

From Prisoner of War to Prisoner of Conscience

Those who have read this column for awhile know that I feel the privilege is all mine in being able to pour over our archives. There is so much to learn, I gain so much inspiration from our past leaders, and my awe on what has already been accomplished by May Memorial people over the years continues to grow. This remains so true as I now go through the material of Rev. Dr. Nicholas C. Cardell, Jr., our 10th minister (1974-1995).

Many readers know that Nick spent time in prison on two occasions. Once was as a Prisoner of War during WWII and 54 years later as a Prisoner of Conscience when he served time in a Federal Prison Camp, joined by active members Dan and Doris Sage, for their demonstrations against the School of the Americas. You can read more about the despicable background of the U.S.'s School of the Americas at <http://history.mmuus.org/judasbyproxy.pdf> in a sermon by Nick in the fall of 1997. Several months later Dan, Doris, and Nick's prison terms began. Go here to read some about his experiences: <http://www.uuworld.org/1999/0799feat3.html>. Such commitments based on conscience establish a role modeling atmosphere explaining so well why I am a Unitarian Universalist and why I so love this church. I encourage parents with young children to talk about this with them and read some of Nick's words.

I recently discovered an undated sermon by Nick entitled *From POW to POC*. It was written sometime in 1999. You can see it at <http://history.mmuus.org/From%20POW%20to%20POC.pdf> It, too, is well worth reading. Nick talked about the feelings people have when they do something that is truly based on their conscience and knowing that they know how to distinguish right from wrong in terms of the way you deal with others: "There is a joyful exhilaration in risking something with others for the sake of some deep-down fundamental conviction that has to do, I think, with belonging and caring—with loving. It is a spiritual experience." In essence, I believe Nick was describing how spirituality comes about in so many different ways.

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