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A NATION'S PROGRESS

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One Woman's Journey, A Nation's Progress

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Prologue

Peggy Roach was a person who responded to the spirit, to the spirit of the times, to the spirit of the person she encountered, to the spirit that calls forth the best in our USA civil tradition, and, ultimately, to the living spirit we call Holy that animates our Catholic faith and makes us sisters and brothers in a community of all persons of good will.

In the confines of this essay, it is impossible to present a complete biography of Peggy or a complete history of her work. I have chosen, therefore, to present a decade of Peggy's life, from 1962 through 1970, that in my judgment most clearly profiles the character of Peggy's person and work. Peggy's work with Jack Egan, beginning in 1970, is fairly well known and documented, less so her pioneering work prior to teaming up with Egan. Also, this decade of the 1960's was and continues to be a most exceptional and important time in our national history and in the history of the USA Catholic church.

I do not refer to Peggy as 'Roach,' the usual convention for citing the subject in an essay. I refer to Peggy as 'Peggy' because she asked me to do so, declaring 'it suits me.' Peggy demonstrated this strong sense of 'what suits her' in all of her actions as a Catholic, as a woman, as a leader, all intimately and inimitably 'Peggy' and all intensely 'Chicago style.'

I am grateful to DePaul University and the Vincentian Fund for initiating my research on Peggy Roach and for providing me with the research assistance of Joe Pisano and Zach Mucha. I am especially grateful to the Ann Ida Gannon Center for Women and Leadership at Loyola University Chicago for assisting me in preparing the profile of Peggy for publication to the general public as well as for scholars in the field of civil rights. I am sure Peggy is most delighted to be remembered as a celebrated graduate of Mundelein College and to be numbered in the company of the women leaders honored in the Women and Leadership Archives at Loyola.

The Call

Peggy Roach climbed the old wooden staircase to her third floor office at 21 W. Superior. It was a hot, late summer morning in 1962. The previous day's heat had increased during the night, a classic Chicago weather event. The air was stuffy. The disturbed dirt from the poorly maintained stairwell didn't help.

Peggy had a lot to think about.

John McDermott, her boss, was making the Chicago Interracial Conference (CIC) a formidable force for civil rights in Chicago, and nationally. The CIC campaign he had started last summer to integrate Chicago's beaches—always a dangerous flash point for racial hate in summer heat—was again in full swing.¹

The myriad details of the annual CIC benefit dinner in October were nagging at her thoughts. Peggy knew this year's honoree, vice president Lyndon Baines Johnson, wouldn't be the big draw that Sargent Shriver had been for last year's dinner. Shriver had friends in Chicago. He had been president of the Chicago School Board, president of the CIC, manager of the Kennedy interests at the Merchandise Mart. Peggy didn't think she could sell as many tickets with Johnson as her speaker. LBJ had little clout in Chicago.

But mostly Peggy was thinking about Matt Ahmann's spectacular idea to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation by convening a "National Conference on Religion and Race" in Chicago in January. She knew Matt's idea was truly inspired—a gift of the Spirit.

As she entered her small office that morning, Peggy was grateful she had a front window that admitted sunlight. The receptionist's office down the narrow hallway had none. She marveled at how Gina could be so efficient in such a closet. She struggled to open the uncooperative window to let in hot, humid air to mix with hot, stale air inside.

Peggy's keen eye quickly swept her desk to see if her boss had left something for her to type up—no yellow tablets, McDermott's preferred paper for drafting letters, but a few stray files that had somehow escaped her attention the day before. Files in hand, she fussed with the drawers of the battered, metal cabinet which, like the window, opened only under

duress. She took great pride in the accuracy of her filing system, which included several cardboard boxes on the office floor. Names, places, dates, acronyms for organizations—all correctly spelled and ordered. No one dared to touch Peggy's files.

Peggy smiled. She was grateful to be counted among the people who worked in this neglected slum building. Extraordinary people like Russ Barta, who headed the Adult Education Centers, Tim Murnane, who edited *Work*, the Catholic Labor Alliance newspaper, Matt Ahmann, who directed the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice (NCCIJ), and, of course, John McDermott, her boss.

Peggy spent a moment at the window, to look out onto the thick, muggy day. She remembered how, as a high school student, she had first become aware of the "race problem." There were no black students at St. Scholastica, but her teachers, Benedictine nuns, had introduced her to Catholic Action. (See endnote 88.) These programs had taught her a lot about how to work for justice, and about Chicago. About how, if you were black, you could live quite close to Lake Michigan and yet never have kicked your feet in its cool waters.

Peggy smiled again. Not far from where she now stood, she had attended "sessions" with the Baroness Catherine de Hueck at 3 East Chicago. The Baroness, such a strange, powerful woman! Herself a refugee from persecution in Russia, she set up "Friendship Houses," one in New York, another in Chicago, safe places where black people and white people could meet and talk, and share a meal. A simple, effective idea. The kind Peggy liked.

Back at her desk, Peggy started sorting the mail, selecting the items requiring immediate attention. The floor of the office sloped so acutely she always checked to make certain the locks on the wheels of the typewriter stand were securely set.

As she threaded the first sheet of paper onto the spool, the phone rang. Peggy decided to let Gina answer it. She started typing a response to one of the letters in the morning mail. The phone rang again. Peggy wondered why Gina was putting the call through to her. She knew McDermott was out of the office today, at community meetings throughout the city.

The call was from Washington, D.C.

The call was for Peggy.

The Job Offer

Russ Barta was attending a meeting in Washington, D.C., where he met Margaret Mealey, director of the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW). Mealey asked him to help her find the right person for a position on her staff. She needed a staff secretary for the social action and legislation committees. Russ Barta said to her: “Margaret, you need a Peggy Roach.”²

Mealey acted promptly on Barta’s advice. She phoned Peggy at the CIC office. Peggy remembers it as a difficult conversation. She was attracted to the idea of working in the nation’s capital, where the Kennedy administration was formulating progressive social legislation. But, the reality of leaving family and friends for a strange city troubled her. She had never thought of leaving Chicago for any reason.

Peggy doesn’t usually make serious decisions quickly. This day she decided to dare it. She said yes to Mealey.

Concerned with the quickness of Peggy’s decision, Mealey wisely suggested that she attend the NCCW convention in Detroit as her first step into the new job. The convention was scheduled to run for four days in October, right before the CIC annual benefit dinner. It isn’t in Peggy’s character to leave any of her work unfinished, whether large or small, important or not. The dinner was a complex and lavish affair upon which the CIC depended for more than 60 percent of its annual budget—not to mention the additional complication of the presence of the vice president. Undaunted, Peggy had everything in proper order before she left for the convention.³

Anxious and excited, Peggy set off for Detroit not knowing exactly what to expect. She had some knowledge of NCCW from her three year tenure (1954-57) as executive secretary of the Chicago Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women.

But she really didn’t know much about Margaret Mealey who had been running things in Washington since 1950 or about how the NCCW operated on the national level. Peggy was hoping her experiences at the convention would confirm her decision. Her first experience was sorely disappointing.

“When I arrived in Detroit, the convention was already in full swing. I was assigned to staff a registration area and found there was little

work since most of the women had already arrived. I was so frustrated that first day I seriously doubted I had made a good decision when I said I would take the Washington job.” (Roach, 29)

Peggy did not mind performing menial tasks if she judged them useful or necessary in a good cause. Sitting at a registration desk, however, with no one to register did not satisfy any of her requirements.

On her second day at the convention, when Peggy again was assigned registration work, she felt she had made a terrible mistake in saying yes to Mealey. But, instead of becoming demoralized by this situation, Peggy decided to take the initiative and employ her time more productively by attending a session on social action.

“Standing in the back of the meeting room, I saw a lovely woman in a white furry hat that almost looked like a large marshmallow on her head. She stepped to the microphone and identified herself—Hope Brophy.” When Peggy was preparing to leave for Detroit, Matt Ahmann recommended she contact Brophy, a leader of the Detroit Council of Catholic Women. “I knew I had to see her. I waited at the back of the room and approached her as she moved to the door. I explained that I needed to talk to her. It just all poured out.” (Roach, 29)⁴

Brophy rejoiced that Peggy had been offered the job. She saw Peggy’s experience in civil rights as a great opportunity to move the NCCW in the right direction. She promised to help Peggy in any way she could.

“It was Hope Brophy who lent the encouragement I needed to make the leap.” (Roach, 29)

As was so often the case in Peggy’s career, it was her interactions with people that helped her to discern what she should do next with her life. Peggy Roach has a prophetic gift of responding to the right people, people who, possessed by the spirit of the times, have a sense of what is needed and a sense of how Peggy can best contribute. At this moment and in this situation, Hope Brophy helped Peggy understand why she *specifically* was needed in Washington.

There was a job that had to be done. And Peggy Roach had been asked to do it.

Unfinished Business.

When Peggy arrived back in Chicago, all the arrangements she had so painstakingly stitched together for the CIC benefit dinner unraveled. The Secret Service had rejected the setting for the dinner and the seating arrangements, detailing strict requirements for the security of the vice president.

“I clearly remember one aspect of the benefit which taxed my efforts in planning and promoting the dinner. Again, the dinner was a sell-out, tickets were out, tables assigned. Then, the Secret Service showed up Needless to say it was a nightmare.” (Roach, 25)

Peggy's extraordinary organizational and people skills trumped the nightmare of last minute changes.

Needless to say, Peggy's extraordinary organizational and people skills trumped the nightmare of last minute changes. The dinner was a success.

A far more difficult and urgent matter emerged. Matt Ahmann was having second thoughts about his idea of convening a national conference in Chicago to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation in January of 1963. At a luncheon meeting with John McDermott, Ahmann expressed his anxiety and enumerated all the reasons the conference could not be held. Ahmann decided to cancel the conference. On his return to the CIC office, McDermott informed Peggy of the decision. He got the response he anticipated.⁵

“My response was utter dismay. It was the best idea to come down the pike in years, and I felt Matt could not abandon it. John suggested I talk with Matt. Immediately I went to his office to discuss it with him. We took an overall look at the conference plan, then, working backwards from the conference dates, detailed the tasks that needed to be accomplished, assigned these tasks, set time-lines, etc., etc. I recommended Dolores Coleman, his administrative assistant, and the only full-time person in his office, take charge of a key job of great detail—the listing of delegates designated by the participating religious bodies. I assured him the conference plan was workable, and that I would help as much as I could,

and he agreed to push on.” (Roach, 26)

Peggy’s amazing instinct for worthy ideas coupled with her sound judgment about the people who could make the ideas work never failed her. The National Conference on Religion and Race would prove itself to be a watershed event in the history of the ecumenical movement as well as of the American civil rights movement.

The Move to D.C.

In making the move to Washington, D.C., Peggy was not just leaving a job she valued. She was not just going beyond the daily reach of friends and colleagues. She was also leaving her family, especially her trusted advisor Cecile Duffy Roach, her mother. For most Chicagoans, family and neighborhood are important. For Peggy, family and neighborhood are the foundational values of her commitment to civil rights and social justice. Peggy wasn’t just leaving her hometown for a job in a strange city. She was being uprooted.

In 1962 to use the phone for long distance calling was not a casual matter. It was not like our day of cell phones and inexpensive national service. The normal way in which people kept in contact was by letters sent via the United States Postal Service. In this new situation, Peggy decided to call her mother and father, James E. Roach, every Sunday afternoon when she could. The Sunday phone call was a good solution, but it was no substitute for friends in Washington, D.C. When Peggy needed someone to talk to, or someone to just relax with, she didn’t know who that would be.

“My dear college friend, Patty Nealin, took a few days off from her job at WGN-TV and accompanied me to Washington. Together we would look for an apartment and buy the essentials to furnish it—a bed, a chair, a table, that would do for starters. We looked at several places and finally decided on the first apartment building we visited at 1500 Massachusetts Avenue—just a few blocks from the NCCW building where I would be working and close to the White House—an ideal location.... Her task accomplished, Patty was off to catch her flight back to Chicago. The loneliness set in when she left. I was on my own now.” (Roach, 30)

Peggy dealt with her loneliness in the direct head-on way in which she tackled all problems: “Since I didn’t know people in Washington who

would invite me to their homes, I decided the best way to make new friends would be as hostess. I began by inviting people to dinner at my place: office colleagues, people I met at the myriad of meetings I was required to attend, Chicago visitors in Washington for meetings and conferences.” (Roach, 30)

Peggy knew she was no Pearl Mesta,⁶ having neither the wealth, nor the space, nor the time to be “the hostess with the mostest.” Her apartment was basically one large room, her skills as a cook rudimentary. Borrowing recipes from her Mom who was a great cook, Peggy taught herself three main dishes: “‘the chicken thing’—baked chicken with a citrus/honey/cinnamon sauce; ‘the fish thing’—fillet of sole with grapes baked in wine; and spaghetti. If you came to dinner a fourth time, you were bound to get a repeat of one of the above.” (Roach, 31)

This proactive plan worked admirably. Peggy’s apartment became a salon of Catholic Action in D.C., and of friendship.

“One evening with the apartment full of people, one of my guests remarked: ‘This is really a small apartment—where’s your bedroom?’ My reply: ‘You’re sitting on it.’ Soon guests became friends.... Needless to say, I didn’t spend much time with tears of loneliness—I was too busy arranging furniture and cooking.” (Roach, 31)

With a space she could now call hers and with friends to make Washington a second home, Peggy could concentrate all of her considerable energy and talent on her job at the National Council of Catholic Women.

Introduction to NCCW.

When Peggy Roach joined the staff of NCCW in late Fall of 1962 as its social action/legislative secretary, it was an organization in the process of change provoked by the profound impact of Pope John XXIII, Vatican II, and the American civil rights movement. The election in 1960 of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the first Catholic president, and his idealistic program of the “New Frontier” also stimulated this process of re-thinking the Council’s mission. Access to the “power structure” in the nation’s capital had never been quite so great for Catholics committed to social action.

The National Council of Catholic Women had been founded on March 4, 1920, in Washington, D.C., by the United States Catholic Bish-

ops Conference as an organization within its own committee structure designed to mobilize support for its agenda. NCCW itself was not an individual membership organization. It was a federation of affiliated Catholic women's groups of many different types, ranging from diocesan councils, through local and regional women's clubs, to national organizations. By 1958, it consisted of more than 11,000 affiliated women's groups.

The *Zeitgeist* of liberating reform was everywhere: in government, in the church, in society.

From its founding, NCCW had an international perspective. Its work with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) both during and after World War II strengthened and deepened this international focus and commitment. Popes Pius XII and John XXIII publicly recognized the service of NCCW. As a constitutive member of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO), it was one of the first non-governmental organizations (NGO) to be granted consultative status at the United Nations upon the

UN's founding in 1946. Margaret Mealey, among other NCCW leaders, had been invited to participate in Vatican II, in United Nations sessions, and in USA government policy committees. In many ways, NCCW had outgrown itself and needed to renew its own identity in a changing church and in a changing American civil society.⁷

"The first day on the job Margaret Mealey introduced me to my counterparts who were staffing committee work in other areas—spiritual development, international relations, medical missions, libraries, etc. etc. I met colleagues I would be working with for the next few years—Jane Dwyer, Marcia Cox, Alma Herger, Mary Donohoe, Barbara Brunton—a wonderful group of women. I felt my area—social action and legislation—was the most important of all. I would give it my best." (Roach, 30)

The *Zeitgeist* of liberating reform was everywhere: in government, in the church, in society. In addition to receiving "first-hand" news from people connected to Rome, Peggy was inspired by the reports on Vatican II deliberations that she read in the Catholic press, the Jesuit publication *America* and the lay Catholic publication *Commonweal*, and in the secular dailies, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. The national civil

rights movement was gaining strength and momentum. The presidency of JFK was heralding a new political era for the American people. In this supercharged atmosphere of open horizons and enthusiastic expectations, Peggy Roach, just as she had worked to do in Chicago, her beloved home, was ready to make her contribution to civil rights and social action on the national level in the policy making center of her beloved country.

