

Special Thanks to Our Sponsors

Mayor Steven L. Reed



City of Montgomery, Alabama

103 N. Perry Street
Montgomery, AL 36104

Association for the Study of African American Life and History,
H. Council Trenholm Branch, Alabama State University

Jon Broadway and Judy Broadway

R. Dawn Campbell

Sherrie Cook

Dr. Daniel Haulman and Ellen Haulman

Atty Julian L. McPhillips Jr.

Donald Nolte and Ursula Nolte

Valerie Smedley

Evelyn Tackett

Lewis Ware and Teresa Ware

Lt. Col Michael Waters (Ret.)

Rev. Robert Graetz-Jeannie Graetz Historic Marker Unveiling



Rev. Robert Graetz and Jeannie Graetz

1558 Dunbar Street
Montgomery, AL 36106

May 16, 2021
2:00 PM

Dr. Richard Bailey, Presiding



Mayor Steven L. Reed
Montgomery, Alabama

Cover: *Rev. Robert Graetz and Jeannie Graetz (David Campbell/ASU)*



Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, Rev. Robert Graetz and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Rosa Parks, Edgar Daniel Nixon and Fred Gray

Table of Contents

Title	Page
Program	3
“Onward Christian Solder”	4
“My Country Tis of Thee”	5
Program Participants	6
Testimonials	Letter from Martin Luther King III..... 7
	Letter from Dr. Agnes M. Lover
	Letter from Dr. Willie D. McClung..... 9
	Letter from Atty. Julian L. McPhillips Jr. ... 10
City of Montgomery Honors Rev. Robert Graetz.....	12
	Dr. Richard Bailey (December 12, 2013)
City of Montgomery Honors Jeannie Graetz	15
	Dr. Richard Bailey (December 12, 2013)
“Rosa Parks’ letter about KKK Bought By Family Bombed”	17
Attending Emancipation Celebrations	21
The Graetz Story	27
The Graetz Legacy	45
Special Guests (Listed Alphabetically)	46
Financial Supporters	45
Acknowledgements	47
Financial Supporters	Back Cover



Rev. Robert Graetz and Jeannie Graetz attending Emancipation
Celebration at Mount Zion AME Zion Church, January 1, 2018

Program

Call to Order	Dr. Richard Bailey
*“Onward Christian Soldiers”	Dr. Cordelia Anderson
Accompanied by Dr. Kristofer Sanchack	
Welcome	Mayor Steven L. Reed
Reading of Letter.....	Dr. Richard Bailey
From Martin Luther King III	
Reflections	
On behalf of Reverend Robert Graetz	Rev. LaVaughn Wiggins
Graetz Family/Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.	Atty. Fred D. Gray
Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy	Rev. E. Baxter Morris**
E. D. Nixon	Dr. Calvin McTier
Rosa M. Parks.....	Dr. Farrell J. Duncombe
Jeannie Graetz	Dr. Janice R. Franklin
Jeannie Graetz	Mr. Jon Broadway
The Graetz Family	Mr. Tim Lennox
As a Neighbor	Atty. Julian L. McPhillips Jr.
The Graetz Family: Why Historic Markers Matter.....	Mr. Scotty E. Kirkland
Recognition of Special Guests	Dr. Richard Bailey
Historic Marker Unveiling	The Graetz Family
Remarks	Dr. Richard Bailey
“My Country Tis of Thee”	Dr. Cordelia Anderson
Accompanied by Dr. Christopher Sanchack	

“Onward Christian Soldiers”

1. Onward, Christian soldiers!
 Marching as to war,
 With the cross of Jesus
 Going on before.
Christ, the royal Master,
 Leads against the foe;
 Forward into battle,
 See his banners go!

[Chorus]
Onward, Christian soldiers!
 Marching as to war,
 With the cross of Jesus
 Going on before.

2. At the sign of triumph
 Satan's host doth flee;
On, then, Christian soldiers,
 On to victory.
Hell's foundations quiver
 At the shout of praise;
Brothers, lift your voices,
 Loud your anthems raise.

3. Like a mighty army
 Moves the Church of God;
Brothers, we are treading
 Where the Saints have trod.
We are not divided;
 All one body we:
One in hope and doctrine,
 One in charity.

4. Onward, then, ye people;
 Join our happy throng.
Blend with ours your voices
 In the triumph song:
Glory, laud, and honor
 Unto Christ, the King.
This through countless ages
 Men and angels sing.

*Martin Luther King Jr. King recalled years later: “The opening hymn was the old familiar ‘Onward Christian Soldiers,’ and when that mammoth audience stood to sing, the voices outside swelling the chorus in the church, there was a mighty ring like the glad echo of Heaven itself.”)

Origin of “Onward Christian Soldiers”

In Yorkshire, England, where Doctor Baring-Gould was stationed as curate of Horbury, it is the custom to observe Whitmonday as a day of festival for the school children. In 1865 his school was invited to march to a neighboring village, there to join the children of another school in the festival exercises. As he could not find a suitable hymn for the children to sing while marching from one village to another, he sat up late into the night to compose a hymn; and out of those midnight hours came the lines, “Onward, Christian soldiers,” to which the children marched toward their festival and to which hundreds of thousands of Christians have marched in the decades since it was written. It was published in the Church Times in 1865. The hymn with its stirring tune, written later by Sir Arthur Sullivan, makes an ideal processional.

Source: Carl Price, One Hundred and One Hymn Stories.

“My Country, Tis of Thee”

1. My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From ev'ry mountainside
Let freedom ring!

2. My native country, thee,
Land of the noble free,
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills.
My heart with rapture thrills
Like that above.

3. Let music swell the breeze
And ring from all the trees
Sweet freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake;
Let all that breathe partake;
Let rocks their silence break,
The sound prolong.

4. Our fathers' God, to thee,
Author of liberty,
To thee we sing;
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light.
Protect us by thy might,
Great God, our King!

Origin of “My Country Tis of Thee”
(National Hymn of the United States)

“My Country Tis of Thee” (also known as “America”) was the lyrical result of Samuel F. Smith's drive to create a national hymn for the United States. A native of Boston, Smith (1808–1895) wrote the now-classic anthem in about thirty minutes on a rainy day in 1832, while a student at Andover Theological Seminary in Andover, Massachusetts. The first three verses encourage and invoke national pride, while the last verse was specifically reserved as a petition to God for His continued favor and protection of the United States of America. “My Country Tis of Thee” was first performed on July 4, 1832 at the Park Street Church in Boston.

Smith was also a Baptist minister, author, and journalist.

Program Participants

Rev. LaVaughn Wiggins is a native of Mobile, Alabama. LaVaughn Wiggins Received the BS and MDiv from Concordia College of Fort Wayne, Indiana. He has served as pastor of United Evangelical Lutheran Church since July 2016.

Dr. Kristofer Sanchack is a professor of music at Alabama State University.

Dr. Cordelia Anderson is a professor of music at Alabama State University.

Atty. Fred D. Gray has represented countless civil rights litigants since March 1955. He is a living legend and a national treasure.

Rev. E. Baxter Morris is a native of Anniston and served as the pastor of First Baptist Church for several decades. He cherished church and local history.

****In deep respect to Reverend Morris, who died May 2, 2021, we decided to leave his name in the program.**

Dr. Calvin McTier is the pastor of Bethel Missionary Baptist Church and a member of the Edgar D. Nixon Sr. Foundation.

Dr. Farrell J. Duncombe is the current the pastor of First Congregational Christian Church, United Church of Christ. He is a former pastor of St. Paul AME Church and once sat in Rosa M. Parks' Sunday School class. He remembers her well.

Dr. Janice R. Franklin is the dean of Library and Learning Resources at Alabama State University and a recent recipient of the Ann Barnett Service Award for her exemplary contribution to librarianship and professional education. She also heads the university's National Center for the Study of Civil Rights & African American Culture.

Jon Broadway met Jeannie Graetz through their association with One Montgomery, one of the city's foremost biracial organizations.

Tim Lennox has been one of the most visible and trusting fixtures in television broadcasting in the area for decades. He is a personal friend of the Graetz family.

Atty. Julian L. McPhillips Jr. personifies the best in community advocacy. Rev. Fred Lee Shuttlesworth visited his home for prayer once when he was ill.

Scotty E. Kirkland works from behind the scene at the Alabama Department of Archives and History to ensure the factual accuracy of our cherished historic markers. He is a true asset to the state.



April 6, 2021

Dr. Richard Bailey, Sr.
P. O. Box 230144
Montgomery, AL 36123

To the Rev. Robert and Jeannie Graetz Historic Marker Unveiling:

Although circumstances make it impossible for us to join you in person, on behalf of my wife and partner, Arndrea Waters King, my daughter, Yolanda Renee King and myself, I write to you to express our warmest greetings to everyone gathered for the unveiling of the historic marker honoring the Reverend Robert Graetz and his wife and partner, Jeannie Graetz.

We hold Rev. and Mrs. Graetz in the highest esteem for their courageous and selfless leadership in support of the Montgomery Bus protest of 1955-1956 and the continuing work of my parents, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King. At a time when very few white citizens of Montgomery supported the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott, The Graetz family chose instead to answer the call of history and uphold the highest values of their faith to take a valiant stand for racial equality and interracial brother and sisterhood.

Rev. and Mrs. Graetz did not merely lend their respected names to this historic cause; instead, they served it as active participants, despite threats and the antagonism of many white citizens, who did not share their deeply-felt commitment to racial equality and human rights. Rev. Graetz served as secretary for the Montgomery Improvement Association and the Graetz family suffered multiple bombings of their home. But never did they back away from their heartfelt commitment to racial justice and the Montgomery bus protest.

Our family will forever remain grateful and deeply-inspired by the courageous leadership of Reverend Robert and Jeannie Graetz during the Montgomery Bus Boycott, just as my father and mother valued their friendship and support with the highest admiration.

This historic marker honoring Reverend and Mrs. Graetz will provide a potent reminder to future generations of our brave white brothers and sisters in Montgomery and their names will be forever emblazoned among the pioneers of the Beloved Community of my father's great dream for our nation and world. And as we go forward into the uncertain future, the names of Robert and Jeannie Graetz will stand as a testament of hope for greater interracial understanding, goodwill and brotherhood and sisterhood.

In solidarity,

Martin Luther King III

Martin Luther King III · 1984 Howell Mill Road, NW · Suite 250613 · Atlanta, GA · 30325

Saint Paul

African Methodist Episcopal Church

706 East Patton Avenue Montgomery, AL 36111

Rev. Dr. Agnes M. Lover, Lead Pastor

www.stpaulamemontgomery.com

334-286-8577



May 16, 2021

Greetings:

On behalf of Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church Officers and Members, we salute the Honorable Graetz Family, on this historic well-deserved marker dedication. Saint Paul is the home church of Mrs. Rosa Parks, the Mother of the Civil Rights Movement and personal friend of the Graetz family. During the 3rd Annual Celebration of Rosa Parks Day in Alabama, Saint Paul proudly honored The Reverend Robert and Mrs. Jeannie Graetz for their determined efforts in "Dismantling Systemic Racism." Their courageous acts during the Civil Rights Movement not only challenged the unjust state of affairs of the 1950's, but their immense sacrifice signified Mississippi John Hurt's greatest hit, "Just like a tree that's planted by the water, I shall not be moved."

Mrs. Rosa Parks referred to St. Paul as her "special living room." This expression suggests that St. Paul and her faith in God was a place of refuge for her. Therefore, while under constant threat, documented home bombings, and perhaps social isolation from white clergy in the south, it is easy to conclude that the strength of Rev. Graetz and his family was fortified through his service: pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, one of the spiritual leaders during the Montgomery Bus Boycott and driving blacks to work while encouraging them to not ride the bus. These efforts combined with their faith, singing spirituals and trust in an Almighty God gave them the resolve and the resilience.



"Dismantling Systemic Racism"

The Late Reverend Robert Graetz
and
Mrs. Jeannie Graetz

For aiding in the coordination of the Montgomery Bus Boycott; for urging parishioners not to board Montgomery's buses and providing rides for them as well as other black residents to work; for your courageous stance against racism amidst constant threats and intimidation; for being faithful friends and supporters of Mrs. Rosa Parks; for being rare, unbowed voices for desegregation among white people in Alabama.

December 1, 2020

Rev. Dr. Agnes Lover, Pastor
St. Paul AME Church

Mrs. Rosa Parks, Rev. and Mrs. Graetz were not only neighbors that had an unquestionable bond; it is confirmed that Rosa Parks facilitated the Youth Council NAACP meeting in the Graetz home; attended the Highlander Folk School for social justice training together in Tennessee, in addition to countless Montgomery Improvement Association meetings that undergirded the 382-day Montgomery Bus Boycott. We are indebted to the Graetz family for their immense sacrifice in making this world a better place. May their contributions forever be etched in the annals of history!

Rev. Dr. Agnes M. Lover, Lead Pastor



The Mission of St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church is to ensure access to holistic (spiritual, social, and educational) ministries for the empowerment of the community and to preserve the legacy of Mrs. Rosa Parks.

