



## Dr. Abe and Jean

1. My mother Jean was the daughter of a Unitarian minister, Rev. Dr. **Frank Scott Corey Wicks**, a prominent and influential Indianapolis civic leader, and signator to the historic Humanist Manifesto, preaching at All Souls Unitarian Church there where, in 1907 he penned “Good Men in Hell”. It was still being printed well into the 60s and was sitting in my church’s literature rack in 1975. An Australian religion blogger based two essays on it in 2003 and 2005 and referenced it again in 2013. Ninety-nine years from its publication in 1914 would have been a pretty good run, but I just received a link to an article published today (April 2, 2019) from *Alton (Illinois) Telegraph* columnist John Dunphy, referencing it yet again.

And to add the most obscure of familial trivia, there was a novel written by an author, popular in his day, *reviewed in 1923 in Time Magazine*, that was dedicated to Frank S.C. Wicks. I’m unable to Google it at this time, but I even have a copy of it. Somewhere.

While a working musician, I once met a Unitarian minister from the Midwest who regarded Rev. Wicks as his mentor, and spoke of him as a prominent and respected leader in the Midwest Unitarian community. Indeed, he was well-known throughout the denomination.

2. Such a Francophile as was her father, who would take her to Europe as a child, Mother was the first freshman allowed to live in Middlebury College's women's-only residence, called the Chateau, where residents were forbidden to speak any language other than French while in the residence. She received her degree at the University of Paris' **Sorbonne**, and would bicycle through Europe, staying in youth hostels, many of which were centuries-old castles. One day, while sojourning in Germany (where she had seen *Tristan und Isolde* in the Dresden Opera House, before we fire-bombed it into rubble) when a German soldier with whom she had made friends told her to not even return to her hostel, but to board the very next train leaving the country – right before Hitler slammed shut the border gates.
3. A committed pacifist, Mother lost a teaching job for refusing when her school required that teachers help recruit young boys to go to war to kill Germans. Though I do not really know, I'm certain that she was influenced and inspired by New York's Unitarian minister **John Haynes Holmes**, who lost a battle for the soul of American Unitarian Association (AUA) to hawk James Howard Taft, then-president of the American Unitarian Association – and his Unitarian affiliation as well. His congregation followed him, and his church became non-denominational. He was only re-instated decades later.
4. Two Methodist ministers, **Ralph Templin** and **Jay Holmes Smith**, were missionaries in India when it joined the Second World War in support of its colonizer, Great Britain. Templin and Smith were required to sign what amounted to a loyalty oath, which they refused to do. One of them and his wife left India voluntarily; the other couple was shortly expelled. Both found themselves in New York City and co-founded the **Harlem Ashram**, an interracial, pacifist, Christian intentional community, which my mother joined, along with civil rights leader and founder of Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) **James Farmer, Jr.** (As a member of the famed – and nearly unbeaten – debate team at Black **Wiley College** (Marshall, Texas) in the 30s, he helped win against powerhouse (and White) USC. The team inspired the movie "The Great Debaters," starring Denzel Washington.)
5. Puerto Rican Nationalist leader **Don Pedro Albizu Campos** was under house arrest at New York's Columbus Hospital when he heard about the Ashram. I am unsure of neighborhood boundaries, but it's likely that the Ashram was in Puerto Rican Spanish Harlem, which could have accounted for Don Pedro's interest. His followers invited members of the Ashram to meet Don Pedro. My mother and **Ruth Reynolds**, who would go on to devote her life to Puerto Rican independence and become beloved by the Nationalist *independentista* community, accepted the

invitation. Upon explaining that the founders of the Harlem Ashram had been ardent and outspoken advocates for India's independence, Don Pedro sternly responded, "India is Britain's problem. Puerto Rico is *your* problem." My mother became an aide to Don Pedro and would speak at events on his behalf. She learned Spanish from him, although as an adult it was not easy, and would forever speak Spanish with a French accent.

She never gave up on attempting to convert Don Pedro to pacifism. His stock response was, "But I would defend you with my life!" A Puerto Rican flag, hand-made by Don Pedro's nurse, graced the entrance hallway in our Pittsburg (California) home.