“Washington was an exciting place to be. John F. Kennedy was our new president, challenging us all in his inaugural address—‘Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.’ He proposed a new concept, the Peace Corps, where Americans could make a personal commitment to development and world peace by their international volunteer service in underdeveloped countries throughout the world. Its mantra—‘the hardest job you will ever love.’ The Kennedy administration promised action in the arena of civil rights to assure equality and justice for all citizens. It was a new day and looked so promising on many fronts.” (Roach, 31, 32)

In *BVM VISTA* June 1964, Mary DeCock wrote a focus article on Peggy as a distinguished alumna of Mundelein College in Chicago. DeCock writes: “Her Washington assignment was to organize and coordinate diocesan programs relating to four broad areas: immigration, rural life, legislation and racial problems. ‘The filing cabinet on race relations was almost empty,’ Peggy says. ‘So I started there.’”⁸

Before Peggy could fill up the empty cabinet, she had to return to Chicago for more unfinished business.

National Conference on Religion and Race

“It was 20 below 0 in Chicago January 14, 1963, when over 700 delegates from churches, synagogues and other houses of worship from across the country arrived at the Edgewater Beach Hotel (no longer there) for the opening of the National Conference on Religion and Race, co-sponsored by the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the National Council of Churches and the Synagogue Council of America.” (Roach, 32)

NCCW was a participating sponsor of the conference. Matt Ahmann asked Peggy to serve as a secretary for one of the working groups.

Jewish, Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic participants attended the four-day conference. An all star line up of speakers made

presentations, including among notable others: Albert Cardinal Meyer, archbishop of Chicago; J. Irwin Miller, president of the National Council of Churches; R. Sargent Shriver, director of the Peace Corps; Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, professor of ethics at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America; and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.⁹

Dr. Benjamin Mays, president of Morehouse College and conference chairman, delivered the convening address. He exhorted the participants “to dedicate ourselves to the task of completing the job which Lincoln began 100 years ago.”

The conference received extensive, in-depth coverage in the Chicago press for many reasons, not the least of which was the extraordinary fact that individuals and organizations not usually inclined to talk to each other, let alone cooperate on a common agenda, had come together and produced a common statement and platform for action. The statement was entitled “An Appeal to the Conscience of the American People.” It declared racism to be the greatest domestic evil in the United States and efforts to eradicate this evil the greatest moral imperative. The platform for action was entitled “programmatic recommendations.” It was comprised of a complex and impressive mixture of educational strategies ranging from exercises for the spiritual enlightenment of congregations in churches and synagogues through social action practices for employers and institutions to legislative policy formation for politicians. The conference published a pamphlet of 36 pages entitled “Religion in Racial Crisis.” A book entitled *RACE: Challenge to Religion*, containing the major addresses of the conference, was edited by Matt Ahmann and published by Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, 1963.

“It was an historic moment—I could feel it. I thought—we *can* change the world! Others felt it too. Many delegates returned to their home areas and set up local conferences on religion and race in their communities modeled on the 1963 national meeting. The local Chicago Conference on Religion and Race existed well into the 1980s” (Roach, 39)

It was indeed an historic moment. Comparing the conference to the unique importance of the World Congress of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, John La Farge, SJ, wrote: “We never before had anything like it in this country. Never before, on a national scale, have most of the major religious bodies of the United States—including the Greek Ortho-

dox, in the gracious person of its Archbishop Germanos—united thus to perform a single task. This task was to implement the moral principles handed down to both Jews and Christians for the brotherhood of man, and thereby effectively combat the monstrous evil of racism.”¹⁰

The name and work of Peggy Roach are missing from the extensive publicity and historical records justly generated by the conference, even though this historic event came to be because of her indomitable spirit.

JFK and Civil Rights Legislation

In June of 1963, President John F. Kennedy proposed civil rights legislation to the Congress. In July, Peggy, along with 16 other members of NCCW, attended a meeting in the East Room of the White House where President Kennedy made a special plea to the 300 women gathered there to work for his civil rights program. Peggy decided to mobilize her constituency to put pressure on members of Congress.¹¹

“There seemed to be a lot of inaccurate information abroad about the proposed legislation. I asked Margaret Mealey if we at the NCCW could do a mailing to all affiliates with an outline for the basic components of the proposed civil rights bill. This was a costly undertaking, she advised. I pleaded my case—we need Catholic women across the country to be properly informed and supportive of the legislation. Justice was at stake here. She finally agreed, and we got the mailing out.” (Roach, 42)

In her role as legislative liaison, Peggy was assigned the task of representing NCCW to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR) which was influential in formulating the policy content of the civil rights bills to be presented to the House and Senate of the U.S. Congress. House bill H.R. 7152 introduced civil rights legislation into the agenda of the House of Representatives. At the weekly meetings of the LCCR in downtown Washington, Peggy was briefed on the current status of the bill: it had made it through the House Judiciary Committee, but was stuck in the Rules Committee.

To get H.R. 7152 out of the Rules Committee and onto the floor of the House, a committee of labor, civil rights, and church leaders planned a “March on Washington” for August 28. A. Philip Randolph, the founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was appointed chairman.

“The call from the committee went out across the country and thousands of people were expected to participate. The big question—would this be a peaceful march, or, would there be violence? Tensions in Washington mounted in the days immediately preceding the August 28 march.” (Roach, 43)

People came to Washington, D.C., from all over the nation to march in support of civil rights legislation. Peggy set off to join the march with Father Mallette, his dad Dan, and Mimi Schubert, a friend from Chicago. In the press of the crowd, Peggy and Mimi became separated from the Mallettes. They decided to join their many friends from the Chicago Catholic Interracial Council delegation.

“It wasn’t hard to find them behind their large banner, which ushers from St. Dorothy’s Church on the South Side carried. They looked so handsome and smart in their navy blue jackets and white caps. I spotted Mr. Carter and his daughter, my friend Dolores Coleman, immediately. We were greeted with hellos and hugs by the whole group. The march stepped off, and we were on our way.... As we looked around us and behind us when we got to the reflecting pool near the Lincoln Memorial, we were amazed at the crowd—some 250,000.... We awaited the words of the speakers on the platform—we could only hear them, not see them, they were so far away. But we knew we were part of an historic gathering.” (Roach, 43)

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his profoundly moving and historic “I Have a Dream” speech.

The march had been a great success. And, it had been peaceful.

“The next day the papers were filled with pictures and stories about the historic march, and we were all proud we had participated. Our spirits soared in the hope that the Congress would move soon on the proposed civil rights legislation.

“Less than three months later, our hopes were dashed and the nation plunged into mourning—on November 23, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas! I remember going to the Capitol Rotunda to pay my respects. I wept all the way home.” (Roach, 44)

Taking the Message On the Road

In the fall of 1963, Peggy took the message of the National Conference on Religion and Race to the regional meetings of NCCW. At these institutes Peggy provided each participant with a mountain of information in the form of a packet entitled “Race—Challenge to Justice and Love.” In addition to highlights from the speeches given and recommendations passed at the conference, the packets contained fact sheets on family life, educational articles, and program notes on a variety of family and community projects.

Peggy also made a creative contribution to these regional meetings. She formulated a role playing skit for two women titled “What Does the Negro Really Want?” She borrowed the idea for this script from an improvisational piece created by Fathers Dan Mallette and George Clements of the Archdiocese of Chicago. They had developed the skit to educate parish groups on issues of race.

The original skit was entitled “A Debate in Black and White.” The roles were ad-libbed very much in the manner of Chicago’s famous Second City “improv” comedy troupe. Fr. Mallette, the white priest playing the role of the black man, and Fr. Clements, the black priest playing the role of the white man, generated their routines quite spontaneously in response to the specific characteristics of the audience for whom they were performing. They often “ripped” their opening dialogue from the day’s headlines relating to racial troubles.¹²

The NCCW skit, which was performed at these regional institutes, was scripted with Peggy Roach playing the role of the black woman and Marcia Cox playing the role of the white woman. When Marcia could not accompany Peggy to a regional meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska, Peggy recruited Mrs. Lucy Nevels to perform the skit with her.¹³

“Mrs. Nevels was a handsome Black woman, who had just been named ‘Mother of the Year’ in Nebraska. I asked if I might meet privately with her, and she agreed. I explained the role playing skit and asked if she would be willing to join me in the skit. She was enthusiastic about it. We met to practice it. A few times, each of us picked up the wrong lines. We confused each other—who was Black, who was white. And we laughed and laughed. Finally, we got it right, and at the general meeting of the Institute participants, the skit went off well.” (Roach, 41)

Peggy and Lucy Nevels became life-long friends.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964

The assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy in November of 1963 was a watershed event in the history of 20th Century American national life. Overnight, JFK and his brief reign as the 35th president achieved mythic stature.

“Dorothy Holden, NCCW national chairperson for social action, and an articulate and impressive woman, was active in Democratic politics in a Republican stronghold of Ohio. She was credited with delivering a key Republican precinct in Columbus, Ohio, for JFK, and she did it by knocking on doors. When the President was killed, people in the area knocked on her door. They came to express their deep sympathy, as if she were a sister of the slain President.” (Roach, 45)

The anecdote quoted above that Peggy narrates in her *Memoir* gives us an important insight into the power of JFK, the man and the myth, to motivate people to change history, and themselves. The myth of JFK continued to be politically effective long after his death and the shattering of the dream of Camelot where King Arthur like President Kennedy would usher in a golden age of justice and chivalry.

Vice president Johnson assumed the office of the presidency with a moral and civil mandate to fulfill the promises of JFK’s administration. In addition to this inherited mandate, Johnson, from his many years in the House and in the Senate, had a strong legacy in his own right from his extraordinary grasp of congressional politics. A protégée of fellow Texan Sam Rayburn, legendary powerful speaker of the House of Representatives, Johnson knew how to get things done, and now he had the power to do it.

If proof of his power were needed, in February of 1964, Johnson forced the passage of the Civil Rights Act through the House. In June, he got it through the Senate. On July 2, 1964, Johnson signed H.R. 7152 into law as an Act of the 88th Congress.¹⁴

“The signing session was broadcast live. Jane O’Grady and I sat in my apartment listening to the radio broadcast, and we wept in joy when we knew the bill was finally the law of the land. Shortly after the session was over, I had a phone call from Msgr. Frank Hurley (now retired Archbishop of Anchorage, Alaska) from the Bishops Conference office. Msgr. Hurley was the assistant general secretary there and had been invited to

the signing ceremony. He was back at his office and indicated that he planned to stop in to see me on his way home. He said he had not yet said Mass that day so he would come by in about an hour.” (Roach, 45)

Since Peggy’s apartment was only a few blocks away from the Bishops Conference office chapel, Jane and Peggy decided to join Msgr. Hurley in his mass of thanksgiving. After mass, all three returned to Peggy’s place for “a drink and good conversation.”

“As Msgr. Hurley was leaving, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a little brown box containing one of the pens used by President Johnson. Handing it to me, he said: ‘You really worked on this effort—I think you deserve this pen.’ I was astounded.” (Roach, 46)

Peggy cherished this gift, carrying “the little brown box in my purse for the next ten years.” In typical Roach fashion, Peggy was waiting for the right opportunity to pass on this precious symbol of achievement in American civil rights history. The opportunity came when President Nixon dismissed Father Theodore Hesburgh, CSC, President of the University of Notre Dame, from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights on which he had served for 15 years. “...I sent the pen to Father Hesburgh in admiration of all he had done over the years to advance the cause of civil rights. He was delighted to get the pen and promised me it would have a place of honor in the newly established Center for Civil Rights and Human Rights at Notre Dame’s Law School.” (Roach, 46)

The importance of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 cannot be overemphasized. Nonetheless, it failed to achieve one of its principal goals: voting rights. Even though the very first line of the Act reads: “To enforce the constitutional right to vote...” and Title I of this Act concerns itself entirely and explicitly with “Voting Rights,” for the most part the disenfranchisement of blacks continued unabated at the local level. Most blacks in the deep South still could not register as voters, or when registered, still could not cast a vote at polling places.

The current website of the United States Department of Justice testifies to this failure of the Civil Rights Act of 1964: “Congress determined that the existing federal anti-discrimination laws were not sufficient to overcome the resistance by state officials to enforcement of the 15th Amendment. The legislative hearings showed that efforts by the Department of Justice to have discriminatory election practices eliminated by litigation on a case-by-case basis had been unsuccessful in opening

up the registration process; as soon as one discriminatory practice or procedure was proven to be unconstitutional and enjoined, a new one would be substituted in its place and litigation would have to commence anew.”¹⁵

For Peggy, as with so many others, the elation at the passing of the Civil Rights Act transformed itself into renewed energy and commitment. In her role as NCCW liaison, Peggy continued to participate in the weekly meetings of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights which now focused on the passing of a Voting Rights bill “with teeth in it” to effect the enforcement of the voting rights provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Wednesdays in Mississippi (WIM)

In 1961, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and other civil rights organizations initiated an intensive voter registration drive in the deep South. By 1963, CORE and its allies, principally The Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) and The National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP), decided to mount a concentrated voter registration campaign in the state of Mississippi where less than 7 percent of black voters were registered to vote. In 1964, this Freedom Ballot campaign evolved into the Mississippi Summer Project headed by Robert Moses, a SNCC director. This summer program called upon students from all over the USA to come to Mississippi to help register black voters. SNCC acted on the political premise that voting power was the key to political power. SNCC’s project had two primary objectives: one, to register black people to vote, and two, to wrest the Democratic Party from the control of the “bosses.” SNCC hoped to establish a “Freedom” Democratic Party to supplant the establishment Mississippi Democratic Party.¹⁶

“Tensions continued to mount in the South with the planned 1964 Mississippi Summer Project which would bring thousands of college students to the state, and the formation of the Freedom Democratic Party aimed to challenge traditional delegates to the Democratic convention.

On June 21, 1964, three young civil rights workers [CORE volunteers]—Andrew Goodman, James Chaney and Mickey Schwerner—disappeared near Meridian, Mississippi.... I remember this time well.

Shortly after their disappearance, I participated in a remarkable program called ‘Wednesdays in Mississippi.’” (Roach, 46)

Teams of women from the National Councils of Negro Women, Jewish Women, and Catholic Women, the United Church Women, and the National Women’s Committee for Civil Rights visited their local counterparts in Mississippi to quietly encourage them “to do their utmost for racial equality.”

Peggy traveled with the Washington, D.C., team to Jackson, Mississippi. At the airport, the team was divided into groups: the white members in one, the black members in the other. To avoid harassment and possible arrest, they had to pretend not to know each other. The white

To avoid harassment and possible arrest, they had to pretend not to know each other.

women were taken to a motel, the black women to private homes. Both groups came together at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Young. Mr. Young was one of only three black attorneys practicing in the state of Mississippi.

At the Young’s home, the women learned of the history and importance of the Freedom Riders to the state of Mississippi. The Youngs had housed many of the riders after they were released from jail. Their names were recorded in a large guest book which also included the signatures of many other civil rights workers who had relied on the protection and hospitality of the Young home. Mr. Young observed: “We would all be arrested if this party had taken place here in my home three years ago before the Freedom Riders came.”¹⁷

At the Young’s gathering, Peggy’s team also met an intriguing assortment of civil rights activists and local community leaders. Peggy was especially impressed with Dean A. W. Branch from Tougaloo College who discussed with her a recently inaugurated joint program with Brown University of Providence, Rhode Island, for the advancement of Tougaloo faculty. Students and faculty of Tougaloo were active in the freedom movement for some time, provoking local segregationists, who called it “Cancer College,” to work to revoke its accreditation.

