

Community Mourns the Passing of a Patriot with Vision



Joel McNair, 1951 - 2011

Sunday, 29 May 2011 – Sarasota, Florida. Adverse Possessor Joel McNair (60) took his own life in his home near Sarasota Florida. Patriots might suspect that the Sheriff and State Attorney of Sarasota County murdered him through their special brand of torture – strategic litigation to avoid public participation. They might suspect correctly.

Sarasota County officials had conducted an incarceration, prosecution, and persecution pogrom, with the help of the news media, against Joel and other foreclosure adverse possessors (FAP) since last November and December when the Sarasota Sheriff's Office first arrested Joel for adverse possession. They accused Joel of Grand Theft and Scheme to defraud. The State Attorney recently indicted Joel for Grand Theft and brokering without a license. Joel had taken upwards of 100 homes through adverse possession and put low-income member families in them for a monthly fee of less than \$500. Families became members by joining Homes for Americans, a program he had established to help families in distress with no affordable place to live in times of falling real estate prices and rising rental costs.

Palm Beach, Sarasota, Manatee, Hillsborough, Polk, Pasco, and Marion County officials have conducted related pogroms of persecution against foreclosure adverse possessors in the past two years. They didn't stop at arresting FAPers for trespass, grand theft, breaking and entering, burglary, malicious mischief, swindle, fraud, and scheme to defraud. They also visited member occupants of FAP realty and stirred them to financial mutiny against the FAPers, encouraging them not to pay the FAPer the monthly member/rent fees, thereby putting the FAPers into financial distress and making it impossible to operate the FAP enterprise. This put the FAPers into financial distress, preventing them from caring properly for the properties.

Joel, for example, lost tens thousands of dollars in membership fees because of such tortuous interference by Sheriff Deputies with his member contractees. Tampa Bay area news media reporters like Steve Andrews of Channel 8 News, repeatedly rand

stories that denigrated adverse possessors in spite of the good they did for the community, particularly for low income families and single moms seeking decent housing in nice neighborhoods for their children, housing they otherwise could not afford, but which lay unused and vacant in abandonment due to foreclosure. Joel matched such needy families to available homes and took a modest fee for his work of keeping the lawns m

Friday, Joel learned of new charges levied against him, and a warrant for his arrest in connection with another adverse possession incident in Sarasota County. He became depressed. He had spent four years in prison from an unrelated conviction in Pinellas County 25 years earlier. According to his life-companion Deborah Watson, a Sarasota real estate broker, Joel had prepared his affairs quietly Saturday, verified Sunday morning that she knew certain important personal details, then told her he wanted to go meet with some buddies. She had felt uneasy because he left his laptop behind, which he had never done before. When she went into the garage a short time later, she found him hanging by the neck from a crossbeam, dead. He had tied a noose around his neck and stepped off a chair to end his life.

Joel had called me on Saturday to tell me of the new charges against him. He knew he did not have the financial resources to fight yet another criminal charge against him. He said “You know, I’ve had a good, full life, and experienced many adventures and pleasures, and done my part to help others.” I thought he meant that he had resigned himself to another jail term. He seemed more philosophic than depressed. We spoke about getting together for a lunch this week. He told me he appreciated my writing about his the Sheriff’s persecution of him, and about the false deputy affidavits that led to his arrests, then said our good-byes. He said “I love you” before hanging up. I had no idea that would become his final farewell to me. Deborah told me in her phone call today that she will wrap up the details of his funeral and burial this week, and then deal with her future options.

I know of another man with a vision for helping others as did Joel McNair – Mark Guerette of Palm Beach County. He suffered similar persecution for helping disadvantaged families by putting them into foreclosure adverse possession properties. County officials jailed him for a season, then let him out when he agreed to a plea bargain that left him a convicted felon, but free. I know he shares my condolences to Deborah Watson and Joel’s family.

The official suppression of FAP hurt FAPer’s badly enough, but the news media made it even worse. Among the chief culprits, Steve Andrews of Tampa Bay’s Channel 8 News, repeatedly reported the very worst about FAPers, showing the equivalent of mug shots to make them look evil, and conveying a consistently terrible impression about them, in spite of the good they did. I spoke on the phone with one of his victims, Chris

McDonald, 17-year realty investment agent of Plant City on Saturday. Chris told me that Andrews got the story wrong, and portrayed him and Mrs Swain, his tenant in Danuta Brown's Val Rico house, as evil interlopers, and never bothered to interview Chris about its details. Chris said he had engineered a deal with real estate investor Brown to AP her 3 foreclosure houses, but that Brown had insisted on making Swain into her tenant for \$800 rent per month. Swain eventually left the property under pressure from the court, but failed to clean up after herself because Brown had changed the locks during Swain's moveout. So, Andrew's video report showed the place a mess unfairly because Brown had blocked Swain's moveout and cleanup efforts. Chris said Swain had actually cleaned up a lot of mess in the house when she moved in. Bottom line, Andrews got the story wrong, apparently just to make adverse possessors look bad.

I for one will continue to honor Joel McNair in my thoughts and prayers, and feel pride on his behalf for the good he tried to do in the final years of his life. He didn't consider himself a patriot or part of the patriot movement. But he gave the last measure of his life in behalf of the families who needlessly suffer for want of a decent home in a decent neighborhood. The recent census report shows that 1.6 million residences in Florida lie vacant, many for years as a consequence of foreclosure. Joel considered that a travesty of justice – to let millions of residences sit empty while millions of families need an affordable place to live. I applaud Joel for his vision, similar to Mark Guerette's, of converting some of those vacant houses into low-cost homes for impoverished and needy families.

Joel gave up his life because Sarasota and other government officials engaged in a pogrom of official oppression against those who would exercise the common law right of adverse possession Florida and other states inherited from 600 years of English tradition enshrined in Florida Statute chapter 95.

I, and others who loved him and shared his vision, shall miss him and his bold, benign leadership.

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