6. **Wilson MacDonald** was a well-known Canadian poet and pacifist who wrote on many issues of social justice, one example being the Caw Caw Ballad, on Jim Crow. He would submit his poetry books to his publisher drawn and illustrated in his own calligraphic hand. He would then hand-color a select few, a couple of which volumes I possess. Mother would book readings for him in New York City in the 40s.

7. One summer, the Ashram had decided to walk from New York to Washington, D.C. to protest the Jim Crow laws which legalized segregation. My chiropractor father (New York School of Chiropractic) **Abraham** was living in Baltimore at the time and heard about the walk, having known one of the Ashram's founders. And so he joined the walk en route and met his lifelong beloved. Yes, my parents met while on a *civil rights march in 1943*.

My brother David Reuben, who was born in Los Angeles, was taken to meet Don Pedro and was given a blessing by him. I believe that he wanted to add Albizu to his name, but never formally did so. On the webpage I created for him on his passing, two days after 9-11, I gave Albizu as his second middle name.

At some point in the late 40s my parents met a woman who would become known as **Peace Pilgrim** who, by January, 1952, had given away all her possessions, vowing a Franciscan commitment to voluntary poverty, intending to walk 25,000 miles for Peace, a distance she soon outpaced. Becoming fast friends (my parents, like Peace, were vegetarians as well as pacifists, so there was a natural kinship), my mother would, over the next thirty-some-odd years, arrange for newspaper, radio and TV interviews and speaking engagements.

8. For a time my mother was the secretary, under the first president, **Jay Dinshaw**, of the American Vegan Society.

9. While living in Topanga Canyon, a hilly community terrorized by a fellow driving a jalopy proclaiming "*Chico has no brakes*," my parents were invited to a party where

they would meet a well-known (except to them) folk-singer. Being adverse to parties, they declined the invitation, and so I missed meeting **Woody Guthrie**.

10. The names **Martha Boehl and Julie Lee** (I'm a bit sketchy on spellings) were popularly unknown, but were, as proponents of the healing properties of fasting and honey, strong spiritual influences to my parents, who also were devotees of fasting. I once had a serious bicycle accident, losing a front wheel at high downhill speed. Martha and Julie had a modest fasting facility (only them, no employees, and very informal) out in the southern California desert to which I was taken. I underwent a supervised fast, my extensive burns salved with honey. I soon healed, and have no scarring from the incident.
11. My schoolteacher mother taught almost exclusively in private schools throughout our childhood, beginning with Gateway, founded and run by Helen Virginia Bryan Touyarot, daughter of **William Jennings Bryan**, by whom she was raised. Because of my mother's teaching position, my brother and I received an exceptional, tuition-free education. Our last matriculation was at **Shimber Berris**, in San Bartolo, Baja California, Sur, between La Paz and Cabo San Lucas, founded and run by Dr. David Burden and his author wife Virginia (*The Process of Intuition*). Dr. Burden had been a missionary in Africa, and the school's name meant Valley of the Birds. While Mrs. Burden taught, her husband was the village doctor. My brother David and I were the school's first guinea pigs and the experience was priceless, from accompanying the fellow who gathered firewood for the village on a day's jaunt with his burro, learning desert lore, to visiting a ranch where cheese was made, to building a home with just wood and palm fronds, and using only machete, ax, sledgehammer and wedge as tools. Personally, a highlight of mine was lying on a flat rock while irrigating an orchard with our worker Juan and talking about life, religion and philosophy – in Spanish – as a precocious 11-year-old. This digression, while personal, serves to illustrate the unusual wealth and breadth of experience my parents afforded me and my brother.
12. I'm unsure where my parents' southern connections took root, but they knew **Clarence Clarence and Florence Jordan**, founders of the pacifist, Christian, interracial collective Koinonia Farm in Americus, Georgia, created to be a "demonstration plot for the Kingdom of God," and whose housing ministry became **Habitat for Humanity**, led by **Millard and Linda Fuller**, also friends of my folks, who were early participants in the movement.

