

The Volunteer

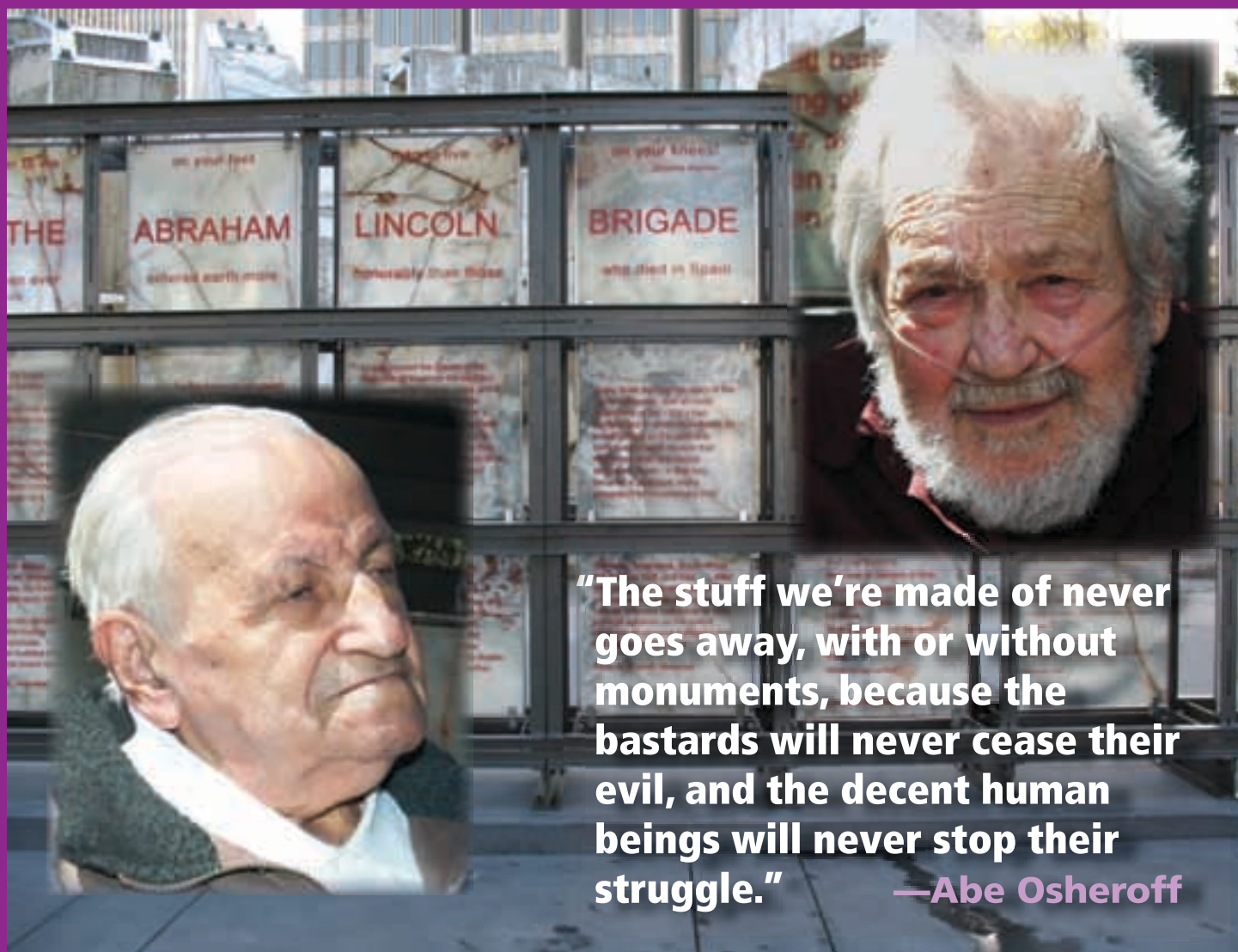
JOURNAL OF THE VETERANS OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE

"...and that government of the people,
by the people, and for the people,
shall not perish from the earth."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Vol. XXV, No. 2

June 2008



"The stuff we're made of never goes away, with or without monuments, because the bastards will never cease their evil, and the decent human beings will never stop their struggle."

—Abe Osheroff

On March 30 the national monument to the Lincoln Brigade was unveiled in a grand celebration, including speeches by the mayor of San Francisco, the Spanish ambassador, and vets, including Abe Osheroff (right). Within a few weeks of the event several vets passed away, including Osheroff and Abe Smorodin (left). Smorodin was the last national officer of VALB. Photos by Len Tsou.