On the drive from Jackson to Meridian, Mississippi, where the team

was to visit a Freedom School and the Meridian Community Center, Peggy “with a lump in her throat” noted the fork in the road to Philadelphia, Mississippi, where it was suspected that Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner had been “disappeared.”

At the Community Center, Peggy met Joe Morse, a student from St. Mary’s College in Winona. Joe was working on voter registration. Peggy asked Joe how his family felt about his working in Mississippi and whether he kept in contact with them. Joe said they were supportive but he had little time to keep in touch with them. Peggy asked for his mother’s address and said she “would drop her a line.”

Peggy noticed a poster on the wall picturing two black children. The caption read: “I’m too young to register. What’s your excuse?”

At the Freedom School, Peggy sat in on a French class taught by Gail Falk of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The students had no books. Their home work assignment had been to write out on one side of a sheet of paper a sentence in English and on the other side the French equivalent. The first student called upon had written: “I want freedom.”

About a dozen black women came to the school to have lunch with Peggy’s team. In her WIM Report to the leadership of NCCW, she wrote:

We sang a get-acquainted song—“The more we get together, the happier we’ll be,” introducing ourselves between choruses. We became further acquainted during lunch. I sat next to Mrs. B _____ who had returned to Miss. a year ago, after living for years in Chicago. She worked at the County Hospital for 20 years she told me. Small world!

As we finished lunch, Mrs. C _____ opened our discussion with a Peanuts cartoon (she said she was an avid Peanuts fan). She expressed her hope for Miss. through the cartoon where Linus and Charlie are discussing the opening of the baseball season. Charlie says, “Why do we get excited when we haven’t a chance in a million to win?” Linus, the optimist, answers that perhaps they don’t have a chance in a million, but maybe they do have a chance in a billion. With that, they both holler out —PLAY BALL!

Mrs. C _____ went on to tell us she had invited five white women to meet with us and related that in her phone conversa-

tions with them, each had wanted desperately to come, but all of them were afraid to come for fear of reprisals. One woman sobbed on the phone, our hostess said. Mrs. C _____ talked with great understanding of their fears and with no bitterness, and she said she knew how cut off these white women felt. "They need me," she said, "I will listen to them."

Back in Jackson, Peggy had the opportunity to attend a rally for the Freedom Democratic Party at which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the principal speaker. "He told the packed Masonic Temple: 'You're not slaves. We are God's children. To be free, we must believe this.'" (Roach, 47)

While in Jackson, Peggy contacted Fr. Bernard Law, the editor of the diocesan newspaper, to inform him about WIM. Weaned on Chicago politics, Peggy understood power structures. She knew that it was important to give the "bosses" of the local turf notice of her presence and actions, out of respect and out of a concern for clear communication to avoid unpleasant confusions. "People in chancery offices can be likened to Chicago's City Hall—asking the question: who sent you? I didn't wait for the question. I assured him I was on my own time (vacation) using my own funds." (Roach, 48)

Fr. Law presented Peggy to Bishop Gerow so that he could hear first-hand about Peggy's visit: "I saw a tall, thin, silver-haired prelate as Bishop Gerow greeted me warmly. I related my story again. Bishop Gerow was visibly moved and said to me: 'Miss Roach, I would give my life if I could change things.' I came away from my visit to the diocesan office with the feeling of pity for those men. I felt they were persons of good will, wanting to move resolutely ahead, yet convinced that too strong a move at a strategic moment might weaken the influence they felt they had gained. I guess they were just plain scared." (Roach, 48)

Shortly after Peggy's return to Washington, federal investigators found the bodies of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner buried in a ditch at a construction site near Philadelphia, Mississippi. Peggy felt an affinity for these three young men whose lives touched her even though they were already dead when she arrived in Meridian. Peggy remembers a poster in the Meridian Community Center she visited. It was a safety warning addressed to the Center's volunteer workers and read: "Did you

remember to sign out?” Signed: Mickey Schwerner. Schwerner had been in charge of the Center.

WIM was a defining moment in Peggy Roach’s work for social justice. Her WIM Report shows her powerful ability in complex social situation to forge strong connections with the people she finds there. It shows Peggy’s ability to feel the destructive power of evil and not be paralyzed by it. It shows her capacity to transform righteous indignation into constructive action.

The murders of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner, and the “thundering silence” of the local church strengthened Peggy’s resolve. In the concluding paragraph of her Report, Peggy writes: “I know of one way in which I might help the cause of freedom in Mississippi and the involvement of the Church—prayer and fasting—lots of it. Other things too I felt I must think about, pray about, propose, discuss, in an effort to help Catholic women in Mississippi in the role of leadership they must assume there.”

Through her participation in the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Peggy worked to get a voting rights bill through Congress. Through her position with NCCW, Peggy worked to mobilize Catholic women to become leaders in the cause of racial justice.

In the midst of this intense work, Peggy was informed that her mother, Cecile, had been diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. Peggy’s weekly phone calls home took on an added dimension of importance. When traveling, she also tried to plan a lay over in Chicago whenever she could.

Cecile Roach advised her daughter: this disease is acrippler, not a killer.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965

The NAACP, CORE, and SNCC campaign to register voters in the deep South steadily gained momentum with rallies and marches occurring on a regular basis.

Since 1961 the NAACP, officially banned in Alabama, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) had worked together on a voter registration campaign in Birmingham. Though the campaign itself failed, it brought to international attention the work of Martin Lu-

ther King, Jr., His “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” became an instant classic of the American civil rights movement. King wrote the letter in jail on April 16, 1963, in response to a published statement by eight Alabama religious leaders that King’s actions in the cause of civil rights were “unwise” and “extreme,” and would retard real social progress.

King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October of 1964, while in St. Joseph’s Hospital in Atlanta for a general check-up and necessary rest. The Nobel refreshed the drooping spirits of the SCLC leadership who decided to mount a campaign in Selma, Alabama. Selma was a bold choice because of its strong attachment to the worst aspects of the myth of the Old South. In *An Easy Burden*, Andrew Young, former U.S. Ambassador to United Nations and two-term mayor of Atlanta, notes that taking the movement to Selma “was a much more serious threat than anything we had done to date.”¹⁸

SNCC had established a strong base in Selma. Jim Forman, its executive secretary, and John Lewis, its national chairman, had moved to Selma in the Fall of 1963. In accordance with its basic strategy, SNCC focused on voter registration. In *An Alley In Chicago*, her book on Mon-signor John Egan, Margery Frisbie writes: “Out of 15,000 blacks of voting age in Dallas County (Selma was the county seat), only 333 were eligible to vote.”¹⁹

In collaboration with the Dallas County Voters League, SNCC conducted several types of civil rights actions with little real progress. In response to a vigorous voter registration drive, Selma authorities had enacted an injunction prohibiting the gathering of more than three black people at any one time in any public space.²⁰ Even black school children could not walk home in groups of more than three. Sheriff Jim Clark enforced this injunction and other restrictive regulations with unusually brutal force.

At the invitation of Mrs. Amelia Boynton of the Dallas County Voters League, King decided to make a public address in Selma at the Brown AME Chapel on January 2, 1965, to celebrate the 102nd anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and to challenge the validity of this injunction.

In *An Easy Burden*, Andrew Young provides us with this eye witness account of King’s inauguration of the SCLC Selma campaign: “Martin’s ‘Give Us the Ballot’ speech (a reincarnation of his 1957 Prayer Pil-

grimage March on Washington speech) on the night of January 2 before a jammed audience at Brown Chapel challenged the injunction and served notice that we were willing to wage a determined campaign in Selma to achieve progress in the registration of black voters. The willingness of hundreds of people to violate the injunction was a powerful indication of the resolve of Selma's black citizens."²¹

After King's speech, most of the SCLC leadership relocated to Selma. Coretta Scott King's family came from Perry County, adjacent to Dallas County. In collaboration with SNCC, King and Ralph Abernathy launched a series of well-organized, well-disciplined, and narrowly focused actions, such as registering black school teachers to vote. These efforts, while landing them in jail several times, caught the attention of the nation. A significant confluence of circumstances made it seem that the entire civil rights struggle was now focused on Selma.

Young writes: "Once again, the arrest of Martin and Ralph brought tremendous national attention to the Selma campaign. To take advantage of this heightening national attention, we encouraged a group of concerned congressmen to come to Selma and observe conditions there. The group was organized by Rep. Charles Diggs and Rep. John Conyers, both black Democrats from Detroit, and Rep. Brad Morse, a white Republican from Massachusetts. Altogether fifteen congressmen, including Ed Koch of New York and Sid Yates and Abner Mikva of Chicago, descended upon Selma on a very cold day in February to see for themselves what was happening, and to talk with Martin and Ralph, who bailed themselves out of jail in order to brief the congressional delegation. We were encouraged that Assistant Attorney General Ramsey Clark flew down with the congressional delegation."²²

Meanwhile, in one of SCLC's actions in nearby Marion, Alabama, Jimmy Lee Jackson, a black Vietnam veteran, was shot and killed while trying to assist his mother who was being attacked by a state trooper. The murder of Jimmy Lee Jackson provoked SCLC to organize a march to the State Capitol in Montgomery to protest both Jackson's death and the brutal tactics of Sheriff Jim Clark and of Public Safety Director Al Lingo. Clark commanded a deputized posse which included Klu Klux Klanners; Lingo commanded the state troopers. The march was scheduled for March 7, 1965, but serious objections were raised. SNCC, arguing that it was impossible on such short notice to protect or provide for the people

making the 54-mile walk, refused to endorse the march. King himself, having to be in Atlanta on that date, instructed Young to postpone the march for a few days so that he could get there to lead it. But, highly motivated people, some spontaneously and some called upon by a network of black ministers, had come to Selma to protest the vile murder of Jimmy Lee Jackson.

History has a way of taking control from any given individual or any given group. The march had to proceed.

History has a way of taking control from any given individual or any given group. The march had to proceed.

The die was cast. The temper of the moment persuaded SNCC executive director John Lewis to march as an individual citizen, even though his organization was officially against it. He and Hosea Williams of SCLC were selected to lead the march. Pew by pew the marchers left the church and moved in

an orderly fashion to the Edmund Pettus Bridge which would take them from Selma to the state highway (now US 80) that led to Montgomery, the state capital.

Young writes: "Once the march left the church and the first rows disappeared across the Pettus Bridge, I turned my attention to making sure the drivers for the Medical Committee for Human Rights, a group of Northern volunteer doctors and nurses who had come to Selma to support us, were in place. Within five minutes I could hear shouts and screams coming from the other side of the bridge. Then I smelled the tear gas, all this before I saw the first of our people, those in the rear of the march, come running back down the bridge onto Broad Street.... The first of the wounded began staggering back down the bridge, confused, panicked, blinded by tear gas, and badly beaten."²³

Having allowed the first rows of marchers to move on to the bridge, Lingo's troopers sealed off the far side of the bridge while Clark's posse sealed the Selma end. With horses and clubs, the troopers then rode into the trapped marchers, systematically beating everyone caught in their vise. Clark's posse cut off any retreat and swept around the borders of the bridge to catch and beat any marcher trying to escape. The troopers had

cordoned off the press and television reporters at some distance, but had miscalculated the range of the cameras and the talent of the film crews who recorded the entire incident in frightful detail. By happenstance, national television was broadcasting “Judgment at Nuremberg,” a documentary on Nazi war crimes. Scenes of Nazi violence became enmeshed with scenes of the posse and trooper violence at Pettus bridge, making an indelible connection in the minds of the nation and, in fact, of the world community of nations.

While delivering a sermon in Atlanta, King was interrupted and informed of this vicious and nationally televised attack. He immediately issued a call to the “Community of Good Will” to go to Selma. People from all over the USA came in overwhelming numbers to join this effort to cross the Edmund Pettus bridge. This “Bloody Sunday” of March 7, 1965, marked the first of a series of marches culminating in the actual five day march (March 21-25) from Selma to Montgomery. Conventionally, the Selma-to-Montgomery March is divided into three major marches: “Bloody Sunday,” “Turnaround Tuesday,” and the “Five-Day March.” In reality, there were many marches leading up to the final march to the State Capitol. Collectively, the Selma-to-Montgomery March is judged to be the most important and most celebrated march of the American civil rights movement.

In response to King’s call, Matt Ahmann of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, went immediately to Selma where he stayed with Father Maurice Ouellet, an Edmundite priest and pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Selma. Using Fr. Ouellet’s rectory as a command base for operations, Ahmann started to mobilize support from the national Catholic community.

“At the time of the ‘Bloody Sunday’ march, Father Egan was in Sea Island, Georgia, with the McCreadys, a Chicago couple, who had brought him there for a brief rest. When he saw what was happening in Selma, he left his friends and flew to Montgomery, rented a car and drove to Selma. He found Matt Ahmann at Fr. Maurice Ouellet’s rectory, and the two of them began making calls across the country, urging people to come to Selma.” (Roach, 49)

This second march on March 9, 1965, which King led, was intended to be a limited march: the objective was to cross the bridge as a protest to “Bloody Sunday” and to conduct a prayer service on the other side of the

bridge for the victims of racial hatred. Right after this first prayer service, one of the marchers, Jim Reeb, a Unitarian minister from Boston, was severely beaten by Klansmen when he made a wrong turn in downtown Selma. The officials at the local hospital in Selma refused to treat Reeb or to allow the use of their ambulance to take him to another hospital. When Reeb finally got to a hospital in Birmingham, it was too late to save his life. King went to Birmingham to be with the dying Reeb who was in a coma.

Abernathy immediately called for another march and prayer service for Reeb. NAACP lawyers had petitioned Federal district court Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr., for protection. Judge Johnson issued a court order prohibiting a march from Selma to Montgomery until he had time to make a final ruling. Abernathy decided that to march to the bridge and hold another prayer service did not constitute a violation of Judge Johnson's order.

"Rev. Ralph Abernathy, standing in for Dr. King, announced another march, and assigned Father Egan to join him in the front line of the march." (Roach, 49)

"Behind the two hundred troops were about two thousand red-necks, and we were there all night, face to face.... Then it began to rain. We were all arm in arm, C.T. Vivian on my left, Dr. Abernathy on my right. As some of my classmates say, 'They were holding you up, Jack.'"²⁴

The Chicago Daily News ran an Associated Press photo of Jack Egan standing in the front line between Abernathy and C.T. Vivian. This photo, which was published throughout the nation, had a great effect on the American Catholic community. Many lay people, nuns, and priests immediately went to Selma to take part in the struggle to secure voting rights for blacks. Fr. Egan enjoyed saying that the publication of this photo was his greatest contribution to the civil rights movement.

More front line troops were needed. Ahmann phoned Peggy Roach in Washington D.C. with an assignment list of calls to mobilize support.

With financial support from her friend and mentor, Hope Brophy, Peggy traveled to Selma with the Chicago Catholic Interracial Council delegation. Fr. Ouellet met the CIC delegation at the airport and arranged for the seven women to be housed with families in his parish. (Roach, 49)

Fr. Ouellet made just one request of the seven women: "My people want to vote—please help us get the message out." (Roach, 51)

Five of the women stayed in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Thompson (not their real names). Two stayed with the Beckers, friends of the Thompsons.

