

Endless and singing. Whose lovely ambition
Was that their lips, still touched with fire,
Should tell of the Spirit clothed from head
to foot in song . . .

What is precious is never to forget . . .

These are the opening lines of a poem by
Stephen Spender, the British man of letters.

So often when we hear the exhortation,
“Never forget!”, it is the victims of atrocities
whose fates are being invoked. But today, with
the addition of the names of Martha and
Waitstill Sharp to the “Wall of Rescuers,” it is
two people whose “lips . . . told of the Spirit
clothed from head to foot in song” that we
would have the world remember and the faith
that inspired them to take risks on behalf of
unknown others and the courage that led them
to face the Nazis not once, but twice and a
kind of almost incomprehensible determination
they exhibited that most of us mortals can only
dream of.

The plaque we install today has only 100
words on it, only 100 words in which to tell
their story. The documentary short produced
by the Unitarian Universalist Service Com-
mittee, which we will see in a few moments,
has only twenty-minutes to make their heroism
clear. So it is fitting that the museum is adding
to its collection the 8–9,000 pages of docu-
mentary evidence that Larry Benequist and Bill
Sullivan, the makers of the film, have gathered
from attics, from dusty store rooms in Czecho-
slovakia and France, from carefully preserved
Gestapo archives in Berlin, and from collec-
tions of personal letters. And it is fitting that
the museum has acquired the hours of inter-
views with Martha and Waitstill which Ghanda
Difiglia taped for UUSC while they were still
alive. The museum will no doubt also want to
preserve the hours of recollections of people
who were rescued by the Sharps, people like
Rosemarie Fiegl, and of people who knew
them like Yehuda Bacon recollections which
Deborah Shaffer is filming. All of these frag-
ments of the story will be preserved here so
that scholars, historians, and authors can
study them and make more accessible the ob-
ligation to remember.

Today’s dedication means that future visi-
tors to this museum will be continually re-
minded of two of who were truly great—Mar-
tha and Waitstill Sharp.

And part of what made them great were the
moral choices they made. How many of us
would set out from our comfortable homes,
leaving our small children behind, to travel to
an unstable part of the world where we would
match wits with the Gestapo and lead jour-
neys across the Pyrenees?

And yet the fact that they did that means
that any one else could have done it if they
had decided to, that it was not beyond the
bounds of the human imagination. If even one
person in a generation makes a moral choice,
it leaves the rest of us with less excuse for our
ethical torpidity. William Lloyd Garrison found-
ed the New England Anti-Slavery Society in
1831 when the slaveholder Andrew Jackson
was President. That removes any hope Jack-
son or his fellow slaveholders might have had
to claim ignorance as a defense for holding
other human beings in chains. And Elizabeth
Cady Stanton began the fight for women’s
equality in 1840 when women were excluded
from the world antislavery convention, so after
1840 what was Garrison’s excuse for remain-
ing a misogynist?

But of course not every one of us accurately
reads the tides of history. I often ask myself

what moral myopia I am subject to at this very
moment, something that twenty or forty years
from now will seem like unimaginable short-
sightedness. And that is what strikes me as
most remarkable about the Sharps. They went
to Europe in February, 1939. February, 1939
was less than three months after the
Kristallnacht. It was before the Nazis required
Jews in Germany to relinquish their silver and
gold. It was before the occupation of Czecho-
slovakia. It was before the German “Pact of
Steel” with Italy. It was before the SS St.
Louis set out on its fateful voyage to Cuba
and before its 900 Jewish refugee passengers
were returned to Europe. It was before Ger-
many attacked Poland, before Britain declared
war on Germany. It was before the Warsaw
Ghetto. And it was before Auschwitz, before
“Auschwitz” became the name of anything
other than a pretty little town in Poland. It was,
in other words, before most of the rest of the
world awoke to the true extent of the Nazi
peril and the full measure of its threat to the
Jewish people. It was in fact five whole years
before Adolf Eichmann would offer to trade the
lives of one million Jews for 10,000 trucks and
the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Lord
Moyne, would reject the offer, saying, “But
where shall I put them? Whatever would I do
with one million Jews?” The Sharps, their
sponsors and their colleagues, were gauging
the tides and gauging them with astonishing
perspicuity. It is easy to feel small and blind in
comparison to that.