Rev. Dr. Cathey Bruce, Youth Ministry | Rev. Pamela Higgins, New Members Ministry | Rev. Cassie Jackson, Prayer Warriors | Rev. Bill Owens, Evangelism Ministry

Holt Street Memorial Baptist Church



Rev. Willie D. McClung, Ph.D., Pastor

Willie W. Barnes, Sr.
Chairman, Deacons

Thomas Turner, Sr.
Vice- Chairman, Deacons

Edith Lonon
Chairman, Trustees

Robert R. Calloway
Vice- Chairman, Trustees

Thomas Turner, Sr.
Treasurer

Mary T. Caldwell
Financial Secretary

Dr. George West, Sr.
Dean of Music

W. Gerald Williams
Director of Choirs

Bonita Stewart
Office Manager

1870 South Court Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36104
(334) 263-0522

March 26, 2021

Dear Dr. Bailey,

Thank you for the invitation to attend the honor ceremony for the late Rev. Robert and Jeannie Graetz. I will be delighted to share this moment with you and others. I not only knew him on a personal level, we were blessed on four occasions for him to speak in our pulpit both at 903 South Holt Street and 1870 South Court Street.

Please share with me any additional information I may need, but count me in!

Sincerely,

Rev. Willie D. McClung, Ph.D., Senior Pastor



Service in the Field Or Sacrifice In The Temple

McPhillips Shinbaum, L.L.P.

McPhillips, Shinbaum, Luck, Bodin & Guillot

ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS AT LAW

Julian L. McPhillips, Jr.*
Kenneth Shinbaum
Aaron J. Luck
James G. Bodin**
Joseph C. Guillot
Chase Estes

516 SOUTH PERRY STREET
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36104
(334) 262-1911 • (866) 224-8664
FAX (334) 263-2321

March 2, 2021

*Also Admitted in NY
**Also Admitted in DC

Post Office Box 64
Montgomery, Alabama 36101
Office Admin. Amelia Strickland

Of Counsel Attorneys
David Sawyer
Tanika Finney

VIA U.S. Mail Only

Dr. Richard Bailey, Sr.
P.O. Box 230144
Montgomery, Alabama 36123

Dear Richard:

Thank you for your kind letter of February 24, 2021.

Of course, I would be honored to be at the unveiling of an historic marker honoring the Graetzs, along if possible, with my wife Leslie. As you must know, our properties bordered on each other's, and we were frequently in each other's homes, and with Leslie especially helping them regularly with personal needs, and I contributed to many of their civil rights causes.

They are forever our heroes.

Thank you so much, Richard, for including us. I enclosed a copy of the BOOM! Magazine article about us with the Graetzs pictured.

Sincerely,



Julian and Leslie McPhillips

JLMcPhil/cjm
x.c. Leslie McPhillips

SHARE WITH A FRIEND
MONTGOMERY • PRATTVILLE • PIKE ROAD • WETUMPKA • MILLBROOK

The River Region's 50+ Lifestage Magazine

BOOM!

The River Region's Resource for Aging Well

FEBRUARY 2020
FREE

Cover Profile
page 42

17th Annual
JEWISH
FOOD FESTIVAL

Greg Budell
How to Get In
The Globe

Rekindle the
Romance
52 Date Night Ideas

Going Back
to Work
After
Retiring

Emotional Impact
Long-Distance
Caregiving

FREE SUBSCRIPTION
DELIVERED TO YOUR EMAIL
RiverRegionBoom.com

Alabama Department of
**Senior
Services**

Travel Experiences with Jeff Barganier
**Hunting Big Hogs
Bare-Handed**

The Best Reading Experience in the River Region!
Greg Budell, Leigh Anne Richards, Tracy Bhalla-Eating Smart,
Raley Wiggins' Elder Law, This & That, 12 Things, & More...



Friends and neighbors of Julian and Leslie,
Robert S. Graetz and his wife, Jeannie

Robert S. Graetz (born May 16, 1928) is a Lutheran clergyman who, as the white pastor of a black congregation in Montgomery, Alabama, openly supported the Montgomery bus boycott, a landmark event of the civil rights movement. Graetz's first full-time job as pastor was to a black congregation, Trinity Lutheran Church, in Montgomery. He began working there in 1955, the year of the Montgomery bus boycott. A personal friend of Rosa Parks, Graetz became secretary of the Montgomery Improvement Association, the organization founded to organize and support the boycott. Graetz's support of the movement included appearing at meetings led by Martin Luther King Jr. For his support of the boycott, Graetz and his family were ostracized by other whites and suffered several episodes of harassment, including tire slashings,[4] arrest,[5] and bombings. Bombs were planted at his home on three occasions; the largest did not explode. The Graetzes are actively involved in various civic activities including the diversity group One Montgomery and the League of Women Voters. Each year they host the annual Graetz Symposium at the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at Alabama State University. (Wikipedia)



Celebration of Montgomery Bus Boycott Civil Rights Legends

Gifts of Giants

Attorney Fred Gray

Reverend Robert & Jean E. Graetz



Attorney Fred Gray



Reverend Robert & Jean E. Graetz

Guest Speaker: Dick Gregory

Activist, Critic, Writer,
Entrepreneur and Comedian

Thursday, December 12, 2013 | 6:30p.m.
Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa

Arise, Go Toward the South: Robert Graetz and His Stirring Times

Robert S. Graetz, Jr., was born in Clarksburg, West Virginia, a fifth generation male to bear the name since Gottlob Wilhelm Robert Graetz came to the United States in 1844. Graetz is also the fourth bearer of the name to become a Lutheran minister.

The childhood of Robert Graetz did not present a viable black presence. Indeed, as he entered Capital University, a Lutheran college in Columbus, Ohio, a watershed occurred when this Social Science major decided to concentrate in sociology and signed up for a course from Dr. Karl Hertz, who allowed him to write on a subject of his choosing. Graetz learned from some of his close Jewish friends in high school that some major colleges had Jewish quotas. His research revealed that African Americans were denied admission to American colleges. For the title of his research paper, he borrowed phraseology from Caesar's crossing the Rubicon, "The die is cast." He titled his paper, "The Cast is Dyed—Black." Graetz believed the die had been cast in his personal life. He knew he had crossed his personal Rubicon and could not call retreat. His new concern propelled him to take three more courses from Dr. Hertz, calling him the most difficult "professor he had studied under, and probably the very best."

On the strength of his new discovery, Graetz organized the Capital University Race Relations Club in 1948 and began attending the Columbus chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. At one of the meetings, he met Walter White, national head of the organization. As the only white person in the audience one night, Graetz took special note when White spoke of the increasing number of white persons who were joining the movement.

Robert Graetz also had the double pleasure of meeting Jean Ellis at Capital University. Not only did he succumb to the love of his life, he also met someone who shared his love for God and for social justice. Not easy picking, Jean Ellis had a mind of her own and a reputation to match. Robert Graetz had learned from a friend who had dated her not to attempt a kiss on the first date. Not deterred, Robert Graetz not only tried on their initial date, but he succeeded. Then on Sunday, June 10, 1951, the two became one before family and friends in the bride's hometown of East Springfield, Pennsylvania.

The young couple arrived in Montgomery in June 1955. As Bob Graetz settled in as the first white pastor of the all-black Trinity Lutheran Church, he learned to refer to the event from 1861 to 1865 as the War between the States, not the Civil War. Such orientation was just the beginning, as he came to view segregation throughout Montgomery society. He found it in the movie theaters, doctor's offices, neighborhoods, schools, libraries, and parks everywhere.

Early on, a member of his congregation who operated a barber shop in his back yard was giving him a haircut when a white vendor stopped by. The barber tried unsuccessfully to hide the face of his customer. Night time visitors expressed their displeasure with a black man cutting the hair of a white customer.

In June 1955 Reverend Graetz met a seamstress named Rosa Parks, who used his church for NAACP Youth Council meetings. Parks became his best friend in Montgomery outside of his congregation. Bill Griffin, a fellow Lutheran pastor in Montgomery and an African American, related that someone had been arrested on the city bus and a boycott was being planned but knew little more. Graetz telephoned her on Saturday,

December 3, and said, "I keep hearing that someone has been arrested on the bus and there's going to be a boycott. Is that true? Who was it?" Parks replied, "It's true. It was me, Pastor Graetz. I was arrested." A shocked Reverend Graetz rushed over to her home for details.

That Sunday morning Graetz preached a Christian analysis of Parks' arrest and announced to his congregation that he and his family would observe the boycott. On Monday he attended the 9 AM trial of Parks, where he sat reluctantly in the white section. That evening, with the assistance of church member Robert Dandridge, who led the way through the crowd, saying "This is my pastor, let us through," Graetz found himself the only white person—except for news people and camera crew—inside the Holt Street Baptist Church, where they assembled in the basement.

After he joined the board of the Montgomery Improvement Association, Graetz remembers Dr. King saying that "If you are not ready to sacrifice your life for this cause, you have no business being on this board." Graetz firmly believed he would be singled out for punishment. (He did have a long wait). When vandals struck his car in January 1956, they slashed the front tires from the inside so the cuts would go unnoticed but the tires would blow out from traveling at a high speed. Other times sugar was placed in the gas tank of his automobile. Graetz was also followed as he travelled by car. He stopped using the same route in succession. Graetz always feared for his safety and the safety of his family. Because of the volume of threatening anonymous letters that arrived, Graetz began to write letters with secret messages on the reverse side of postage stamps.

His home was bombed three times, with the last bomb not exploding. No one was home on August 25, 1956 as two or three sticks of dynamite landed 43 feet in front of the porch. The 3:00 AM explosion damaged the front door and some windows. Mayor W. A. "Tacky" Gayle accused the Graetzs of leaving home long enough for the MIA to plant the bomb as a publicity stunt. The explosion of January 10, 1957 caused some damage. Graetz heard other explosions minutes later and learned that four churches and one other home had been bombed, with his home being the first at 2:00 AM. The message was clear - get Graetz first. Bomb experts also found in the driveway 11 sticks of unexploded dynamite and a container of TNT, enough to have destroyed the entire neighborhood. The fuse had been lit, but it had gone out. "

In 1958 Graetz returned to Columbus to assume the pastorate of the St. Phillips Lutheran Church. He later participated in the March on Washington and returned to Montgomery for the last leg of the Selma to Montgomery March.

His many recognitions include the Russworm Award (1958), Selma Humanitarian Award (1976), Ohio Humanitarian Award (1993), (Ohio) Governor's Humanitarian Award (1997), and many others. Bob Graetz is the author of *A White Preacher's Memoir: The Montgomery Bus Boycott* (1999), *A White Preacher's Message on Race and Reconciliation* (2006) and *A Congregational Guide to Human Relations* (1964)". An *Informed Church Serves a Diverse Society*, chapter in *The Church in a Diverse Society*, ed. L.W. Halvorson, Augsburg (1964). He was a monthly columnist for Columbus, Ohio, *Diocese Catholic Times* (1973–1987).

Back in 1955, when Graetz learned that he was headed to Montgomery, he placed on his stationary, "Arise, Go toward the South," phraseology that was based on scripture. Montgomery became a better place because he came south in 1955 and has become an even better place since his return in the fall of 2005 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the bus boycott.

Richard Bailey, Montgomery, Alabama

Never Alone: The Legacy of Jean “Jeannie” E. Graetz

Jeannie Ellis Graetz was born in the small Pennsylvania town of East Springfield (population, 1,477); yet, in 2013 she stands prominently alongside the likes of such historical giants as Coretta Scott King and others because of her commitment to civil rights.

Jeannie Ellis grew up on a farm with four sisters and no brothers; consequently, she was expected to remain on the farm after graduation from high school to help out. Having a mind of her own, she worked for two years at the General Electric plant nearby in Erie (with the secret aim of going to college). Having an insatiable curiosity about different cultures-something she gained from being an avid reader-Jeannie Ellis invited one of her co-workers to meet her parents. The African American female and the Ellis parents were equally unprepared for the unprecedented encounter. Jeannie Ellis was truly the Eleanor Roosevelt of her day.

The single-minded Jeannie Ellis enrolled at Capital University in September 1949. There, she met an equally confident upper classman named Robert Graetz. Their first date and first kiss came on Saturday, February 12, 1950. He courted her acquaintance assiduously, and the relationship was consummated in East Springfield in June 1951. With this marriage, social justice had met social commitment. They would be inseparable thereafter, and the world around them never would be the same.

They became a praying couple, and it continues to show. Their propensity for prayer enabled them to withstand the bombing weather in Montgomery, Alabama. Pastor Graetz had promised Lutheran officials in Columbus that he would not start any trouble in Montgomery, and he kept his promise. But trouble found him once he identified with the Montgomery Improvement Association and its bus protest. The family brought their children along when they came to Montgomery, and the number continued to increase after their arrival.

Events intensified with the progression of the bus protest. Jeannie Graetz received very rude treatment at the office of her pediatrician. And, she never visited a beautician while in the capital city. The parsonage at 1110 Rosa Parks Avenue (named Cleveland Avenue at the time) was bombed on August 25, 1956. The bomb landed 43 feet from the porch, causing little damage to the front door, windows, and some furniture. Luckily, no one was home. But the family was not so fortunate on January 10, 1957. Early that morning, while the family--including a nine-day-old child--was sleeping, a dynamite exploded and caused some damage to the parsonage. No one was harmed. Eleven sticks of dynamites attached to a can of TNT that failed to explode were found in the driveway. Bomb experts said the two could have destroyed the entire neighborhood.

