

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING ALEXANDER KEITH HANSEN FOR ACHIEVING THE RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Alexander K. Hansen, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Alexander has been very active with his troop, participating in many Scout activities. Over the many years Alexander has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Alexander K. Hansen for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

HONORING THE ANTI-WAR ACTIVISM AND SOCIAL CONSCIENCE OF THE LATE NORMA BECKER

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2007

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today in memory of anti-war powerhouse Norma Becker, whose energy, spirit, and integrity fueled the opposition to the Vietnam War. A New York City memorial service held in her honor on November 3 drew hundreds, underscoring how her passion for peace won over the hearts and minds of many. She, herself, exemplified equal measures of heart and mind—impressing others with the sharpness of her intellect and her thoroughly analytical and logical approach to problems, but impelling them to act through her vision, her sensitivity, her soul.

She was a public school teacher with a voracious appetite for learning and social indignation. For 10 years, she presided over the Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee, the most prominent metropolitan antiwar coalition in the country. She was a founding member of Mobilization for Survival and served as chair of the War Resisters League for 6 years. She lent her voice and talents, not only to the cause for peace, but to the Civil Rights Movement, as well.

She has engraved her legacy into the American consciousness, and the country is the better for it. I submit for the RECORD and the interest of my colleagues some of the tributes paid to Norma Becker during her memorial service.

TRIBUTES TO NORMA BECKER
NORMA BECKER: A TRIBUTE AND CELEBRATION
(By Sidney Peck)

It was in December 1966, that I first met Norma Becker. I had come to New York City to attend the executive committee meeting of the newly organized Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. During a break in the meeting, A.J. Muste invited me to join him with a few others the next day to exchange views about a number of political issues.

Being in New York City was new for me, having lived most of my life in St. Paul, Minnesota. I braved the big city subway system and then found 68 Charles Street. I was looking for the name Norma Becker on a doorbell—but no name was listed. So I rang both bells and soon a buzzer sounded.

I heard a loud yell—a question, “WHO’S THERE?!!!!” I was too intimidated to respond. Again the loud question—“WHO’S THERE?,” followed by “THE DOOR’S OPEN. COME ON UP.” I opened the door and went up. She was standing at the top of the stairway—she had a big grin on her face, looked straight into my eyes and said, “Hi, I’m Norma,” and with the same breath—both question and command—asked, “What’s your name?” “Sidney,” I answered rather softly. “SIDNEY,” she exclaimed, and with the same breath asked, “Where are you from?” “The Midwest,” I answered aloud, “And your name is SIDNEY?” “Most people call me Sid,” I replied. “That’s very interesting, how come?” she asked, and added, “Come on in and hang your jacket up in the closet. Have you had lunch yet? Sit down and tell me about yourself, before the others come.”

That is how our friendship began. She told me how she was a teacher at a public school, how she loved to teach but despised the system. She told me about her marriage and divorce—about her children, Gene and Diane. She talked about her involvement with the civil rights movement and the peace movement—and more recently the anti-Vietnam war movement, of her work with the Teacher’s Committee and The Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee. A total stranger only moments before, she made me feel right at home.

Soon the others arrived and we shared our views about this issue and that question and were encouraged to appreciate and respect the profound differences that occasionally rose to the surface. Norma’s place was a safe house to the Movement. It gave us a sense of community.

Just as we were about to adjourn, Diane appeared, soon followed by Gene who gave everyone a big “Hello, what’s happenin’?” greeting. I liked them immediately because of their great sense of humor. They had never met anyone from the Midwest. “Minnesota?” asked Gene, “Where in the hell is Minnesota?” So, Norma invited me to stay for supper and answer that question. It was over a meal of whatever was left in the refrigerator that we began a family friendship.

Over many years, I learned to understand Norma’s language. Most of all, I learned to understand what Norma was saying when she wasn’t talking at all: when she just looked—or smiled—or laughed—or cried—or grimaced—or shrugged.

Norma was a very careful listener. I think that was because she was such a good teach-

er. Her penwomanhood alone was impressive! And, she was always the teacher and student wrapped in one. Probing, questioning: “How come?”; “Why do you say that?”; “What are your reasons?”; “What is your evidence?” and on. She needed to have the facts straight and the facts had to make sense. She has a lot of left brain: very analytical, logical, organized. But even more powerful was her right brain: her vision and sensitivity. Above all, Norma was heart and soul.

How else can you account for her record of leadership in our movement for peace and social justice? For ten years, she presided over the most prominent metropolitan antiwar coalition in the country—The Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee. The political waters of New York City are treacherous, especially those of the left and progressive movement. No other city has more political splinters, splits, factions, fragments, division and sects—all of whom believe they are the vanguard. Each of which proclaims the correct political line. And none of whom shall ever be denied a representative speaker at the coalition demonstration—or else!

