the U.S. military presence can make or break the careers of politicians. In 2010, Yukio Hatoyama was elected, in part, because he pledged to move a U.S. marine base off the islands. After intense pressure from the Obama Administration he broke his promise. It cost him his job.

An increase in low birth weight babies and higher incidences of cancer and leukemia have been linked to carcinogenic fuels, oils, solvents and heavy metals from the base. The U.S. marines use depleted uranium ammunition in training exercises. Live ammunition exercises are believed to have caused forest fires, soil erosion, earth tremors and other accidents. Also, Okinawans complain bitterly about the noise pollution from aircraft. Elsewhere in Japan U.S. aircraft cannot land after 7 p.m., but such restrictions are not in place in Okinawa. With the military bases have come increased prostitution and rape. On Okinawa, U.S. servicemen from the Kadena Air Base can be seen wearing T-shirts depicting a woman with the letters, “LBSM” which means, “little brown sex machine.” The “brown” refers to the Filipino and Thai women who constitute the majority of military prostitutes on Okinawa. Huge anti-bases demonstrations occurred in 1995 at the rape of a 12-year old girl by a U.S. marine.

Also in 1995, as the result of the brutal gang-rape and murder of a 12-year old girl by three U.S. military men, SOFA, the “Status of Forces Agreement,” between the U.S. and Okinawa, was changed to permit Japanese authorities to convict and imprison Americans who rape and murder. But this has not stopped them.

So, this most recent rape, along with the arrival of 12 new transport aircraft, plus the presence of 50,000 military personnel on this small island has incensed the population. My old friend Nobuko Karimata has not been silent.

On Aug. 20, around 300 people held a rally in front of the U.S. Marine Corps Camp Zukeran in Okinawa to protest the sexual assault of a woman by a marine in Naha City. Protestors called for the U.S.M.C to formally apologize to the victim and to be punished. Some female members of prefectural and national assemblies took part in the action.

And who was among them? Prefectural assemblywoman Nobuko Karimata of the Social Democratic Party, who argued, “No more women should suffer from sexual assaults by U.S. marines. Let’s work together to get the U.S. Forces out of Okinawa.”

In an effort to get in touch with Nobuko I discovered a book in which she and eight other women are featured: “Nine Voices from a Garrison Island.” I’m going to try to get a copy in an effort to reach her and I’m going to write every member of the Minnesota congressional delegation demanding that U.S. military forces be removed from Okinawa.

Drama and political discovery

BY POLLY MANN

Meryl Streep was magnificent as Mother Courage, the lead character in the Bertolt Brecht play of the same name, which was the subject of a documentary film recently shown at the Oak Street Theater. Likewise, Emily Gunyou Halaas was magnificent as Rachel Corrie in the recent “last ever” production of the local Emigrant Theater.

Rachel Corrie was a far cry from Mother Courage, who survived selling sundries to soldiers in the European Thirty Years War (1618-1648), and at the same time was raising her three children. Rachel was a real person—a young American volunteer who was in Palestine trying to prevent Israeli soldiers from bulldozing homes of Palestinians. She was killed in 2003 by a bulldozer operator who ran his machine over her twice—once forward and then in reverse.

The Emigrant Theater production was followed by a discussion. I was prepared for passionate remarks about the politics of the Palestine/Israeli conflict, such as those made a few nights previously. I was trying to gather my thoughts to speak as forcefully as possible about the plight of the Palestinians—surreptitiously drying my eyes and sniffing a bit—when I began to feel the deep silence. I was amazed. A few people had drifted out, but the bulk of the audience remained—silent. I have had similar experiences after an especially moving play, but such moments are rare.

“Doesn’t anyone have a question or a comment?” asked the facilitator. Again silence. “I have one,” I said. “I speak and write about the horrors of war, but my words cannot begin to produce the same effect as that which I’ve witnessed here tonight. The power of art—of drama in particular—to present a compelling argument far outstrips the written word.” With this the spell was broken and others began to speak but more about the play itself than the message.

Rachel’s story is that of the mostly unknown conflict in Israel/Palestine, which is at the heart of today’s Middle East conflicts—comparable to the fight between David and Goliath. The Palestinians have

neither planes nor army. Some have explosives and guns, but the vast majority of them have no weapons whatsoever. The media coverage of not only the conflict but almost any event concerning the region is presented from the Israeli viewpoint. This is not surprising in that Israel uses public relations firms to ensure this. There is no way the poverty-stricken Palestinians could provide any counter force.

Some facts are hard to dispute. The Israelis have allowed Palestinians to live on only 22% of the land they originally occupied at the close of World War II. But even this small amount is being reduced by a 30-foot-high wall, separating Israel from Palestine, located and encroaching on Palestinian land. In addition, the Israelis continue to build settlements on land ceded the Palestinians by international treaties. The water allotment for each Israeli is four times that of a Palestinian. This has proven disastrous to Palestinian farmers. An estimated total of 24,000 Palestinian homes have been bulldozed since 1967, escalating recently to more than a 1,000 every year. Far more Palestinians have been killed in the conflict than Israelis. For example, during the Second Intifada, there were 5,300 Palestinian deaths compared to 1,000 Israeli deaths.

This injustice is what led to the death of Rachel Corrie and it is this kind of massive injustice about which Mother Courage speaks. Both blamed indifference for the continuation of conflict.

It is this indifference of well-meaning and good-hearted Americans that keeps our country, the most powerful nation in the history of the world, engaged in massive worldwide wrong-doing and armed conflicts.

Materialism

BY POLLY MANN

Have you noticed how so many little girls are dressed these days? By little I mean from say 3 years old and up. They're wearing darling little skirts and tutus and gold-colored slippers. And so what's wrong with that? Well, let's go back to the beginning. I don't think that a bunch of mothers decided one day that their daughters' jeans and T-shirts were too unfeminine. Neither was it a decision of the daughters. After all, little girls don't know whether they're feminine or unfeminine. They, like little boys, run and play and walk through puddles of rain water and roll in the grass. No, the tutus and dress-up clothing came from another source—the manufacturers of children's clothing. Again, so what's wrong with that? Well, in my opinion, it creates a desire for those little girls, and their mothers, to see that they're prettily attired and that means buying more and more clothes. But perhaps even more important, it means little girls are learning at an early age to “want” things and to satisfy that want. Of course, children's clothing is just the tip of the iceberg.

Let's look for a minute at the mothers. They're at least one generation or two past the irate feminism expressed by Betty Friedan. Although they haven't yet received equal pay for equal work, more and more women are not only executives but corporate chairpersons of the board and presidents. So what is it with these frilly little girls? Has there been a revival of Barbie Dolls? Is it a struggle for the influence wielded by say Lady Gaga on one hand and Hillary Clinton on the other? No, it's a cold, clear-headed decision on the part of manufacturers to propagandize mothers to buy, buy, buy.

The ultimate in clothes competition is the various award-presenting ceremonies—best actor, best director, etc. The garments of the actresses must run into the thousands. (They probably show them as an expense on their income tax returns.) Less is more for these events—that is the less of the covering the better. However, it must be unique in some way.

Corporations love competition. At least they say they do as they go about trying to eliminate their competitors. One particularly obnoxious TV

ad of many years ago featured a teenage boy in a car with his father. A couple of blocks away from their high school destination the boy says, “Just let me off here.” The puzzled father complies, shaking his head. A voice then explains, “Don’t let your car make your son ashamed to be seen in it.” Gross, simply gross.

There is no article too humble on which the greedy gophers of the free market can make money. The cane I was supplied when I left the hospital after hip surgery was an old black one, which serves the purpose. Recently, I saw a beautifully painted cane for sale in one of the many catalogs that routinely and unrequested make their way to my mail box—less than a hundred dollars but not much less. The really sad part of the story is that I’m tempted to buy it.