“It was a beautiful home surrounded by a high fence; on either side of the Thompson residence were old houses, each of them quite small and desperately in need of repair. Mr. Thompson owned a cotton gin in Selma and was undoubtedly the richest Black man in town.” (Roach, 50)

Peggy learned a great deal from talking with the Thompsons and the Beckers about their experiences as black people in Selma. She learned that education and financial success did not significantly alter their condition. Their life stories underscored for Peggy the very human face of racial hate.

“It really riled Mr. Thompson that even when he went into the local bank to conduct business, he was never called ‘Mr. Thompson’—just ‘Joe’—or worse yet, ‘Boy.’ This lack of respect cut deep and was humiliating for him.” (Roach, 50)

Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Becker were both light colored, and could pass for white. “Mrs. Becker talked about the day she was doing her Christmas shopping in town when her husband drove by on his way to his job. He tooted the horn and gave her a big wave. A white woman turned to her and said: ‘Is that nigger bothering you?’ Mrs. Becker retorted: “That man happens to be my husband.” (Roach, 50)

“The next day we were ready when the march was scheduled to leave Brown Chapel. The monitors put the women in the middle of the lines for their protection. We didn’t go far before the march was halted by the police. There we prayed and sang and stood our ground for a few hours, then returned to the church. Another march and another group from another city was scheduled for the next day. We made our way back to the airport and to Chicago. It took two more weeks and the death of a white minister, Rev. James Reeb of Boston, before the march from Selma to Montgomery began.” (Roach, 51)

Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr., ruled: “The law is clear that the right to petition one’s government for the redress of grievances may be exercised in large groups...and these rights may be exercised by marching even along public highways.” President Johnson federalized the Alabama National Guard to give protection to the marchers. Five thousand people began the march in Selma on Sunday, March 21; 25,000 people complet-

ed the march in Montgomery on Thursday, March 25, 1965.

The joy of this great day was laced with bitter sadness. Viola Liuzzo, a white woman from Detroit, was shot and killed by Klansmen that same evening as she drove back to Selma from Montgomery.

“The fight in the Congress continued. Finally, on August 6, 1965, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, a monumental victory for the civil rights movement.” (Roach, 52)

The War On Poverty

Peggy Roach always had a keen grasp of how important the local, grass roots, practical approach is to social problems. In D.C. in her own local work against poverty, Peggy did tutoring in English and arithmetic in “The Future For Jimmy Project” at the Bible Way Baptist church and the Mt. Pleasant Baptist church. “‘One of their biggest needs is just learning to listen,’ Peggy explains when discussing these youngsters. ‘Like all children, they’ve got to know you like them before they’ll let you teach them anything.’”²⁵

In his January 7, 1964, State of the Union address, Lyndon Johnson announced a “war on poverty” to signal his intention to establish his own legacy as president in his own right. To begin the assault on the root causes of poverty in the USA, Johnson employed the famous “Johnson Treatment.” He cajoled Congress into passing the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 which established the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). Johnson even persuaded R. Sargent Shriver, the director the Peace Corps, to take on the additional job of executive director of the OEO. In that capacity, Shriver oversaw the establishment of VISTA (Volunteers In Service to America), a domestic peace corps, and the Jobs Corps, which offered remedial and vocational training to high school dropouts.

His overwhelming electoral mandate in the Fall 1964 presidential election inspired Johnson to create his own legislative initiatives on a wide variety of issues which collectively became known as the “Great Society.” LBJ made a compliant Congress pass and implement this astonishing volume of social legislation in record time.

Peggy’s work at NCCW now focused on the legislative initiatives of this Johnsonian Great Society. She became the NCCW liaison to the Women in Community Service (WICS) program established in 1964 as

part of the War on Poverty effort. Peggy, to her delight, was again working with the same coalition of women's organizations that participated in the Wednesdays in Mississippi program and in the lobbying for civil rights legislation.

In May of 1979, Mary A. Hallaren, the first executive director of WICS, wrote:

“Conceived in civil rights and nurtured in the War on Poverty, the coalition of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, black, white, brown, poor, middle class and affluent women is helping to bridge the racial, religious, cultural, and economic gaps that have separated Americans for two centuries.”²⁶

Peggy trained NCCW women to recruit and screen women for the Jobs Corps training programs. “The women volunteered to search the poor areas of their communities for likely candidates and bring them to community centers where they would be screened and make application for entrance into the residential Women's Job Corps centers around the nation. The women did much more than the government required. For instance, Dorothy Holden had a young woman she felt would greatly profit from the Women's Job Corps. The young lady had never seen a dentist in her life. Dorothy Holden asked a local dentist to donate his services to her candidate so that she could put her best foot forward when she was interviewed in the application process. Dorothy Holden not only provided access to needed dental care, but helped that young woman raise her own self-esteem in the process.” (Roach, 53)

Preparing to Leave Washington, D.C.

In her *Memoir*, as if preparing the reader for her leaving D.C., Peggy lists an honor role of the distinguished women she encountered through her work with NCCW:

Gladys Gunning of Atlanta, Georgia, who served as the national chairperson of the Legislation Committee, and who monitored the legal system in Atlanta through court room attendance; Dorothy Holden of Columbus, Ohio, who served as the national chairperson of the Social Action Committee, and who worked

actively in local community organizations; Margaret Edmunds of Danville, Virginia, who served on the NCCW board, and who worked in the courts in Danville to assure justice for black defendants; Lucy Nevels of Lincoln, Nebraska, who to this day has kept the WICS spirit alive by assisting poor young women in getting the services and job training they need. (Roach, 54)

Fittingly, in this same section of her *Memoir*, Peggy reminds us once again of the faith that is the root cause of her own motives and actions in citing the profound changes taking place in the Catholic Church because of the work of Vatican II.

Peggy quotes a passage from the work of Walter M. Abbott, SJ, editor of *The Documents of Vatican II: The Message and Meaning of the Ecumenical Council*:

The opening words of the Council (by Pope John XXIII) look to renewal of the Catholic Church, to compassionate dialogue with modern men, to peace, to social justice, to whatever concerns the dignity of man and the unity of mankind. The message shows awareness of the world's problems and a keen desire to help. It emphasizes the quest for a community of peoples, the motivation that comes from Christ's love, the need for cooperation with all men of good will. It is remarkable how this first document contains the seed of the great Constitution on the Church; how it foreshadows the great texts that will come on ecumenism, religious freedom, relations with non-Christians; how it outlines so much of what will be in the Council's concluding document, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World... in its contents the message is faithful to the desires of Pope John's heart.

Indeed, this passage is as much a statement of Peggy's values as it is of Pope John's and of Fr. Abbott's.

But not everyone understands the message the way Peggy does:

In the early days of the Council, I recall a meeting of the staffs of the National Council of Catholic Women and the National Coun-

cil of Catholic Men with our episcopal moderator, Bishop Steven Leven of the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas. The Bishop asked us what we thought was the most important thing we learned since the beginning of the Council. I quickly volunteered—that we are the People of God! The Bishop’s response: ‘Peggy, you had better read those documents again—the most important point thus far is that the Bishop is Christ in the midst of the people.’ I remember asking my mother what she thought of this exchange. In her usually motherly wisdom, she responded: “Position is everything in life.” (Roach, 55)

At Home: A Changing Situation

In her *Memoir*, Peggy Roach writes she “decided to move back to Chicago to be of some assistance” to her parents: her mother’s Parkinson’s disease was growing worse and her father could not handle the situation alone. (Roach, 56)

During her four year tenure as staff secretary of the Social Action and Legislation Committee of the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW), Peggy had acquired a national perspective on racial issues, a new network of contacts for collaborative work, and a new appreciation of her considerable skills as an organizer, activist, and “enabler.” Peggy had implemented such projects as the Black/White Skit as a “consciousness raising tool” for regional NCCW conferences. She had participated directly with other national organizations in collaborative civil rights projects such as Wednesdays in Mississippi. And she had gained considerable knowledge of the Federal government bureaucracy in her work with the Women in Community Service program.

The whole trajectory of her life up to the writing of this book shows clearly that Peggy returned to Chicago not just to serve her family but to serve her Church and community. Once again Peggy Roach was responding to a spiritual call: a prompting of the Holy Spirit deep within the heart of her faith.

Peggy discerned the presence of the Holy Spirit in the 1958 landmark statement of the Catholic Bishops of the United States “Discrimination and the Christian Conscience,” in the pronouncements of Vatican II,

and in the work being done by Father John Egan and others inspired by the practitioners of Catholic Action. Clearly, it was now time for Peggy Roach to put her experience, knowledge and skill into practical action on a grass roots level on her home turf.²⁵

The ironic Chinese blessing “may you live in interesting times” pales by comparison to the actual events of the “times” to which Peggy Roach returned to Chicago in 1966.

In an effort to bring the civil rights movement of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)²⁶ to the North, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr (King) had moved into a black ghetto apartment at 16th and Hamlin in Chicago’s North Lawndale area. King’s decision to take the struggle to Chicago had met with strong resistance from within SCLC itself as well as from many black leaders in Chicago. This opposition did not come exclusively from those black leaders, whether political “bosses,” business leaders, or ministers, with ties to the organization of Mayor

Richard J. Daley (Daley). There was also a principled opposition from some black political activists and black ministers who rejected either King’s politics or his theology or both.²⁷

Without economic development, all the basic rights of citizenship would remain beyond the reach of the poor.

The Civil Rights legislation of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 had affirmed the ideal of equality for all citizens before the law. However, without economic development, all the basic rights of citizenship would remain beyond the reach of the poor. Thus, the next step of the civil rights agenda was to clearly articulate the ideal of “economic

equality,” that is, to create the conditions for all citizens to have a chance at the opportunity for economic advancement. To this purpose, Dr. King and the SCLC had been formally invited to Chicago by the Co-ordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCCO), an association of 36 Chicago civil rights and black organizations.²⁸

From the beginning of his stay in Chicago, King’s apartment functioned more as a headquarters than as a home. Andrew Young²⁹, one of the SCLC leaders who initially opposed the Chicago project, nonetheless,

at King's request, took on much of the responsibility for overseeing the Chicago organization. Young and other SCLC leaders in association with the CCCO formed The Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM), a loose coalition of individuals, religious organizations, social agencies, neighborhood groups, and others dedicated to working for racial justice. Al Raby, a Chicago school teacher and political activist, was appointed Co-Chair of CFM.³⁰

Under the leadership of Dr. King and Mr. Raby, the Chicago Freedom Movement launched civil actions against two mighty bulwarks of racist segregation in Chicago: the Chicago Public School system and the Chicago Real Estate Board. These campaigns, which officially began on January 6, 1966, had as their primary goals: the removal of School Superintendent Benjamin J. Willis³¹ and the opening up of the Chicago housing market to home ownership and "open housing" renting by blacks and other minorities.

Another significant change in the rich, volatile civic life of Chicago was the appointment of John Patrick Cody as Archbishop of Chicago (Cody) on June 14, 1965.³² Although Cody had a strong civil rights record from his previous tenure as Archbishop of New Orleans, his coming to Chicago marked a serious and long-lasting shift from the collegial administrative and progressive social policies of Samuel Cardinal Stritch and Albert Gregory Cardinal Meyer (Meyer). Meyer had been instrumental in securing the affirmation of the principles of religious and civil liberty at the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in 1963. In Chicago, one of the most important aspects of Meyer's tenure (September 19, 1958, until his death on April 9, 1965) was his extraordinary leadership skill both in identifying the people that deserved his attention and in providing them with the means to work effectively and fairly independently on their chosen projects.³³

Despite his reputation as a civil rights supporter, Cody wasted no time whatsoever in dismantling this informal Chicago diocesan network of effective people and organizations. Cody saw himself as the sole ruler and doer in the archdiocese, and regarded all special programs and projects, such as civil rights work, to be secondary to parish ministry and subject to his direct control. In the case of the priests involved in these social ministries, Cody cut off their sources of funding in the chancery and assigned them to ministries in poor parishes, moves designed to pre-

occupy their energies.

While Peggy Roach was making her move back to Chicago, this rich, complex, and volatile social situation erupted into the modern USA mass phenomenon of the urban riot.

On Tuesday, July 12, 1966, an incident on Roosevelt Road on the Near West Side of Chicago erupted into a full scale urban riot, a riot that echoed the Watts riots³⁴ of August 1965 and foreshadowed the massive urban destruction that occurred in Chicago when Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in April of 1968.

Chicago was in the midst of one of its infamous, blistering heat waves that too often take too many lives. Historically, residents of inner city neighborhoods turned on the fire hydrants to cool off by harnessing the opened hydrant's spray. As the heat wave progressed, Fire Commissioner Robert Quinn ordered all the hydrants to be closed to prevent the drop of water pressure to levels dangerous for public safety. On a scorching hot day, two white policeman on the black side of Roosevelt Road twice stopped black children from opening up fire hydrants while white children within view of the black children were luxuriating in the refreshing waters of opened fire hydrants on the white side of Roosevelt. When the black children complained of this glaring, self-evident injustice, the two white policemen explained that the other side of Roosevelt wasn't their beat. The white policemen kept turning the hydrants off; the black kids kept turning them back on. When the white policemen started roughing up some of the kids, the riot erupted.³⁵

Two days prior to this riot, Dr. King held a rally of CFM supporters at Soldier Field.³⁶ After instructing the participants in the principles of non-violent mass civil action, King led a march to City Hall where, in the manner of his namesake Martin Luther, he posted a list of CFM'S demand to the closed City Hall doors. King had tried to meet with Mayor Daley for weeks, but Daley always managed to avoid an encounter. On Monday, the day after the rally, Daley and King managed to have their first meeting. They could not agree even on minimum terms.³⁷ After the riot, however, both King and Daley understood that this type of violence benefited no one. They understood that these massive explosions of rage directly threatened their respective agendas. Accordingly, they undertook a series of meetings designed to begin the process of brokering an acceptable agreement without compromising their own constituencies.

At the same time, to keep pressure on Daley and the Chicago Real Estate Board, King continued his push for “open housing” with non-violent marches into closed all white neighborhoods. On Sunday, July 31, King led a CFM march into the heavily Catholic Gage Park—Chicago Lawn neighborhoods. “The marchers were, as they always are behind

**In Chicago, Dr. King
and the SCLC ran
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urban America.**

King, studiously peaceful; but on that Sunday afternoon they were viciously assaulted with rocks and bottles by swarms of white youth, encouraged and provided with ammunition by jeering adults. All in all 53 persons, including nuns and clergymen, were injured.”³⁸

King was determined to continue his campaign. On Friday afternoon, August 5, 1966, thousands of angry whites attacked King and his fellow marchers as they walked through Marquette Park, a South Side Chicago neighborhood. Despite police protection, Dr. King himself had been hit by a rock. “Frankly, I have never seen as much hatred and hostility on the part of so many people,” Dr. King remarked to his aides back in his apartment headquarters.³⁹

Dr. King and his staff were beginning to understand how different racial dynamics were in Chicago from their experiences in the South where they were able to establish a common bond of kinship with fellow blacks and a common bond of biblical faith among blacks and between whites and blacks. In Chicago, King and the SCLC ran head-on into the rock-hard realities of urban America where there is a vast diversity of ethnic groups, religions, ideologies, and power blocks.

In addition to the violence directed against blacks by various white groups, separately or in tandem. Dr. King and his SCLC associates had to deal with violence from blacks against blacks, with political divisions among blacks, and with dissension among the black ministers. There simply was no unity in the black community.

