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## Review of *Martyrs of Hope*

John Thiede

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## Book Review: Brett, Whitson Donna and Edward T. Brett: *Martyrs of Hope: Seven U.S. Missionaries in Central America*

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Martyrs of Hope: Seven U.S. Missionaries in Central America

This book updates the histories of seven Roman Catholic men and women who died in Guatemala and El Salvador in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century: a diocesan priest, a religious brother, four religious sisters, and one laywoman. The murder of six of these readily fits a more modern definition of martyrdom. In the case of Sr. Carla Piette, MM, who was killed in a tragic accident, the authors claim she may fit an expanded category of a “martyr of charity” advanced by Pope John Paul II. The most well-known cases described are those of the U.S. churchwomen killed in El Salvador in 1980. Recently Stanley Rother, a diocesan priest from Oklahoma, has garnered more attention because of his canonization process. Perhaps the least well-known is Christian Brother James Miller, whose case one of the authors became familiar with while teaching at the College of Santa Fe, run by the Christian Brothers, when Miller was killed. This project furthers the research of an earlier work by the two authors, *Murdered in Central America*,

published by Orbis in 1988. This book updates that project, utilizing recent scholarship and updating the more recent history in each case.

Perhaps unique is the authors' ability to update the historical record for each of these cases with extensive use of letters and firsthand accounts. The update is effectively accomplished for Rother, Miller, and Piette. Those who are more familiar with the story of the U.S. churchwomen may leave wanting more in terms of the update on the current status of their judicial process and canonization process, and their impact on El Salvador today.

This book will interest anyone who wants to learn more about modern-day martyrs in Central America. It could easily be used in an undergraduate course on martyrdom, or for more advanced high school religion courses. The authors successfully describe the impact of these brave men and women while reminding the reader of the many native peoples in Guatemala and rural poor in El Salvador who also lost their lives during this time period.

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