Also dear friends were **Rev. Ashton and Marie Jones**, such committed civil rights activists that, upon seeing Rev. Ashton in Pasadena in 1965, **Rev. Dr. King** rushed to greet him, reportedly exclaiming "*Ashton Jones! God bless you, Ashton.*" A Whites from the deep South, Ashton experienced decades of arrests, imprisonments,

beatings and hunger strikes. They drove, and eventually lived in, a succession of “World Brotherhood” vehicles, from a Nash sedan to a motor home, all painted white and sporting the depiction of black and white hands clasping over a globe of the earth – and numerous bullet holes. But I knew them also as just Ashton and Marie.

These friendships were but an extension of a life that intersected many other peace and civil rights notables such as **A.J. Muste, Baird Rustin. David McReynolds.**

13. My mother’s experience with farm workers began prior to meeting **César Chávez**. As my parents’ political views became more known, my mother’s teaching opportunities became increasingly scarce, relegated to substitute teaching and night school. She found herself teaching literacy and ESL (English as a Second Language) to, predominantly, farm workers. She became, in equal measure, a pariah within the conservative community (where my parents would later co-found the bastion of liberal thought, the Hemet Unitarian Universalist Fellowship), and a hero among what were then termed Mexican Nationals.

It was natural that they would be ardent supporters of Chávez, for whom my mother would make fresh fruit and vegetable juices for him while he would fast. It would be under their influence that he would become – and remain – a vegetarian.

14. Ever the rebel-rousing agitators, in order to establish a “spiritual fortress” for their progressive brethren and sistren my parents helped to found the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Hemet & the San Jacinto Valley, which remains vibrant today. While at San Diego State I received an invitation to play a violin solo for a Sunday service. I was told I needn’t bring my violin, as one would be provided for me. So I packed my toothbrush and my Kolitsch shoulder-rest and went hither. The “one provided for me” turned out to be a 16<sup>th</sup> century Amati of Cremona, from one of the four great families of luthiers, which included the Bergonzi, Guarneri, and Stradivari.

15. I went to college at San Diego State, and my parents eventually followed me (as they were to do so to northern California), moving to National City and settling in into a new mobile home in the border town San Ysidro, which was purchased for them by the state of California due to a freeway incursion into their previous digs. While my father would take forays into Tijuana, armed with only the phrase “*Mas o menos*” and a genial smile, my mother would teach literacy and English in the *colonias*, of Tijuana, outlying shanty-towns made of cardboard and tin and whatever building materials could be scrounged.

The famed educator **Frank Laubach** (“Each one, teach one”) was to move to San Ysidro and make my mother his assistant.

By the way, my mother was, briefly, secretary to author and UFOlogist **George Adamski**, first and foremost of the “contactees” of the 1950s. The shorthand bio in

Wikipedia had his occupation as “con man.” I’m sure found my mother found him to be ... interesting.

16. It was in the late 1970s to early ’80 that my parents realized that, for all their advocacy, they had never actually been to Puerto Rico. They finally went, armed with just a few names and phone numbers, and as soon as it was learned that my mother had been close to Don Pedro, she instantly became almost a celebrity. Soon beloved among the *independentistas*, my parents spent months a year for several years working with individuals and groups throughout Puerto Rico and the “*isla nena*” Vieques, home of Roosevelt Rhodes Naval Base, one of the largest military installations in the world, tirelessly advocating nonviolent resistance.

My mother told of the *Viequense* fisherman Carlos Zenón, who went out one day to fish. He parked in front of the battleship USS Dewey and commenced to go to work. They told him, on the horn, to move so that they could do their maneuvers. He replied that he had to fish. In a true David and Goliath story, the Dewey’s maneuvers were canceled for the day.

My mother found a map in some government office describing the “2020 Plan,” essentially to turn Puerto Rico into one gigantic business park by the year 2020.

When land set aside for low-cost housing lay fallow while it was desperately needed (one government functionary told my mother that it was needed for “grazing cattle”) a group offered to build themselves – just allow them the use of the land, for which it had been originally designated. They were refused. And so a “squatter community” rose up, named “*Villa Sin Miedo*” (City Without Fear). Interestingly, that particular plot of land was designated on the 2020 Plan map to be developed as a business park. The government wouldn’t be denied, and so, after a year, the army came in and burned it to the ground.