National Monument to the Lincoln Brigade Dedication, page 1.
The Transition, inside cover.

THE TRANSITION

Important Letter from ALBA

The dedication of the monument to the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, followed by the unexpected deaths of two of the vets who participated in the ceremony (and three other vets) during the following weeks, was both shocking and ironic, but not surprising. The child of one vet said, "I can imagine them all meeting in heaven and Milt Wolff saying, 'What took you so long?'"

The truth is, the vets had a good idea about what would happen and took care to prepare for the inevitable.

About 10 years ago, word reached 799 Broadway that a Klan-like group was calling itself "The Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade." More recently, a group of dissidents within the California Democratic party said they were "The Lincoln Brigade." Did any group have the right to "speak" for the vets?

Looking ahead, the vets wisely asked how they could protect their reputation from obvious trespass. More practically, they worried that some unknown organization, even with good intentions, might claim to speak in the name of the VALB. What would happen if an unknown organization made claim to a future bequest intended for "The Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade?"

The VALB officers decided to consult with lawyers about these issues. They then drafted a legal document to protect their legacy and submitted that draft for approval by other vets around the country. With their consent, the VALB's National Executive Committee signed a formal Assignment.

The document begins as follows:

The undersigned, representing the National Executive Committee of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade ("VALB"), an unincorporated association having its principal place of business at 799 Broadway, New York, New York 10003, hereby transfer, convey and assign all of VALB's right, title, and interest in and to its assets on hand as of the effective date of this Assignment set forth below, and all donations and other contributions or bequests received thereafter, whether inter vivos gift or by Will to the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, a corporation organized under the laws of the State of New York, having its principal place of business at 799 Broadway, New York, New York 10003.

The next paragraph addresses the "effective date" of this assignment. Drawn up several years ago, the vets believed that the 70th anniversary of the departure of the Lincoln Brigade from Spain—October 28, 2008—would be an appropriate date on which to dissolve the VALB as an organization. But they also anticipated the same reality back then that we are facing today. Accordingly they decided:

The effective date of this Assignment shall be the earlier of (i) the seventieth (70th) anniversary of the departure of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade from Spain on October 28, 1938, or (ii) the death of the survivor of Mossess Fishman and Abraham Smorodin....

With the passing of both Moe and Abe, we have reached that effective date.

Now, after years of doing the "heavy lifting" for the vets, ALBA also assumes the legal responsibility to preserve and protect the VALB's legacy. That is what the vets wanted because they knew they could trust ALBA. And ALBA, for its part, accepted the Assignment because ALBA has always supported the spirit of the vets. What they stood for will be safe in our hands, and we are honored to carry their legacy forward into the new century. Of course, we will need your assistance and support as we continue this project.

We have many new programs for the coming year, but one is particularly important. Months ago, ALBA began planning a ceremony to acknowledge the passing of VALB. This will held at the King Juan Carlos I Center on November 8, 2008.

We will keep to our plans and now invite you well in advance to save the date.

Unveiling the Monument



Photo by Richard Bermack.

Sunday, March 30: The Dedication

The morning started with a chill. A memorial service for Milton Wolff the previous day added a somber note to what was expected in the afternoon. But by 11 o'clock, a brilliant California sun washed away any trace of gray from the skies, and early comers were already circulating around the sparkling monument.

Forty feet long, eight feet high, the steel and onyx structure radiated a certain pride on the San Francisco Embarcadero, just across from the historic Ferry Building. Eager spectators couldn't restrain their responding smiles as they glimpsed its splendor and significance, this first national monument to the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

A little after noon, just a few yards from the monument, the Musicians Action Group, a brass band under the direction of Bruce Barthol, began to play the songs of the Spanish Civil War, veering into renditions of "The Internationale" and other labor tunes that evoked old times on the San

Francisco waterfront. Visitors began selecting their seats along the concrete embankment. Folding chairs for the more elderly and a row directly in front of the monument for the 11 vets and other VIPs were reserved.

By one o'clock, the appointed hour, the area had become congested. The Spanish Ambassador to the United States, Carlos Westendorp y Cabeza, arrived, followed by Luis R. Cancel, Director of Cultural Affairs of the San Francisco Arts Commission. The crowd buzzed when the city's Chief of Protocol, Charlotte Swig-Shultz, approached with her husband, former Secretary of State George Shultz. "What's he doing here?" echoed many voices. The answer followed, "His wife."