And food!! Its presentation is justification for meal prices as high as a round-trip ticket to Chicago. Good-bye to the old gold-rimmed porcelain dishes of yesterday. Hello to square white plates that hold a small dollop of food in the middle topped with a sprig of cilantro.

Even health care isn’t isolated from the fray. For-profit hospitals send out requests for donations including full-color brochures that must cost from \$5 to \$10 each. Every facility has to own and exploit the same medical equipment as its adversary. Why couldn’t hospitals get together and decide which will specialize in treatment of, for example, heart problems, head injuries, etc., thus saving the duplication of very expensive machinery and personnel? The health facility has become a business. Some facilities provide services to “customers”—not patients. By the same token, one no longer refers to the medical profession or legal profession. Rather, it’s the medical industry or the legal industry.

Which brings us to nursing homes. No doubt, there must be those for people with minimal incomes and insurance, but I haven’t seen any of them. Those I have seen or occupied have been definitely upscale, which means hundreds of square feet of wasted space in carpeted lobbies filled with furniture that looks as if it has never been used and is cemented to the floor. They could be movie sets. At the same time that this has been going on, there continue to be efforts to reduce the wages paid those people who provide services. Labor unions have lost clout and the salaries of many have been greatly reduced—for example, airline pilots and stewards. As this has

happened, the disparity between the richest people in the society and the poorest has grown wider and wider. Upper-end incomes have skyrocketed. A few years back 1% of U.S. citizens owned 40% of its wealth.

The most serious aspect of materialism is that it totally ignores that this is a finite planet. Substances we once considered as never-ending are now being rationed. Once natural resources are depleted, they can't be restored. The world has already consumed half the available supply of oil—most of that in a period of less than a hundred years due to wars.

And there's an even more precious commodity: water. By the year 2050, some 4 billion people (over half the world's population) will be facing severe water shortages. People in some southwestern U.S. states will be facing severe freshwater shortages by 2025. Fred Pearce's book "When the Rivers Run Dry" suggests that overall water shortage could constitute the greatest environmental crisis the world will ever see.

From birth to death, materialism is with us. The costs connected with a funeral are estimated at from \$7,750 to \$9,000. There's a way to get around this. If you're willing to donate your corpse to the University of Minnesota Medical School you can enroll in their Anatomy Request Program (I did) and eliminate a funeral where there's a body in a casket. However, for those unhappy with this situation, there could still be a memorial service.

If, by this time, you're beginning to despair, there is a place on the globe where cooperation has trumped materialism—Mondragon, Spain, where there is no poverty, unemployment or extreme wealth.

Climate change and political headwinds

BY POLLY MANN

It's rather like a prophecy that's come true. It's not quite as dire as naming a date on which the world will come to an end but the recent freaky weather—the storms, floods, tsunamis and earthquakes—have made believers of many of us—politicians, scientists, students and just plain citizens—in climates that “are a-changin’.” So we're paying more attention to the recent U.N. climate control conference held in Doha, Qatar. The newspaper items about it have usually been one or two paragraphs on the inside pages. So here's my summary.

The conference was called COP18/CMP8. Why? COP stands for the Conference of the Parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate and this is its 18th annual conference. The CMP reviews the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol on climate and promotes its implementation. This protocol is behind all the activity. It was adopted in 1997 and legally binds developed countries to emission reduction targets. Its first commitment period, from 2008 to Dec. 31, 2012, will be followed by a second commitment period.

As noted, this protocol applies to “developed” countries, and there's the rub.

After all, “developed” countries such as the U.S. of A. do not like to be told what to do. They, after all, with their wealth and standard of living, tell others what to do, define democracy and boundaries and such like. So is it any wonder that while the U.S. is represented and participates in the conference it really resists restrictions of any kind. So what happened?

Well, let me remind you—the United States is a capitalist country. To reduce the carbon dioxide from the atmosphere will mean that those capitalists, i.e. energy producers, oil companies and so forth, would have restrictions placed on the amount of energy they could produce, and this is not to their liking. Energy representatives of various companies such as Shell and Chevron were very much present at the conference, though, according to one report, oil companies are generally not welcome.

The location of the conference in Qatar, a country which is a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, seemed odd to many, and, when it was chosen to host the U.N. negotiations on climate change, environmentalists were dismayed. Negotiations were already problematic, with few results, at the last conference, held in South Africa in 2011. However, now the high-level discussions were occurring in a country, which is a member of OPEC.

But I'm realizing that I haven't provided you, gentle reader, with the need for climate control. Of course, most of you have read about it but perhaps a re-summation is needed, (no less for your enlightenment than my own). The Earth's climate has always gone through periods of change. Over the past few decades, however, increasing fluctuations in weather patterns have led to a recognition of the need for international action. The Earth is surrounded by an invisible layer of mainly water particles that acts as a protective shield against the infrared radiation from the sun and forms a natural greenhouse effect. The "manmade" greenhouse effect, on the other hand, is caused by the addition of greenhouse gases (GHGs), especially carbon dioxide (CO₂), which are emitted when fossil fuels, such as petroleum, coal and natural gas, are burned. In addition to CO₂, greenhouse gases include other destructive chemicals. This enhancement of the greenhouse canopy reduces the loss of infrared radiation into outer space, and it becomes a "blanket" that keeps the Earth's surface and lower atmospheric layers increasingly warmer. Although people have always been preoccupied by weather patterns, the culmination of intensive studies of rainfall, temperature, oceanic data and improved methodologies since the middle of the 20th century has driven the science of climate change. Since the Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America, humans have increased their use of fossil fuels and have released increasing levels of GHGs into the atmosphere. This situation, combined with additional human activities that have decreased the Earth's natural ability to absorb carbon dioxide, such as the depletion of forest cover, have led to the point where scientists have warned that concerted human action is required to reverse both trends. Politicians must make decisions under circumstances in which scientists' findings indicate that even a few degrees of warming could lead to a melting of the polar ice caps that in turn raises sea levels and temperatures significantly, increases in extreme weather events and

decreases in snow cover and glacier retreat or total disappearance. Most of these outcomes would have ecological as well as social and cultural impact.

And now—back to the conference. Amy Goodman devoted her daily hour of radio/TV time for a whole week to the conference. One of the highlights was, in my opinion, interviews and speeches, especially that of a young college student who was most moving in her concern for the future of the world and why addressing climate change is essential if the earth is to survive. Hosting the conference was part of Qatar's campaign to project the country as a world power and to change the world's perception about the region. Most people believed the Arabian peninsula was concerned only with protecting its vast oil reserves.

Apparently, Qatar and its Gulf neighbors believe that the present framework is outdated. The United Arab Emirate (UAE) supported the extension of the Kyoto Protocol. They were also the first among the Gulf countries to sign the Copenhagen agreement in 2009. Even Saudi Arabia, which once led the opposition on climate change negotiations to protect its oil production, affirmed the team of negotiators. Both Qatar and the UAE are working to build green buildings. Qatar says it will have 20% of its energy in renewables by 2024, while Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE announced plans for huge investments in solar energy.

Activists want to see results emanating from the conference. The former president of Ireland Mary Robinson suggested voluntary targets to cut emissions, as did Mexico, which hosted the conference in 2010. The total emissions of Gulf countries are a fraction of the emissions of China and the U.S., but they support goals as encouragement for other countries to do likewise.

Activists also claim that the Gulf countries, which often sell gasoline for less than bottled water, should do more to cut fuel subsidies.

And what did the conference achieve? Certainly nowhere near what the affected nations of the world would have wanted. "We think the Western countries are not serious about cutting emissions," said a climate activist from the African country of Lesotho, continuing, "Their actions are our survival. If they act positively, then we survive; negatively, we perish."

On the last day of the conference a few hundred people marched in a peaceful demonstration for “climate justice.” The event was billed as the first environmental rally ever in the wealthy emirate. Many of those taking part in the march said Arab leaders need to look beyond the political turmoil in the region and address the broader challenge of climate change. Dangerous warming effects could include flooding of coastal cities and island nations, disruptions to agriculture and drinking water, the spread of diseases and the extinction of species.