“What do you mean, ‘or else?’” asked Norma, “Or else what?” And then she said nothing—just looked, rubbed her chin and waited as the demand was withdrawn—and then she smiled. “Thank you very much for helping to reach an agreement on our plans for the demonstration.” She was a superb communicator, even to those who resisted her leadership. She was tireless in her efforts to build a true coalition. She was an outstanding leader of the anti-Vietnam war movement.

On April 15, 1967, over 400,000 people marched from Central Park and Harlem and assembled on First Avenue in front of the United Nations to protest U.S. military intervention in Vietnam and demand an end to the war. The success of that powerful demonstration was due in large measure of the work of The Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee, under Norma’s skillful leadership.

Fifteen years later, Norma threw herself into organizing New York City peace sentiment in support of the mass demonstration in Central Park on June 12, 1982. It was Norma’s tireless and devoted leadership of the New York City peace movement that contributed immensely to the outpouring of over a million people in the largest single demonstration for peace in the history of the country.

In both of these historic demonstrations, Norma carried a considerable burden over the most difficult political obstacles. On both occasions, it was her energy, spirit and integrity that helped to sustain the unity of mass action. For more than 20 years, Norma was in the vigils, the sit-ins, the days of protest, the trains to Washington, the Hiroshima actions. She did the calling and the fundraising and the letter writing. She went to this meeting and that conference and hosted thousands of gatherings at Norma’s place.

In the spring of 1977, she was a founding organizer of the Mobilization for Survival and for several years organized for peace and social justice at the national level. During this

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

same period she gave organizational leadership to the War Resisters League, serving as chair from 1977 to 1983.

She was a unique and successful organizer because she could blend the right proportions of tender loving care, anger and guilt. Above all, she conveyed a powerful sense of social indignation to all of us, and especially the youth. She truly appreciated the young for their energy, creativity and selflessness. In her interview with Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, authors of "Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975," Norma recalled some of the events around the May 9, 1970 demonstration (in response to the U.S. invasion of Cambodia and the killings of students at Jackson and Kent State universities):

We put out a mailing of 10,000 one day's notice—we didn't have computerized mailings then. We had a staff of young people who worked incredible hours. These are the unsung heroes of that period, and their names don't go down in the history books: Linda Morse, Josh Brown, Alan Barnes, Wendy Fisher, Laurie Sandow, Bob Eberwein, and many others . . . these are the young people who were working for fifty, seventy-five dollars a week, if and when we could pay them—nineteen, twenty, twenty-one years old. . . .

Norma worried about our youth. She worked with youngsters every day in the public schools and she witnessed young people in the movement for peace and social justice. She was critical of herself and her generation for not providing the young with more meaningful role models. She was concerned that we have left them with too little hope.

In her effort to understand the dynamics of war and genocide, Norma was drawn to the study of human culture and the role of irrational forces in human motivation. She researched biology and behavior—was not satisfied with the theoretical orthodoxy and rationalistic models of the political left. She read the literature of Zen and Tao; she took courses in anthropology; she engaged her friends in long talks about the meaning of it all. She always continued to learn, to study, to know, to create, to enjoy, and to love.

A hope, a desire, a wish—or an attitude—whatever it took, it was an expression of Norma's optimism in troubled times. She understood how powerful a people's movement can be, even with the most limited of resources. And, how empowered each of us can become if we act on our inner courage, however small it may seem.

Norma celebrated our potential as persons, if we can accept one another as ally, friend and comrade. In Norma's everyday practice, she sought to heal and overcome the hurts and pains, the divisions and schisms arising from racism, sexism, opportunism and sectarianism within our movement. Time and again, she acted with courage and passion to unify our ranks against divisive assaults. Often she succeeded, and sometimes not, but she never failed to respond, no matter how difficult the task.

This is a time to celebrate Norma and give tribute to this remarkable person who gave so much of her energy, her spirit, her self, so that this might be a better world for the young—so that our children will be alive and well in the 21st Century and beyond—so that all will go well.

We love you, Norma, as our sister, friend and comrade—and we celebrate your life. L'Chayim!

THE NORMA BECKER THAT I KNEW

(By David McReynolds)

My first memory of Norma is from the Civil Defense Drill protests in 1960-61, and her attending the WRL Conferences we used to have every year at Hudson guild. I had lit-

tle knowledge of her courageous work in the South and didn't really get to know her until 1965 and the founding of the Vietnam Peace Parade Committee.

Looking back, that was typical Norma Becker. She felt that since everyone else had parades on Fifth Avenue—The Irish, the Italians, the annual Easter Parade—that the Vietnam Peace movement had a right to such a parade. She approached A.J. Muste—then in his late seventies—chaired the meetings, and had wide respect, the Communists and Trotskyites, who hadn't sat in the same room in decades, came. The Catholic Left came. Liberal Democrats, pacifists, socialists, trade unionists, Protestants, Jews—all came to that founding meeting, and to the following meetings.

