

## Paying tribute to those who work for peace and justice



**BARB GUY**

While we stood on the playing field in our one-piece blue-and-blue-striped polyester gym suits, new to the grown-up world of Churchill Junior High, our gym teachers, maybe 15 years older than we were, told us girls how lucky we were to be born at the right time.

They said we were the first girls who would go through all of junior high and high school years after the adoption of Title IX, a new law to keep sex discrimination out of federally funded educational programs. They said we would get a fairer shot at sports programs than any girls before us, including them.

"Be grateful," they said. "Women worked hard for this." I'm grateful to Molly Yard who fought, over and over again, for Title IX, which a number of people would still love to repeal. Molly died in her sleep at 93 in September. She worked for

women's rights, civil rights and social justice. She helped lead the campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment and was president of the National Organization for Women.

For Title IX and for my right to choose, thank you, Molly.

Seventy-three-year-old Dorothy Stang was a nun in the Amazon. For more than 22 years she taught sustainable agricultural methods to peasant farmers and tried to hold back the illegal destruction of the rain forest. One day last February, Sister Stang learned of a village burned down by unethical developers looking to remove opposition.

Villagers were hiding in the forest and Sister Dorothy brought them comfort, food and clothing. The next day, walking a great distance to visit another village, the nun was accosted by men brandishing guns. She opened a small cloth bag and retrieved her Bible, saying it was her only weapon. As she read aloud from it, the men assassinated her.

Simon Wiesenthal was an architectural engineer by training. As the gathering storm of the Holocaust drew nearer and nearer to him, he was forced to close his business. His stepfather and stepbrother were killed by the Soviet Secret Police. In all,

he and his wife lost 89 family members to the Holocaust.

Wiesenthal was barely alive when the concentration camp where he was imprisoned was liberated by American soldiers in 1945. He spent the rest of his life fighting anti-Semitism and hunting for Nazi war criminals, finding more than 1,100.

Wiesenthal died in September at 96. The Simon Wiesenthal Center, an international human rights organization, continues his work, fighting racism, anti-Semitism and genocide.

Mary and Carrie Dann, Western Shoshone sisters, took a stand against the United States government over the ownership of their land. In the Treaty of Ruby Valley (1863), the U.S. government was given rights of passage upon the land, but the treaty states that the land itself belongs to the Western Shoshone.

Still, the sisters were told their cattle were trespassing on federal property and they have spent decades in a David-and-Goliath battle. I met Carrie and Mary when native lands became part of another national argument, the one over nuclear testing. The Dann sisters attended protests at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site, where Western Shoshone people irked officials by issuing permits allowing peaceful people to enter

# The Salt Lake Tribune

the site, citing the Treaty of Ruby Valley.

Mary Dann passed away in an accident on her Nevada ranch in April. She was more than 80 years old. The Associated Press quoted Patricia Paul saying her aunt "died as she would have wanted - with her boots on and hay in her pocket."

Rosa Parks left us in October at 92. Her courageous act of defiance, her insistence that she was worthy of any seat on the bus and her willingness to commit civil disobedience to send the message improved our country. She is an American hero.

Simon Wiesenthal once confessed that he was forever asking himself what he could do for those who did not survive the Holocaust. Similarly, I wonder how best to pay homage to people who pass on after a life of work for peace and justice.

In his book, *Justice, Not Vengeance*, Wiesenthal shares a good idea: "The answer I have found for myself is I want to be their mouthpiece, I want to keep their memory alive, to make sure the dead live on."

We can pay tribute to people who do great things by passing along their stories, stories that might give the next person the strength to do something great.

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*Barb Guy is a regular contributor to these pages.* © Salt Lake Tribune.