In addition to her concern about bombings, Jeannie Graetz worried about threatening telephone calls. One such call asked, “I see your children out in the yard there. Are you sure they’re okay out there?” Such calls also made her fearful of taking out the trash. She didn’t feel safe outside at night. The Graetzes lived in constant fear.

Never Alone: The Legacy of Jean “Jeannie” E. Graetz

Bob and Jeannie Graetz have been called many names, some unfit for print. And, the couple has been the victims of just about every act of inhumanity known to humankind. Yet, their faith in God never has wavered. Jeannie Graetz was convinced they were never alone.

On Saturday, February 26, 2011, Montgomery Mayor Todd Strange presented the Robert Graetz with keys to the city for his work in racial equality and reconciliation. The Graetz Neighborhood Association also used the 2:00 PM ceremony to dedicate the Graetz Neighborhood to Bob and Jeannie Graetz with a marker at the Fairview Avenue and West Jeff Davis Avenue intersections of Edgar D. Nixon Avenue.

Along the way Jeannie Graetz has co-authored many books with her husband, although her name does not appear on the cover. Such strategy is consistent with their view of teamwork. Because of her interest in literacy, the E. D. Nixon Elementary School in Montgomery surprised her by naming a literacy program in her honor on May 13, 2013.

Richard Bailey, Montgomery, Alabama

“Rosa Parks’ letter about KKK Bought By Family Bombed”

The handwritten letter by civil rights icon Rosa Parks about how the Ku Klux Klan bombed a neighbor’s home in 1957-Montgomery will shortly move back to the “City of Dreams.”

The letter will soon be transferred from the rarefied vault of an international auction house on Manhattan’s upper East Side to a climate-controlled enclosure in Alabama State University’s archives, all thanks to a beloved Montgomery family who lived in the very residence mentioned in the newly won Parks’ letter.

The family who purchased the 1957 letter last week from New York City’s Guernsey’s Auction for \$9,375 is led by the Rev. Robert (Bob) and Jeannie Graetz, who are the very same couple whose family home on the corner of Mill Street and Cleveland Avenue in Montgomery was bombed by the KKK in the early morning hours of Jan. 10, 1957.

Parks’ letter is her firsthand account of the bombing that she vividly described in the letter purchased by the Graetz family.

Both of the Graetzes are known as acclaimed pioneers in Alabama’s civil rights movement, and since retiring from the Lutheran clergy, both serve as advisers and consultants with ASU’s National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture.

“The house that Rosa Parks describes as bombed in the letter that we bought at auction was our own home, which was the parsonage of the Trinity Lutheran Church where my husband served as its minister and I served as its first lady,” said Jeannie Graetz.

The Parks’ letter won by the couple is an account of the second bombing of their home by the KKK. It was first bombed by the hate group on August 25, 1956. No one was seriously hurt then or in the subsequent 1957 bombing, which is the subject of Parks’ auction letter.

The Graetzes believe that they were on the Klan’s “hit-list” because they were among the only local white clergy who openly supported the Montgomery Bus Boycott that began after Parks refused to give up her seat on a segregated Montgomery City Bus to a white passenger on December 1, 1955, which led to her arrest.



Rev. Bob and Jeannie Graetz and their four children were in their home when it was bombed in 1957. (File Photos)

Parks' arrest and what occurred because of it is called by historians as the seminal birth of the modern civil rights movement in America.

"We raised the ire of the local Klan as soon as we moved to Montgomery because we are a white couple, and my husband was the minister of an all-black Lutheran congregation. We also chose to live among our flock, and then we publicly supported the desegregation of Montgomery's buses beginning in 1955. Because of those reasons, we were marked targets," she said.

Family Purchases Letter

Rev. Bob Graetz said that a friend told the couple about the handwritten Parks' letter a few weeks ago, and that is when his family had the "eureka" moment to purchase it, bring it back home to Montgomery and give it to Alabama State University's archives.

"We thought that the account of the KKK bombing of our house by Rosa Parks should come back home to Montgomery, and where better to house it than our beloved Alabama State University," said Bob Graetz.

"My wife and all seven of our children chipped in to help us purchase this piece of history and it has been a joy and a blessing to all of us to soon bring this back home," said the 90-year-old civil rights foot soldier.

Bombing Memories



Rev. Graetz with Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Montgomery, circa 1955.(File Photos)

Jeannie Graetz said that when the KKK's dynamite bomb went off, the entire family was home, which included her husband, her husband's mother and their four young children – the youngest child inside the bombed home was their nine-day-old infant.

“When the bomb detonated at 2 a.m., it blew our roof completely off of the home, as well as all of the doors; it shattered every one of the windows and did considerable other damage to the rest of our house,” Jeannie Graetz said. “Our neighbors included Mr. and Mrs. Parks who lived across the street, and they were our close friends. After the bombing, they helped us clean and pick up. It was a miracle that no one was killed or severely injured.”

Jeannie Graetz remembered that many other locations were also bombed in Montgomery on that same evening.

“The same night that our home was bombed, four black churches were also bombed by the KKK in Montgomery, as well as the home of Rev. Ralph and Juanita Abernathy. Several men were arrested by law enforcement for these bombings and placed on trial, but the all-white local juries of that era found them all innocent,” she said with a sigh.

Belongs At ASU

Both Bob and Jeannie Graetz said that they both felt from the beginning that the Parks' letter belonged at Alabama State University because of its long and historic association with Parks, who attended school on campus, as did so many other civil rights movement leaders, including the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, attorney Fred Gray, Jo Ann Robinson, Selma's F.D. Reese, Thelma Glass, Birmingham's Fred Shuttlesworth and so many more.

“Bob and I just love ASU, it is a part of us and its employees and students are just like our family,” Jeannie Graetz said.

“A Wonderful Story”

The president of New York's Guernsey's Auctions Arlan Ettinger said that the account of the Graetz family purchasing the Parks' letter is a wonderful story.

“As the president of an internally acclaimed auction house, we've presided over many unique and meaningful auctions from the Titanic relics to Princess Diana's jewelry ... but this story is an extremely wonderful story,” Ettinger said.

“When I heard about the Graetz family's full-circle story concerning the Rosa Parks' letter, I thought how wonderful and fabulous it was for this most meaningful thing to occur at our auction house. What's not to love about this occurrence?” Ettinger said.

‘All Of God’s Children’

The dean at ASU who oversees the University’s archives is Dr. Janice Franklin. She said that the University is gratified that the Graetz family pooled their resources and purchased this rare civil rights artifact for ASU.

She said that the Parks’ letter belongs in Montgomery and specifically at Alabama State University because of the University’s close association with the civil rights movement. “We who work at Alabama State University’s archives are overjoyed because this will allow us to preserve and share this important document with the public and scholars alike,” Franklin said.

She said that it is a rare find that speaks to the struggles and to the suffering that the Graetz family endured, as did so many others who stood up against hatred, segregation and the evils of Jim Crow and KKK injustice.

“Thank God for Rev. and Mrs. Graetz and this letter written by Mrs. Parks, which attests to all that the Graetz family went through so that freedom and equality could be enjoyed by all of God’s children, despite the color of their skin,” Franklin added.

Source: Kenneth Mullinax, “Rosa Parks’ letter about KKK Bought By Family Bombed,” Birmingham *Times*, August 9, 2018.

1863

2021

**Emancipation Association of Montgomery
Presents Its 155th Annual
Emancipation Proclamation Celebration
(1866-2021)**



**The Honorable J C Love III, Judge
Probate Court of Montgomery County, Alabama
Montgomery, Alabama
Keynote Speaker**

**Friday, January 1, 2021
10:00 AM**

**Theme:
“Tell Them We Are Rising
Our Cause is Just; Unity as a Must, the Struggle Continues”**

**Bryant Missionary Baptist Church
3645 Norman Bridge Road
Montgomery, AL 36111**

**Rev. Ronald Moncrief, Host Pastor
Dr. Richard Bailey Sr., President, Presiding**

Emancipation Association Memorial Hall of Fame

Members



Lawrence A. Myers



John Louis
Thomas



Cora L. McHaney



Elizabeth M.



Dr. Gwendolyn

Friends



Rev. Robert
Graetz
Fervid supporter.
Program



Jeanie Graetz
Civil Rights
Advocate



Rev. Frank R.
Johnson
Avid supporter,
Teacher, Counselor,
Pastor, Hall Street



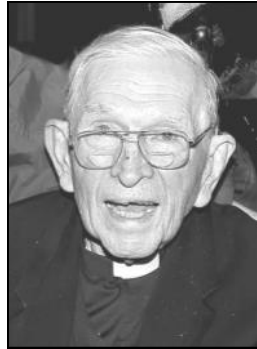
Mr. David Calloway
Ross, Jr.
Ardent supporter,
President




Correta Scott
King

In Memoriam

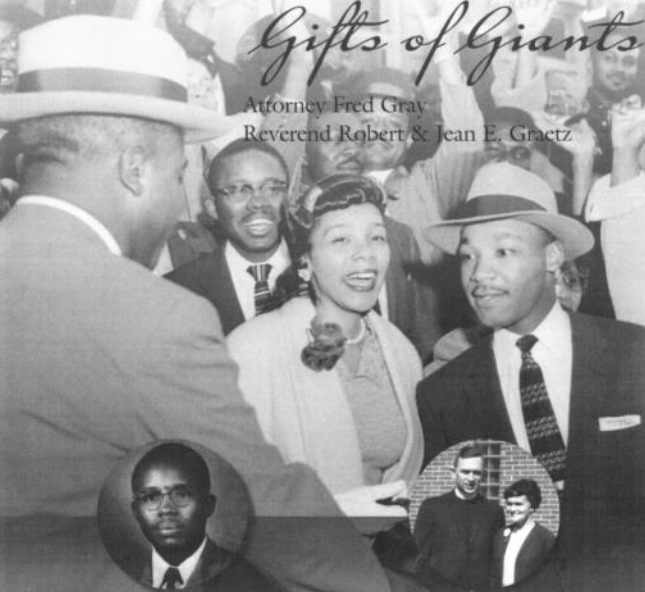
Rev. Robert Graetz





 Celebration of
Montgomery Bus Boycott
Civil Rights Legends

Gifts of Giants

Attorney Fred Gray
Reverend Robert & Jean E. Graetz



 Attorney Fred Gray

 Reverend Robert & Jean E. Graetz

Guest Speaker: Dick Gregory
Activist, Comedian, Writer,
Entrepreneur and Consultant

Thursday, December 12, 2013 | 6:30p.m.
Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa



1863

2013

Emancipation Association of Montgomery
Presents Its Sesquicentennial
EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION CELEBRATION



**Rev. Thomas Earl Jordan, Pastor
Lilly Baptist Church
Guest Speaker**

**Tuesday, 1 January 2013
10:00 A.M.**

**Theme:
"Moving Forward in Unity with a Vision and a Purpose
Our Cause is Just; Unity is a Must, the Struggle Continues"**

Hutchinson Missionary Baptist Church
860 Grove Street
Montgomery, AL

Dr. G. W. C. Richardson, Pastor
Dr. Richard Bailey, President. Presiding

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



Rev. Andrew E. Dawkins is a retired AME minister and chaplain. His background has focused on radio broadcasting and contractual government service. He has also been a departmental supervisor. He continues to volunteer and to remain active in the community.



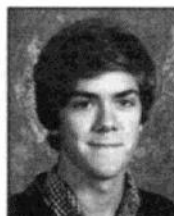
Rev. J. J. Fountain was born in Lowndes County to the late Mr. and Mrs. Willie Robert Fountain in 1940. He accepted his call into the ministry in 1961 and pastored Disciples of Christ for the next 25 years. He came to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Faith in 1986 and was ordained and received under the Right Reverend Cecil Bishop. He has pastored such churches as Bezzell Springs, Oak Street, Troy Chapel, and Weeping Mary AME Zion Churches. He is married to Mary Anna Flowers Fountain, and they are the parents of nine children.



Mary E. Gaines has excelled in several areas. A graduate of the University of Alabama – Tuscaloosa, the Loop College, and Midwestern Broadcasting School of Chicago, she has worked for the Department of Justice, the United States Forest Service as a public affairs staff officer. She has also been a producer and anchor for Alabama Public Television and a reporter for WBRC TV in Birmingham and WCBI-TV in Mississippi. Her work in radio has included WBMX in Chicago, WTUG in Tuscaloosa, and WXVI in Montgomery.