The vast majority of climate scientists say human activity—primarily emissions from the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation—is to blame for the rise in global temperatures seen in recent decades. Both rich and poor countries say emissions have to be reduced but don't agree on how to divide the burden. That dispute and other disagreements have slowed talks on crafting a new global climate treaty, which was originally planned for adoption in 2009 but has now been postponed until 2015.

So returning to the U.S.A., what has our government been doing about the situation? Not much as far as I can tell. I didn't hear the President mention it during his campaign. A New York Times reporter asked him about it in November. His reply was, in essence, he was talking with scientists, engineers and elected officials to create a program that would be expensive but necessary.

We shall see.

The cost of a college education

BY POLLY MANN

It costs a lot of money to go to college. As far as I can make out, it costs \$448.08 per credit to attend the University of Minnesota, with a minimum requirement of eight credits, which totals \$3,504, and I suspect that's low. Medical insurance is available at \$1,340 annually. And, of course, on top of that there are books and room and board. I paid \$60 for a text for the last college course I took some 10 years ago.

As you can see, salaries of faculty and administration have also risen:

Head Basketball Coach, \$1,783,150.

Head Football Coach, \$850,640.

Sr. Vice President for Health Services & Dean of the Medical School, \$485,000.

Dean of Carlson School of Management, \$478,560.

University President, \$455,000.

Dean of the Law School, \$385,000.

CEO of the Minnesota Foundation, \$365,568.

Sr. Vice President for Academic Affairs & Provost, \$346,310.

Athletic Director, \$336,250.

Professor of International Economics, \$229,603.

It would be interesting to see how much money has been put into new buildings on the campus. You need only drive around to see the construction. Of course, the biggest building on campus has nothing to do with learning. It's the Twin City Federal Bank Stadium, which is larger than any academic building there. Another interesting study would be to accumulate figures on the cost of the building, the annual maintenance,

cost of salaries paid coaches, etc., cost of uniforms, travel expenses, etc., for the athletic teams compared to the money garnered through ticket sales.

What the stadium says to me is that the University's principal concern is winning athletic teams.

Getting to know Sallie Mae

BY POLLY MANN

Recently a friend was telling me a “horror story” about an educational loan that her granddaughter owed Sallie Mae, the biggest corporate supplier of student loans in the country. My friend had co-signed a promissory note to the company, the granddaughter had fallen behind with payment, and a collection agent called my friend threatening her with the loss of her home if the debt was not paid immediately. The matter was resolved, but I began thinking about it and the \$40,000 educational debt one of my grandchildren will be paying off for the next 20 years. So I turned to my ever faithful google and did I ever learn about Sallie Mae. She looks and acts a lot like Freddie Mae and Fannie Mae but they’re actually not related.

There are two versions of Sallie:

1) She is very well thought of in some circles. She began life as the Student Loan Marketing Association in 1972, a government-sponsored enterprise, but in 2004, Congress terminated her federal charter, ending her ties to the government. The company, the country’s largest originator of federally insured student loans, contributed the maximum of \$250,000 to the second inauguration of President George W. Bush. In 2010, the lady acquired federally insured loans from Citigroup-owned Student Loan Corporation worth \$28 billion. She won the Ron Brown Award for Corporate Leadership in 2006. Corporate Responsibility Officer has named Sallie Mae one of America’s “100 Best Corporate Citizens” five times.

2) Her detractors among students are legion. Google’s comment section contains page after page of complaints. For the last few years they’ve averaged about 16 a month. Following are just a few of the hundreds of online complaints: 1) “ ... by far the worst loan company in the history of loan companies.” 2) “So now I am stuck paying \$10,000 for an education I never received.” 3) “They are a crooked organization that mistreats people and lacks compassion.” 4) “I really wish someone (Newsweek, The Times) would do an in-depth look at their deceptive business practices.”

So, it appears Sallie is obviously no lady; her past and present policies

and procedures should be made public. Maybe some motivated and mistreated student will make her the subject of a Ph.D. thesis?

Welfare activist brutalized by Capitol Police

BY POLLY MANN

I was present at a demonstration and rally held at the State Capitol on Friday, May 3, 2001. It was called by the Welfare Rights Organization, protesting the 5-year limitation on welfare grants, the imposition of sanctions and the elimination of \$100 from the grant provided to people who live in subsidized housing. The demonstration, begun at about 1:30 p.m. on the steps facing Constitution Avenue, moved into the Capitol Rotunda about 2:30 p.m.

It was a rowdy group of about 100 people. These were not human services administrators or social workers or even community activists, rather these were welfare recipients affected by sanctions too often unfairly and capriciously applied. Among them were women protesting the state's unwillingness to provide educational grants allowed under the welfare laws, mothers with handicapped children, and Hmong parents having difficulty with the English language. (In case we've forgotten, the Hmong fought in the Vietnam War on the side of the United States and were promised security and a safe haven in this country at the end of the war.)

In the Capitol Rotunda there was a speaker system, and the chants of an estimated 150 people could be heard throughout the first floor. One of the chants had to do with "robbing the poor," referring to \$46 million which it was reported the Republican-controlled House is diverting from Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). In other words, welfare funds are being moved to the general budget to be used for tax rebates. There were numerous short speeches, primarily from welfare recipients from the Twin Cities and Duluth, including African Americans, Hmong and Latinos. The Capitol Security Police, with pistols in holsters, stood about in small groups, laughing and talking to each other.

At 3:30 p.m. the demonstration was concluded. But not quite. Some of the Welfare Rights group had decided to do civil disobedience and about 50 people walked up to the second floor to watch the plan unfold. There, several people sat on a short flight of three steps leading to one of the Capitol chambers, with three or four security guards standing beside them.

One of the guards spoke to the seated group, warning them that if they didn't move they would be arrested. The group nodded and then the action began. A shaven-headed state trooper, standing close to where Debby Pflipsen was seated on the steps, picked up her arm, twisted her wrist forward until it appeared he would break it, put his arm around her neck and squeezed it. At one point he grabbed her chin and held it tight. The other guards watched.

I walked several paces up to the stairs, and though quite frightened, said, "You've got to stop this," and I appealed to the other guards to stop the state trooper from abusing Debby. At about the same time, Jane McDonald of the Sisters of St. Joseph, almost as red-faced as Debby, said, "This can't continue." I looked around to see another McDonald Sister demanding that the brutal treatment stop. Shortly, the perpetrator released his choke hold on Debby and placed handcuffs on her. Then she and two other people sitting on the stairs were led away. Their places were then filled with other protestors who were likewise handcuffed and taken away.

A total of eight were taken to jail, where they were charged with having committed gross misdemeanors, and bail was set at \$12,000. I then approached Debby's perpetrator, trying to read the name on his badge. "You want my name?" he asked. I nodded. "Here, let me give you my card," he said, obviously unconcerned about any repercussions brought about by his previous action. He is James Englin, #37, State Trooper District 2400, of Minnesota State Patrol East Metropolitan Headquarters in Oakdale. The Minneapolis Star Tribune reported the arrests without any mention of the reason for the action. So much for 5-year time limit restrictions for welfare recipients, unreasonable sanctions and cuts in housing grants to people living in subsidized housing, and the people of Welfare Rights who tried in every way to bring home to state legislators the disastrous effects of welfare cuts.

Civil disobedience in adherence to one's conscience doesn't seem to impress people as much today as it once did. Consider how effective civil disobedience was when used by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his followers in demanding equal rights for African Americans as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, and contrast that with the lack of attention paid to the Welfare Rights activists following in their footsteps.

So it is today in Minnesota with State Trooper James Englin brutalizing an unarmed woman, secure in the reality of his impunity.

Ellison proposes a Robin Hood tax on Capitol Hill

A legal way to help fix the economic system, taking from them that has and giving to them that aren't among the well-heeled.