Dr. King also had to deal with a political and legal system too sophisticated to commit the mis-steps of Southern towns and states that made a martyr out of him and his cause. King had never encountered

an ethnically diverse political and social structure in which each ethnic group jealously protected its turf against all other groups. Italians kept other white ethnics out of their turf just as they did blacks. Daley's political power base was securely grounded in such ethnic enclaves: the five black wards, the two "mafia" wards, the four "Irish" wards which included the German and Bohemian elements of the Daley "machine." These eleven wards constituted the power base from which Daley could always crank out a minimum 100,000 plurality for any candidate he chose. When the five Polish wards joined this power base (the Polish wards voted Republican or Democrat depending upon the candidate's relationship to the Polish community), the Daley machine was an invincible juggernaut. In Chicago, King had to digest the fact that his demonstrations secured for Daley the full support of the Polish wards, as well as other "swing" wards, without causing Daley to lose any support from the black wards. In effect, Dr. King's work in Chicago had greatly increased Daley's political power by solidifying his ethnic, business, banking, and labor union support.⁴⁰

By the end of the summer of 1966, Dr. King and Mayor Daley came together in a series of meetings in an attempt to work out some practical compromise to contain the violence and to improve the economic conditions of the black community. King judged these agreements to constitute the "most significant and far-reaching victory that has ever come about in a Northern community on the whole question of open housing."⁴¹ Most historians, however, have come to view Dr. King's struggle in Chicago as a defeat.⁴²

Upon her return to Chicago in the early Fall of 1966, one of the first things Peggy Roach noticed was the presence of black clerks and black shoppers at the Marshall Field's department store on State Street in the Chicago Loop. To a non-Chicagoan, this fact might seem insignificant when compared to the sensational quality of an urban riot, but to Peggy Roach this fact marked a major change in the civic reality of Chicago: blacks in the Loop both as shoppers and clerks, and at Chicago's most prestigious department store. It was unprecedented, and a clear sign of small but dramatic cracks appearing in the castle walls of segregated Chicago.⁴³

Peggy began her work in Chicago as an administrative assistant for Matt Ahmann at National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice (NCCIJ). "Always ahead of the curve, Matt assigned me the area of health

care. In those days, we were not so aware of the tremendous gap in those who were able to access decent health care and those who were left out.” (Roach, 56)

Peggy decided that she lacked the “knowledge and expertise” to work on health care: “This was a national organization which needed an experienced person in the field, who could speak and act nationally and regionally for the Conference. I flunked on the health care issue.” (Roach, 56) Matt Ahmann recharged Roach with responsibility for planning and executing national conferences, board meetings, workshops and other events for NCCIJ.

While working for Ahmann, Peggy Roach volunteered to assist her friend Father John Egan in his work as pastor of Presentation Parish in Lawndale (where coincidentally Dr. King’s apartment headquarters was located) and as head of the archdiocesan Office of Urban Affairs, the first such office in the nation. “When Archbishop Cody made the appointment to Presentation, Father Egan asked: ‘What will happen to the Office of Urban Affairs?’ The Archbishop replied: ‘You can keep that job too. I understand there isn’t much going on there.’” (Roach, 57)

Cody would eventually close the Office of Urban Affairs and cut off archdiocesan funding for the Interreligious Council on Urban Affairs, effectively ending official ecumenical collaborative work on social problems in Chicago.

With two full time jobs, Egan found it almost impossible to keep up with the enormous amount of weekly correspondence generated by his work in the areas of urban renewal, race relations, community organization, housing, among other notable causes. This correspondence was essential for the networking that enabled Egan to get vital support from organizations, individuals, and donors for the various programs and actions he undertook.

Peggy came to the rescue: “I started volunteering my Saturday mornings to try to help him answer his correspondence and to free him up in some way for the pastoral duties which were now his at the parish. After a session where he dictated his responses to his mail, I would go to the NCCIJ office or to my home and begin transcribing the letters. On Sundays, I attended the 12 noon Mass at Presentation and delivered my finished work, with envelopes stamped and ready to mail.”⁴⁴

Peggy always attributed her ability to construct brief, effective let-

ters to Sr. Madelena, BVM, her mentor in journalism at Mundelein College. (See p. 57.)

Egan embodied the values that Peggy Roach had been responding to since her high school days with the Benedictine nuns at St. Scholastica. While in high school, Peggy was attracted to Baroness de Hueck's Friendship House program in the black community on the South Side of Chicago. She also attended Catholic Action Summer School programs directed by Father Martin Carrabine and other Jesuits in the Chicago Loop. Later in her professional life as an executive secretary, Peggy would participate in the John A. Ryan Forums initiated by Ed Marciniak and Father Dan Cantwell. These forums, generated by the principles of Catholic Action and dedicated to the implementation of Catholic Action projects, convened four times yearly and attracted the best and the brightest of Chicago's Catholic intellectual and activist community.^{45, 88}

When Peggy Roach teamed up with Father Jack Egan at Presentation Parish, a Catholic Action "dream team" had come into being, a team that would stay together until the death of Egan on May 19, 2001.

Peggy Roach and the "Eganization" of Presentation Parish.

Peggy Roach had met Father Egan in the mid 1950's when she was working at the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women. "One day the door to my small office...burst open. A priest, who had just concluded a meeting in the adjoining conference room, introduced himself: 'My name's Egan—may I use your phone?' He was Father John Egan, director of the Cana Conference, the diocesan marriage preparation and enrichment program. Little did I know that introduction would have such an impact on my life in the years to come." (Roach, 14)

When Peggy joined the staff of the NCCW in Washington, D.C., in 1962, their friendship continued uninterrupted. In her biography of Egan, Margery Frisbie (Frisbie) writes: "Anytime Jack had let her know he'd be in Washington, Peggy had crowded ten or twelve activists privy to D.C. developments into her tiny apartment to bring him up to date."⁴⁶

When Cody assigned Father Egan to Presentation parish in Lawndale in 1966, Egan managed to persuade literally hundreds of people from all walks of life (lay people of all faiths and ideologies as well as

nuns, clergy, and seminarians) to come into his parish to help him do the work he judged necessary. Peggy Roach, having witnessed numerous instances of Egan's power to persuade, observes: "When Jack asked you for help, he had a way of looking at you that made it impossible to say 'No.' He made you feel you could save the world." Peggy recalls that one of Egan's colleagues, Harry Browne of New York, named this "peak" experience: "being Eganized."⁴⁷

Using the network of people and organizations he had been working with for years, Egan brought money and expertise into the parish to tackle every type of problem ranging from repairing the boiler to providing housing and jobs to those in need. Presentation had rapidly changed from a white parish to a black parish in a community that had become almost entirely black and non-Catholic. One of the first programs Egan created was "Operation Saturation." He recruited seminarians from six schools in the Chicago area to work in Presentation parish one-day-a-week during their academic year of studies.⁴⁸

Operation Saturation began in the Fall of 1966 with forty seminarians. They worked in Presentation parish on Saturdays during the 1966-1967 academic year. The seminarians received a crash course in community organizing from Tom Gaudette, an experienced activist working with the Organization for a Better Austin (OBA). Gaudette introduced them to the community organizing principles, strategies, and tactics of Saul Alinsky.⁴⁹

Presentation was divided into blocks with each seminarian assigned responsibility for a specific block. In accordance with the principles of Catholic Action, the community building strategies of Saul Alinsky, and the instructions of Father Egan, each seminarian was charged with the task to visit every person who lived within his block and to listen to what each person had to say. The three principles of Catholic Action "Observe, Judge, Act" were perfectly complemented by Alinsky's strategy of "listening and assisting."

Specifically, the seminarians were trained to listen for what the people named to be their basic problems, and for what the people thought might be the best ways to solve those problems. They were also taught to listen for the voices of the natural leaders who would emerge from this process. It was then the task of the seminarians to assist those natural leaders and their co-workers in selecting the chief problem to be ad-

dressed, in determining the basic strategy and tactics to be employed, and in securing the “outside” technical, legal, and financial support necessary to effectively resolve the matter.⁵⁰

At the end of each day, the seminarians gathered together in the Presentation rectory basement to thrash out their experiences in a grand communal conversation. Jack Macnamara, a Jesuit seminarian, recalls how Tom Gaudette never allowed them to forget the three sacred principles of community organizing: Listen to the people; Listen to the people; Listen to the people. By means of this graceful conversation of respectful listening and collegial discernment, the most serious problems affecting the people who lived within the boundaries of Presentation parish were surfaced and engaged.

Macnamara soon emerged as a natural leader among the seminarians working in Presentation parish. With 12 college students as the starter group, Macnamara created the Presentation Community Organization Project (PCOP) to work on a full time basis in Lawndale on community issues. Macnamara rented two apartments in Lawndale to house the students and to serve as the operation headquarters for their work.

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As the leader of PCOP, in typical Alinsky style, Jac-Mac, as Macnamara was called by his friends, “...organized busloads of Negro children, who had no playground in their neighborhood, to stage a series of peaceful ‘play-ins’ on a public playground in Mayor Daley’s all-white neighborhood.... Within one week Jac-Mac and the children who live near Lexington and Springfield had their own play-lot, complete with swings and slides.”⁵¹

Another action initiated by Macnamara centered on garbage collection. The sanitation department had failed to pick up the garbage in Lawndale for over two weeks during a July hot spell. The garbage was making a big stink. “After calling the sanitation department and the local ward alderman without success, Jac-Mac and members of the Lawndale Union to End the Slums loaded up nine oil drums of garbage and carted

it downtown where they unceremoniously placed it on the sidewalk in front of city hall...within 24 hours there wasn't a can of rotting garbage in Lawndale."⁵²

Macnamara's full-time summer program blossomed into a full-time all year program. Joe Putnick, also a Jesuit seminarian, decided to join Macnamara. Together, they persuaded their superiors to allow them to take a time-out from their formal Jesuit formation studies to work the full academic year (1966-1967) at Presentation. They attracted six college students to work with them each semester. Macnamara and Father Egan even managed to persuade Notre Dame University and Holy Cross College to give semester credit hours to their students who came to Chicago to work with him and Joe.

As part of Fr. Egan's "Eganization" of Presentation parish, Peggy Roach got the insider's advantaged viewpoint on the "volunteered" people and projects. Egan... "was busy as the ants in a colony newly spaded up, trying to keep up his interreligious and city contacts, his work with IRCUA⁵³ and the Association of Chicago Priests.... At the invitation of Archbishop Paul Hallinan of Atlanta, he'd additionally agreed to chair a group to research the 'Pastoral Ministry and Life of the Priest' for an Episcopal Committee.... Peggy knew he needed someone like her. As she said of him, 'He was sort of taking care of the world.' Or trying to."⁵³

Peggy Roach knew how to organize, a skill she had honed throughout her career. "Peggy promptly displayed the coping-with-Jack mechanisms that caused the Reverend Theodore Hesburgh, president of the University of Notre Dame, to call Jack and Peggy 'the most symbiotic pair he'd ever met.' She told Jack simply, 'If you would organize it, it wouldn't be so bad.' Then she proceeded to organize it. 'A lot of letters were one-liners,' she recalls. 'You can zip those off real quick.'"⁵⁴ So, Peggy organized it: she got Egan to dictate his responses to the correspondence on Saturdays; then Peggy typed them up at home and brought them back to Egan on Sundays. She also got Egan to file all necessary paperwork in clean, new, accurately labeled manila files.

"Peggy made it possible for Jack to be Jack," Frisbie concludes.⁵⁵

At some point in the Fall of 1966, with Peggy's management of Father Egan in full steam, amidst all of the activities and people coming into and out of Presentation parish, Peggy Roach and Jack Macnamara ran into each other, briefly. It would be an encounter with a future.

“In January of 1967, Chicago was hit with the snowstorm of the century—at least that’s what it seemed like to us. I remember that day well because I had waited in my neighborhood for 45 minutes for a bus to the el station where I would get the train downtown. I finally gave up and walked the two blocks back home—and I thank God I did. When I arrived home, my mother was in great distress—it looked like a heart attack.” (Roach, 58)

In spite of the storm, the whole family gathered at the hospital: Jim from Atlanta by plane, Helen from Memphis and Rosemary from Milwaukee by train. Because there was no other way to get to the hospital, Peggy, Jane and Peggy’s father James were permitted to go with Cecile Roach by ambulance to St. Francis Hospital in Evanston. “We were all there at the hospital, waiting and praying that Mom would live. After all night at the hospital, the doctor suggested we go home.... But we had no way to get home....” Loretta Duffy, Peggy’s aunt who lived a few blocks from the hospital, managed to house the six of them with the help of a neighbor. (Roach, 58)

Peggy’s mother recovered and returned home in good spirits. “On her first visit to see Dr. Bart Heffernan after that hospitalization, she faced him in the corridor to his office and exclaimed: ‘Hello, Bart, here comes Lazarus!’” (Roach, 58)

With her mother’s health situation stabilized, Roach returned to her work with NCCIJ. Ahmann gave her the job of planning and implementing a national conference on the theme “The Church and The Urban Racial Crisis.”

At about the same time, Fr. Egan received an invitation to be the Catholic representative on the first board of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO).⁵⁶ In response to this invitation, Egan called a meeting of the directors of diocesan offices of urban affairs, many of whom he had mentored in his capacity as the director of the first such office in the USA. The meeting was held in Evanston, IL, in March of 1967 with seventeen priests in attendance and, of course, Peggy Roach. All of the priests were white; and all were Irish except for Geno Baroni from the Archdiocese of Washington D.C.⁵⁷ “Their response (to the invitation) was to create the Catholic Committee on Community Organization to raise the money for the IFCO seat. Peggy Roach...agreed to serve as CCCO secretary. Geno Baroni came out of the hotel room,

banging his head with his hand, saying, ‘My God, I can’t believe we have started another Catholic organization.’”⁵⁸ This Committee evolved into the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry which became one of the most important agencies in the development of Catholic social thought and action in the USA.⁵⁹

The NCCIJ conference was held in Kansas City, Missouri, in August of 1967. Egan and the newly formed Catholic Committee on Community Organization used the conference as an opportunity to plan their own meetings and agenda. The priests invited Archbishop John Dearden of Detroit, a key speaker at the Conference, to one of their meetings to ask him whether they should seek official episcopal support for their committee. Dearden wisely responded: Just continue doing what you’re doing. In accord with Dearden’s advice, Peggy cites one of Egan’s aphorisms: It’s easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission.⁶⁰

Peggy’s work with Ahmann and with Egan was significantly dovetailing. The full-time work at NCCIJ and the part-time work at Presentation were settling into an almost normal everyday work routine.

And then the world came apart, again: “I remember looking toward the west from the windows of the NCCIJ offices at 13th St. and S. Wabash, and seeing the smoke and flames billowing into the sky on the near west side of Chicago, then hearing the sirens of the fire trucks and police cars. I prayed for my friends in Lawndale, the locus of the fires and rioting.” It was April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr., had been assassinated in Memphis. “We were dismissed from work. All the way home, I listened to the car radio for the latest news and developments. Drivers were asked to turn on their headlights in tribute to Dr. King. I saw few cars without burning headlights. I prayed and wept—what a sad, sad day it was!” (Roach, 59)⁶¹

Cohen and Taylor in *American Pharaoh*: “...black America erupted in a spasm of sorrow and rage. In the wake of King’s assassination, 168 cities and towns were struck by rioting, arson, and looting. The national statistics were staggering: before it was over, there were 2,600 fires, and 21, 270 injuries. This time, it was Washington D.C. that got the worst of it. Arsonists set 711 fires, including some just blocks from the White House.”⁶²

Len O’Connor in *Clout*: “In misery and bewilderment, Daley surveyed the gutted West Side ghetto—safely, from a helicopter—and softly

spoke the lament: 'I never believed that this would happen here.' The wonder of it is: Why didn't he?"⁶³

Peggy Roach in her *Memoir*: "The tragic death of Dr. King and the riots which ensued only reinforced the need for action to bring about justice in our cities and throughout our country." (Roach, 59)

Before any healing could begin, Robert Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles on 5 June 1968.