The first parade, in 1965, when the Vietnam War was still widely supported by the public, marked the birth of what would, by the 1970s, become mass coalition demonstrations. (And it had one wonderful moment of theater, when Allen Ginsberg, who was in the parade, walked up to a police officer, kissed him, and handed him a flower—only Allen could have done that and left the officer looking bemused instead of angry.)

When the initial parade was over, the Parade Committee didn't dissolve. It set up offices, and drew a staff of supporters who provided the backbone of public protest and resistance in New York City—setting an example, in the process, for people all over the nation to put aside old disagreements and unite to fight the war. (Norma never forgave me for opposing the continuation of the Parade Committee, sectarian anti-Communist that I then was, I wasn't sure about institutionalizing cooperation with the Marxist-Leninists. Norma was right. I was terribly wrong).

Norma functioned in a movement where men played the leading roles as the main speakers and writers. While this was a period when the feminist movement emerged, and Norma considered herself a feminist, she was more concerned with getting work done than with getting credit. She was a constant figure in all the shifting coalitions and mobilizations, often using her apartment on Charles Street as the meeting place from which new ideas and new approaches emerged. It would be an enormous mistake to think that because she was not the "public figure" for the movement, that she was thus "merely" an organizer. (Though God knows, being the kind of organizer Norma was, if that was all she did it would have earned her a place in heaven—if not the history books).

What needs to be said is that while many of us, including myself, had jobs in the movement, Norma's full time job was that of a school teacher—a first class one, active in her union. In addition, she was a divorced mother raising two children. For most human beings that would have been enough. But Norma was a tower of strength in the broader movement, negotiating her way through forests of egos and organizations. She had taken on the role as Chair of War Resisters League, and, like all of her other tasks, she took that seriously. Did Norma somehow operate outside the usual time spectrum? Did she have a 48 hour day, while the rest of us had only 24?

Norma was one of the first in the Jewish community to initiate informal dialogue with Arabs in New York City, bringing together members of two groups who had operated at a great distance from one another.

When the Vietnam War ended, and most people returned to their pre-war routines, Norma, with the help of Sid Lens, founded the Mobilization for Survival in 1977. While "Mobe" eventually folded, during its ten years or so of active life it generated a num-

ber of local "Peace and Justice" centers, and laid the basis for the enormous demonstration in 1982 in Central Park, when the numbers of those who came were so great that estimates of a million remain only a guess. I was there—the crowds were so dense it became frightening. Norma was, for once, a speaker, late in the program, and she alone dared raise the issue of the Israeli military actions taking place at that time.

With the recession that came with the Reagan years, Norma tried hard to push the War Resisters League to embrace economic justice as part of its agenda. Together with Norma we helped set up a coalition—the name now escapes me—which tried to get the peace movement to put unemployment, poverty, and economics on its agenda.

She had a restlessly curious mind. To visit Norma for dinner was to be plunged into intellectual discussions far beyond the agenda of the moment. Toward the end of her life she suffered from mania and depression. She was out of the usual organizational loop. The death of her son, Gene, probably precipitated her agitation. Norma would be furious with me if I skipped over this, as if her life was too perfect for a touch of reality. Norma was very real, to the dinners she prepared, to the love and concern she showed to all, to the incredible ability to forgive slights. Perhaps, most of all, I remember her laughter

I have been lucky in this life to have known closely and well a number of those the world has considered great, among them A.J. Muste, Norman Thomas, Dave Dellinger, Bayard Rustin. Norma was as "great" as any of them. Let the record show that because of her, fewer Vietnamese and Americans died. She showed us that—in the midst of apathy—resistance and mass mobilization is possible. It was my good fortune to have worked with her during many years of struggle. The memory of that struggle shames us if we think, in a period equally dangerous, we can fail now to mount a resistance, one that reaches out to mobilize the many.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF
FORMER TEXAS SUPREME
COURT JUSTICE JOHN HILL

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2007

Mr. HALL of Texas. Madam Speaker, I am honored to pay tribute to the memory of John Hill, the only person in the history of the great State of Texas to serve as Secretary of State, Attorney General and Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court. John was a friend of mine. He was a spellbinder and, in my opinion, the greatest and most successful trial lawyer of his day.

John entered politics as an organizer in the 1964 re-election campaign of Governor John B. Connally. Governor Connally appointed him Secretary of State in 1966, a post he would hold for 2 years. In 1972 John was elected Attorney General, where he pressed lawsuits against polluters, created an organized crime task force and persuaded the Legislature to pass consumer legislation. In 1984 he was elected Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas. He resigned in January of 1988 to advocate his belief that the partisan election of judges fostered an environment which allowed campaign contributors to have undue influence upon the courts. He continued to campaign for