BY POLLY MANN

The legislation has already been introduced into Congress by Minnesota's own Fifth District U.S. Representative Keith Ellison: H.R. 6411, calling for a minimal tax on all financial transactions. It would affect individual investors, banks, hedge funds and financial institutions. It would not apply to ordinary Americans, their personal savings, or everyday consumer or business activity. Among its supporters are: Microsoft founder, Bill Gates; financial entrepreneur George Soros; Nobel Prize winner for economics Joseph Stiglitz; former U.S. Vice-President Al Gore; the Pope; Archbishop Desmond Tutu; and The New York Times editorial board.

The charitable organization "War on Want," based in London, gave birth to the idea, presenting its case for a currency transaction tax in 2001. It slowly made its way across the continent to Italy where in 2008 the minister of the treasury introduced a windfall tax on the profits of energy companies. Adbusters, the organization responsible for sparking the Occupy movement, called for a global march in support of the Robin Hood tax, to take place on October 29, just before the 2011 G20 leaders summit. While the march did not occur, there were several hundred protests in various locations, including Washington, D.C., Vancouver and Edinburgh.

The 2010 U.S. and European campaign has proposed to set taxes on a range of financial transactions. The rate would vary but would average about .05%. The amount of money raised would depend on many factors. It is estimated it would produce from \$350 billion to \$400 billion annually in the United States, and in the 10 European countries interested in the plan it could produce an estimated annual amount of 57 billion euros.

With the launching of the British campaign there was an apparent backlash of possibly thousands of people against the idea. However, investigation showed that 5,000 of the "no" votes on a poll came from only two sources, and one of them was the investment bank Goldman Sachs.

Campaigning for the tax continued in 2011 with over 1,000 economists signing a letter addressed to G20 finance ministers attending an April meeting in Washington. (The G20 is a group of 20 finance ministers and central bank governors from 19 major economies and a representative of the European Union. The group includes Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, United States, India, Russia, South Africa, Turkey, France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, China, Indonesia, Japan and South Korea.)

The Nation magazine of Sept. 14 carried an article replete with information about the movement here. In it John Nichols writes of a May conference of the National Nurses Union joined by healthcare, labor and other unions as well as activists from G-8 nations that called for a financial transaction tax (FTT)—that is, a Robin Hood tax. Nichols also quoted Congressman Ellison, who said while attending the Democratic National Convention, “We’re not broke. We’ve got plenty of money. It’s just not in the hands of the American people because the people with so much of the wealth bought lobbyists and influence to get loopholes for themselves so that they would not have to pay for the civilization that is America.” The National Nurses United and Progressive Democrats of America have been joined by groups such as the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers.

Save money. Save lives. Stop jailing pot smokers.

BY POLLY MANN

Today as state budgets are strained to the breaking point, it seems like a good time to examine all state facilities with a view to reducing them wherever possible. Who can fault Enlightened Self-Interest? Programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid should be sacrosanct, as well as programs to alleviate hunger, homelessness, etc. So what's left? Well—there are penal institutions that have been growing by leaps and bounds. It's even a growth industry, with the construction of privately-run prisons a source of competition throughout small-town America. And it's strictly an American phenomenon. Globally, the United States has 5% of the world's population but 25% of its prisoners. Prison growth has been fueled by tough drug enforcement, stringent sentencing laws, and high rates of recidivism—the re-arrest, re-conviction or re-incarceration of an ex-offender.

That racism is well and alive in this country is demonstrated in its prisons where African Americans are imprisoned at 8 times the rate of white people and Hispanics are imprisoned at 3.5 times that of whites. About 38% of the total prison population is African American and 22% is Hispanic. In the total U.S. population African Americans make up just 12.6% of the total and Hispanics 16.3% according to the last census. The law itself could be said to reflect racism in that penalties for smoking cocaine, for example, are less than for using crack cocaine, a form generally preferred by African Americans. (A book that I believe to be as important today as was “Uncle Tom's Cabin” during Civil War days is Michelle Alexander's “The New Jim Crow,” in which she provides facts and figures showing that incarceration targets African Americans.)

There has been an increase in prison populations from 500,000 to 1.8 million in the last two decades. Just how much is this costing taxpayers? Well, in Minnesota the estimated annual cost of maintaining a prisoner is \$41,364. By the end of 2008 there were 9,406 such prisoners, or an increase of 50.8% since 2000, which figures out roughly at \$37,800,000. There is also an aging prison population, which requires medical care and occasionally hospitalization.

So, how would one start reducing a prison population? The public certainly doesn't want violent criminals let loose on the streets. Of course not. But there is an alternative. Nonviolence is the word and there are lots of prisoners who fit that category. There has been a 77% growth in the last several years in the number of inmates who were committed to prison for nonviolent crimes—most of them for possessing or selling recreational drugs. That nationwide nonviolent prison population is larger than the combined populations of Wyoming and Alaska. There are three times as many nonviolent offenders in U.S. prisons as in the total nonviolent prison population of all the European Union nations.

We could empty the prisons of nonviolent offenders. They might be under probation or parole for a while, but the taxpayers would be relieved of the cost of maintaining them. It's actually not a preposterous idea. Minnesota has actually taken a step in that direction: its sentencing law change during the 1980s drastically slowed prison growth and reserved prison space for violent and more serious offenders while establishing a network of support programs for less serious offenders.

The vast majority of the offenders were guilty of possessing or using marijuana that can be found growing in Minnesota, composed of dried leaves, stems and flowering tops of the hemp plant. There are many who contend that alcohol usage is worse in many ways and gradually social acceptance of marijuana has continued to climb. By the 1980s, over 80% of high school students said they had easy access to marijuana. By 1988, the Drug Enforcement Administration's administrative law judge, Francis Young, concluded that, "Marijuana may well be the safest psychoactive substance commonly used in human history."

A 2009 CBS News poll found that 41% of the people polled said they thought that the use of marijuana should be made legal and 52% were opposed. A previous CBS News poll found 31% in favor of legalization in all cases, with another 7% saying they would favor legalization if marijuana were taxed and the money went into the federal budget.

Endorsement of the legalization of marijuana usage has come from an unusual source—LEAP, “an international organization of criminal justice professionals who bear personal witness to the wasteful futility and harms

of our current drug policies. Our experience on the front lines of the “war on drugs” has led us to call for a repeal of prohibition and its replacement with a light system of legalized regulation, which will effectively cripple the violent cartels and street dealers who control the current illegal market.” There is no question but that legalizing recreational drugs would reduce—maybe eliminate? —The criminal activity in Mexico, Colombia and Bolivia in connection with their sale.

The following information from the LEAP website must be continually updated as it provides the time of day as well as the date in its recap, which follows.

2012 Drug War At A Glance

Federal Spent	\$14,370,950,929
State/Local Spent	24,494,452,399
Total Spent	\$38,865,403,328
All Drug Arrests	1,586,509
Cannabis Arrests	818,638
Imprisoned	10,315

Who can the U.S. military legally kill when not engaged in a war?

BY POLLY MANN

In The New York Times of March 6, Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. claimed that it is lawful for the government to kill American citizens if officials deem them to be operational leaders of Al Qaeda planning attacks on the United States, and if capturing them alive is not feasible.

My oh my.

His statement was meant to excuse the killing of an American citizen in Yemen, Anwar Al-Awlaki, without any due process, but what does this say about the assassination of Osama Bin Laden? There was absolutely no way Bin Laden could have escaped the U.S. Navy Seals descending from a helicopter upon the compound which housed the group. One account says that Bin Laden was unarmed; another says there was a firefight. So who was armed? Was it the two couriers who were killed? Could it have been the unidentified woman? The press has provided no details. It is said that the unidentified woman victim was the wife of one of the couriers. Which of the Seals made the decision that capturing the group alive was not feasible? Nobody knows the names of the Seals involved and they will probably go to their graves unidentified.