Peggy Roach resolved to commit herself fully to a local, grass-roots organization working for racial justice in Chicago.

Contract Buyers League

"During my trips to Presentation, I got to know some of the parishioners, and I met Jack Macnamara, a Jesuit seminarian, who was living and working in the community. For the first time in my life, I heard about contract buying." (Roach, 59)

Peggy Roach was not alone. Though contract buying had become a well-established practice, it was seldom investigated or presented for public discussion.

Roach continues: "Lawndale had been redlined⁶⁴ by the mortgage houses and the banks, and residents could not get regular mortgages. Prospective home buyers had to deal with real estate operators who had bought up multiple properties in the area, then resold them to Black prospects on contract, and at much higher prices than the speculators had paid for the properties. When buying on contract, the buyer has no equity in the home and legally is not the owner until the final payment is made. It was legal but unjust." (Roach, 60)

The intensive work in the Lawndale community that Jack Macnamara had been doing as a result of "Operation Saturation" had uncovered this pervasive system of race-based financial exploitation.

The use of such contracts by blacks to purchase homes was not simply the product of greed or of local real estate practices or of racial and social discrimination; it was also the direct result of government policy.

In an April 1972 *Atlantic Monthly* cover story, John Alan McPherson exposes the social and economic policies that generate the need for contract purchases of housing. "From the FHA's (Federal Housing Administration) creation in the 1930's, its policies, like those of the Chicago

Real Estate Board, reflected a belief that property value in a residential area decreased when the residents were not of the same social, economic, and racial group. Besides including a sample restrictive covenant, the FHA underwriting manual of 1938 advised that ‘if a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial groups.’⁶⁵

In addition to this covenant, FHA guidelines included an “economically sound” clause that worked against the giving of loans for used or older housing stock and for housing in “changing” neighborhoods.⁶⁶

In effect, black home buyers had no alternative: they could not purchase homes in white neighborhoods and they could not secure FHA

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mortgages in black neighborhoods. Contract sellers were providing a legitimate financial solution to a real social problem. The ethical heart of the matter related to the grossly unfair terms of the contracts and to the exaggerated profits realized by the sellers and their agents.

“Despite the number of studies, beginning with Luigi Laurenti’s *Property Values and Race*⁶⁷, which challenged the popular idea that ‘black people lower property value’...FHA policies did not change until after the 1967 riots when FHA offices were instructed to consider all buildings in riot or riot-threatened areas as ‘acceptable risk.’ However, between 1938 and 1967 countless black home buyers...were obliged to rely on the use of installment purchase contracts.”⁶⁸

The Contract Buyers League (CBL) had its origins in a phone call Ruth Wells⁶⁹ made to Father Egan. The terms of Ruth Wells’ contract purchase of her home stipulated that when she and her husband had paid off 50% of the mortgage they could renegotiate the contract. Ruth’s lawyer, a black man, had negotiated a new contract which contained a “mystery” fee of \$1500.00 for insurance. Ruth Wells knew that she was already paying for insurance in her monthly premiums. Her lawyer hadn’t even questioned the fee. She phoned Egan to ask him to recommend a lawyer,

one who wasn't afraid to ask the right questions and get the right answers. Egan responded by sending Jack Macnamara and Sr. Andrew, another Presentation volunteer, who had been a real estate legal expert for ten years prior to her becoming a nun, to visit Ruth Wells.⁷⁰

For some time, Macnamara and his colleagues, Sr. Andrew and Joe Putnick, had been seeing the deleterious effects of the burden of excessive house payments in the Lawndale community. Their preliminary research indicated that about 50% of all the current home owners in Lawndale were contract buyers, representing some 3,000 households. The meeting with Ruth Wells made Macnamara resolve to organize the contract buyers.

Macnamara approached Egan with the idea of forming a foundation to research contract purchases and to provide legal assistance to contract buyers. Egan set up a meeting between Macnamara and Saul Alinsky. Alinsky nixed the idea: "If I were you I would leave it alone. You're not going to do anything about it," he told Macnamara, adding that a friend of his had died trying. When Macnamara stubbornly insisted he wanted to challenge the lenders, Alinsky warned him their practice was legal. "What they are doing may be legal," Macnamara retorted, "but it is immoral." Alinsky persisted, "You can't win on a single issue if it's legal." Macnamara made it clear he was going to try... "In that case," Jack Egan assured a Macnamara determined to organize contract buyers, "I will wholeheartedly support you."⁷¹

Macnamara, Sr. Andrew, and Joe Putnick, using their student and seminarian volunteers, researched the records in the offices of the Chicago Title and Trust Company, which handled most of the real estate sales in Chicago, and in the offices of the Cook County Recorder of Deeds. They discovered that the identities of the sellers were often shielded by "land trusts" through which the banks held title to the properties. In spite of this difficulty, the researchers were frequently able to uncover the original purchase prices, the reselling prices, as well as the identities of the sellers' agents.⁷²

Although most of the buyers had understood that they were not getting a good deal, they were shocked to discover just how bad the deal was. Contrary to what most people believed, the white sellers had purchased the homes from whites at more or less market value. Then, in turn, they sold the same buildings, with no improvements or modifications, on contract to blacks for almost double the original purchase price.

Contract buyers had, in effect, fewer rights than renters: they had all the burdens legally placed upon the homeowner but, in fact, did not legally own the property until the last payment was recorded.

The meetings organized by PCOP in Presentation church basement were attracting between twenty and twenty-five people, but the organizing was not advancing. Though many black buyers were willing to discuss their individual contracts with Jack Macnamara or with Sr. Andrew on a one-to-one basis, they were reluctant to speak out in the public meetings. No “natural leaders” had emerged to challenge their contracts.

“One (Macnamara) of the organizers would come by my house before every meeting on Wednesday nights, but he wouldn’t say anything. So, I said to my husband, ‘There’s something he wants, but he won’t say it.’ My husband said, ‘What do you think it is?’ I said, ‘He wants one of us to get up and talk.’ He said, ‘Well, what good would that do?’” Ruth Wells knew what good that would do.⁷³

Peggy Roach recalls her impressions from these meetings: “No one wanted to admit ‘being taken’—most had hired lawyers who had worked with them negotiating their transactions. Then Ruth Wells stood up and said she was willing to try to do something about her contract. She became the ‘Rosa Parks’ of Lawndale, and the Contract Buyers League was born.” (Roach, 61)

Ruth Wells recalls: “I asked if any of them was in the same boat. Immediately practically every hand in the room went up with a question. And that’s when the thing got started.”

The Contract Buyers League (CBL) was born out of this famous January 1968 meeting. CBL elected its own leadership and decided to hold its meetings on Wednesday evenings in the parish church basement. Presentation Community Organization Project (PCOP) remained under the direction of Jack Macnamara who assumed an advisory and supporting role in CBL. The CBL Wednesday night meetings attracted between 300 and 500 people.⁷⁴

Working the connections of his family and friends, Macnamara secured significant financial support for CBL from a wide variety of sources. One of the first and most important contributors was John O’Connor who read about Macnamara’s work in William Dendy’s weekly columns in *The New World*, the official weekly of the archdiocese of Chicago. O’Connor made significant contributions to CBL over the entire course

of its history.⁷⁵

Macnamara's apartment at 704 South Independence Boulevard could no longer serve as an office for CBL. CBL needed a real office and a Peggy Roach to keep things going. Macnamara got both.⁷⁶

"Jack Macnamara was looking for a secretary, and I was interested in moving into a grassroots situation. In 1968, I left NCCIJ and spent Monday through Friday working with Jack Macnamara and the Contract Buyers League, and Saturday for Father Egan at Presentation." (Roach, 61)

Peggy's experience with the Wednesdays in Mississippi project in 1964 had convinced her of the value of action on the local level led by local leaders. To Peggy, the Contract Buyers League was a perfect fit of faith, thought, and action working together efficiently for justice in the neighborhood.

"During my days with CBL, Charlie Baker and Clyde Ross served as co-chairmen assisted by Ruth Wells and Henrietta Banks. Aided by Jack Macnamara as advisor, the buyers themselves became the key players in the organization.... When parishes or other organizations called the CBL office, a storefront on Pulaski Road, asking what these real estate contract sales were all about, the CBL leaders were the people who visited these groups and told their own stories. These men and women were also the key contacts with the buyer members when they sought information and assistance. CBL was a people's organization." (Roach, 61-62)

Ruth Wells, the Rosa Parks of Lawndale, was not only the first contract buyer to give public witness to the specifics of her contract; she was also the first contract buyer to confront the person who held the contract on her home.

In the Wells case, Macnamara's research teams had discovered that a local bank held title of the deed in a land trust. The holder of the deed through the land trust was F & F Investments. The documents showed that the Wells couple had placed 3,000.00 dollars down in cash and were paying off a 15 year mortgage at 7% interest in monthly installments of \$175.00. The property had been purchased for \$13,500.00 one month prior to its being sold to the Wells' for \$23,000.00. Since purchasing the property, the Wells's had made substantial improvements, completely rewiring the property and rebuilding the back porches. On the basis of the improvements made by the Wells's, the seller obtained a loan from the bank for \$12,000.00 using the Wells's home as collateral. At Macnamara's

insistence, the Wells' had their home appraised. The appraisal came in at \$14,750.00.⁷⁷

Armed with this information, and using the \$1,500.00 "mystery" fee inserted into the renegotiated mortgage as her point of attack, Ruth Wells decided to confront the owner of F & F investments in person. With Father Egan, Sr. Andrew, and Jack Macnamara along for moral support but confining themselves to the background, Wells entered the corporate Loop offices of the owner of her contract and asked him to show her the insurance policy under dispute. Peggy Roach recalls: "Ruth Wells was absolutely scared to death." (Roach, 62) Wells reports: "I let him know how much I had found out about the property..."⁷⁸ "When I saw his hand shaking, I knew I had him. He's scared because he knows he's wrong."⁷⁹

**Father Egan wisely
involved prominent
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Ruth Well's encounter with her contract holder became an instant legend among contract buyers and community organizers alike. Overnight, 300 contract buyers joined the struggle to identify and to take action against the holders of their mortgages.

When repeated phone calls failed to secure the desired meetings, the buyers and their allies started picketing the offices of the banks and of the real estate agencies that represented the contract holders. When this tactic failed, they started picketing the homes of the contract owners.

Many of the contract holders held multiple contracts, some as many as 30 or 40. CBL decided to focus on this group, many of whom were Jewish. Father Egan was the first to foresee the dangerous paths this fact might suggest. He wisely involved prominent Jewish leaders and organizations to collaborate with CBL. Through Egan's efforts, Rabbi Robert J. Marx became involved in CBL actions, and Gordon Sherman, the founder and owner of Midas Muffler, became a large donor to the CBL treasury.⁸⁰

From the very beginning, Macnamara had understood that the effort to renegotiate the contract purchases would require significant expert legal assistance. Also, from the very beginning the legal experts had declared contract purchases legal and essentially unassailable on legal

grounds. Macnamara refused to accept this legal situation as fact.

John O'Connor placed Macnamara in contact with Harold W. Sullivan, presiding judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County. "Irish Catholic like Macnamara, and also a native of Skokie, Judge Sullivan responded immediately to Macnamara's request for lawyers. He organized a Lawyers Committee, and persuaded forty to fifty Chicago lawyers to attend a dinner meeting at which Macnamara and several contract buyers explained the situation. As honorary chairman, Judge Sullivan advised the lawyers that 'the legal profession has an outstanding opportunity to demonstrate its social conscience simply by aiding in the renegotiation of these contracts.'" ⁸¹

In February of 1968, CBL won a major victory when an investment firm agreed to renegotiate the terms under which many Lawndale residents were paying for their homes, saving each contract buyer thousands of dollars. ⁸²

In March, *The Chicago Sun-Times* was hailing the success of CBL as "an economic miracle." ⁸³ Macnamara knew that this "economic miracle" was very incomplete.

Macnamara credits Tom Sullivan with the legal breakthrough that shaped the future of CBL. "In addition to getting 40 lawyers to our apartment for a dinner—spaghetti on thin paper plates—meeting, Judge Sullivan introduced us to Tom Sullivan because we were not getting anywhere working hit and miss with the volunteer lawyers. Judge Sullivan said we needed the best trial lawyer in the city." Tom Sullivan, supported by Albert E. Jenner the senior partner of Jenner and Block, of which firm Sullivan was a member, created a legal strategy for civil rights based class action suits on behalf of the members of CBL. In addition to other lawyers from Jenner and Block, Tom Sullivan engaged the services of Bob Ming, a well-known black trial lawyer and a senior partner of McCoy, Ming, and Black.

This legal team was complete when Thomas Boodell walked in off the street to help.

Thomas Boodell, a graduate of Harvard Law, had secured a Stevenson Fellowship from the University of Chicago to do some research on contract buying. On a walk through Lawndale, he joined a Wednesday night meeting at Presentation and never left. Peggy Roach writes: "Each Wednesday evening, CBL members, now numbering in the hundreds,

met in Presentation's basement hall (named Martin Luther King Hall after his assassination) to get an update on the campaign for renegotiation. Legal advice was available through lawyers like Tom Boodell, working pro bono for CBL. At every Wednesday night meeting I attended, Tom Boodell was there." (Roach, 62)

CBL started to grow beyond the borders of Lawndale. Middle-class blacks on the South Side of Chicago had purchased newly constructed homes on contract rather than through conventional mortgages. In light of the CBL's public exposure of contract buying, the South Siders decided to review their own contracts. They joined CBL and initiated two lawsuits against the ten companies (under the umbrella name of Universal Builders) that had constructed and sold the new homes to them on contract.⁸⁴

By December of 1968, CBL leadership decided to escalate their actions against those who refused to renegotiate. Charles Baker and Clyde Ross were the leaders of "the West Side block" within CBL. Sidney Clark and Arthur Green were the leaders of "the South Side block."⁸⁵

Baker and Ross recommended to the CBL membership that they withhold their mortgage payments and place them in escrow accounts as if they were on a rent strike. "In the first month 327 families withheld their payments, in the second month, 595. Within three months, the account held over a quarter of a million dollars." [86]

In response to CBL actions, many of the sellers organized themselves to take legal action against the contract buyers who were on strike. Each seller put \$5,000.00 into a "kitty" for legal expenses. The sellers started evicting the CBL contract buyers.

"Contract buying was a tough issue that demanded tough action. At one point, CBL called 'a rent strike.' CBL members withheld their monthly payments from the sellers. Instead, they purchased money orders in the payment amount, but payable to themselves. They deposited the money orders into an escrow account with CBL, where the funds were held pending renegotiation. The move, however, threatened CBL members with possible eviction. Some sellers called for eviction on account of non-payment, and the sheriff's police came and moved a family's belongings into the street. As soon as the authorities left, CBL members moved the family's furniture back into the buyer's house." (Roach, 63)

The pace of evictions increased rapidly. It was time to implement the new legal strategy.

With support from Thomas Foran, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and John McKnight, a director of the Midwest Office of the Civil Rights Commission, Tom Sullivan and the CBL legal team put their legal game plan into action. Peggy writes: “The Contract Buyers League filed a federal class action suit charging the CBL members’ civil rights had been violated. Thomas P. Sullivan and other lawyers of the prestigious firm of Jenner and Block worked with CBL on the case.” (Roach, 63)

In January of 1969, the South Side bloc filed *Clark v. Universal Builders*; and the West Side bloc filed *Baker v. F & F Investment*.