While they were all camping out in the (sizable) back yard of the local Episcopalian priest, my mother was writing articles. One, published in an international peace magazine, was read by a peace group in Germany, which sent a check for \$5,000. That, together with another grant they received, enabled them to purchase land in the highlands. When I visited it, it was primitive, but thriving.

My parents’ advocacy for nonviolent resistance was to bear fruit in a rather spectacular way. When David Rodriguez Sanes, a civilian observer for the Navy on Vieques, was accidentally killed by a dropped bomb, the entire island rose up, and through *totally nonviolent tactics*, in a year-and-a-half succeeded in shutting down Roosevelt Rhodes. None of the participants were pacifists, but they understood the efficacy of nonviolent action against the mightiest military force in the world. I attended a town hall meeting on Vieques, shortly before the uprising. We were a commission studying the effects of militarization on Puerto Rico and Vieques. The

leader told me, on the way to Vieques, that it would have not happened if not for my mother. Reflecting back, I am certain my mother's hand was in the uprising. My mother went on to write a book chronicling forty years of the Puerto Rican independence movement, "Voices for Independence, in the Spirit of Valor and Sacrifice."

17. If I appear to writing almost only about my mother, do not believe that my father was in any way off duty. While my mother's influence was largely on a personal level, my father, though erudite and full of humor (my punning came from him), he largely let his actions speak for him, in vigils, demonstrations, marches and in civil disobedience (his arrest record was prodigious). I used to tell of my septuagenarian father's being dragged by a county sheriff across the road in front of the Concord Naval Weapons Center, crying in pain, while I stood face-to-face with a cop in full riot gear, helpless to intercede.

Then my friend Mike Kerr blew my mind. He was telling friends about the very same incident, concluding with "then he looked at me ... *and he winked.*"

18. I was playing a gig, a private party, and was introduced to the host, a tall young man named Johnny Lopez (professional name, Steele, as Johnny Lopez had been taken), said, "Zwickel. Are you related to Abe?" And he told of an encounter with my father.

He and his football jock buddies were going into the post office to register for Selective Service, when they were gently accosted by this old couple at a beat-up card table, counseling young men about peaceful alternatives to the military. He had just the one conversation with my dad, but left impressed. He would read about him in the papers, see his photograph, and began paying attention – and learning. From a total political zero, he became a raging radical, with an edge he avers contributed to the strength of his craft. **Johnny Steele** was celebrating his winning the **San Francisco International Stand-up Comedy Competition**. He re-told that story at my father's memorial celebration.

19. My mother and I attended many *independentista* meetings throughout the Bay Area, and she began to notice visitors from the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, so she began attending *their* meetings, only to encounter fellow *independentistas*. For a late 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, my parents went to Hawai'i – to study the sovereignty movement. (They were required to take me along. I was their driver, and it was *in the contract*.)

We stayed with sovereignty leader Kekuni Blaisdell, son of the political powerhouse Neal Blaisdell, former mayor of Honolulu. My parents never went

anywhere without an agenda. When they went to Israel, they met with a Palestinian doctor who was under house arrest. So they spent nearly all their time – well, my mother did – in meetings with leaders of the various factions. My mother intended to write another book, on Hawaiian sovereignty, and was gathering material when her physical afflictions precluded her continuing. She died in April, 2006 and the age of 96.

20. On my father's part, true to form, nearly every Thursday, up until just months before he died in January, 2000 at the age of 96, he would take the bus from Pittsburg (California) to the Concord Naval Weapons Station (NWSC), where he and my mother witnessed the assault of the weapons/munitions train on Brian Willson in 1987. And every Thursday he would block the trains and trucks, wearing his kimono, a gift from Japanese Buddhist monks, his *keffiyeh*, a symbol of solidarity with the Palestinian cause (did I mention he was a Jew to his *bones?*), beating his Japanese Buddhist drum (another gift) and chant, "*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.*"

By the way, the same sheriffs who would physically abuse protesters at the NWSC ended up calling my father, affectionately and with respect, "Old Abe."

Dr. Abraham Albert Zwickel, D.C. and Mrs. Jean Wiley Zwickel, *ipresente!*

Daniel B. Zwickel

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