Of course, if Bin Laden had been captured and returned to the United States for a trial, he would be entitled to legal representation and it could have been a matter of years before the "deed was done." In addition, the trial would be quite costly, though I'm sure that cost was never a consideration. I'm convinced that it was never intended that he be returned.

After a flurry of media attention, the episode has quieted down and there is little mention of it. An important factor in determining the legality of assassination is that the targeted individual must be a terrorist. It seems to me that in order to ignore due process, upon which the law of this country is based, there must be an official definition of a terrorist. The present administration obviously believes it is legal to kill a terrorist, but **JUST WHO IS A TERRORIST?**

In October, The New York Times stated there was a memorandum from the Office of Legal Counsel that approved targeted killing, and the newspaper filed a Freedom of Information Act request seeking access to it. The Justice Department refused to confirm or deny its existence. U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy asked about it but was refused information.

Georgetown law professor Gary Solis claims that assassinations and targeted killings are two entirely different actions. Former U.S. District Court Judge Abraham Sofaer claims that assassination denotes murder whereas people who are allegedly terrorists are targeted in self-defense, and thus this is viewed as a killing but not a crime. On the other hand, the American Civil Liberties Union states on its website, "A program of targeted killing far from any battlefield, without charge or trial, violates the constitutional guarantee of due process. It also violates international law, under which lethal force may be used outside armed conflict zones only as a last resort to prevent imminent threats, when non-lethal means are not available. Targeting people who are suspected of terrorism for execution, far from any war zone, turns the whole world into a battlefield."

The media has been amazingly quiet about the whereabouts of Bin Laden's three wives. But on March 9 they were in Pakistan where the interior minister said they had been charged with illegally entering the country along with the five children of Bin Laden's third wife, Amal Ahmed al-Sadah. The issue will continue to be discussed. The use of drones makes targeted killings or assassinations (pick your term) ever easier. Law enforcement now uses them. What do you suppose are their regulations for killing? One thing is certain: The victim of the assassination or targeted killing won't be able to object.

Recently the story of U.S. Staff Sergeant Robert Bayles has made the newspapers' front pages. After four tours of active duty he apparently went berserk, killing 16 unarmed Afghani civilians. It appears he was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, a severe anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to any event that results in psychological trauma. This has been an ongoing problem for the U.S. military that demands attention; studies reveal that one out of eight soldiers who fought in Iraq show signs and symptoms of PTSD. This condition was known as

“Soldiers’ Heart” during the Civil War, “Shell Shock” during World War I and “Battle Fatigue” during World War II.

I have a theory about the prevention of PTSD, but inasmuch as I do not have the accepted credentials of a psychologist it has received very very little attention. But perhaps the publishing of this article will change that situation. Except for physical injuries to the brain, it is, no doubt, the expectation or experience of killing that creates the condition. But why? I suspect that other animals (and we are animals) kill one another and suffer no ill effects, though I’m not familiar with any study proving this. After all, how could one interview a wolf? Anyhow, my theory pertains only to the human animal.

Why should killing another human cause mental anguish? (Your lightbulb should go on at this point.) It’s because we’ve been heavily programmed all our lives that killing another is wrong. How confusing this must be for the soldier for whom this is an obligation under, of course, the “right circumstances.” This has got to be changed if we are to eliminate PTSD. So from birth on, parents, our first educators, must encourage children to think first of themselves in any situation, fight for the toy the other toddler has picked up, trip the kid who’s going to get ahead in the lunch line, etc. And this kind of “me first” approach should be inculcated in all education from kindergarten through graduate school. Long ago the corporate world adopted this attitude and look what it’s done for those people. Granted this would go against many religious teachings, but the importance of good mental health should eliminate all objections.

So, mothers, start now. For disputes among siblings, bring out the boxing gloves. Teach your children to handle conflict by meeting it head on—fighting it out. Eliminate Post Traumatic Stress Disorder by preventing it.

Racism is alive and well! A recent study, “Lost Ground, 2011: Disparities in Mortgage Lending and Foreclosures,” released by the Center for Responsible Lending, presented data in support of the claim that African Americans and Latinos are more than twice as likely to lose their home as white households. It estimated that 17% of Latino homeowners, 11% of

African-American homeowners, and 7% of non-Hispanic white homeowners already have lost or are at imminent risk of losing their homes.

NeighborWorks America, the administrator of the congressionally authorized National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling (NFMC) program, has stated that of the more than 870,000 homeowners who received foreclosure prevention counseling through Jan. 31, 2010, 26% were African-American homeowners. In all, 52% of NFMC Program clients were minority homeowners. NATIONWIDE, AFRICAN-AMERICAN HOMEOWNERS MAKE UP ONLY 9% OF THE NATION'S HOMEOWNERS.

The right to refuse to kill

BY POLLY MANN

“The Right to Refuse to Kill.” It's such a simple phrase and yet one so seldom heard, except perhaps at St. Joan's Catholic church where the parents of an infant being baptized are informed that the child, any child, any adult has that right. It's also the name of a chapter in “Peace Be With You,” a most interesting book written by Eileen Eagan, a co-worker of Mother Teresa and an associate of Dorothy Day.

Why wouldn't one have such a right? Today it refers to military conscription, which is, comparatively, quite young, first applied during the French Revolution when even priests were conscripted. Because of the law, Napoleon is reported to have said at one time that he could lose 30,000 men a month. By 1815, the state of Prussia had adopted universal military conscription. The United States legislated conscription in 1862 when the Confederates adopted it. It was followed by the Northern side in 1863. In June 1917, in connection with World War I, a central lottery was established. With present U.S. military policy, women serve in combat the same as men. Therefore, it would appear that if conscription should ever be reinstated, women would be called up the same as men. The concept of the “refusal to serve” in the military was born in Europe, first introduced by the Anabaptists, an early Christian sect. It was taken up by the Mennonites, Hutterites and Brethren despite tremendous persecution. In England it was the Quakers.

With the advent of World War II, the Mennonites anticipated the likelihood of conscription and met with the President of the United States along with leaders of the Quakers and Church of the Brethren to propose a way for conscientious objectors to war to perform humanitarian service. As a result, the Burke-Wadsworth Selective Service Act was passed, in September 1940, which authorized the establishment of camps to which men could be sent to perform humanitarian service. The historic peace churches covered the costs of men in the camps. Inasmuch as there was no Catholic participation at the time, the Mennonites and Quakers paid the costs of Catholic objectors. It was said during World War II that the little town of Mountain Lake, Minn. (population 3,000), populated mostly by

Mennonites, was the home of more conscientious objectors than any other community in the country.

Catholic bishops affirmed the right of conscientious objection to military service on Dec. 7, 1965, against the backdrop of the Vietnam War, fought largely by conscripted soldiers. They affirmed not only the right of conscientious objection to military service but the right of selective objection to a particular war in which conscripts were required to fight.

On March 8, 1998, the United Nations passed a resolution concerning the right of everyone to have conscientious objections to military service as a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as laid down in article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

There is no question that establishing the legal right of an individual to refuse to kill in war is most important, but there is another issue. The government has at its disposal billions of dollars to influence or to coerce young people to join the military. The corporate mainstream media, which is the willing servant of the state (no matter whether the administration is Democratic or Republican), can and does advertise the advantages of military service—foreign travel, a guaranteed income, learning a trade, etc.

It would seem to me that the religious establishments of the three great monotheistic religions of the world—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—could put forth some energy into discussing, advocating and promoting peaceful solutions to world conflicts. I've been waiting for this to happen. I'm waiting and I'm waiting and I'm waiting.

Uri Avnery

BY POLLY MANN

I have been interested and active in the Palestinian/Israeli conflict since 1980 when I moved to the Twin Cities from southern Minnesota and met some Iranians and Palestinians who became friends. When Women Against Military Madness was organized, one of its most active committees was (and is) the Middle East Committee. I soon discovered it was not the two-headed anomaly I had once thought. While there may be two sides to every issue, there are issues in which justice is badly skewed, in which there is more right on one side than the other. That is clearly the case in the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

After World War II, the U.N. allocated 56% of Palestine to a Jewish immigrant minority who comprised a third of the population and owned 6% of the land. By 1949, Israel had taken another 22%, and in 1967 occupied the remaining 22% as well as Syria's Golan Heights. Also, the United States gives Israel more than \$3 billion a year.

