



Religion



Roberta Vann: an icon in the community

BY JOY RAMOS
OF THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Roberta Vann, an honored fellow resident of Portland celebrated her 97th birthday among family and friends last week on Sunday, September 3. Born in 1926 in Minter City, Mississippi, she had picked cotton on a plantation at 5 years old and attended school around the cotton picking season.

At 26 years old, Roberta graduated from Clark College in Georgia and later went on to become a teacher. She met her future husband, Cleotus Moore, Sr. when he was still a student in embalming school. They married on April 1, 1949 and later took up residence in Portland a few years later where Cleotus started his mortuary business, now called Vann & Vann Funeral Directors located at 5211 N.

Williams. Roberta helped to run the company as well as working part-time as a teacher at Boise-Elliott Elementary. Over the years, Roberta endured many challenges for being a woman of color where she was not allowed to vote, own a house and other discriminatory practices that have been outlawed.

During her birthday celebration, Calvin Allmon, Roberta's former 4th grade student from Boise Elliott showed his appreciation for her influence in his life by playing the piano. Another one of her students was Kevin Fuller, a graduate from Harvard with a Masters degree.

Roberta has had a personal commitment to helping youths. Her message to them has been to not take their opportunities for granted because it has been through the sacrifice of others that has created the freedoms and opportunities they have today.

Priest told to drop civil suit

CONTRIBUTED STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

In an unprecedented move, the Vatican is forcing a Canadian Catholic priest to drop his libel suit against another cleric by illicitly threatening him with the rare and extraordinary punishment of excommunication. Father Nicholas Gruner, who heads the Fort Erie-based Fatima Center, has offered to withdraw his libel action against Monsignor Alan McCormack, now based in Cardinal Ratzinger's Congregation in Rome, provided the unwarranted threat of excommunication is withdrawn together with certain guarantees. Coralie Graham, a Director of the apostolate headed by Father Gruner was incredulous: "I am speechless at this abuse of authority. Excommunication is for heretics and abortionists. This is a clear cut abuse of Church authority in order to engage in a coverup. But what is a person to do when politicians so close to the Pope are the ones pulling the puppet strings?"

Father Gruner's civil suit seeks a retraction of public statements made in 1990 by Msgr. McCormack, then an official of the Archdiocese of Toronto, challenging Father Gruner's status as a Catholic priest. Excommunication, which formally severs all connections between an individual and the Catholic Church, is a punishment normally applied only to persons guilty of grave moral or theological offenses, such as the persistent preaching of heresy. Since this penalty effectively terminates a priest's career, it is very rarely used. Hundreds of priests convicted in civil courts of serious sexual and financial crimes in recent decades have been spared this punishment, as have prominent theologians, such as Hans Kung, whose published views are notoriously contrary to Catholic teaching.

Father Gruner has never been officially accused of any such offenses. In fact, Father Gruner has never been canonically accused of any offense whatsoever against the Catholic Faith, Catholic morals, or Canon Law. The excommunication threat was made in a letter (dated June 5, 2000, and delivered by two messengers to Fort Erie on June 21) from Dario Cardinal Hoyos, who heads the Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy in Rome. Catholic moral theology and Canon Law allows Father Gruner to sue in civil court for libel if other avenues of defending his good name are exhausted.

In any case, Canon Law does not provide for the penalty of

excommunication for such a civil suit. Nevertheless, according to a Vatican official, the letter bluntly warned Father Gruner that failure to withdraw his libel suit "would provoke additional canonical procedures against him, up to and including the penalty of excommunication." Since Father Gruner was attacked in print a decade ago by Monsignor McCormack, Father Gruner has made several unsuccessful attempts to reach an out-of-court settlement. The Toronto Archdiocese's only response was an attempt to have the suit dismissed, claiming that the Church's internal court was a more appropriate forum for resolving the matter.

In view of the excommunication threat, Father Gruner has now requested a meeting and direct negotiations with Vatican officials, including Hoyos. At the same time, Father Gruner requested an adjournment of the libel trial in order to accommodate the requested meetings at the Vatican, which may take many weeks to arrange. Earlier this year, Justice Gloria Epstein of the Ontario Superior Court ruled that the case "can and should be resolved in this court," since the Church's internal dispute resolution process does not provide for the awarding of damages, and lacks a mechanism for enforcing such awards.

Father Gruner's organization publishes a quarterly magazine, "The Fatima Crusader", with over one

million readers in Canada and the United States. It promotes traditional Catholic teachings and devotions, and has attracted strong opposition from Fatima skeptics in the Vatican bureaucracy.

Notably, the same Cardinal Ratzinger, (whose Vatican office employs McCormack), mentioned Father Gruner by name in his press conference of June 26 regarding the Third Secret, and suggested that Father Gruner was in a state of anxiety. "It must be because Cardinal Ratzinger knew of Cardinal Hoyos' threat of excommunication. I am not now suffering, nor was I suffering on June 26, from any state of anxiety. The excommunication threat has no basis in Church law and my mind is at peace. I don't know what else Cardinal Ratzinger could be referring to. His choice of the word 'anxiety' is surely no coincidence," said Father Gruner.

Since both European and North American press have sought the benefit of Father Gruner's and the "Fatima Center's" extensive research on the Third Secret, it may be that there is more to this excommunication threat than meets the eye.

It appears that this is an attempt to silence the "Fatima Center" from revealing to the world all it knows about the Third Secret independent of the Vatican and in particular, the news that clearly contradicts the Vatican "spin" on the Third Secret. The suit is currently scheduled for trial August 28, 2000 in Toronto, Canada.

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Obituaries

In Loving Memory Of

Christopher Guinn Jr.

Sunrise August 7, 1937
Sunset September 1, 2000

Christopher Guinn, Jr., died September 1, 2000 at the age of 63. A celebration of life will be held on Thursday, September 7, 2000, 3 pm - 7 pm, at the Isaac and Peggy Brooks Building 3620 N. Williams Ave., Portland.

Mr. Guinn was born August 7, 1937 in Curtis, Arkansas. He served in the United States Air Force for almost four years. In 1957 he moved to Portland OR.

His survivors include his daughter Michelle Guinn and son Christopher Guinn, III; sisters Vivian Lock, Samuella Dedmond, Bobbie Black, Betty Sherman, Audrey Hampton, Beverly Meek, and Lenetta Guinn; brothers Rayford, Tommy, and Carl Guinn and Rickie Hendrix. He had five grandchildren and a host of nieces and nephews.

Private interment will be at Willamette National Cemetery. Arrangements are by Little Chapel of the Chimes on Killingsworth Avenue.

In Loving Memory Of

Nadine Winifred Luper

Maiden name Bennett

Sunrise July 4, 1920

Sunset August 20, 2000

Nadine Winifred Luper leaves to cherish her memory:

Samuel S. Sission Son Portland, OR
Elsie J. Sission Daughter Las Vegas, NV
James A. Sission son Portland, OR
Rita M. Dashti Daughter Beaverton, OR

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Health Emphasis Week

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7pm Friday, September 15
Having Good Health

5pm & 7pm Saturday, September 16
Dealing with Arthritis, Fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue
syndrome and immune diseases

7pm Sunday-Wednesday, September 17-20
Coping with Cancer, Diabetes, Heart Disease
and High Blood Pressure

7pm Friday, September 22
Digestion and Good Health

5pm Saturday, September, 23
Health Demonstrations

Presenters: Mamon Wilson - over 25 years experience as a medical missionary physician. Joyce Brown, RN for over 30 years and medical missionary for 11 years. Presentations will focus on natural remedies based on God's plan for good health.

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4212 NE Prescott Portland, OR

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