Already the vets occupied places of honor: David Smith, head of the Bay Area Post; Abe Osheroff, who came in a van from Seattle; Abe Smorodin and Matti Mattson, who flew in from Brooklyn; Clarence Kailin, who came from Madison, Wisconsin. Hilda Roberts, who was a nurse in Spain and now lives in the Bay Area, and

Virginia Malbin, a social worker who traveled from Portland, Oregon, were the last surviving women volunteers from the United States. Carl Geiser flew with his daughter from Portland; Continued on page 2

The Volunteer

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Monument

Continued from page 1

Del Berg came from the Gold Country in northern California; Warren Billings, one of the student recruits from the University of California,



Dave Smith. Photo by Anita Toney.

Berkeley, drove across the Bay Bridge; Hank Rubin, the last San Franciscan, was right at home.

The arrival of Mayor Gavin Newsom moved the proceedings along. By now, according to a police estimate, the crowd had reached 1,200.

Acting as the Chair of ALBA, the organization that gifted the

monument to the city, Peter Carroll began the ceremonies. He read greetings received from British and Irish friends of the Lincolns and thanked the innumerable benefactors and volunteers who made the occasion possible, not least the many municipal agencies that voted to approve the monument's purpose and design.

"This monument is an antidote to amnesia," Carroll said. "We need to remember the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. We need to honor their courage, their moral courage. They stood up and were counted."

Carroll spoke of the two artists who collaborated on this unusual design, Ann Chamberlain, who was too ill to attend the ceremony, and Walter Hood, a professor in the Landscape Architecture Department at the University of California, Berkeley. The team was chosen after a public competition sponsored by the Bay Area Friends and Associates of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, chaired by veteran David Smith.

The winning design provides for a display of archival photographs of the

Lincoln Brigaders, both in Spain and in the years afterward, to emphasize the theme of the volunteers' continuing activism throughout their lives. In addition, a series of texts—including the words of poets Edwin Rolfe and Pablo Neruda, political figures such as Dolores Ibarruri, and writers Ernest Hemingway, Albert Camus, and Martha Gellhorn, among others—proclaims the anti-fascist principles of the men and women who defended the Spanish Republic. Both images and texts were inscribed by sandblasting onto the onyx stone.

Walter Hood addressed the crowd about the principles of the design, making a special point to acknowledge that the artists had been given complete freedom to present their ideas without interference. He explained how the monument evoked the spirit of the Lincoln volunteers, suggesting their commitment not just to the anti-fascist movements of the 1930s, but also to the current demands for social justice, freedom, and equality.

Luis Cancel continued this theme in his remarks. "These volunteers, like



Clarence Kailin. Photo by James Fernandez.



Virginia Malbin. Photo by James Fernandez.

the 11 volunteers we are blessed to have with us today, were not Spanish descendents, there were no relatives or great-grand parents that they felt some obligation to defend—no, their ‘kinship’ with the Spanish people was their moral compass that recognized a shared value—defending a fledgling egalitarian democracy. These noble moral principles have been incorporated by the monument’s designers, Ann Chamberlain and Walter Hood, and the names of those courageous first defenders against the rise of fascism now stand for all to see, and for younger generations to learn about.” The brief speech brought huge applause.

Mayor Newsom enjoyed this unusual podium. Flanked by Lincoln veterans and Secretary Shultz, his respectful remarks about the presence of the former Secretary of State drew a few hisses. He reminded the crowd of San Francisco’s noble tradition of encouraging dissent and protest, but also maintaining tolerance for those

with other positions. He stressed the educational benefits of the monument for future generations and lauded the historical achievement of the Lincoln volunteers. Clearly he was pleased that the monument would be welcome in this city of leftish leanings. His introduction of Ambassador Westendorp brought more cheers.

The representative of the Spanish government left no doubt about his sympathies. “We are today paying tribute to the courageous American men and women who generously risked their lives to defend democracy and freedom in Spain,” he said. . . . “Spain will never forget those generous Americans who offered their blood for the cause of liberty in our country. . . . Long live the members of the Lincoln Brigade!”

Then came the vets. David Smith, who initiated the monument project eight years earlier, spoke first. He thanked the members of the local committee, including three daughters of vets, Emily Lazarre, Martha Jarocki,

and his own daughter Linda Lustig, as well as tireless workers such as Judy Montell, Richard Bermack, and Peter Glazer.

Abe Osheroff spoke last, his voice raspy but strong. The monument, he



SF Mayor Gavin Newsom. Photo by James Fernandez.

admitted, raised questions of immortality, about which he had his sceptical opinion. “The stuff we’re made of never goes away, with or without

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Some of the members of the monument team at the ground breaking ceremony: (l-r) Walter Hood monument co-designer, Dave Smith, Linda Lustig, Martha Olson-Jarocki, Donna Graves, and Judy Montell. Dan Hodapp, senior planer from the Port Commission, is standing in back. Photo courtesy of David Perry and Associates.