I realized that I needed to learn more about the situation. A few years later, in addition to studying the issue, I subscribed to a periodical entitled "The Other Israel," published quarterly and edited by Uri Avnery, an Israeli peace activist who has, for years, supported Palestinian rights. In 1983, he began to publish a periodical of about four letter-size sheets printed front and back entitled "The Other Israel," with current news about the conflict. Today the information is available on its web site TOI-Billboard-subscribe@googlegroups.com.

Uri Avnery is over 80 years of age and has been involved in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict since, at 15, he joined the "Irgun," a World War II organization based on the so-called right of every Jew to the land known as Israel today. Members believed that only Jewish armed forces could remove the Arabs from the land they'd been living on for centuries. Later Avnery left the organization because he did not approve of its methods and aims. He is opposed to the violence of the Israeli forces as well as the violence of the Palestinians.

The following citation is from the cover of a paperback book, "Burning Issues," copyrighted in 2007. It, to me, encapsulates the problem.

“In defiance of international law, Israel has settled over 440,000 of its citizens in the Occupied Territories. Israeli soldiers and settlers harass or kill Palestinians, confiscate their property, bulldoze their homes, devastate their towns and deny them freedom of movement.”

Now, back to Avnery. Today, he is a member of Gush Shalom, which objects to: 1) the Israeli occupation of the “West Bank” of Israel (by treaty ceded to the Palestinians); 2) Israel's blockade and non-recognition of the Gaza Strip; 3) the right of Palestinian-born individuals to return to their homeland; 4) the right of Israeli soldiers to refuse to serve in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank; and 5) a two-state solution to division of the land (Since today Palestinian villages are not contiguous, it seems doubtful that there could be a two-state solution.).

In an interview with Canadian journalist Jon Elmer, he discusses the wall built by the Israeli government, on Palestinian land, to separate Palestine from Israeli, saying, “ This is a joke, this is a farce. It is a continuation of the war by other means.” So, what is this wall? According to Wikipedia, it is a “separation under construction by the State of Israel.” Upon completion, the barrier's total length will be approximately 430 miles. 90% of the length of this barrier is a fence surrounded by trenches 200 feet wide. 10% of the barrier is a 26 ft-tall concrete wall.

Uri Avnery says his organization has published a draft of a peace agreement between the two countries which follows. The state of Palestine will include all of the territories allocated them by treaty; all settlements occupied by Israelis in the West Bank will be evacuated. Jerusalem will be a shared capital. East Jerusalem will be the capital of Palestine and West Jerusalem will be the capital of Israel. The security must be arranged for both people, and there must be a moral solution and a practical solution.

In a January 18th interview with editor Jim W. Dean of “Veterans Today,” Avnery condemns the media for its lack of courage in covering the contentious issue. “Decades of virtually no coverage on Israeli politics has kept it off the American public radar which is just fine for the Israelis and their 5th columnists over here . . . A good public grasp of how corrupt the country is would be obvious to even an idiot . . . American media is too cowardly to even quote the Israeli papers, which are a gold mine of the never ending scandals and intrigues of Israeli domestic politics . . . Israel

actually has a free press and they air their dirty laundry every day. But that is not allowed in the U.S. The phonies in the media and academia, plus a numbed-out public, remain in a constant state of cowardice or numbness.”

So speaks today's prophet: Uri Avnery.

Islamophobia

BY POLLY MANN

The excellent 200-page book “Islamophobia” by Deepa Kumar could be described as a primer for those of us who have given little thought as to why there is such mistrust of Middle Easterners among us. This fear was exacerbated by the Twin Trade Towers bombing of 9/11 and, subsequently, the word “terrorist” was applied to most Middle Easterners. This book brings together past history and current events as it examines the prevalent myths about Islam, which have produced such fear in this country. A summary of the myths follow.

ISLAM IS A MONOLITHIC BELIEF. We tend to believe that all Middle Easterners are Arabs and all Arabs are adherents of Islam; we also think there are no variations in the way the religion is practiced. Kumar makes a comparison of Christianity with Islam. As there are Baptists, Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists and scores of groups professing Christianity as well as Orthodox and Fundamentalist Jews, so there are different varieties of Islam of which there are two main categories: Sunni and Shi'a'. The Sunni Islam practiced in India is quite different from the Shi'a Islam practiced in Pakistan. They could be compared to Catholic and Protestant Christians.

ISLAM IS A SEXIST RELIGION. As the British in the 1800s denounced sexism in Islam, they worked to deny British women the right to vote. The rights of women are still a topic of interest in all parts of the world. Discussion of the rights of women continue in Islamic society as in Christian and Judaic society. Some scholars argue that Islam is not inherently misogynistic and point to the egalitarian passages in the Koran that suggest equality between men and women. Equality for women is a tenet of most religions today. That equality has not yet been fully achieved is a condition of all.

THE “MUSLIM MIND” IS INCAPABLE OF REASON AND RATIONALITY. There are many excellent books and articles, listed in footnotes, that tear to shreds the concept of biologically defined races and the spurious connection between biology and intellectual capacity. The European

Renaissance could not have occurred without the contributions of Muslim thinkers and scientists.

ISLAM IS AN INHERENTLY VIOLENT RELIGION. This virulent myth is strong today, helped, of course, by 9/11. Author Amitabh Pal explored this myth with examples of nonviolence from the Koran. The bloody history of early Christianity with attention given to the Crusades is cited as a correlative of Islamic violence. The reader is reminded that after the Sultan Saladin retook Jerusalem from the Crusaders, he forbade acts of violence against them.

MUSLIMS ARE INCAPABLE OF DEMOCRACY AND SELF RULE. This is the false basis for much of Western policy with regard to the Middle East. Again and again Western nations have interfered in the internal affairs of Middle Eastern nations looking to avail themselves of their natural resources, such as oil and minerals. They call this “bringing democracy.”

Today the worldwide Occupy movement is reminding people about the humanity we all share and how the greedy capitalist system is, in its essence, violent, and how we can work together to bring about a peaceful world. When we are aware of the things that divide us such as Islamophobia, we are more capable of making that dream a reality.

Did you know ... ?

BY POLLY MANN

... THAT for the very first time (in my lifetime, that is) The New York Times carried a story about the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine? It is about six pages long, illustrated and entitled "The Resisters" (March 17, 2013), and it begins: "In the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh, every Friday is the same march, the same unarmed demonstration, the same retreat from an overpowering Israeli military." Could this be a way to end the occupation? It is a very sympathetic and moving account of the weekly nonviolent action of the Palestinian villagers.

... THAT the United States was sending arms to the Syrian rebels even though the Obama administration declared only "nonlethal" aid was being provided. However, since early 2012, according to a March 25, 2012, New York Times article, 160 plane loads of armaments have been furnished the rebels by the CIA.

... THAT the Pentagon not only authorized but set up the methods used at Iraqi detention and torture centers to extract information from prisoners? U.S. Army Col. James Steele and retired Colonel James H. Coffman, who organized the centers, reported to General David Petraeus. Iraqi General Muntadher al-Samari said of the two, "They knew everything that was going on there ... the torture, the most horrible kind of torture." But, according to the Guardian Weekly, which published the information, although "they were sometimes present where torture took place ... There is no evidence Steele or Coffman tortured people themselves." I think their situation was rather like onlookers present at a rape. They didn't engage in it, but they did nothing to stop it.

... THAT the CIA officer involved in the 2005 decision to destroy videotapes depicting the cruel interrogation of two high-ranking Al Qaeda members has been elevated to a top position within the agency's clandestine service, according to The New York Times, March 28. Her identity has not been disclosed because she is undercover.