In March of 1969, the South Side bloc of CBL members entered into a court agreement concerning their “rent strike” against Universal Builders. In April of 1969, the Lawndale bloc entered into a court agreement concerning their strike. These agreements were “temporary” legal arrangements negotiated by Mayor Daley and others until the respective courts involved could render their final decisions.⁸⁷

Peggy observes: “In the end, the buyers’ efforts with sellers plus the lawsuit resulted in the renegotiation of hundreds of contracts, saving the home buyers in Lawndale over six million dollars. These efforts also helped legislators see the need for federal regulation to outlaw redlining, and undergirded efforts to achieve the Community Reinvestment Act (spearheaded locally by Gale Cincotta), which directed that any bank taking in money from a local community must put a certain amount back into that community.” (Roach, 63)

By 1970, the Contract Buyers League of Chicago had distinguished itself as the most successful organization of its kind in the USA. By the time the League was dissolved, it had saved its membership an average of \$13,000.00 per household.

“Toward the end of my days with CBL, Mom needed more of my time and care. I set up a little office at home, installed a phone, and worked from there. Jack Macnamara would drop off work for me, or I would visit the CBL office during Mom’s nap time and pick up my assignments, work on them at home, then get them back to the office. When Mom was hospitalized the last few months of her life, I usually spent the day at the hospital and did little for CBL. She died in June of 1970.” (Roach, 63)

The crises of the death of Cecile Roach and the spiritual and physical exhaustion of Father John Egan changed, once again, the direction of

Peggy Roach's life. Once more, she would leave Chicago on another great adventure, based on her zeal for social justice and her love for the people for whom she worked.

Growing Up a Woman and a Catholic in Chicago.

Peggy was born on May 16, 1927, to James E. and Cecile Duffy Roach. Peggy is the middle child; Rosemary and Jim, the elder siblings; Helen and Jane, the younger.

Peggy received a four-year scholarship to St. Scholastica High School run by Benedictine nuns in the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago, just north of her family's home. She enrolled in the college prep program, but, ever practical, she also took courses in typing and shorthand. Till this day, she remembers her typing teacher, Sr. Mary Ann, with deep fondness and gratitude.

While at St. Scholastica, Peggy became involved in Chicago Inter-Student Catholic Action (CISCA), a program directed by Jesuit Father Martin Carrabine. Through the CISCA meetings held at the Morrison Hotel in Chicago's Loop, Peggy met high school students from throughout the Chicago Archdiocese and received instruction in the social theory and practice of Catholic Action, which focused on current social conditions.

"It was through CISCA that I first became aware of 'the race problem,' as it was known in those days. Because we were all growing up in a segregated society at the time, we were learning about the race issue, but had little or no contact with counterpart black students. They were not enrolled in our high schools." (Roach, 4)

Catholic Action is a complex movement that developed in response to the catastrophic changes forced upon the Catholic church by the industrialization and secularization of Europe, communism, the loss of church lands and temporal jurisdictions, and the emergence of a rootless working class severed from all traditional social ties. Essentially Catholic Action is based on two foundational principles: 1) the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy, and 2) the apostolate of the laity to transform the temporal order into a just civilization.

Historically, these two principles, which often clash in actual practice, are united on one absolute value—the role of the lay person as the

principal minister in the work to be done.⁸⁸

In Chicago, Catholic Action, its instruction primarily directed by Jesuits, generated an impressive lay Catholic movement which operated in just about every aspect of social and civic life. In turn, this lay movement contributed greatly to progressive change in American society and significant reforms of the American Catholic Church.⁸⁹

It is impossible to overestimate the influence of Catholic Action on the young Peggy Roach. She not only participated in its programs during the school year but in the summers as well. After college, she participated in the Ryan Forum which was one of Catholic Actions most important fruits.⁹⁰

Mundelein College.....

James and Cecile Roach were committed to providing a college education for all their five children. In itself this expectation marked them as exceptional for their times, but, when this expectation embraced four daughters, it marks them as extraordinarily ahead of their times.

As resourceful and practical parents, they judged Mundelein College the best way to achieve their goal. Helen and Jane would also choose to attend Mundelein.

The Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a congregation of teaching sisters, started building Mundelein College in 1929 right after the stock market crash that marked the worst days of the Great Depression. The mission of the college was to provide an excellent education at an affordable price for young women from working class families in the Chicago area. The primary goal of this mission was to enable women to take their proper place as informed citizens and informed Catholics actively participating in the formation of American society and in the life of the Catholic church in the USA.⁹¹

To help her parents with college expenses, Peggy worked at Marshall Field's on Saturdays as a gift wrapper. During the school week, she worked in the college library. She chose to major in journalism which was directed by Sr. Madelena, BVM, who also directed the student newspaper *The Skyscraper*.

Sr. Madelena became Peggy's mentor.

"Writing did not come easily for me, but all I wanted was an 'A' from Sr. Madelena! Besides being an excellent teacher, she was a charming,

wise, and loving woman who served so many of us as personal counselor par excellence.” (Roach, 11)

Peggy became involved in student government and continued to develop her interest in the “race problem.” Peggy recalls participating in a Student Council sponsored social science experiment developed by a teacher in Iowa to test people’s instinctual responses to blatant prejudice. The experiment at Mundelein went as follows: On a given day, the students who ran the elevators (which had manual controls at that time) would deny service to those students with blue eyes or blond hair. These students would be forced to walk the stairs to get to their classes, some of which were held on the ninth floor of the fourteen floor skyscraper building. The put-upon students were naturally outraged. Point taken.

**In the education of
Peggy Roach, and
of her sisters Helen
and Jane, Mundelein
College admirably
achieved its purpose.**

In the education of Peggy Roach, and of her sisters Helen and Jane, Mundelein College admirably achieved its purpose.

In 1958, Sr. Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, president of Mundelein College asked Peggy to return to Mundelein as the Alumnae Director. With great enthusiasm Peggy accepted the position in the hope of transforming the staid idea of an alumnae association function as luncheon fashion show fund raisers to one of life-long learning.⁹²

“We initiated a ‘Back to College’ Day to familiarize alumnae with the changes at their alma mater since their student days. They could attend a class in French and follow it up with time in the new language lab. There were class offerings in other subjects in which they had expressed interest—art, current affairs, literature. Alumnae were encouraged to continue learning, and they responded! I felt good about the success of this venture.” (Roach, 11)

Peggy also initiated the practice of sending alumnae to represent the college at important events when Sr. Ann Ida herself could not attend. Peggy provided the women with academic cap and gown, had their names printed as Mundelein representatives in the event programs, and, in general, made them feel proud to be ambassadors of their alma mater.

In co-operation with Dan Cahill, Mundelein's Director of Development, Peggy helped launch a magazine to keep alumnae informed about developments at Mundelein, and, of course, of ways to support the college.

John A. Ryan Forum.....

Although the Archdiocese of New York had more power, and the Archdiocese of Washington more prestige, in fact the Archdiocese of Chicago had become the active center of the most important movements of the Catholic Church in the USA.

The Christian Family Movement, Young Christian Workers, The Cana Conference, Adult Education Centers, Catholic Labor Alliance, Catholic Interracial Councils, and many other lay and clerical organizations had their epicenter in Chicago. The meetings of the John A. Ryan Forum were the think-tank sessions for all these groups and more.

"Chicago was the hub of these movements for the church in the United States, putting faith into action in the tradition of Catholic social teaching. Each of us developed a camaraderie with like-minded people and learned what other active Catholics were doing through these meetings of the Ryan Forum. It was our gathering place, our meeting place, our learning place." (Roach, 12)

The Ryan Forum was established by Ed Marciniak and Msgr. Dan Cantwell of the Catholic Labor Alliance. Among the many notable personages who addressed the Forum, Peggy cites Walter Reuther who spoke on labor issues and John Courtney Murray, SJ, who spoke on issues of church and state "long before Vatican Council II."

Born in persecution and nourished by poor immigrants, the Catholic church in the United States identified not with the economic or cultural elite but with the working class and the poor. Protected by the US Constitution, the American Catholic church also learned to cherish the value of religious freedom and the formal separation of the state from an established church. Accordingly, Catholic Action in the USA worked with progressive forces in American civil society, a fact which the agenda of the Ryan Forum clearly demonstrates.

The 1958 Statement of the Bishops of the United States.....

In 1958, in their annual statement to the nation, the American Catholic bishops issued a document entitled “Discrimination and the Christian Conscience.” This statement called for the total elimination of all forms of racial injustice. It judged racism to be a moral and religious disorder as well as a civil and social matter. The bishops affirmed the necessity of a profound change of heart in the American people if the Negro people were to receive their Constitutional rights.

“This means not only political equality, but also fair economic and educational opportunities, a just share in public welfare projects, good housing without exploitation, and a full chance for the social advancement of their race.”⁹³

Peggy was greatly influenced by this statement. She kept a printed copy in her files available to her at all times.

Peggy died April 20, 2006.

Epilogue

This profile presents a portrait of Peggy Roach as a Chicago woman formed and trained by family, faith, and Catholic education to be a leader in the struggle for justice in USA civil society and in her church. This portrait shows Peggy and her work prior to her thirty years of well documented work with Jack Egan at Notre Dame (1970-1983), at the Archdiocese of Chicago Office of Human Relations and Ecumenism (1983-1987), and at DePaul University Office for Community Affairs (1987-2001). It enables us to see Peggy in action and reaction with the people, institutions, social and intellectual movements that formed the context from which Peggy created her own unique way of taking action for the common good, of forming her own style of being a leader.

When Bishop Steven Leven asked Peggy Roach and the other members of the staffs of the National Council of Catholic Women and the National Council of Catholic Men what they had learned from studying the work of Vatican II, Peggy responded “that we are the people of God.” Bishop Leven instructed Peggy to re-study the documents, declaring that they taught that the Bishop is the presence of Christ in his community. (Roach, 55)

Peggy never backed away from her position. She lived it.

In affirming that ‘we are the people of God,’ Peggy affirmed herself, and all of us, as a source of God’s presence in the world, united through time and space, in compassion and love. ‘We are the people of God’ affirms the basis for Peggy’s leadership style, to initiate when necessary, to assist when necessary, to promote when necessary, the attitudes and work that make for a more perfect society and church.

Peggy made a decision to be a single woman, a lay woman, who chose not to marry, who chose to dedicate her life to the work for social justice. She chose not to become a nun; she chose not to go to graduate school or to become a lawyer. Peggy chose to assist others in their work.

I am grateful to Jan Sisler, executive director of the Gannon Center for Women and Leadership at Loyola University Chicago, for giving me the insight that Peggy’s type of leadership might best be described as that of the COO, the chief operating officer of an organization. It was Peggy, the COO, who kept the Contract Buyer’s League together while Ruth Wells and Jack Macnamara operated on the front lines. And, of course,

Peggy's legendary work with Jack Egan incarnates this leadership model perfectly.

The person, life and work of Peggy Roach demonstrate the Catholic ideals of individual self-realization in dynamic engagement with community goals and the common good, of local action related to national objectives, of parochial thinking in dialogue with international, global thinking. These ideals are unique values of Catholic education which always understands the uniqueness and development of the individual person in relationship to the needs and well-being of the local and international communities in which and through which that uniqueness and self-identity has its full meaning.

Peggy Roach: woman, Catholic, leader, Chicago style.

Endnotes

1. In the summer of 1961, CIC joined forces with the Youth Work Committee of the NAACP to conduct integration actions at Rainbow Beach, the epicenter of which was at 75th Street and the Lake. In 1962, these “wade-ins” continued at Rainbow and other South Side beaches. This collaboration between CIC and the NAACP and other civil rights groups continued to operate right into the formation of the Chicago Freedom Movement which is discussed in the following chapter. See Appendix A for details on the life and work of John McDermott.
2. Roach, Peggy. *Memoir*, p. 28. Hereafter citations of *Memoir* are made in text as: (Roach, 28.) The original unedited version of this text is housed at the Gannon Center for Women and Leadership, Loyola University Chicago. All page references are to this text. An in-house published version edited and with photos, produced for the Egan Hope Scholars Program at DePaul University, is housed in the DePaul libraries. See Appendix B for details on life and work of Margaret Mealey
3. *An Alley In Chicago: The Life and Legacy of Monsignor John Egan* by Margery Frisbie. Sheed and Ward: Franklin, Wisconsin and Chicago, Commemorative Edition 2002. p. 189.
4. Cross reference Frisbie, p. 189.
5. See: <http://www.archives.gov/> For a most interesting discussion and presentation of the Emancipation Proclamation.
6. Mesta, Perle Reid Skirvin (1889-1975) of Newport, R.I. Known as Pearl Mesta, she was born in Sturgis, Michigan. Matriarch of Mesta Industries. Fabled hostess of the biggest, “baddest,” and best parties in Washington, D.C.
7. See: “Organized Catholic Laywomen: The National Council of Catholic Women 1920-1995.” Dissertation, Catholic University of America, Ruth Libbey O’Halloran. Washington D.C., 1995.
8. “Peggy Roach: Her Apostolate Spans a Nation,” Mary DeCock, BVM VISTA June 1964, p. 2. Roach Papers, Women and Leadership Archives, Gannon Center, Loyola University Chicago. Hereafter cited as DeCock.
9. Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) traces its origins to the 1955 Montgomery bus boycotts. Founded on Gospel values and the principles of non-violent social action of Mahatma Gandhi, it organized black ministers and their congregations for civil rights. See: *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America* by Andrew Young. Harper Collins, New York, 1996. See: www.sclcnational.org
10. *America*, a Jesuit publication on church and civil affairs, February 2, 1963. Editorial, p. 159.
11. DeCock, p. 3.
12. See: <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/civilr19.htm>

13. See: http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/intro/intro_b.htm.
14. See: <http://www.ibiblio.org/sncc> and <http://www.core-online.org>.
15. Peggy kept a daily journal of her WIM experiences. She presented a summary of this journal in a Report to the leadership of NCCW. The Report, which is held in the archives of the Gannon Center, is presented in its entirety in Appendix F to my research on Peggy's work in Washington, D.C. The Report enjoys an historical introduction by Joseph Pisano. For a good, brief history of the Freedom Riders consult: www.freedomridersfoundation.com
16. Young, p. 346.
17. Frisbie, p. 174
18. Young, p. 338.
19. Young, p. 342.
20. Young, p. 350.
21. Young, p. 356.
22. Frisbie, p. 175.
23. DeCock, p. 4.
24. See: <http://www.charityadvantage.com/wics/Home.asp>
25. *An Alley in Chicago: The Life and Legacy of Monsignor John Egan*. Margery Frisbie. Sheed and Ward. Franklin, Wisconsin and Chicago, Illinois, 2002. pp. 188-192.
Discusses Roach's "activist" commitment to Catholic Action, Civil Rights, and Women.
26. Southern Christian Leadership Conference was founded in New Orleans, Louisiana, on February 14, 1957, with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as President and Dr. Ralph David Abernathy as Financial Secretary-Treasurer. Committed to the philosophy of nonviolent resistance as practiced in the lives and teachings of Jesus Christ and Mohandas Gandhi, the SCLC, at its first convention in Montgomery, Alabama in August 1957, officially adopted the strategy of non-violent mass social action for its work for equality for all peoples regardless of race, religion, or social-ethnic background. Martin Luther King Jr remained the president of SCLC until his assassination in April of 1968.
27. Rev. Joseph H. Jackson, pastor of Olivet Baptist Church on South Side of Chicago, also president of the National Baptist Convention, judged that King's theology and politics would do more damage than good to the black community. Book *Unholy Shadows and Freedom's Holy Light*, Townsend Press, Nashville, 1967.
28. Internet Document: "Program of the Chicago Freedom Movement 1966."
<http://sites.middlebury.edu/chicagofreedommovement/primary-sources/>
29. Andrew Jackson Young, Jr. Born March 12, 1932, New Orleans, LA. Civil-rights leader, clergyman, congressman, ambassador to United Nations, mayor of Atlanta.

