

Terry McCaffrey, Cupertino, CA 95014, November 27, 2004

I am writing this tribute to Jim McEntee from the perspective that I have lived the same number of years as Jim McEntee at the time of his death.

In all my years there are few people that I would have put on a pedestal who would have stood the test of time. There were some that I indeed put on a pedestal only to have my expectations dashed.

However, Jim McEntee was a person that I considered to be a Saint and I was never disappointed in that estimation.

Of course I knew that Jim was a former priest. I am sure that part of his life he must have developed in him a deep understanding of the human condition. And I knew that he left the priesthood and went on to marry his beautiful wife and to bring together a large family. My wife and I were blessed to have had two beautiful children. However, there were difficult times in bringing up our children. That Jim and Ann managed to bring up such a large family must have been full of challenges.

I first got to meet Jim McEntee early in 2001. I had been working a campaign to have California declare a moratorium on the death penalty. Part of the strategy was to have local legislatures pass resolutions calling on the state to declare a moratorium on the death penalty. So a major objective for us was to have the Board of Supervisors of Santa Clara County pass such a resolution. An impossible dream you might say. That is where Jim McEntee entered the picture.

With Jim's guidance we set up a Steering Committee consisting of a broad spectrum of the community. To start with, Jim enlisted the support of the Human Relations Commission of Santa Clara County headed by Gertrude Welch, a long time campaigner for Social Justice. This led to a Community Forum on the Death Penalty which was held in Board of Supervisors Chamber. The forum attracted over 400 people and attracted speakers from all walks of life in the community. The forum was a big success and overwhelmingly supported a moratorium on the death penalty.

The next step of the campaign was to bring the issue of a moratorium to the attention of the Board of Supervisors. Jim provided invaluable support for this, drawing upon his long term relationship with the Board of Supervisors. With Jim's support the impossible dream became a reality and the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution calling for a moratorium on the death penalty.

Working with Jim gave me a small slice of the work of Jim McEntee. It opened a window on the life of a man worked so tirelessly 7 days a week to resolve the human relations problems of the community. There are many who are prominent in the public eye that cast a large shadow. Jim was not a person that was drawn from such a mold. He was a quite person who led by his moral persuasion and could draw on the loyalty of his team and those of us who were touched by him.

Jim McEntee changed the landscape of Santa Clara County in Social Justice. His influence on the adoption of the Moratorium Resolution by the Board of Supervisors was critical. It was a milestone for a mainstream county and it may have set the stage for the ultimate abolition of the death penalty in California.