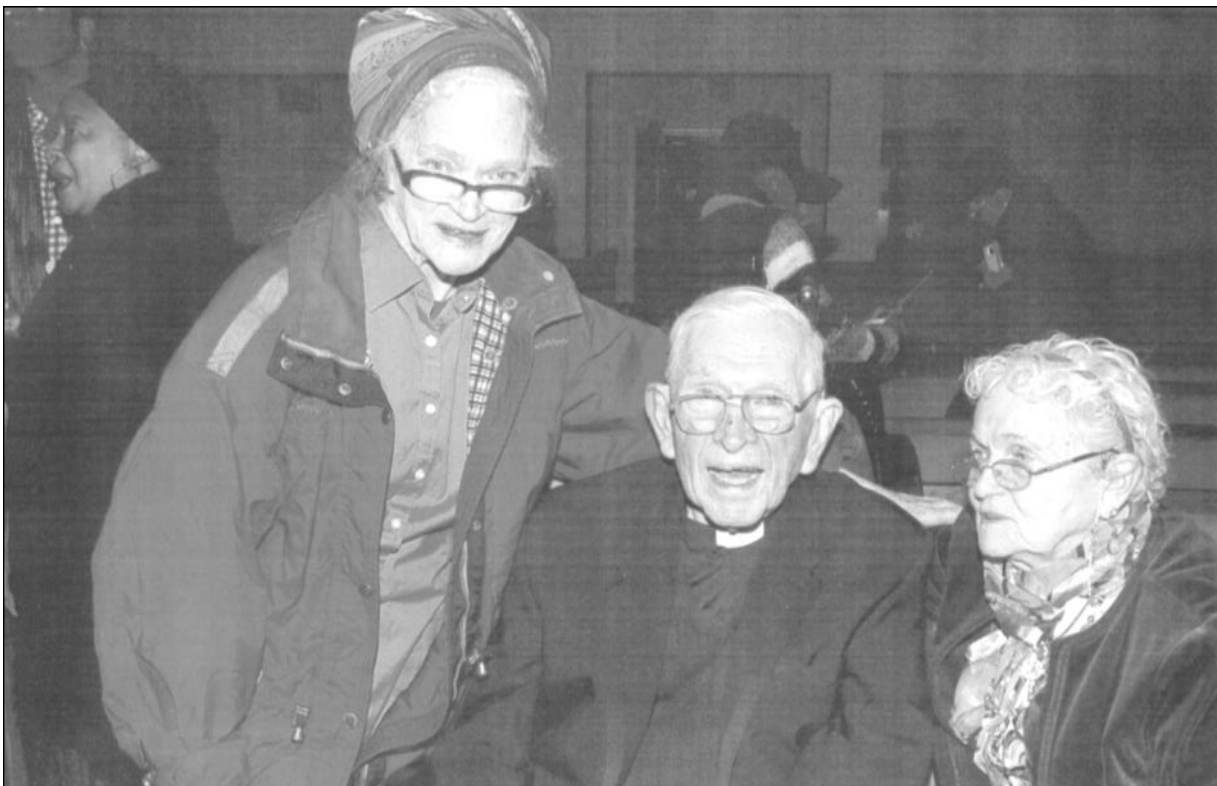
Lutheranism has served as the cornerstone for the faith of **Rev. Robert S. Graetz**. His faith sustains him well while he was a minister at the Trinity Luthern Church during the Montgomery Bus Boycott and while as he and his family survived the taunts and physical violence. This Ohio native and author today calls Montgomery home.



Cannon Hyche is a junior at Booker T. Washington (BTW) Magnet High School. He is a lead guitarist in the Show Band Magnet and serves as president of the Board Game Club. Besides pursuing academic goals and serving as a student leader, Cannon participates in BTW's Theatre and Musical Theatre productions. He has been featured in *The Crucible* (John Proctor) and *Children of Eden* (Ham). Cannon is also committed to service and to making a difference in the lives of others as a youth missionary. He visited Nicaragua as a mission worker during his sophomore year in high school, and he has utilized lessons learned and observations made to support humanitarian efforts in his school and community. Cannon has also served as a member of BTW's National History Honor Society.



Kenyona G.T. Blocker, the daughter of the late Elder Ken Blocker and Ingrid R. Blocker, is a junior at Robert E. Lee High School, where she is an outstanding student. Kenyona is currently a two-year member of the school's prestigious Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program and a "first chair" trumpet player for the "Marching Generals", Lee's signature marching band. Her other interest include volleyball, track and field, and basketball.



The Graetz Story

Pastor Graetz Is Threatened; And Quickly Receives Clyde Sellers' Protection; As Phone Gushes Praise, Abuse

By Tom Johnson

THE REV. ROBERT S. GRAETZ made the following sleepy notes after a telephone call at 2:15 a.m., Tuesday.

"White man who seemed to be drunk demanded that I come and give him taxi service like what has been furnished to the dark complected people. Suggested we set up a car pool for white people so [they] can save the .15c fare. Refused to give name.

After *The Advertiser*, containing the story of his ministry at a Negro Lutheran church on Cleveland Avenue appeared in general circulation a few hours later, Graetz was besieged by the after-clap of a surprised, and in many cases angry, indignant, white citizenry.

And he, in turn, was surprised by the number who called to express their support of his work. A few dropped by to speak to him in person.

As of late yesterday, Pastor Graetz had logged 30 telephone calls as a direct result of his boycott activities becoming known.

Twelve whites and nine Negroes made friendly calls. Eight calls were of the unfriendly sort, four of them downright hostile.

At 3:35 p.m. Tuesday, a caller threatened that "something might happen" unless Graetz got "out of town by night-fall." Two hours later, three other calls came from the same person in quick succession.

Clyde Sellers Comes Through

BY THAT TIME, Graetz had informed police and a couple of detectives were on hand. When the phone rang the last time, Graetz quickly passed it to one of the officers, who grinned and said: "I heard him all right."

Some time later, Graetz received one of the "nicest calls" since his troubles began. The caller was Police Commissioner Clyde Sellers, who had learned of the threats shortly after the young pastor called the police.

Almost immediately, Graetz says, Sellers told him: "You know I don't agree with what you believe but I do believe that every man has the right to his own beliefs."

Then Sellers, a White Citizens Council member, assured Graetz, the former NAACP organizer, that nothing would happen to him, that police cars would watch the pastorate all night to discourage any violence.

Graetz Joins Investigation

THE TWO had a lengthy discussion of the boycott issue, with Sellers expressing the opinion the "boycott has failed." He also informed Graetz of incidents that led him to believe the nearly unanimous abstention of Negroes from riding buses was not entirely voluntary.

Graetz, "thoroughly surprised," said he had heard of no instances where protesting Negroes were pressured, but he promised "to investigate."

Graetz was impressed that the police commissioner should make a friendly call.

Negro Son-In-Law

NOT SO FRIENDLY was the letter from a Union Springs "white man," with the white underscored three times. Its cryptic contents: "May you have for a son-in-law the blackest Negro that ever originated from the wilds of Africa."

A telephone call Tuesday evening: "Pastor, if I was you I wouldn't call myself a pastor. You're a no-good Son-of-a-bitch."

An "old white lady" who said she was a member of an "old family and knew all the city officials" offered her Oldsmobile for use in the car pool.

A man from Macon County said there are "thousands of white people who are determined to right the wrongs that have been done." He added that race relations are "splendid" in Shorter, Ala.

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Jan. 12, 1956

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

Mutually Exclusive Roles Editor, The Advertiser:

After reading Tom Johnson's column in *The Advertiser*, in which the ambitious young minister of Lutheran faith is described as taking such an active part in the 90-year-old Civil War question of segregation of the races:

It is apparent that this young and well meaning minister is conscientious and feels he is doing the right thing. We need lots of young men like that and I have no objections to their feeling free to use their time as best they see fit.

For one so young to move into a strange section or into a new state and to immediately project himself into a heated controversy as age-old as the separation of races at the same time hiding behind the skirts of the ministry in order to defy the very law that grants him immunity, shows a disregard for both Christian principle and for established law which has as its purpose to guard the peace that comes from nowhere except through Christ the Prince of Peace.

Can one imagine the Master using such tactics to serve the Lord?

Pastor Graetz is either a Christian or a rabble-rouser. He cannot be both.

Montgomery JOHN KELTON.

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Jan. 14, 1956

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

Another John Brown Editor, The Advertiser:

I read the article written by Tom Johnson of *The Advertiser* staff describing the activities of Rev. Robert S. Graetz. While he was sent here to be the pastor of a Negro church on Cleveland Ave., it appears that he spends more time stirring up dissatisfaction among the Negroes than he spends in the pulpit.

I noticed that Graetz hails from Charleston, W. Va. After reading this article I just casually picked up a book from my encyclopedia, flipped it open and by some strange coincidence I read that in 1859, just 96 years ago, in Charleston, Va., another fanatic by the name of John Brown was hanged.

JAMES H. GREENE.

Montgomery

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Jan. 15, 1956

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

Graetz Denies Bomb Hoax



MINISTER MEASURES HOLE

The Rev. Robert Graetz, with son Robert III and daughter Margaret, measure a 15-inch hole left by a dynamite bomb thrown on the lawn early yesterday.

OFF RED CHINA COAST

Probe Shows Navy Plane Hit By Gunfire Before Sea Crash

TOKYO, Aug. 25 (AP) — Bullet fragments in a crew member's body confirmed tonight that a U. S. Navy patrol bomber was hit by gunfire before it plunged into the China Sea off Red China's

The white minister of a Negro church whose home was damaged by a dynamite blast early yesterday charged Mayor W. A. Gayle with "foolishness" in calling the bombing a "publicity stunt."

The Rev. Robert Graetz, 27, arrived in the city during the afternoon to find windows and a door shattered at his home, 1116 Cleveland Ave., by the pre-dawn blast. Windows in two nearby homes also were shattered, but nobody was hurt.

Mayor W. A. Gayle laid the latest bombing to a "publicity stunt," and promised an all-out investigation to "get to the bottom of this thing by arresting and convicting the party or parties if it is at all possible."

GRAETZ DENIES

Gayle said it "appears strange that none of the occupants have been at home when other bombings occurred." There have been two previous bombings since the boycott began last winter.

Det. Capt. E. P. Brown, leading an investigation into the incident, said the blast on the Graetz lawn apparently came from "two or three sticks of dynamite."

Set off about 20 feet from the house, at about 3 a.m., the blast shattered a picture window, broke others throughout the house, and forced open the front door, ripping out the lock and door facing.

A window was shattered at the home of B. T. Knox, Negro, 1116 Cleveland Ave., and at another house across the street.

Gayle declared that "this latest bombing follows the usual pattern. It's a strange coincidence that when interest appears lagging in the bus boycott, something like this happens."

"We are inclined to wonder if

Ousted Coed Not Certain On Schooling

TEAGUE, Tex., Aug. 25 (AP) — Autherine Lucy Foster, first Negro to attend the University of Alabama, hasn't made up her mind where she will attend school this coming term.

She was expelled from the university last winter after she charged university officials conspired in campus rioting that forced her from the all-white school.

Her husband, the Rev. H. L. Foster, pastor of the First Baptist Church, South, here, said today his wife hadn't made any decisions.

He added that she had received a number of invitations to enroll, including one from Denmark. He said another was from a group of students at the University of Texas.

It was announced in Birmingham, Ala., yesterday that her attorney would reveal in a federal court hearing next Wednesday whether she would continue her fight for admittance to the University of Alabama.

The Fosters returned here last night from a series of revival meetings the pastor has been conducting in east Texas.

Graetz

(Continued From Page 1)

out-of-state contributions to the boycott have been dropping. Perhaps this is just a publicity stunt to build up interest of the Negroes in their campaign."

Rev. Graetz called the mayor's statement "foolishness." He said he has been often threatened in the past, and that "this is just the sort of thing they did to Dr. Martin Luther King and E. D. Nixon."

An estimated half-stick of dynamite was tossed on the porch of King's home Jan. 30, doing some damage, and another blast was set off at Nixon's home two nights later.

There was no damage at the Nixon home. Last January Graetz' car was damaged when someone put sugar in the gasoline tank and slashed two of the tires.

The minister said he surmised that the latest violence was brought about by the "same group" responsible for the earlier bombings "or by like-minded persons since it all follows a similar pattern."

Rev. King last night voiced "regrets" at Gayle's remark, and said the mayor should use all the power of his office to find and prosecute the perpetrators.

"We regret that Mayor Gayle allegedly accused the Montgomery Improvement Assn. of instigating the bombing in order to stimulate interest and encourage financial contributions for the continued operation of the bus protest."

The interest and enthusiasm are as high as ever and the people are still giving generously, but even more the movement from its inception has been a movement of non-violent resistance depending upon moral and spiritual forces.

"We condemn such acts and urge the mayor to use every effort possible to apprehend and punish the guilty parties. Since the mayor implies that Negroes perpetrated this deplorable act, it is both morally compelling and practically expedient for him to use the power of his office to bring the guilty parties to justice."

"We are still determined to live by the principle of non-violence. Both aggressive and retaliatory violence are diametrically opposed to the spirit of love and morality that stand at the center of our movement."

Yesterday's blast left a hole 21 inches in diameter and 15 inches deep on the Graetz lawn. Capt. Brown said he was convinced the blast went off on top of the ground, since there was a strong odor of cordite.

HEARD MILES AWAY

He estimated the size of the home-made bomb as at least two sticks of dynamite, and probably three. The blast was heard over an area estimated at five miles in radius.

Graetz, his wife and three children were just ending a one-week vacation and workshop at Highlander Folk School in Tennessee. He said he heard of the blast from a newsman before leaving there.

His wife and three small children were with him. "I'm certainly glad we weren't at home," he said. "We had a nice night's sleep where we were, and I don't think we'd have slept so well here."

BOYCOTT SUPPORTER

The young minister, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, has actively supported the bus boycott since it got under way nearly 10 months ago. For a time he was a driver in the boycott car pool.

Graetz is a native of Clarksville, W. Va. He attended Capital University and Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, where he became interested in work with Negro young people.

Before accepting his pastorate here he was intern minister at a predominantly Negro church in Los Angeles.

Only this week Graetz had invited Montgomery's white ministers to attend a meeting of the bi-racial Montgomery Council on Human Relations, to hear Negro pastor, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., tell "his side of the story" on the bus boycott.