- Worked with Martin Luther King, Jr., in the SCLC from its founding until King's assassination, and then with Dr. Ralph Abernathy, King's successor, until 1970.
30. Internet Document: Vol. 9, issue 4 , p. 30, *Home Truths*, "American Visions" August/September 94. James R. Ralph, Jr. ISSN 08849390.
 31. Benjamin C. Willis. Chicago Public Schools Superintendent from 1953-1966. Famous for his introduction of the "Willis wagons" to deal with overcrowding and desegregation efforts. Died August 29, 1988.
 32. John Patrick Cardinal Cody. Born December 9, 1915. Died April 25, 1982. Appointed Archbishop of Chicago June 14, 1965. Elevated to Cardinal June 26, 1967.
 33. Meyer had the courage and foresight to fund Saul Alinsky's pioneering organizing work on the West Side of Chicago. Stritch was appointed Archbishop of Chicago on December 27, 1939, and was made Cardinal on February 18, 1946. Stritch served the people of Chicago until his death on May 27, 1958, in Rome.
 34. On August 11, 1965, Watts, an area of Los Angeles, erupted into the worst urban violence that had hitherto been seen in modern USA history. A white policeman stopped a black driver who was trying to get his dangerously ill passenger to the emergency room of a general hospital. The white policeman ignored the black driver's waving white handkerchief and blaring horn, and made him pull over. The white policeman had his gun drawn when he got to the driver's side car window. At that point something happened to make the car lurch, the policeman fired, killing the driver instantly, and the enraged black community started burning down Watts.
 35. *An Easy Burden*, Andrew Young, pages 409-10. See also: Michael E. Schiltz, "Catholics and the Chicago Riots: Lessons Learned the Hard Way," *Commonweal*, Volume LXXXV No. 6, November 11, 1966, pp. 159-63. "Rioting, burning, looting, and gunfire spilled over several days. King's staff, other clergymen, the city's human relations staff, the police, and the Illinois National Guard all worked tirelessly to restore order. When quiet returned—an uneasy quiet marked for the rest of the summer by minor but unnerving incidents—two persons had been killed, perhaps as many as several hundred injured."
 36. Egan had tried to get Cody to attend the rally. Cody consented to write a letter in support of King's "Open-City" CFM campaign. The letter was to be read at the rally and in all Chicago archdiocesan parishes. This letter was positively received as a supportive gesture by Cody of King's agenda, an important contribution to King's moral power base in Chicago.
 37. Michael E. Schiltz, "Catholics and the Chicago Riots: Lessons Learned the Hard Way," *Commonweal*, Volume LXXXV No. 6, November 11, 1966. p.160. Critical note: Msgr. Daniel M. Cantwell responded to Schiltz in a letter to the Editor published in the December 16, 1966, *Commonweal*, pp. 321-322. Cantwell's response provides an important vision of the social and political complexity of racial discrimination in ethnic neighborhoods in Chicago.
 38. Michael E. Schiltz, "Catholics and the Chicago Riots: Lessons Learned the Hard Way," *Commonweal*, Volume LXXXV No. 6, November 11, 1966. p. 163.

39. Internet Document: Vol. 9, issue 4, p. 30, *Home Truths*, "American Visions," August/September 94. James R. Ralph Jr. ISSN 08849390. See also: Schiltz, p. 163.
40. In the 1967 re-election after the 1966 riots, Daley carried all 50 wards and garnered 72% of the vote. In his 1971 re-election after the horrific 1968 riots (Democratic National Convention and Dr. King's assassination), Daley carried 48 wards with 70% of the vote. In the 1963 re-election against the popular Polish politician Ben Adamowski, Daley won 56% of the vote (679,497 to Adamowski's 540,705) and 28 wards. Daley had actually lost the vote among white voters, receiving only 49% of their vote while garnering 81% of the black vote. See: *American Pharaoh. Mayor Richard J. Daley: His Battle for Chicago and the Nation*. Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor. Little, Brown, and Company. Boston, New York, London. pp. 301, 511. *Clout: Mayor Daley and His City*. Len O'Connor. Regnery, Chicago 1975. pp. 176, 193.
41. Internet Document: Vol. 9, issue 4, p. 30, *Home Truths*, "American Visions." August/September 94. James R. Ralph, Jr. ISSN 08849390.
42. However one might choose to assess the ultimate value of The Chicago Freedom Movement, there is no doubt that a process of change was set into motion that would over the next decade realign the bases of power in the body politic of metropolitan Chicago. For example: Operation Breadbasket, founded by Dr. King and headed by Rev. Jesse Jackson evolved into Operation Push, founded and headed by Rev. Jesse Jackson.
43. Al Chambers, recording of Peggy Roach interview (available on tape at Gannon Center Archives).
44. See also: *An Alley in Chicago: The Life and Legacy of Monsignor John Egan*. Margery Frisbie. Sheed and Ward. Franklin, Wisconsin and Chicago, Illinois, 2002. p. 191.
45. Frisbie, pp. 188, 189.
46. Frisbie, p. 191.
47. See Frisbie, p. 233. Roach: Conversations with the author. Conversations were by phone, email, letters, and in-person.
48. Frisbie, pp. 181, 192. Jack Macnamara was one of the first seminarians to respond to Father Egan's call for help. He was a student at Bellarmine School of Theology, a Jesuit institution.
49. Saul Alinsky was born in Chicago in 1909 of Russian immigrant parents. He dedicated his life to organizing the poor and disenfranchised to learn for themselves how to gain power and how to use it to gain full participation in USA civil and economic society. He organized picketing, rent strikes and boycotts among the slum dwellers in Chicago's Back-of-the-Yards district. In 1939 he founded the Chicago based Industrial Areas Foundation through which Alinsky trained community organizers to do similar work in other communities through the '60s. One of his best-known projects was The Woodlawn Organization (TWO). Saul Alinsky died in 1972.
50. See: *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals*. Saul Alinsky. Random House, NY, NY 1972.

51. "Self-Help Program Works in Lawndale" William Dendy. *The New World* (Official newspaper of the Archdiocese of Chicago) February 9, 1968.
52. Dendy, February 9, 1968.
53. Interreligious Council on Urban Affairs was provoked into being by Father Egan when he experienced a humiliating defeat in the Fall of 1958 in his struggle with Mayor Daley and the University of Chicago over the urban renovation plan for the area surrounding the University in Hyde Park. See: Frisbie, 109.
54. Frisbie, p. 191. The Association of Chicago Priests is discussed in a following chapter.
55. Frisbie, p. 191.
56. Frisbie, p. 191.
57. IFCO was largely a New York organization created by Jewish and Protestant leaders under great pressure from 'black power' advocates. It aspired to national status and needed a Catholic representative on its board.
58. Geno Charles Baroni. Born 1930. "Monsignor Baroni was Director of Urban Affairs for the Archdiocese of Washington D.C. (1967), program director of the USCC Urban Task Force (1970), founder and president of the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs (1971), and founder of the Catholic Conference on Ethnic and Neighborhood Affairs (1974). He was appointed Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development by President Carter (1977)." Archives, University of Notre Dame. Geno C. Baroni Papers Internet document BRN001.
59. Frisbie, p. 231.
60. John Francis Cardinal Dearden, born October 15, 1907, died August 1, 1988. Bishop of Pittsburgh, PA, 1950. Archbishop of Detroit 1958. Elevated to Cardinal April 28, 1969. Dearden was a most effective leader on civil rights and other social issues, and made a significant contribution to progressive policies at Vatican II.
61. See: Young pp. 463-69 for an eyewitness account of the assassination.
62. Cohen and Taylor, p. 452
63. O'Connor, p. 198.
64. Redlining is the practice of refusing to offer services to residents of certain geographical areas because of their race, color, ethnicity, life-style, and socio-economic condition. Redlining was literally the policy of insurance companies, banks, and the Federal government after World War II when it was decided that inner city neighborhoods with aging housing stock and poor or *degenerate* populations should not be given government loans, bank mortgages, or insurance services. These urban areas were outlined on the wall maps with red lines: thus, redlining. These practices prevented blacks from buying or renting in white neighborhoods and Chicago banks refused to offer conventional mortgage loans to blacks seeking home ownership.
65. "In My Father's House There Are Many Mansions—And I'm Going To Get Me Some Of Them Too." *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 1972. John Alan McPherson. An early and in many ways the definitive presentation of the story of the Contract Buyers League.

66. McPherson, p. 54.
67. Laurenti, Luigi. *Property values and race; studies in seven cities. Special research report to the Commission on Race and Housing*. University of California Press, Berkeley. 1961. Studies San Francisco, Oakland, Philadelphia, Chicago, Kansas City, Detroit and Portland. For an update on this classic study, See: *The Pig and the Skyscraper, Chicago: A History of Our Future*. Marco d'Eramo. Trans. Graeme Thomson. Verso, London and New York, 2003. ISBN 1-85984-498-7.
68. McPherson, p. 54.
69. McPherson, p. 55.
70. McPherson, p. 56.
71. Frisbie, pp. 192, 193. This conversation about how to get the buyers contracts renegotiated and how to set up an organization to work with the buyers took place on telephone and in person between and among Macnamara, Egan, and Alinsky over two days.
72. Land trusts are a unique Illinois legal construct allowing property owners to shield their identities from the public and still exercise their rights of ownership over the land through the banks that hold their titles for them. Often, the executor of the trust, an investment agent, was also in fact the owner/seller.
73. McPherson, p. 56. See also: "A Case Study: Contract Buyers League." Chapter 10 of *Tax , Title, & Housing Court Search: Property Research for Action: A Manual for Chicago*. University of Illinois at Chicago, The Center for Urban Economic Development, 1984. Hereafter cited as "Case Study." Internet HTML and PDF file. Critical Note: wherever this document differs from McPherson, McPherson should be preferred. www.uic.edu/cuppa/admin/pp/tax
74. Frisbie, p. 193. Operation Saturation spun off PCOP and PCOP spun off CBL. PCOP itself then transformed itself into the Gamaliel Foundation.
75. Dendy's articles on Presentation ran for most of 1968. The articles may be reviewed in the Peggy Roach Collection at The Gannon Center Archives at Loyola University Chicago. Macnamara established the Gamaliel Foundation to finance CBL. "The Gamaliel Foundation was originally established in 1968 to support the Contract Buyers League, an African American organization fighting to protect homeowners on Chicago's Westside who had been discriminated against by banks and saving and loan institutions. In 1986, the Foundation was reorganized as an organizing institute providing resources to community leaders in the efforts to build and maintain powerful organizations in low income communities. The Gamaliel Foundation has grown from three to more than forty-five affiliates in seventeen states and in three provinces of South Africa." Gamaliel Foundation web site: <http://www.gamaliel.org>
76. CBL had offices at 817 S. Pulaski and at 1967 Lexington.
77. McPherson, p. 56.
78. Frisbie, p. 194.

79. McPherson, p. 56.
80. Sherman gave significant sums of money to Ralph Nader, Saul Alinsky, and CBL.
81. McPherson, p. 67.
82. Dendy, *The New World*, March 1, 1968.
83. Frisbie, p. 194.
84. McPherson, p. 67. "Case Study."
85. McPherson, p. 73. "Both Charles Baker and Clyde Ross of the West Side were former factory workers, both were from the same town in Mississippi, and both were paid employees of the Gamaliel Foundation. Relatively easy going and cautious, they suggest the kind of participatory leadership common in the early days of the civil rights movement. Sidney Clark and Arthur Green, the two South Side leaders, were not employed by the Foundation; rather their involvement and speaking ability tended to project them as spokesmen."
86. "Case Study." See also: McPherson, p. 68.
87. The South Side case went to trial in April of 1972 before Judge Perry who ruled a directed verdict against the plaintiffs. An appeal was filed October 24, 1973. Directed verdict of Judge Perry reversed July 26, 1974. The West Side case went to trial before Judge McGarr who postponed the trial until after the appeal of the South Side case. November 19, 1975 jury selection begins. Decisions against CBL in both cases April 16, 1976. The jury declared that the speculators would have taken advantage of anyone regardless of race, color, or creed. Macnamara: Conversations. Even though CBL had lost the battle of the legal cases they had won the war on contract buying. In addition to winning back monies for its membership, CBL provoked profound changes in lending practices and in Federal and local legislation protecting the purchaser/consumer.
88. Strictly speaking, Catholic Action exists as a formal organization only in Italy where it was established as an association in 1868 by Pope Pius IX. It was reorganized by Pope Pius XI in 1931 ("*Non Abbiamo Bisogno*," June 29, 1931). The classic statement of its principles is found in the letter of Pope Pius X "*Il Fermo Proposito*" promulgated June 11, 1905. However, the spirit and principles of the Catholic Action movement were quickly adopted and adapted throughout Europe by Catholics committed to making the church respond constructively to the profound and rapid changes in contemporary culture and society. The implementation of 'Catholic Action' in Europe was often associated with specific political parties. The interpretation of Catholic Action employed by Fr Martin Carrabine, SJ, in the USA was based upon the work and thought of Canon Joseph Cardijn of Belgium (born November 13, 1882, died July 24, 1967). Early in his ministry, Fr. Cardijn concerned himself with the working poor. During his imprisonment in World War 1, he developed a program for the organization of workers into effective unions. After the war, he organized young women needle workers in Belgium, then young men into trade unions. In 1924 these trade unions were reorganized into the Young Christian Workers movement which became the model for similar organizations throughout the Catholic world. On

February 12, 1965, Pope Paul VI consecrated Cardijn a bishop and then made him a Cardinal of the Catholic church. Catholic action, with a small “a,” flourished in the Mid-west where it was associated with Young Christian Students movement often referred to as Jocism from its French acronym. Jesuit Father Daniel Lord (1888-1955) made social justice and social action one of the cornerstones of the Sodality movement which had a great influence on many Catholic women. Jesuit Father John LaFarge (1880-1963) promoted Catholic action through a well-articulated and immensely attractive, socially conscious Catholic humanism which charted a course between totalitarian communism and totally unbridled capitalism.

90. John A. Ryan (1869-1945) worked throughout his life for the betterment of the working class in the USA. He was a vigorous proponent of the New Deal, actively supported progressive political candidates for public office, and opposed the polemics of Fr. Charles Coughlin, a fellow priest who had a “reactionary” platform for achieving social justice. He taught at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and directed the National Catholic Welfare Council’s social action committee from 1920 until his death.
91. Five Dublin women led by Mary Frances Clarke came to Philadelphia in 1833 to teach Irish immigrants. On 1 November 1833, Mary Frances Clarke and Fr. Terence J. Donaghoe organized the five women into a congregation of Catholic sisters dedicated to teaching. They encountered tremendous hostility at the hands of the rabidly anti-Catholic Know-Nothing movement, and decided to move westward to a territory that would become the state of Iowa where they founded their motherhouse and were incorporated in 1869 as the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM). In 1867, the BVM’s were invited to Chicago where they established the first central Catholic High School for young women. Please consult: *Creating Community: Mary Frances Clarke and Her Companions* by Ann M. Harrington. Mt. Carmel Press, Dubuque Iowa. 2004.
92. Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, was president of Mundelein College from 1957 through 1975. During her tenure, the student body, the faculty, and the work of Mundelein achieved national recognition. Sr. Gannon also served on several national boards working on education, civil rights, and other social causes.
93. Journal of Negro Education. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2293397>. 1958 US Catholic Bishops Statement on ‘Discrimination and Christian Conscience.’ See also the 1979 US Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism. (Note the change from Negro to African American.) <http://www.usccb.org/saac/bishopspastoral.shtml>

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