... THAT in April 2013, Israeli conscientious objector Natan Blanc is expecting to be sentenced to prison for from 10 to 20 days for his refusal to

join the Israeli military. This will be his eighth conviction. In a statement explaining why he will not take up arms against the Palestinians, Blanc has said, "It is clear that the Netanyahu government, like that of his predecessor, Olmert, is not interested in finding a solution to the existing situation but rather in preserving it."

Clyde Etta (Briggs) Simpson

BY POLLY MANN

With the name of Clyde, you were, no doubt, expecting me to be male. But that name is occasionally given a woman, especially at the time of my birth, well after the Civil War. Clyde is also the name of a river in Scotland and my ancestors came from Scotland and I was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and every couple of years I would host them at my home on Quapaw Avenue in Hot Springs. When Dr. Simpson and I first moved there, Quapaw was “the place” to live and then the developers opened up an addition off Oaklawn Avenue for the “nouveau riche” and Yankees from the north who came to take the baths and recognized what a beautiful place Hot Springs was stayed on and then Lake Hamilton was developed. Well, it's still a good neighborhood but not really ultra like it once was.

When we first came to Hot Springs from the Mississippi delta, Dr. Simpson managed the Fordyce Bath House on Central Avenue. It's the oldest bathhouse on bathhouse row, and for a long time it was the finest.

After a few years the Medical Association ruled that a physician could not practice medicine and manage a bath house at the same time. Lucky for us since his practice doubled after the move.

The house had four bedrooms and Hot Springs had a good school system. Well, good enough for a public school. I'd have preferred a private school, but the only option then would have been the Catholic School. I've got nothing against Catholics, but I didn't want my girls exposed to some of that pope propaganda. We needed every bedroom. Five, we had five girls. Robbie Jere died when she was only 1. Then there was Pauline, a little hellion; Fay; Nan; Clyde, called “Jinks”; and Gloria. You would have thought the Doctor would have been discouraged with all girls, but after Gloria he laughed and told me he'd hollered, “Glory Hallelujah, another girl!” when he got the news. I asked the nurses about it and they didn't remember it. Bob was like that. So serious most of the time and then bang! He'd say something really funny, maybe ridiculous.

We had a good life. I'd have liked a little more social life, but my hands were full and the Doctor was most all in after his evening calls. We

didn't even get to Pine Bluff to see my sisters May and Jewel more than once a year. I was ready to call it quits after my third baby and I hinted to Dr. Simpson that there were such things as abortions and he was so horrified at my even mentioning it that I never used that word again. But that was like him. He was everything I could have wanted—handsome when he was young, before he developed that stomach. And he wouldn't deviate one inch from what he thought was right. Not that I'd even suggest such, but ... And alcohol? I couldn't even buy wine for cooking. He'd say, "What do you need wine for? Your cooking doesn't need wine. There's nothing better than your chicken-fried steak hog and black-eyed peas. Hattie's a good cook, but she's nowhere near as good as you."

Hattie was with us when I was pregnant with Gloria. When 17-year-old Pauline discovered it she was furious. You'd have thought I was a hundred years old instead of 40. We'd announced it at dinner when I was about five months along and it was getting pretty obvious. She looked at her daddy and me and said, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself—at your age," and she stormed up to her bedroom. Bob and I and the other children burst out laughing. Even Hattie was snickering into her apron.

Hattie was one of a procession of colored servants we had over the years. She was a great cook but very indifferent when it came to cleaning. Of course, that's how it is with colored people. She'd do what I set out for her to do. But if I didn't watch her she'd be sitting down in the kitchen just looking out the window. I treated her well. She had a day and a half off a week and didn't have to be to work until 7:30 and if she asked, she could take home leftovers. She had to ask, of course. You know how that goes. Give them an inch and they'll take a mile. I checked out every sack that left the kitchen. But we were good to our colored help and if somebody got sick, Dr. Simpson would take care of them like he did when Idella got gall bladder trouble.

Of course, all that changed when the Doctor died at Easter time in 1929. He'd had insurance, but that crooked insurance agent and the banker took care of that and I was left with a hefty mortgage and not much else. I felt sorry for me and the girls who'd counted on money to go to college. By that time Fay had her degree from Hendrix and Nan had a scholarship to the University of Arkansas, but college was out for poor little Jinks and Gloria.

And Pauline. You want to know about Pauline? The Doctor and I almost came to blows over her education. He wanted to send her to North Carolina and I wanted to send her to Brenau, a finishing school in Georgia. "What will she be finishing? Furniture?" he asked. "No," I retorted, "it will teach her how to live like a lady in addition to the usual kind of education." I won but not really. Damn—darned if she didn't come home at Christmas and marry Jim Holt from Lonoke. I knew from the beginning it wouldn't work out and sure enough it didn't. She was so beautiful, Pauline was. Tall like her daddy but beautiful. She could've married anybody and she married Jim Holt and now she's divorced and back with us plus her two little girls.

By that time there was nine of us living at 627. Nan was still in college and Fay got a teaching job in West Virginia and Pauline and her children moved in, and after the doctor died, my sister Louella (nicknamed Bug) moved in. Pauline found a job at the Garland County Welfare Office and Bug was teaching school so the two of them were able to pitch in to cover groceries. Times were tough during those depression years, but we managed. Every now and then when it looked pretty black, something good would happen. Like the time Pauline went to the Casino and won \$2,000! She came home, woke up all of us and made us come down to the sunparlor and then she spread out the money all over the floor.

And then there was what happened one New Year's. One of the bright events of the year in Hot Springs was the Arlington Hotel New Year's Ball. It was expensive, but Bug and I put aside a little bit every month so we could go. Pauline? She had no patience with such things. But one such ball was really interesting. Before the ball, Bug and I were sitting up in the mezzanine in the big upholstered chairs at the Arlington and Bug dropped her lipstick and in looking for it ran her hand down the side of the chair and found something hard. She frowned and pulled the object out. It was a beautiful diamond bracelet! We knew it couldn't be fake—the clasp was all gold and it was so well made. Bug said, "The somebody that lost this must be rich, very rich." I looked around to see if anybody was watching us and there wasn't. I said, "It's bound to be insured." Bug nodded, opened her purse and dropped the bracelet into it. "Losers weepers, finders keepers," I always said. We then strolled into the ball room. Bug never wore the bracelet, of course. What would a first grade teacher be doing with such a bracelet? Bug was able to remove the diamonds from the bracelet and

concocted some story when she sold them. We read the Sentinel Record ad page word for word for several weeks, but there never was an announcement about the loss in. She made the mistake of telling May and Jewel about it the next time we went to Pine Bluff and they pursed up their mouths and got real silent. "Forget it," I said to Bug later, "they've got husbands paying their bills."

Life went on pretty uneventful for a few years. Gloria married and moved to Texas and Pauline's daughter Barbara went into nurses training. It's a good thing her grandfather was gone. He would not permit any of his daughters to be nurses. "Doctors don't respect nurses. They're way too familiar with them." He told me privately he'd seen too many old geezers at the hospital slap young nurses on the bee-hind. One of Pauline's daughters, got a job in Little Rock at the army camp being constructed there, but I wouldn't want anybody to know what with all those fast-talking Nebraska Yankees and God knows who else. Then the war came, and after the war Frank Pratt moved into my life.

Frank was a colonel in the U.S. Army, originally from Massachusetts, with an accent that sounded almost British and he was stationed at the Army & Navy Hospital for almost a year. We developed quite a friendship before I realized he was courting me. I don't think he realized I was a good 10 years older and I never felt compelled to tell him. After several months he proposed. I could hardly believe it. Of course I said yes and we were married. After the war was over he got orders to go to Japan for several months. I was so excited thinking about going to Japan. I'd never been anyplace farther than Matewan, West Virginia, to see my sisters Ruby and Eppie. But his orders wouldn't let me go. But then new orders were issued which said that after six months I could join him for a year's assignment he had there.