The white ministers declined the invitation.

King, who was convicted of violating Alabama's anti-boycott law last spring, was unavailable for comment on the bombing.

Mayor Gayle commented that for the most part white people of Montgomery have been dispassionate about the bus boycott and have shown very little interest in it.

LITTLE INTEREST

"They don't care particularly how the Negroes solve their transportation problem," he said, "and don't care if the boycott lasts 100 years."

"We deplore this latest incident which tends to fan the flames of racial unrest. Our police department is going to do everything possible to apprehend and convict the guilty party or parties."



WHERE DYNAMITE BOMB LEFT DAMAGE

A part of the crowd of curious which swarmed the home of the Rev. Robert Graetz, 1116 Cleveland Ave., following a bombing early yesterday, inspects damages to windows and door. At

extreme left is the home of B. T. Knox, Negro neighbor of Graetz, where windows also were broken by the blast. The bomb exploded on the lawn, in foreground.

MAYOR SEES 'PUBLICITY STUNT'

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Aug. 26, 1956, 1956

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Aug. 26, 1956, 1956

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

THREATENS POOLS OPERATION

Graetz Says Boycotters Denied Auto Insurance

A "cat and mouse" game between Montgomery insurance men and drivers in the Negro bus boycott pool—a game which threatens the pool's operation—was reported yesterday by a white minister closely associated with the boycott.

The Rev. Robert Graetz, white pastor of the Negro Trinity-Lutheran Church, said the "game" has been going since January, with insurance men repeatedly cancelling policies on vehicles used in the pool, and owners constantly seeking reinsurance from new sources.

The Rev. Martin Luther King, president of the pool sponsoring Montgomery Improvement Assn., declined comment. However, he indicated that he knew of the situation.

Rev. Graetz, at whose home a bomb was set off a month ago, while he and his family were away, said his own automobile insurance policy once was cancelled and that he had difficulty finding a firm which would issue him another policy.

Under the state's driver responsibility law, auto drivers must be insured for \$11,000 to cover any injuries or damages growing from accidents, or be able to prove an equivalent cash responsibility.

The law becomes applicable in case of any accident. Lack of financial responsibility in case of accident brings automatic cancellation of the driver's operating license, and leaves him open for such action as a jury might take in civil action.

"It's been a cat-and-mouse game virtually from the start," Graetz declared. However, he asserted, the "game" has not cut into operation of the pool to an extent which threatens its immediate closing.

"It's been a matter of keeping cars in reserve," he said, "and when one is put out of commission by loss of insurance, putting into service another which is insured."

The white minister did not say

whether the action by insurance men was organized. But, he declared, "I'd say that of the cars (See **BOYCOTTERS**, Page 2A)

Question Mark Shrouds Draft Of Fred Gray

The question of whether Negro Atty. Fred D. Gray, legal spokesman for Negroes boycotting Montgomery's city buses, would report for induction into military service today was up in the air last night.

The local draft board said he would: national Selective Service Director Gen. Lewis B. Hershey said he would not; and Gray last night refused to say either way.

Although Montgomery's draft board had ordered Gray to report for military duty Sept. 17, Hershey postponed Gray's induction indefinitely.

Meanwhile, F. A. Miller, head of Montgomery's Local Draft Board 51, said board members would meet sometime this afternoon to discuss Hershey's action. It was rumored that members of the local draft board might resign their posts in a mass protest to Hershey's decision.

Miller said a press conference would be held following the board's meeting.

Gray had been exempt from the draft with a classification as a practicing minister. The local board changed his draft status to 1-A after deciding that Gray did not now qualify. However, it later developed that he has accepted a full-time pastorate.

The local board has been requested on two occasions to review the case by the national board, but both times members reached the decision that Gray's classification should remain 1-A.

Boycotters

(Continued from Page 1)

on which policies are sought, perhaps five out of every 10 are accepted."

It is in this manner, Graetz said, that the pool has kept operating. He added that only properly insured automobiles are being used.

A member of one of Montgomery's larger insurance agencies said last night that the rumor of discriminatory treatment of car pool insurance had been floating around in local insurance circles for some time. "But so far as I know there's no basis for it," he said. "Certainly I've seen no evidence of it."

Jim Upchurch Jr., president of the Montgomery Assn. of Fire and Casualty Insurance Agents, said "this is absolutely the first I have heard of it. It's absolutely ridiculous."

"I never heard of any plot and I never heard any other agent mention it. But the car pool is a taxi-type operation and taxis always have trouble getting insurance."

Upchurch said he did not know who was handling insurance on the car pool vehicles but he understood some of the local companies recently closed under state injunction might have been writing some of the business. The group Upchurch heads is composed of agents selling stock company policies.

An agent for mutual Insurance companies as well as stock companies, Terry Mastin, said "it's not true that anybody has ganged up" on the car pool operators. "I haven't heard one word about it."

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Sept. 17, 1956

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Sept. 17, 1956

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

White Minister Of Negro Church Receives Threats

A young white minister of an All-Negro church here reported that he received another in a series of threatening telephone calls Tuesday night.

But the Rev. Robert Graetz described it as "nothing unusual" and added that he'd "rather not talk about it."

Graetz, pastor of the Trinity Lutheran Church and at one time a volunteer driver in the boycott car pool, has been the target for numerous such calls in the past.

He reported to Det. Lt. George Owens that an anonymous caller telephoned to warn him to "get out of town or you won't be alive tomorrow."

Graetz said he hasn't received "outright threats" on his life too frequently, but confirmed that he does get more than his share of "crank" telephone calls.

A crudely fashioned bomb was exploded in the front yard of his home several weeks ago, breaking the glass out of a picture window. The Rev. Graetz and his family were out of town at the time.

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Nov. 1, 1956

Copyright © 2021 Newspapers.com All Rights Reserved



PASTOR SURVEYS BOMB DAMAGE

The Rev. Robert Graetz, pastor of the Negro Trinity Lutheran Church, lifts the front door of his home after it was blown free from its hinges in an explosion last night. This is the second time that bomb blasts have ripped the pastor's home. No one was injured in either incident.—(Journal Staff Photo by Tom Collins).

Alabama Journal (Montgomery, AL)

Jan. 10, 1957

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

Police Muster Reserves In Wake Of Dynamiting

President Asks Battle Against Inflation Peril

WASHINGTON, Jan. 10 (AP)—President Eisenhower summoned the American people today to stand "vigilant guard" against ever-threatening inflation at home and the menace abroad of "armed imperialistic dictatorship."

Reporting to Congress and the country on the state of the Union at this moment in history, Eisenhower urged business and labor leaders to "think well on their responsibility to the American people" and go easy on price and wage demands that could increase inflationary pressures.

"The national interest," he said, "must take precedence over temporary advantages which may be secured by particular groups at the expense of all the people."

"Inflation peril," while the pursuit of human liberty, welfare and progress "has brought us to an unprecedented peak in our economic prosperity," the President said, the danger of inflation "is always present."

On the international scene, he said, the existence of a strongly armed imperialistic dictatorship is a constant threat to the security and peace of the free world and "this is our own." America, he said, cannot stand "alone and isolated."

Dressed in a conservative gray business suit, Eisenhower stood at his podium before a crowd of well-dressed, predominantly female, House members in the U.S. Capitol.

With television and radio transmitting his words over national networks, the link of modern, modern, instantaneous approach to problems and issues of the day. For solutions, he pretty much stood pat on things he has recommended in the past.

There were brief warm-over-the-PRESIDENT, Page 2A



GOV. FOLSOM INSPECTS BOMB DAMAGE In Dawn Tour of Shattered Churches and Homes Folsom Posts \$2,000 Reward For Information On Bombings

An aroused Gov. James E. Folsom, disturbed by the sudden outbreak of racial violence in Alabama, posted a \$2,000 reward yesterday for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the "hoodlums" who dynamited churches and homes.

The announcement of the reward was made by Col. Bill Lowry, director of the Department of Public Safety. Lowry said the reward also applied in Mobile, where two bombings were reported yesterday.

Noting that the governor deplored the acts of violence, Lowry quoted Folsom as saying the bombings could have been done by "Negro hoodlums, Communist hoodlums, or by white hoodlums, but wherever did these bombings, they were done by hoodlums."

All the clothes this season seem to emphasize the lady-like look and an easier, more comfortable and more feminine approach to

Tear Gas, Arms Issued Special Patrol Squads

Every available police reserve has been called to active duty following the pre-dawn bombings of four Negro churches and two homes yesterday, Police Chief G. J. Ruppenthal said last night.

Key officers also shuttled in and out of the chief's office for secret conferences but followed strict instructions not to discuss the case.

And, Police Chief Marvin Stanley said reserves and special squads have been issued shotguns, tear gas and rope in a pre-emptive move.

Meanwhile, all city bus service came to a standstill and Mayor W. A. Gayle may be considering a ban on all inter-city gatherings such as sporting events. Another fight slated for tonight here has been cancelled.

At an emergency meeting only a few hours after thousands of Montgomeryans had been awakened by the series of jarring explosions, the City Commission ordered a halt to bus operations for an "indefinite" period.

In a separate move indicative of the tense situation, the commission urged a midnight curfew for all teen-agers in Montgomery.

The six blasts that rocked Montgomery caused extensive property damage but no one was injured.

The first blast was reported at approximately 2 a.m. Four other blasts followed in rapid succession in scattered sections of the city. The sixth and final explosion occurred at approximately 4 a.m.

The homes bombed were those of two ministers active in the pre-integration movement in the city—the Rev. Robert Grant, 1204 Cleveland Ave., and the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, 1217 S. Hall St.

The churches damaged by the wave of bombings were the Bull Street Baptist Church, Boulevard Street Baptist Church, Mt. Olive Baptist Church and the First Baptist Church (Negro).

The first explosion was reported at the home of Abernathy. He was in Atlanta attending a meeting of Negro leaders, but his wife and two-year-old child were both in the home at the time. Neither was injured, but Abernathy was injured.

The first explosion was reported at the home of Abernathy. He was in Atlanta attending a meeting of Negro leaders, but his wife and two-year-old child were both in the home at the time. Neither was injured, but Abernathy was injured.

The first explosion was reported at the home of Abernathy. He was in Atlanta attending a meeting of Negro leaders, but his wife and two-year-old child were both in the home at the time. Neither was injured, but Abernathy was injured.

Curfew Urged For City Youth By Commission

The City Commission urged a midnight curfew for teen-agers of both races and ordered all bus service halted for an indefinite period following outbreaks of violence here yesterday.

Mayor W. A. Gayle and Commissioners Frank Packer and Clyde Sellers took the action at an emergency commission meeting yesterday morning spurred by dynamite blasts that rocked four Negro churches and the homes of two leaders of the Negro Montgomery Improvement Assn.

The mayor said the proposed curfew of Montgomery youth was only a safety precaution. He said he did not think that teen-agers were responsible for the bombings.

Earlier yesterday, a City Lines bus had been fired upon with a shotgun. The shooting took place near town after the commission had issued a 2 p.m. curfew placed on city buses as a result of previous shootings.

BOMBINGS DEPLORED

The commission said they deplored the bombings and urged Montgomeryans to remain calm while police restored law and order.

"Parents of all teen-age children, white and colored, male and female," were urged by the commission to "know the whereabouts of their children at all times and have them at home by 12 o'clock midnight unless accompanied by a parent."

Bus service is halted, the commission said, to protect "life, limb and property" of city residents.

"This has become necessary because of the firing on a bus last evening, making a total of six incidents. The suspension is for an indefinite period or until the curfew," Page 2A

Alabama Journal (Montgomery, AL)

Jan. 11, 1957

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

Exciting New Style Feature

ANYTIME WEAR, COCKTAIL HEM LOWER

Little and the. This morning's The Carnegie's collection was suitable for her return to the longer length, light, softer from the floor for the cocktail dresses, her use of the costume suit made up of dress and their own jacket.

girl popular for evening wear, but daytime lengths are still the same.

All the clothes this season seem to emphasize the lady-like look and an easier, more comfortable and more feminine approach to

Buses

(Continued From Page 1)

nathy later said both were "shocked" by the blast.

Only minutes after the first blast two others rocked the city. The first came at Hutchinson Street Baptist Church, the second at the home of Rev. Graetz, white pastor of the Trinity Lutheran Church for Negroes.

Part of a wall and most of the windows of the Hutchinson Street Church were blown out by the explosion.

The explosion at the Graetz home caused considerable damage to the front part of the house, and broken china was scattered throughout the kitchen by the blast. The pastor, his wife and three small children were asleep in the rear of the home but were not hurt by the bomb.

This marked the second time the Graetz home has been bombed. Last August a bomb exploded in the front yard of the residence, but no one was home at the time.

Officers investigating the Graetz bombing yesterday found a second home-made bomb unexploded in Graetz's driveway. It consisted of 11 sticks of dynamite taped around a hollow metal tube.

The unexploded bomb was quickly de-fused by police officers. Detective Capt. E. P. Brown said it was hoped that a rack to which the bomb was attached might yield some fingerprints but that the dynamite itself had been "thrown in the river."

Brown noted that the Police Department had no demolition experts and because of this the bomb was "too dangerous to fool with."

Less than 10 minutes after the Graetz home was blasted, another explosion shook the city. This time the blast was at the Bell Street Baptist Church, at 503 Oak St. This bomb caused serious structural damage to the building. A large part of the building's walls were blasted from their foundation, and as a result a part of the roof collapsed.

