

Notes on the Rehabilitation of Nathan Leopold

This is a record of "this year" for your editor on Nathan Leopold. Following his death in August, May I add a short personal footnote? I became interested in him as a result of a conversation many years ago with Dr. Carl Winter, pastor of the Oak Park Baptist Church in Chicago, and a friend and adviser of Nathan Leopold during his long imprisonment.

Dr. Winter was also a friend of Clarence Darrow, whose plea to the judge saved Nathan and his associate, Dickie Loeb, from execution. Dr. Winter told me that at the time (1924) he was so outraged by their murder of Bobby Frank that he said to Darrow, "You have rendered a great disservice to humanity." Later, Dr. Winter, rendering a part-time ministerial service at the Joliet prison, had a complete change of sentiment. His counseling service gave him an opportunity to observe Nathan struggling through the process of rehabilitation. He was greatly impressed by Nathan's self-discipline and his response to the moral and spiritual influences that Dr. Winter and others provided.

Dr. Winter shared credit with Dr. Harold Row, a dedicated minister in the Church of the Brethren, who became tremendously interested in Nathan, as a person, not as a statistic. Neither minister had the slightest thought of proselytizing Leopold was grateful for this attitude and on one occasion said to Dr. Winter, "My family is Jewish and I will remain loyal to the Jewish faith." Still, in a letter to me he referred to the depth of

his appreciation of Christian principles and attitudes. One of Nathan's best friends was Father Ellgius Web, O.F.M. and Nathan's book "Life Plus 99 Years" was dedicated to him and two others in this language, "Without whom this book might not have been written because the prison term on which it is based might not have been lived through."

Evidence that religious influence in Nathan's prison life were substantial is also found in the moving words at the end of the book (written before action was taken on his parole): "And when we have done all we humanly can, I shall invoke God's help in prayer. I shall pray for guidance and strength. I shall pray for mercy and compassion. I shall pray for the wisdom and moral strength to justify by my conduct the rightness of the board's decision, if it is favorable. If it is unfavorable, I shall pray for the fortitude to go on."

I had a long friendship with Harold Row as well as with Carl Winter. They introduced me by correspondence to Nathan after his parole was granted, and we exchanged letters during his residence in Puerto Rico, where his studies and activities demonstrated that rehabilitation was genuine and complete. I can add little to this exciting case study, but I do want to express the hope that Nathan Leopold's experience will be studied and cited in the continuing investigations of our penal problems. His life during the

dozen years of his freedom which had been so clearly earned during 33 years imprisonment shows that men can be rehabilitated.

Nathan and I met face to face in the home of Harold Row in Washington shortly before Mr. Row's death. Later Nathan sat in the living room of our Southeast Washington home while we talked chiefly about our friends Winter and Row and of our common interest in social work and in books.

It is fitting that your editorial referred to his marriage and to the understanding and helpfulness his wife brought into his new life in Puerto Rico.

Mr. Row once referred to Nathan as "one of the most remarkable men I have ever known and one of the finest men I have ever known." In light of the fact that he could converse in 10 languages and had a working knowledge of 17 others and further that he demonstrated humanitarian interests in the middle and later years, the compliments must surely have been deserved.

Since proposals for prison reform will likely be given high priority by the American people, the story of Nathan Leopold should be regarded as a significant one.

BROOKS HAYS.
Washington.

The writer, a former member of Congress, is chairman of the Human Relations Commission of the State of North Carolina.