But that is not the lesson that I suspect the
Sharps would have us draw. We honor the
Sharps as heroes who saved hundreds of
lives. But I am willing to bet that Waitstill and
Martha knew that though they and their col-
leagues, the Dexters and Charles Joy, were
the ones risking their lives on the streets of
Prague and in the mountains of Spain, they
were dependent upon a much larger circle of
friends and acquaintances who made their
heroism possible: the people who cared for
their children, the members of their congrega-
tion in Wellesley Hills who maintained their
church while they were gone, the supporters
of the Unitarian denomination that financed
their cause. And, yes, the tailors who darned
their clothes, the shoemakers who soled their
shoes, the pilot who steered their ship and the
housekeeper who kept their rooms.

That, you see, is why we have institutions.
Because not every one of us can set out for
war-torn Europe. Not every one of us can visit
the refugee camps of Darfur or the US deten-
tion camps in Iraq or Afghanistan or God
knows where else. But every one of us can be
a part of the lives of those who do. Every one
of us can be a part of institutions that make
such heroism possible and in that measure
can claim a degree of kinship with the right-
eous among the nations. That Waitstill and
Martha’s work resulted not just in the imme-
diate rescue of hundreds of lives, but in the
creation of an institution that came to be
known as the Unitarian Universalist Service
Committee, an institution that multiplied those
rescues a thousand fold in the years that fol-
lowed, is testimony that, acute as their reading
of history surely was, they knew that they
were but a part of a much larger circle of he-
roes and heroines who made their enterprise
possible and without whom their legacy and
the values it embodied could never be sus-
tained across the decades.

Spender’s poem ends:

Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest
fields
See how these names are feted by the waving
grass
And by the streamers of white clouds
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
The names of those who in their lives fought
for life
Who wore at their hearts the fire’s center.
Born of the sun they traveled a short while
towards the sun,
And left the vivid air signed with their
honor.

Thank you for helping us honor two people
who wore at their hearts the fire’s center and
left the vivid air signed with their own
honor.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF ABE
JOLLEY

HON. JOHN S. TANNER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in
tribute to my good friend, Abe Jolley, whose
community service and sportsmanship will be
recognized next month at the inaugural Abe
Jolley Memorial Golf Tournament in our home-
town of Union City, Tennessee. The tour-
nament will raise money for a scholarship pro-
gram in northwest Tennessee.

Abe was as avid and skilled a golfer as any-
one I have ever met. In 1939—the same year
he was lucky enough to marry his wife, the
former Velma Taylor—he hit his hole-in-one,
only three weeks after he had started playing
golf. Another 50 years passed before his sec-
ond hole-in-one, a slump he blamed on the
hole always being in the wrong place. He hit
four more holes-in-one toward the end of his
golf career, including one at the age of 85.

Abe was more than a golfer, though. He
was a dedicated husband, father and grand-
father. He worked at the Obion County Motor
Company, was active at Union City First
United Methodist Church, served more than
50 years as a Mason and was a charter mem-
ber of Union City Civitan Club.

I knew Abe Jolley all my life and, like all
who knew him, was deeply saddened when he
passed in 2004. Abe lived his life with energy
and excitement that I always admired. Mr.
Speaker, I hope you and our colleagues will
join me in honoring the memory of a very ex-
traordinary man and my dear friend, Mr. Abe
Jolley.

IN LASTING MEMORY OF BOBBIE
GENE “BOB” LANN

HON. MIKE ROSS

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to
honor the memory of Bobbie Gene “Bob”
Lann, who passed away September 15, 2006,
in Magnolia, Arkansas at the age of 79.

After serving in the United States Army, Bob
Lann moved to Stamps, Arkansas, where he
lived for twenty-two years. Bob served as cap-
tain of the Stamps Fire Department, served on
the Stamps City Council and was charter
president of the Stamps Jaycees. He was also