

The Passing of a Community Friend

by Elena E. Robles

La Ferta

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James McEntee was not a complicated man. His purpose in life was simple and direct: to help the less fortunate and to promote the respectful treatment of all people, regardless of age, gender, race, or nationality.

When he died on Sunday, September 12 at the age of 73, he was one of a handful of individuals who profoundly helped set in motion the transformation of an entire county.

His patiently insistent, and passionate dedication to bringing government into the perspective of humanitarian service has created a legacy of programs —not the least of which was the formation of the Santa Clara County Office of Human Relations (OHR), the first of its kind in the Nation.

Jim served as OHR director for over 27 years, as well as in advisory and board positions within numerous social service and human rights organizations. The programs and services they offer will continue to positively impact the wellbeing of individuals for generations.

Jim's mastery of conflict resolution and building 'bridges' between cultures and causes could perhaps be a result of his early seminary training or his many years as a Roman Catholic priest at St. Catherine's Church in Morgan Hill. It could also be the result of the teamwork with his wife, Ann, who he married after leaving the priesthood in 1973 to pursue a ministry in "private practice." Ann McEntee literally walked side-by-side with Jim along the many marches for the rights of the disenfranchised and in the advocacy battles for the homeless, poor, and abused.

They were both good friends of the civil rights and farm worker leader, César Chávez. Jim could speak Spanish and was a tireless supporter of all immigrant causes.

Jim was responsible in the early 80s, for urging the county to open its armories to the homeless during the wet and cold months of winter; a practice consequently adopted by other counties in the state.

Jim is survived by his wife, Ann; his daughters, Ramona Pena, Maria Jack, Dianne McEntee-Sanck, Amy McEntee, and Chynecy McEntee; his sons, Jesse Pena, James McEntee Jr., Peter, Erin Grey; by brothers, Ben McEntee, John McEntee, and Robert McEntee; and his sisters, Mary Hart and Patricia Baxter.

Services were held on the morning of September 17th at the family parish, St. John Vianney Church in San José.

The family asks that in lieu of cards and flowers, people wishing to remember Jim may make donations to either the "Friends of Human Relations," 14850 East Hills Drive, San José, 95127, or to "Abrazos & Books" scholarships, at 255 W. Julian St., Suite 503A, San José, 95110.