The First Baptist Church was the next target. This building, located on Jefferson and Ripley, was not seriously damaged. The bomb apparently was hurled into the basement where considerable damage was done. Abernathy is the pastor of this church.

The sixth and final blast was reported at the Mt. Olive Church on Old Selma Road. This building, along with the Hutchinson Street church, was most heavily damaged.

The outside walls of the building were demolished and the inner walls were affected to such an extent as to make the building unsafe for use.

Gov. James E. Folsom, clad in a leather jacket and khaki trousers, made a personal inspection of the damaged areas at dawn yesterday. He later offered his full cooperation to city officials in meeting the emergency and offered a \$2,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons guilty of the bombings.

"Any person or group of persons that would bomb the house of the Lord endangers the life of every man, woman and child in Montgomery," Folsom declared. "I call on all people of Alabama to help stamp out such lawlessness wherever it may occur."

White Clerics In Report Flay Violence Here

While a victim of yesterday's bombings looked on, a group of white religious leaders issued a statement deploring a renewal of violence here.

The group of about 25 Protestant ministers and a Jewish Rabbi included the Rev. Robert Graetz, white pastor of a Negro church, whose home was one of the six buildings dynamited in a series of pre-dawn bombings here yesterday.

Nearly two hours in formulating their statement, the church group urged residents to maintain law and order. Segregation was not mentioned in the document.

Their statement follows:

"As a group of religious leaders of this community, we feel it our sacred duty to issue this statement to our people and to all the citizens of this community:

"1. We call upon all citizens to join with us in an act of repentance for the violence done against the homes of some of our citizens, against houses of God, against peace, order and good will of our community.

"Whatever our differences of opinion may be we cannot remain silent and allow our community to lapse into the barbarity of terrorism and intimidation.

"2. We call upon you to offer fervent thanks to Almighty God that none were injured in the bombings of Jan. 10, and to pray both publicly and privately that by His grace, we may be guided into the ways of righteousness and peace.

"3. We call upon the God fearing people of Montgomery to highly resolve that violence must not be allowed to continue and that law and order must be maintained in our midst."

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Jan. 11, 1957

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Jan. 11, 1957

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

Six White Men Charged In Bombing Wave Here

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Feb. 1, 1957

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Feb. 1, 1957

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

Bombings

(Continued From Page 1)

held in City Jail in connection with the bombings.

All of the men charged last night were already in City Jail on "suspect" charges.

It has been indicated that perhaps as many as 20 persons will be involved in the bombing and bus shooting investigation.

Reports that Montgomery city detectives have made trips to Birmingham in connection with the bombings raises the possibility that arrests may be made of persons in that area.

FIRST INDICATION

The first indication that police and other authorities were never to cracking the bombing cases came Sunday, when Alexander and Dunlap were arrested in Selma, where they work for Alexander's father, a heating and plumbing sub-contractor.

The first public disclosure was made Wednesday when Alexander's confession to the bus shooting was revealed.

Police Commissioner Clyde Sellers has expressed high praise for his own men and the Highway Patrol and "all other cooperating agencies," in pressing the investigation.

Since Montgomery's buses were racially integrated Dec. 23 there have been seven bomb explosions and three attempts and city buses have been shot upon six times.

While the bombings brought no injury, a young Negro woman was shot through both legs in one bus-shooting incident.

The first bomb, one that damaged the Rev. M. L. King's home, was set off exactly one year before the case was broken.

During that time, 19 major acts of violence occurred which included nine bomb attacks and 10 shootings. The first two suspects were picked up by police last Sunday, a short time after a combination Negro service station-taxi stand and a home next to it were bombed at 4:30 a.m.

An unexploded bomb of 12 dynamite sticks was found shortly after that on the porch of King's home. It was then that City Detective J. D. Shows, who was off duty, spotted some "suspicious looking" men at the scene and took down the tag number of their car.

His action led to the recent arrests and was cited by Police Commissioner Clyde Sellers as the case-breaking tip.

At his press conference, Sellers also praised other members of the force and cooperating law enforcement agencies such as the Alabama Highway Patrol, state investigators and county sheriff's departments.

BRIEF ORDER

In brief chronological order, here are the major events leading up to the arrests:

Dec. 7, 1955—First city bus fired upon.

Dec. 9—Another bus hit by gunfire.

Jan. 25, 1956—King's home damaged by bomb.

Aug. 25—Home of the Rev. Robert Graetz damaged by bomb.

Dec. 26—Two buses shot.

Dec. 28—Boynton bus fired upon twice, one attack resulting in the first casualty of the racial strife. Mrs. Rosa Jordan was shot in both legs.

Jan. 9, 1957—Another bus hit by gunfire.

Jan. 19—Worst outbreak of violence, four Negro churches and two homes bombed in early morning hours.

Jan. 27—Bomb attack on gas station and home. First arrest made within hours by police.

A group of Hall's friends, who sought to gain his release immediately after he was permitted to post bond, were themselves threatened with arrest for "disturbing the peace" by an officer at City Jail.

Robert Starr, one of the group, said they were unable to obtain entrance to the jail compound and were calling to jailers from outside a high fence, seeking to attract their attention.

Starr said attendants first refused to admit the group and that when they protested more loudly he threatened to arrest them for creating a disturbance. After some discussion, Starr said, a single member of the group was permitted to enter and sign Hall's bond.



Photos by Lloyd Gallman Advertiser

Dedication service

Above, Robert and Jeannie Graetz accept the key to Montgomery from Mayor Todd Strange during the Graetz Neighborhood Association's dedication ceremony of the Graetz Neighborhood on Saturday. More photos of event at montgomeryadvertiser.com



PHOTOS @
montgomeryadvertiser.com



The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Feb. 27, 2011

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

TONGUE CAN WREAK VIOLENCE AS WELL

Words do matter

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." My mother taught me that, when I was a young boy. And I believed her, when I was a young boy. It did not take me long to discover how truly hurtful words could be. My teenage years encompassed the Second World War. We were expected to hate our enemies, the "Nazis" and the "Japs," and no good word was to be spoken about them. When thousands of Japanese-Americans were interned in prison camps, I heard not one word objecting to their inhumane treatment.

Words were important. They kept us united, knowing who were the "we" and who were the "others."

Words are still important. That is why the recent debates over the use of certain words deserve our attention. Some of those debates may seem to be petty, but they are not that at all. They define who we are and what are our roles in society.

Example: the "N word." For years a debate has been raging within the African-American community about whether it is ever acceptable for rap artists and others to make public use of this most hated of all offensive words. More recently the debate has centered on Mark Twain's very effective use of the word to define a society and an era. The dispute centers on the propriety of producing an abridged version of Twain's work, which removes the N word.

I don't understand the argument. Offering an altered version of a writing does not erase the original, nor does it prohibit readers from using any version they prefer. I have heard the argument that changing Twain is like changing the Bible. The fact is that the Bible has been re-translated dozens, probably hundreds of times, usually accompanied by loud objections from those who want to hold on to what they are used to, which they are certainly allowed to do.

Another example: the use of offensive words by public officials who should have known better. When the former governor of Alaska used the term "blood libel," she must have been aware that those words are universally understood



Robert Graetz

to be a horrific and untrue historical charge against Jews.

When our own governor said at a public gathering on his inauguration day that he considered only Christians to be his brothers and sisters, he had to know that others would be listening who would be offended and feel excluded.

A more serious example: What shall we say about the decline and near absence of civility in our public utterances? I am aware that character assassination has been a popular sport as long as this nation has existed. But it seems to me that it has taken on a mean-spirited tone in recent years. Those with whom we disagree on issues are no longer just our opponents. They are our enemies.

I remember in some of the darkest days of the civil rights movement that Dr. King would remind us that those who were holding us down might be our opponents and our oppressors. But we should never think of them as our enemies.

What shall we say, then, about people who deliberately use the lan-

guage of hatred and threats and violence against those with whom they disagree? In the days of the movement in the 1960s and 1980s, we dealt with these as daily experiences. We suffered through them, because we knew they were the dying gasp of a social structure that was ending, an era that was nearing its conclusion. But the remnants of that social structure have reassured themselves today, and that era has refused to end.

Is it not possible that some of those whose ears have been filled with expressions of hatred might be inspired to put the language into action by carrying out such violent acts as the shooting of Congresswoman Giffords? Or the gay bashing which starts as words and progresses to physical attacks and even murders? Or the all too common schoolyard bullying, which has, in too many cases, become so intolerable it has led to the suicide of the one who was bullied?

When Dr. King shared his belief in non-violent peaceful protest, he used to say we should be non-violent with the fist, the tongue and the heart. We should commit no violent actions or words or thoughts. His dream was always that of an overarching relationship among all people, which would lead us to respect and affirm one another.

We may not resemble each other. We may not share the same tastes and life goals. We may not even like each other. But we can offer each other our respect, and our acknowledgement that each of us is God-created and God-gifted. Our hope is that one day we may share with one another that greatest gift of all, the gift of love.

Some of these issues will be dealt with in the annual Graetz Symposium, sponsored by Alabama State University, on March 17, at no charge. It will be held at First Baptist Church on Ripley Street, beginning at 9 a.m. For more information, call 228-4624.

The Rev. Robert Graetz was pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Montgomery during the bus boycott. He and Mrs. Graetz have returned to Montgomery and work with the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at Alabama State University.

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Mar. 4, 2011

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

Rosa Parks recalled at service

Civil rights leaders attend Bus Boycott event at historic church

REBECCA BURYLO
MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER

Although civil rights attorney Fred Gray is no stranger to public speaking, Sunday's message at the historic United Evangelical Lutheran Church on Rosa L. Parks Avenue was an "emotional experience," as he recalled growing up on the west side of Montgomery, revisited his birth home, old haunts and talked about his good friend, Rosa Parks.

Sunday's event was one of the final activities to wrap up the 60th anniversary of the Bus Boycott commemoration, celebrated weeklong in Montgomery to laud Parks and other civil rights leaders for their part in organizing and supporting the boycott during which black Montgomery residents refused to ride city buses for 381 days.

The boycott led to the city adopting an ordinance to allow black patrons to sit anywhere on city buses.

Both Gray and Reverend Robert Graetz have had their fair share of speeches in Montgomery and Central Alabama since the kickoff of the commemoration Dec. 1, as pivotal leaders in the fight against segregation, but Sunday was special for the pair. Gray grew up not far from the church and Graetz became its pastor in 1955, right as the boycott began.

Both men knew Parks, the woman whose image is largely associated with the boycott after she refused to move her seat to the back of a Montgomery bus for a white man.

At the time of the boycott, Parks lived in what is now called the Cleveland Apartments, right next door to United Evangelical Lutheran Church. The church too had changed its name from Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church.



"I was doing research on the discrimination against Jews and found out, to my dismay, there was a whole evil done against the African-American people and they were treated more harshly than any other group in this world. And I in my whiteness knew nothing about it."

REV. ROBERT
GRAETZ

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)
Dec. 7 2015

See Parks, Page 4A

Parks

Continued from Page 1A

Graetz's parsonage, located next door to Trinity was bombed twice. One failed to detonate, the second exploded and destroyed most of the home. It was the 16th church to be attacked by the Klu Klux Klan because Graetz activity supported the boycott and black's rights.

His strong support for the African-American community began in college.

"I was doing research on the discrimination against Jews and found out, to my dismay, there was a whole evil done against the African-

American people and they were treated more harshly than any other group in this world. And I in my whiteness knew nothing about it," Graetz said.

He was stunned and ashamed and made a vow to serve African-American communities and churches.

Graetz was offered a pastoral position at Trinity in 1955, under one condition. "Don't start trouble," Graetz said.

"And I have not broken that promise. We didn't start the trouble, we joined the trouble," Graetz said. "We're here because we as a people are committed to something greater than any of us. We're not doing this for ourselves, we're doing this for the children."

Rosa Parks, who, also held meetings of her NAACP Youth Council at Trinity, was there to help

Graetz family clean the debris from the bomb.

She was met with Gray for daily lunch at his law office to talk about the issue of race, segregation and women like Claudette Colvin and Mary Louise Smith, whose stands against bus drivers at that time went largely unnoticed.

They knew it would happen again and Parks asked Gray what she should do, Gray said.

"Unlike what most media outlets at the time said, it didn't just happen," Gray said of the boycott. "There were many meetings and plans made between Rosa Parks' arrest and the first meeting at Dexter Church that people don't even know about."

Gray rebutted the commonly known story, that painted Parks as a hard-working seamstress who

simply was too tired to move from her seat. Although that was true, there was much more orchestration that went on behind the scenes, he said.

"But I don't think Rosa Parks would think that she was an icon ... She did what she could and I know she would feel the same way," Gray said. "She did what she could."

Gray represented Parks in the famous case, *City of Montgomery v. Rosa Parks* and later Dr. Martin Luther King after he was arrested.

"She knew what needed to be done to end segregation on buses and to help young people," Gray said. "She gave her life and dedication to help people."

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Dec. 7 2015

“The Graetz Neighborhood Dedication”



Photos by Debbie Richardson

I have twice become nearly overcome with guilt about my youthful attitude to race relations. The first time, Congressman John Lewis had come to town for the dedication of an historic marker at the Greyhound Bus Station downtown location on South Court Street. Lewis was among the Freedom Riders who were beaten when a Greyhound bus carrying both African-Americans and whites rolled into Montgomery in 1961.

