



Till's mother mourns

▶ where they were registering blacks to vote. The case, which helped galvanise the civil-rights movement and inspired the film "Mississippi Burning", has remained unsolved for decades. Mr Killen, a Baptist pastor, now 80 and in a wheelchair, was indicted in January.

June also saw a belated autopsy of the body of Emmett Till, a black 14-year-old Chicagoan who was brutally killed in Mississippi in 1955 after he allegedly whistled at a white woman. Months after his killers, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, had been swiftly acquitted by an all-white, all-male jury, they admitted their guilt in graphic detail in an interview for *Look* magazine, given to pay their legal fees.

Till's case brought the extreme violence of the racist South to light mainly because his mother, Mamie Till Mobley, decided to put his bloated, unrecognisable body on view in an open coffin and let *Jet* magazine, with its mostly black readers, photograph him. "Let the people see what I have seen," she said. The Department of Justice is working with the Mississippi district attorney's office to find out whether any prosecutions remain possible, though Bryant and Milam are both dead. There is good reason, says Alvin Sykes of the Emmett Till Justice Campaign, why there is no statute of limitations on murder. No amount of evidence at the original trial would have convicted white men for murdering a black boy.

Many argue that the country is obliged to look at these cases before it can move forward, particularly in the Deep South. But these are probably the last of the landmark civil-rights trials. Since 1989, 23 murders have been re-examined in the South, resulting in 27 arrests, 21 convictions, two acquittals and one mistrial, according to the Southern Poverty Law Centre. These so-called "atonement" trials show that justice will be served, even if it takes four or five decades. But the prospect of financial compensation, as for Anthony Crawford's lost land, is remote. Ironically, this may be because many black sufferings were too awful for any price-tag. ■

The Archdiocese of Boston

The church's tin ears

BOSTON

A parishioners' revolution makes church leaders backtrack

GIVEN all that has gone before, this was hardly the image the Archdiocese of Boston needed the world to see: small children crying piteously about what their church had done to them. Just two days before, their Catholic elementary school was due to close for good; the locks were changed, graduation ceremonies were cancelled, and the beloved classroom fish were trapped inside. What an error.

Parishioners these days are very different from the meek flocks of a generation ago. They now have few qualms about organising a revolt. When church leaders announced that they would close Our Lady of the Presentation School and use it to house a tribunal that rules on marriage annulments, the children's parents made no secret of their dismay. They offered to buy the school at market value and turn it into a community centre. When the church demurred, and then closed the school, they vowed to fight. Parents launched round-the-clock protests outside the school, setting up tents in a nearby park. The locked doors had been a disastrous pre-emptive strike: the archdiocese had feared that the parents were going to occupy the school.

The result was another paranoid week for church leaders, still reeling three years after the sex-abuse scandal tore a public rift between them and lay Catholics. After paying massive settlements to victims of clerical sex abuse, the archdiocese found itself in financial crisis. So it announced last year that it would close 83 parishes and sell the properties to raise cash.

Many lay people grudgingly accepted the news. But at St Albert the Great, a vibrant parish in a suburb south of Boston, parishioners occupied their church. Eight other parishes eventually followed suit: for months now, people have been sleeping in pews, organising their own Masses—and comparing church leaders to Judas. Some parishioners have sued the archdiocese, arguing that church buildings belong to local Catholics, not to their leaders.

The occupations put the archdiocese in an impossible position: it knows better than to yank people out of their churches by force. Yet Archbishop Sean O'Malley and his lieutenants do have astoundingly tin ears for publicity. Some protests might have been averted completely if church leaders had shown the tiniest personal touch. Instead, they announced which parishes would close by way of Federal Express packages. Parents of children at Our

Lady of the Presentation School complained that they were denied an audience with the archbishop, no matter how often they asked. "They're just so disconnected," said one parent last week. "They are in such a bunker that they have lost grasp of what it means to be in society, to be a good neighbour, to be a good Christian and Catholic."

But at least they are able, from time to time, to figure out when they have to cut their losses. When the vigil at St Albert the Great had gone on for 215 days, the archdiocese announced that the church would stay open after all. And this week, after several days of awful press about the school closings, Archbishop O'Malley agreed to meet the parents and reconsider their proposal. After a discussion, which one mother described as businesslike, the archbishop tentatively agreed to sell the school to them. He also let the children back inside to retrieve their artwork and their fish, thankfully still alive. ■

Methamphetamine

Instant pleasure, instant ageing

SEATTLE

The awful effects of an increasingly popular drug

VISITORS to a county court in Salt Lake City, Utah, are shown photographs of a woman in her late 20s who has been arrested several times for dealing in methamphetamine, a notoriously addictive and increasingly common street drug. She used the drug herself, and the photos show her ageing some 30 years over a five-year period: cheeks sinking, eyes turning glassy, teeth rotting.

Utah proves methamphetamine's awful power. This predominantly Mormon state largely eschews coffee, tobacco and alcohol. But it ranks third nationally in the percentage of arrested men who tested positive for meth, and meth-related crimes are said to account for perhaps 80% of the criminal activity in the state.

The story is repeated nationwide. Methamphetamine—also known as ice, crank, crystal or glass—is, in the eyes of many, America's leading drug problem. Limited to California and the Pacific northwest a decade ago, it has now spread everywhere. In Missouri, 2,000 meth labs were discovered last year. Atlanta has become the gateway for meth distribution across much of the east coast, with 174 lb (79 kg) being seized in one raid in March. And in Florida, a wave of meth-taking among homosexuals is thought to be behind an increase in HIV: meth makes people engage in more sex, more carelessly. ■