So, I was to be the "Colonel's lady"—very exciting! But I looked at my wardrobe. I always made certain that I was well turned-out. Most of my clothes were made-over, but usually I was ahead of the fashion. I made over an old suit of Eppie's husband, Mr. Sydnor, with help from Vogue and Harper's Bazaar and I got more compliments on it than seeds in a summer squash. But I really should have a nice wardrobe for Japan. Then it came to me. Every month I was now receiving a check from the government, courtesy of Frank. I could simply draw on the bank account where I was

depositing these checks. Of course there was only one place in Hot Springs that carried the kind of garments needed: Eleanor Harris. We had a nodding acquaintance, Eleanor and I, and even the rich visitors from Chicago patronized her shop. If I do say so myself, I have good taste. Eleanor recognized it and found me a couple of beautiful suits, several Cashmere sweaters, a mink-trimmed coat, two absolutely gorgeous evening dresses and some slacks exactly like Marlene Dietrich wore in one of her movies. And I didn't have to worry about where the money was coming from. What a wonderful feeling. A few months later, when Frank wired that he would be coming home in two weeks to accompany me to Japan, I decided I had to take a look at the bank account and I was flabbergasted! There was only a couple of hundred dollars in there. I was quite upset—upset for several days—upset so much that I had trouble sleeping. When I met Frank at the station he looked so happy, so handsome in his uniform. I waited til we got home and we'd had dinner to tell him about the money. He got quiet, very quiet, looked out the window, got up and walked out to the front porch and back and then he said, "It's all right." And it was. But when we got to Tokyo and would go to the Officers Club and the officers' wives would rave on and on about my clothes, he'd just look away.

Changing her name

BY POLLY MANN

I said good-bye to middle age a long time ago and at the same time I lost some of my powers—especially the power to remember—not important things like cracking the window at night or getting to the bank—but where I put something or—who asked me about going to a movie. So it was with Zehaya. When she called I couldn't quite place her but I knew I had heard the name and had talked with her. Her voice was youthful and eager, with a bit of huskiness and energy. "Would you go to court with me next week?" she asked. "What's the issue?" I asked. "Oh, it's nothing that's going to put you on the spot. I'm having my name changed and I need a couple of witnesses who can verify I am who I say I am." I acquiesced, asking myself why I was going along with this. On the other hand it sounded intriguing and I had nothing better to do.

The following week she called, setting the time and date. "I've hired a limousine and a driver and we'll pick you up at 12 noon." And she did. I was sitting on the bench under the canopy covering the entrance to my condominium building when the limousine drove up. I got in the front seat. In the back seat sat Zehaya, very beautiful with a mass of dark fuzzy hair, resembling the not-quite-young Elizabeth Taylor, her extended right leg encased in a cast from her knee through her foot. I then remembered having a conversation with her about Palestinian Archbishop Elias Chacour, whom we had both heard speak. Next to her sat a black woman carrying a huge bouquet of red roses, pink lilies and white baby's breath in a glass vase half filled with water. Ashanti was her name; around her neck was a badge identifying her as an employee of "Going Your Way," a local healthcare organization. Introductions included that of Nick, the limousine driver, young and lithe, who let us off at the courthouse, opened the trunk to remove a wheel chair for Zehaya and announced he would be awaiting a call for him to return.

The Minneapolis courthouse is a multi-storied glass structure built around an interior plaza with a large pool in the center. Ashanti and I sat on one of the several wooden benches adjacent to the pool and Zehaya sat in her wheel chair. Shortly Ashanti and Zehaya were off for refreshments and returned bearing coffee and cupcakes the size of grapefruit. I

discovered that Ashanti was not a full-time caretaker for Zehaya but had been hired for the day only. I asked Ashanti if she had any children. "One," she said, "and he is wonderful." Further exchanges elicited the fact that the son had no idea of who his father was. And, Ashanti knew almost next to nothing about the father. I asked why not. "Because," she said, "my son came along after I was raped when I was 12 years old." After a silence of several seconds, Zehaya said, "So was I—it was my S.O.B. uncle, but thank God, I didn't get pregnant. The second time it happened I was in the Middle East and this Israeli kid—a soldier—was into roughing up women."

"So, you lived in Israel," I said. "I should have known because Zehaya is Hebrew, isn't it?" "No," she said, "and no, I didn't live in Israel, I lived in Palestine. On the West Bank. I'd really love to go back." She shrugged her shoulders. "I'm in no position to, physically or economically. Of course, I could always appeal to my mother. She's got more money than Bill Gates and she's there for me when I get into scrapes—like for my abortion—but I'm trying to live on my own."

"And what about children? Do you have any?" asked Ashanti. Zehaya sat up in the wheel chair, finishing her chocolate cupcake with a gulp of ginger ale. "None. It must have been the damned abortion. At least that's what the gynecologist told me."

"Were you living in Palestine then?" I asked. She replied, "No, that was back in New York."

"I was in Palestine, once," I said. "I was there with a group of women—all ages, straight and lesbian, old and young, Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist. We met with people working for peace in both Israel and Palestine. Did you ever meet Jeff Halper, head of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolition? We met with him."

"Yeah," said Zehaya, "I know Jeff Halper, but I wasn't really involved with the group. They do a lot of good. If I ever get back I'll probably look him up." Suddenly I realized we were objects of a great deal of attention—me, with my white hair and ivory-handled cane, African-American Ashanti with her oversized identification badge hanging from her neck toting the bouquet of flowers, and Zehaya with her pale, pale skin and wild hair. I was

more than happy when the decision was made to go up to the courtroom on the 14th floor.

Sitting on the bench outside Courtroom 1422 was a large middle-aged woman and a young girl of about 12. The two of them greeted Zehaya and introductions followed. "I made it," the woman said. "Clara had choir practice and I was afraid we'd be late. You know she has the lead in this wonderful school operetta."

Zehaya turned to us and explained, "These are my dear friends—my neighbors, Ruth Levander and her daughter. I had to have two witnesses and I was afraid one of you might not make it and Ruth is a 'stand-in' so to speak."

The courtroom door opened and in we all traipsed. Sitting at a table behind the wooden railing separating the courtroom actors from the audience was a man scribbling on a yellow legal size pad. Shortly he left and from the back of the courtroom emerged a woman with an electronic pad—the court reporter. Then came the judge, a woman, Deborah Housley. I had known her for several years. She had been the trial judge years ago when a bunch of us had been arrested for trespassing at the nuclear plant at Prairie Island.

Zehaya, Ashanti and I sat at one of the tables facing the judge. She then asked Ashanti to confirm that she knew Zehaya and she turned to me. "So, Mrs. Mann, we meet again," and she smiled. I had been hoping she wouldn't remember. "Yes," I said. "I'm a friend of Zehaya's and support her decision." Judge Housley nodded to us all, asked a few questions, smiled slightly and then it was all over. As the court reporter was leaving, she handed Zehaya a paper verifying the legality of the name change

Outside the courtroom Zehaya and Ruth Levander carried on an extensive conversation about Clara's remarkable musical ability. Ashanti, still holding the flower-filled vase looked at me and slowly shook her head. She was ready to go and so was I. After what seemed an interminably long time we left.

Nick was waiting for us, the trunk of the limousine open to accommodate the wheel chair. When we arrived at my condominium Ashanti presented the flowers to me—a total surprise. I'd thought they

were in honor of the occasion. I thanked Zehaya, bid adieu to Ashanti and Nick and leaning on the cane I had almost left in the limo, hobbled into the building. In my unit I placed the flowers on the coffee table, sat down and read the note of thanks Zehaya had handed me. A day to remember. Why had I not asked the reason for the name change? I then opened the kitchen cupboard, pulled out the bottle of generic Irish Cream Whiskey I'd bought on sale the week before and sipped it ever so slowly.