And the second time occurred a few years ago when the late Tommie Miller re-introduced me to The Rev. Robert Graetz and his wife Jeannie. It was then I learned of their astonishing involvement in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Montgomery Improvement Association.

Pastor Graetz is a white Lutheran pastor. I am a Lutheran who somewhat prided herself on her lack of racial prejudice. How, I wondered, could I not have known the Graetz family and supported them in their efforts? How could I have been so totally oblivious to those who were struggling so?

Of course, I had not thought about the calendar. The Montgomery Bus Boycott began December 1, 1955. I did not move to Montgomery until mid-1964. I have subsequently learned that the Graetz family left Montgomery for a new pastorate in 1957, and the church they pastored changed its synodical affiliation and — I assume — its involvement in the Civil Rights Movement.

How, I tortured myself, could I have been so blissfully unaware and unengaged in the upheaval that was ongoing in Montgomery at that time? The answer was pretty simple: I grew up in a time and place where “ignorance was bliss” ... or perhaps worse!

An award-winning 1966 CBS Television documentary, “Sixteen in Webster Groves,” depicted a St. Louis suburb where parents shielded their children from all ugliness, in the hope that life would be better for their offspring than they had experienced themselves during the Great Depression. That, at least, was my take on what occurred. A 1996 report in a St. Louis publication saw it differently: “...what they chose to show after three months nestled amid the shaggy trees and century-old homes — was a Babbitt-like conformity, rigid and overbearing parents, an insular and soulless class and a callous indifference to the minuscule number of “negroes” in the community.”

“The Graetz Neighborhood Dedication”

I didn’t grow up in Webster Groves. And my childhood home was right next door in the suburb of Kirkwood, Mo. Our public schools integrated peacefully in the fall of 1955, right on the heels of Brown vs. Board of Education. While they may well have occurred, I don’t ever recall reading or hearing about a civil rights demonstration in our area.

As a college freshman at Washington University, also in St. Louis, I had a friend from New York whose older sister was a Freedom Rider. But my friend spoke little of that. Her concerns were more mundane: making decent grades and gaining social acceptance.

She and I, were we guilty of anything, were shamefully self-absorbed and terribly like the adolescents of every generation since WWII. Not an excuse, for sure. But an explanation.

My coming to grips with the reality of both prejudice in my childhood community AND my developing a real heart for equal justice has occurred only slowly over the intervening years since early adulthood. I like to think that now — given the chance — I will stand with any oppressed group. Stand tall and loud. (Friends in the GLBT community, hold me accountable on that!)

So it was with immense joy that I attended last Saturday’s dedication of the Graetz Neighborhood entry-way sign at the intersection of E.D. Nixon Avenue and West Fairview, just two blocks west of Midtown. Guest speaker and historian Dr. Richard Bailey rightly observed that we in attendance were witnessing another milestone in Montgomery race relations, that of a nearly 100% African-American neighborhood’s decision to name their community after their beloved white friends, Robert and Jeannie Graetz. Amazing — utterly amazing!

Hat’s off, Graetz Neighborhood, for honoring Dr. King’s vision for a time when people are judged “not by the color of their skin but on the content of their character.” And hat’s off, Montgomery. We’ve come a long, long way. And, yes, we still have a long, long way to go!

Source: Sandra Nickel, *Montgomery Advertiser*, March 3, 2011.

Sandra Nickel has been listing and selling residential real estate for over 29 years, most with an intense focus on Montgomery’s Midtown neighborhoods. Sandra serves on the Mid-Alabama Coalition for the Homeless, the Cloverdale Business Coalition, Historic Southview, the Volunteer and Information Center, Landmarks Foundation and her own neighborhood Garden District Preservation Association.

IMMIGRATION

Church vigil protests law

By Brian Lyman
blyman@gannett.com

Nury Ballinas was born in Mexico but has lived in Alabama for 12 years. The state's new immigration law, if upheld in court, might require her to leave.

"We have a house in Mexico," said Ballinas, a 15-year-old student at Wetumpka High School, following a vigil in protest of the law at Immanuel Presbyterian Church on Thursday. She is undocumented. "I was born there, but I don't remember anything about it."

The 60 participants at the vigil prayed that Ballinas and other undocumented aliens would, in the words of a prayer read by retired pastor Andrew Dawkins, receive "protection from the evils of this law."

The legislation, signed by Gov.

Robert Bentley on June 9, makes it a state crime to be an undocumented alien in Alabama and gives law enforcement the power to detain those they have "reasonable suspicion" of being in the country illegally while performing other duties.

The law's supporters have said it is a necessity because of federal inaction on immigration enforcement. Civil rights groups, religious leaders and the U.S. Justice Department have sued to overturn the law.

Most provisions of the statute were scheduled to go into effect Thursday, but U.S. District Judge Sharon Blackburn issued a temporary injunction against the law Monday, saying she needed more time to consider specific requests

See VIGIL, Page 3B



The Rev. Elizabeth O'Neill, pastor of Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Montgomery, speaks at a vigil held in protest of Alabama's immigration law on Thursday. BRIAN LYMAN/ADVERTISER

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Sept. 2, 2011

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

Vigil

Continued from Page 18

for enjoining portions of it. A larger protest against the law took place in Birmingham on Thursday evening.

Many of those at the vigil work with immigrant communities.

"People are so afraid to go out from their homes," said Sister Janet Santibanez, who works for Hispanic Ministries for the Roman Catholic

Church. "They're afraid they're going to lose everything."

Participants read Scripture and selections from the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King Jr.

The Rev. Bob Graetz, a Lutheran minister who worked with King during the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, read a selection of King quotations, including one from the late civil rights activist's "Letter From A Birmingham Jail."

"We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny," Graetz read. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Graetz said after the vigil that his opposition to the immigration statute was "one more phase of the civil rights movement."

His wife Jean, who also attended the service, said they were there "to support people who are being discriminated against. It's that simple."

Religious leaders said they feared the law's provisions against harboring undocumented aliens could criminalize religious gatherings and services involving the undocumented. Supporters of the law said that could only occur if there was a deliberate effort to shield the undocumented from the law, and Blackburn said during an injunction hearing last week she saw nothing in the law that did that. Attorney General Luther Strange, de-

fending the law in court, said he saw nothing in it that abridged religious freedom.

But the Rev. Elizabeth O'Neill, pastor of Immanuel Presbyterian, said fear created by the statute was undermining services the churches provide.

"When people have needs, and every other door is closed, people come to church," she said. "Now people are afraid to come to church."

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Sept. 2, 2011

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

ROBERT GRAETZ 1928 - 2020



Rev. Robert Graetz talks about Black History Month at his home in Montgomery in 2017. MICKEY WELSH/ADVERTISER

Civil rights giant dies

Former Montgomery minister helped organize Montgomery Bus Boycott

Brian Lyman *Montgomery Advertiser*
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Rev. Robert Graetz, whose support of the 1955-56 Montgomery Bus Boycott made him a target of segregationists and sparked a career dedicated to social justice, died Sunday, his daughter Meta Ellis said. He was 92.

Graetz had been in hospice care. Graetz, who ministered to the majority-Black Trinity Lutheran Evangelical Church, helped organize the early stages of the boycott and helped drive people to and from work.

Graetz was the only white clergyman to support the boycott, and like other participants in the boycott, the reverend and his family persisted in the face of harassment, terrorism, and death threats that extended to their preschool children. Vandals poured sugar in their gas tank; slashed their tires and sprayed acid over their cars. White students on segregated school buses shouted "n---r lover" at Graetz and his wife, Jeannie, as they walked the street.

The family home was bombed twice, and while arrests were made, no one was ever convicted. Graetz often became emotional remembering the bombings in later years.

"People often said we had courage," he said in 2001. "There were times when I was scared to death."

Graetz received tributes from Gov. Kay Ivey and Montgomery Mayor Steven Reed, who praised him as a civil rights giant.

"He stood for what was right, not for what was popular, even if that meant the safety of him and his family was at risk," a statement from Ivey said. "It is because of people like him that Montgomery and the entire state of Alabama have progressed from the vestiges of the past."

See GRAETZ, Page 2A



The Rev. Robert Graetz is photographed with the Rev. Martin Luther King in Montgomery in the 1950s. Graetz served as a Lutheran minister and led Montgomery's all black Trinity Lutheran Church. He was an early and outspoken advocate of racial equality. He and King became good friends.

CONTRIBUTED

"He stood for what was right, not for what was popular, even if that meant the safety of him and his family was at risk. It is because of people like him that Montgomery and the entire state of Alabama have progressed from the vestiges of the past."

Gov. Kay Ivey,
in a statement

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Sept 22, 2020

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

Graetz

Continued from Page 1A

Reed posted a picture of himself with Robert and Jeannie Graetz, and said the late minister "practiced what he preached."

"Rev. Robert Graetz and his wife Jeannie stood against hate and put their lives in danger because the cause, of their all black congregation and the community itself, was just," he wrote.

Son of West Virginia

Robert Graetz was born on May 16, 1928, in Charleston, West Virginia. His father worked as an engineer for the Libbey-Owens-Ford Co., a glass manufacturer. In the mid-1940s, Graetz entered Capital University in Bexley, Ohio, where he helped organize a "campus race relations club." Walter White, the longtime leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), once spoke to the club and said race relations were improving because of the growing presence of whites in civil rights battles.

"Naturally I just beamed," Graetz told the Advertiser in 1956, "because that depiction really fit me."

The Lutheran Church faced a shortage of Black clergy in the 1950s, and Graetz was asked to minister at majority-Black churches. He started as a student pastor at Community Lutheran Church in Los Angeles in 1952. After earning a divinity degree from what is now Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, Graetz went to the 20-member Trinity Lutheran Church in Montgomery in June 1955.

"He was a wonderful pastor," Ella Bell, a member of the church, told the Advertiser in 1999. "He was kind-hearted. I remember that you didn't hear crying in the church. The children would stand at the door with him."

The church also sponsored meetings of the NAACP Youth Council, through which Graetz met Rosa Parks.

"When we met Rosa, we just fell in love with her," Graetz said in 2015. "She was such a great lady, and so brave. She could really lead those kids and they responded to her."

The Montgomery Bus Boycott

Graetz had spent barely six months as the pastor of Trinity Lutheran Evangelical Church in 1955 when Black leaders in the city organized the boycott, following Parks' arrest on Dec. 1. The Sunday after the arrest and first organizational meetings, Graetz encouraged his congregation to unite behind the protest.

"Let's try to make this boycott as effective as possible because it won't be any boycott if half of us ride the buses and half don't ride," Graetz told the congregation. "So if we're going to do it, let's make a good job of it."

With a full schedule that included preaching at churches in Clanton and Wetumpka, Graetz took an active role in the boycott. From 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. each day, he drove a Chevrolet in support of the boycott, shuttling as many as 50 people a day between home and work.

As a member of the Montgomery Improvement Association, Graetz organized car pools and raised money to pay for gas and automotive expenses.

While the Graetzes were not the only whites involved in the boycott — Clifford



Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, center, speaks with attorney Fred D. Gray, left, and the Rev. Robert S. Graetz, second from right, about the bus boycott settlement in Montgomery on Feb. 21, 1956. AP

and Virginia Durr provided legal and financial support — the young couple were the only white members of the clergy to publicly support it. Graetz attempted to enlist other white ministers to support the boycott. He wrote letters to fellow clergymen on stationery with a quote from Acts 8:26 ("And the Angel of the Lord spake unto Phillip saying: 'Arise, go toward the South'"), asking them to consider this matter "prayerfully and carefully, with Christian love. Our Lord said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'"

He was not successful. The association representing white ministers in Montgomery refused Graetz's invitation to a talk from the Rev. Martin Luther King about the boycott.

Montgomery's larger white community also shunned the Graetzes. As they endured vandalism and verbal harassment, Robert and Jeannie received notes suggesting that their young children could be shot while playing outside. Family members suggested sending the children out of state; they refused.

Law enforcement also targeted the minister. On Dec. 19, 1955, while picking up five passengers, Graetz was stopped by Montgomery County Sheriff Mac Sim Butler and accused of picking up passengers in a taxi zone. The sheriff ordered him to follow him to the county jail, where Graetz was placed in a deputy sheriff's office.

A person who Graetz assumed was a deputy sheriff told him "We like things the way they are here. We don't want anybody trying to change them."

"Arriving here, I realized I had no idea what it would be like to be Black and live life in daily repression," Graetz said in 1999. "I had no idea what it would be like to be told day after day and year after year that you are a nobody, that you have no value."

The terror escalated in August 1956, a few days after the white ministers rejected Graetz's invitation to meet with King. Graetz was on a trip with his family and Rosa Parks at the Highlander Folk School, a training ground for civil rights activists in northeastern Tennessee, when he got a call from a reporter



Rev. Graetz, a Lutheran minister who was the only white Montgomery Improvement Association board member, speaks at a mass meeting during the bus boycott. ADVERTISER FILE

asking for a comment about his home being bombed.

It was the first news Graetz had about the attack, which tore the door off and shattered a window.

Far from providing support, city leaders went on the offensive. Mayor W.A. Gayle accused the Montgomery Improvement Association of setting off the bomb to boost interest in the boycott.

"We are inclined to wonder if out-of-state contributions to the boycott have been dropping off," he said. "Perhaps this is just a publicity stunt to build up interest of the Negroes in the campaign."

Graetz called the mayor's comments "foolishness," and King rejected all of Gayle's premises.

"Since the mayor implies that Negroes perpetuated this deplorable act, it is both morally compelling and practically expedient for him to use the power of his office to bring the guilty parties to justice," King said.

The boycott ended in December after Montgomery's bus system was ordered

desegregated. The attacks did not. On Jan. 10, the Graetzes; their children, including their 9-day-old son and the Rev. Graetz's mother were at home when a bomb exploded on their front lawn. Shortly afterward, a much larger bomb, consisting of 11 sticks of dynamite, was found, which could have killed the entire family had it gone off.

"The thought of tiny babies having bombs thrown at them in the middle of the night was just incredibly difficult to deal with," Graetz told The New York Times in 2018. "My mother, my poor mother, she had come down to help take care of the babies, and she was just devastated that these terrible people would just throw bombs at our babies."

The Graetzes were one of several individuals targeted that evening. The Rev. Ralph Abernathy was also bombed, and several African-American churches were also targeted. Arrests took place, but no one was ever convicted.

After the boycott

In 1958, the family moved to minister at a Black church in Columbus, Ohio. Graetz worked in Ohio, Kentucky, California and Washington, D.C., where Graetz worked as a lobbyist for marginalized individuals for 13 years.

Robert and Jeannie Graetz returned to Montgomery in 2005 for the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, then moved to the city permanently in 2007. They worked for Alabama State University and held regular symposiums on civil rights issues. Graetz also wrote semi-regular columns for the Advertiser.

"What shall be done about the pockets of abject poverty scattered throughout our nation, disproportionately African-American?" he wrote in 2008. "Until progress has been made in ensuring more satisfying and productive lives to those who are the most vulnerable in our society, we cannot fully resolve the problems that divide our various groups."

The couple remained politically active and outspoken, even as the Rev. Graetz entered hospice care. In 2011, they opposed Alabama's House Bill 56, which criminalized undocumented immigrants' lives in the state. Graetz also condemned white nationalist violence at Charlottesville in 2017 and sharply condemned President Donald Trump's reaction to it.

"Now that there's no longer a criterion, even if it's the worst of times, we're setting a standard for all of us," he told the Advertiser. "Now, (it's) no longer a standard based on God. Now, instead what we see is television channels that are based on who can tell the most lies the most effectively."

Graetz is survived by his wife, seven children, 27 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild.

"Some time ago I read that the first requisite of a successful missionary was that he become color blind," Graetz told the Advertiser in 1956, near the start of the Bus Boycott. "I figured that the same was true of my work here. I know that I shall be criticized for my stand. I may even suffer violence. But I cannot minister to souls alone. My people also have bodies."

Contact Montgomery Advertiser reporter Brian Lyman at 334-240-0185 or at blyman@gannett.com. Updated at 11:11 a.m. Monday to include statements from Gov. Kay Ivey and Montgomery Mayor Steven Reed.

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Sept 22, 2020

Copyright © 2021 Newspapers.com All Rights Reserved

JEANNIE GRAETZ | DEC. 24, 1929-DEC. 16, 2020



Jeannie Graetz smiles as she celebrates her 65th anniversary with her husband, Robert Graetz, and family and friends at Messiah Lutheran Church in Montgomery in July 2016. PHOTOS BY MICKEY WELSH/ADVERTISER

‘Christian zeal’

Jeannie Graetz, who helped and publicly supported Montgomery Bus Boycott, dies at 90

Brian Lyman
Montgomery Advertiser
USA TODAY NETWORK

Jeannie Graetz, one of a handful of whites in Montgomery who publicly supported the 1955-56 Bus Boycott — and suffered threats and two bombings of her home for it — died Wednesday. She was 90 years old.

Meta Ellis, Graetz's daughter, said the cause of death was cancer. Graetz died nearly three months after her husband, the Rev. Robert Graetz, passed away.

The Graetzes were some of the very few whites in Montgomery to support the boycott. The Rev. Graetz, who pastored the majority-Black Trinity Lutheran Evangelical Church, was the only white clergyman in Montgomery to do so, and joined the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), which organized the boycott.

The family endured the harassment other members of the Montgomery Improvement Association did. Segregationists poured sugar in their gas tanks and slashed the tires on their vehicles. The family home was bombed twice. The first time, in the summer of 1956,



Rev. Robert Graetz and his wife, Jeannie Graetz, are shown in Montgomery on April 1, 2015.

See GRAETZ, Page 3A

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Dec. 17, 2020

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

Graetz

Continued from Page 1A

the family was away on a trip.

The second time — on Jan. 10, 1957 — the Graetzes were home with their four young children and the Rev. Graetz's mother when the bomb went off.

"It's one of those things you try to forget," Graetz told the Advertiser in 2018. "Not a fun thing to happen at 2 in the morning with four babies and a mother-in-law there. To know there are people who hate you, that's not very nice to know."

Born Jean Ellis on Dec. 24, 1929, Graetz was raised on a farm in northwest Pennsylvania, the second of five daughters. The Rev. Graetz wrote in "A White Preacher's Memoir" that Jeannie's father, Marshall, openly wished for boys, but sent his daughters to do the chores. Jeannie maintained a trap line on their farm to catch animals and sell their hides for cash.

"We were his boys," she said. "We did every kind of work that a farm boy ever did."

Jeannie was also attracted from an early age to those who were different, the Rev. Graetz wrote. As a student at Capital University in Bexley, Ohio, she roomed with a blind student, helping her in her classes and developing a lifelong friendship with her. Jeannie Graetz later said that her interest in other people was an act of rebellion against the hypocrisy of the adult world, natural curiosity and an act of faith.

"Knowing how Jesus treated people, she says she had a 'sporadic Christian zeal' to do the same," the Rev. Graetz wrote. "That 'zeal' has been apparent throughout her life, not sporadic."

Jeannie Ellis married the Rev. Graetz, a native of West Virginia, in 1951. In June 1955, while pregnant with the couple's third child, Jeannie, with her husband and their two toddlers, drove from Ohio to Montgomery, Alabama, where Graetz would serve as pastor of Trinity Lutheran.

The Graetzes chose to live in the Trinity Lutheran parsonage, near their predominantly Black congregation. The family, which knew little of the unwritten rules and expectations of the Jim Crow South, was instantly shunned by most of the white community. While attending movies, the Graetzes insisted on sitting in the Black section in the balcony. Fearful that such actions would lead to riots, theater owners rushed them into their seats and let them watch films for free.

"The Graetzes almost never got to laugh at such absurdities," historian Taylor Branch wrote in "Parting the Waters," the first book in his trilogy on the civil rights movement. "There was too much tension. Besides, the daily ostracism caused too much hurt within the family for its excesses to be funny."

There was also tension with some members of the Trinity Lutheran congregation, a few of whom "said out loud that they did not need a white man to tell them how



Jeannie Graetz holds up her Alabama State University 2015 senior class T-shirt — something she planned to wear as often as possible after her graduation in 2015. ALVIN BENN/SPECIAL TO THE ADVERTISER

to live," Branch wrote. But the Graetzes did form friendships with a number of people in the congregation, including Rosa Parks, who lived across the street from the family. The Rev. Graetz also befriended the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., then a pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.

The Sunday after Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus on Dec. 1, 1955, the Rev. Graetz preached a sermon calling on his congregation to support the boycott, and saying his family would do the same.

Harassment began almost instantly. A nurse at the office of Jeannie Graetz's obstetrician berated her family's stand, and "seemed unnecessarily rough and careless in her preliminary examinations of Jeannie," the Rev. Graetz wrote. The Graetzes had sugar poured into their gas tank, and slashed their tires. Students at the segregated schools shouted "n—r lover" at the Graetzes as they walked down the street.

"Someone would write that they've seen our kids out playing in the yard and they had a gun there and they could just shoot them," Jeannie Graetz told the Advertiser in 2015. "Things like that, they scared you to death."

In August 1956, the Graetzes attended a training at the Highlander School in Tennessee. While there, the Rev. Graetz got a call from an Advertiser reporter asking him for comment about their home being bombed. When they returned home, a Montgomery police lieutenant spoke so harshly to the Graetzes that their 2-year-old son shouted "Go away, you bad policemen." (Montgomery Mayor W.A. Gayle openly speculated that the Graetzes had planted the bomb themselves.)

The Graetzes installed lighting around their house after the bombing and tried to hire guards — one of whom frequently visited bars — but did not stint in their support of the boycott. It ended in December 1956, when



Rev. Robert Graetz and his wife Jeannie Graetz are shown in their wedding photo. CONTRIBUTED

discrimination on Montgomery's bus lines was ruled unconstitutional.

On Jan. 10, 1957, the Graetzes, along with their young children and the Rev. Graetz's mother were at home when a bomb exploded on their front lawn. The bomb blew out the windows and doors on the house and scattered plaster and glass on the floor. (Parks helped the Graetzes clean up the damage.) A second bomb was discovered which, had it gone off, would have killed the family.

"I had a hard time forgiving them for that," Jeannie Graetz said in 2015. "How could someone bomb a house with babies in it? That bomb was supposed to kill us."

When the Graetzes' home was bombed in 1957, Parks came across the road and helped sweep up the damage.

The Graetzes left Montgomery in 1958 to go to a predominantly Black church in Ohio. The Rev. Graetz later worked as a lobbyist for marginalized groups. Robert and Jeannie returned to Montgomery in 2007, where they worked for Alabama State University and held symposiums on civil rights issues. The couple was frequently seen at social justice gatherings and protests, from gatherings against a state law targeting immigrants in 2011 to a 2012 memorial for Trayvon Martin, the Black teenager killed as he was returning from the store.

Graetz is survived by six children; 26 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild.

Reflecting on her experiences in 2015, Jeannie Graetz said the boycott had reminded her that many people struggle to obtain basic levels of equality, and that it shaped her and her husband's professional choices and how they raised their family.

"It's not just black and white," she said. "There are many people who are oppressed in this world — women, the poor, handicapped individuals, gays. That's what we learned."

Contact Montgomery Advertiser reporter Brian Lyman at 334-240-0185 or blyman@gannett.com.

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Dec. 17, 2020

Copyright © 2021 Newsspers.com All Rights Reserved

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Jeannie Graetz was an inspiration to everyone

Editor's note: Jeannie Graetz, who with her late husband, the Rev. Robert S. Graetz Jr., supported the Montgomery Bus Boycott and endured bombs and threats as a white couple aiding the historic boycott, died Wednesday at age 90. Her death comes approximately three months after her husband died at 92 from complications of Parkinson's disease.

We are deeply saddened to learn of the death of Jeannie Graetz. In addition to her love of family, she demonstrated a profound love of community throughout her life, whether it was during the Montgomery Bus Boycott or her later work at the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at Alabama State University in Montgomery.

When Jeannie's husband became ill, she committed herself to leading the work of the Graetz Symposium, an annual conference supporting the civil rights movement, a partnership with the national center at ASU. During the most recent symposium, she spoke about how important its work was to her and the greater community.

Jeannie was also a lifelong learner, earning a bachelor's degree at age 85. She was truly an inspiration to everyone who met her. Today, we honor her life – a life defined by service, commitment and community.

Tafeni English

Director of Southern Poverty Law Center Civil Rights Memorial Center

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Dec. 20, 2020

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved

The Montgomery Advertiser (Montgomery, AL)

Dec. 20, 2020

Copyright © 2021 Newspspers.com All Rights Reserved



Rev. Robert Graetz and his wife Jeannie Graetz in Montgomery on Wednesday April 1, 2015. MICKEY WELSH/ADVERTISER

The Graetz Legacy

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?
Then said I, Here am I; send me.

Isaiah 6:8 (King James Version)

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

Matthew 5:44

Note: This scripture was the lesson for the day at Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, September 15, 1963.

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Matthew 25:40

So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (Only what we do for Christ will last.)

2 Corinthians 5:9-10

Peace Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

Special Guests

Chip Hill, Chief of Staff to the Mayor

Jamyla Philyaw, Special Assistant to the Mayor

Tania Johns, Special Assistant to the Mayor

Phillip Ensler, Senior Policy Advisor to the Mayor

Sheyann Webb Christburg, Noted Author/Youth Advisor

Dr. Willie D. McClung, Pastor, Holt Street Memorial Baptist Church

Mrs. Leslie McPhillips and Atty. Julian L. McPhillips Jr.,
Author, Community Advocate

Nelson Malden, barber who gave Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. his first local haircut

Sandra Nickel, Veteran Realtor, Community Advocate

Valerie Smedley, Owner-Operator of Tours of Montgomery, Community Advocate

Cedric Varner, Longtime Television Talk Show Host

H. Randall Williams/Suzanne La Rosa, Book Publishers, Community Advocates

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to the following individuals for their indispensable support:

Mayor Steven L. Reed and his staff; Jennifer Gold, chief of staff, Martin Luther King III; One Montgomery; Sheyann Webb Christburg, noted author/youth advocate; Krista Johnson and Brad Harper, *Montgomery Advertiser*; Scotty E. Kirkland and Ken Barr, Alabama Department of Archives and History; and Meta Ellis and other Graetz family members.



Rev. Robert Graetz and Jeannie Graetz