Monument

Continued from page 3

monuments," he said, "because the bastards will never cease their evil, and the decent human beings will never stop their struggle."

And then came the final cheering and many tears.

The Celebration

A 20-minute walk from the Embarcadero, the Post Street Theatre hosted a celebration of the day's formal events. With a capacity of 700 seats, the place was packed. The audience speculated as to how anything on stage could top the emotionality of the dedication.

And then the program began. Peter Carroll pinch-hit for the ill Peter Coyote as MC. He read the famous response to cynicism written by film director John Sayles, "But What about the Guys in the Lincoln Brigade?"

Ana Perez, who had travelled from Madrid to represent the Amigos of the International Brigades, expressed the gratitude of democratic Spaniards for the volunteers who came from abroad to fight for the embattled Republic.

Manus O'Riordan, son of the volunteer Michael O'Riordan, had come from Dublin, Ireland. He sang an ode to commemorate the spirit of internationalism that led men and women from over 50 countries to serve in Spain.

Peter Glazer, author of *Radical Nostalgia*, followed with a passionate address about the significance of the new monument. "We live in difficult

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Address by Carlos Westendorp the Spanish Ambassador

Mr. Mayor, distinguished authorities, ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you very much for the opportunity you have given me and my wife to be back in this beautiful land of California and in this unique city of San Francisco, a land and a city so near to our heart. They were discovered, founded and colonized by Spain, and the Spanish colors have been flying here for more than two centuries. Most of the names of cities, rivers and mountains in this land are Spanish.

But beyond this common heritage, there is a paramount event in our history that links our two peoples together, the event we are commemorating today.

It is therefore an honor for me and my wife to accept the kind invitation of Mayor Gavin Newsom to attend the unveiling ceremony and celebration of the National Monument honoring the American Volunteers and Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

It is a monument that does justice to a heroic deed, a heroic deed by which more than 3,000 Americans, together with other nationalities, joined the Lincoln Brigade to fight for the defense of a legitimate, democratic government in the bloody Civil War that ravaged my country between 1936 and 1939.

We are today paying tribute to the courageous American men and women who generously risked their lives to defend democracy and freedom in Spain.

At that moment there was at stake much more than a military confrontation between two factions on the Spanish soil. At stake was really the defense of liberty and democracy in Europe against the threat of fascism and dictatorship.

Spain will never forget those generous Americans who offered their blood for the cause of liberty in our country.

Today Spain enjoys a full-fledged democracy and a high standard of living.

It is due to the efforts of the Spaniards, but we are all well aware of the fact that 70 years ago many of our American friends made a decisive and generous contribution to the peace and prosperity our democracy enjoys today. We lost the battle, but finally we've won the war. Long live the members of the Lincoln Brigade!

Thank you very much. ■



Ambassador Carlos Westendorp Cabeza. Photo by James Fernandez.



Introductory Remarks

By Luis Cancel, Director of Cultural Affairs, San Francisco Arts Commission

The City of San Francisco stands out nationally and internationally for several reasons, but two of those outstanding qualities come into play here today: our dedication to excellence in public art and our steadfast dedication to the principles of human rights, civil liberties and democracy.

The National Monument that we dedicate today will remind present and future generations of the moral courage demonstrated by thousands of Americans that responded to the call to help preserve democracy in Spain. Seventy-two years ago, hundreds of Americans from all walks of life, and from every ethnic group, gathered on the east coast to board ships to bring them across the ocean to Spain, where they joined what would eventually be called the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

These volunteers, like the 11 volunteers we are blessed to have with us today, were not Spanish descendents; there were no relatives or great-grandparents that they felt some obligation to defend. No, their “kinship” with the Spanish people was their moral compass that recognized a shared value—defending a fledgling egalitarian democracy.

These noble moral principles have been incorporated by the monument’s designers, Ann Chamberlain and Walter Hood, and the names of those courageous first defenders against the

rise of fascism now stand for all to see, and for younger generations to learn about. Ann and Walter have done a magnificent job and their design beautifully upholds the two qualities I mentioned at the outset: excellence in public art and an embrace of the principles that honor human rights and democracy.

Before introducing our distinguished mayor, I must take a moment to thank some of the many individuals that worked for nearly 10 years to make this national monument a reality. First the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, Anne Taibleson, ALBA’s Executive Director, and Peter Carroll, and especially Linda Lustig, who was the public face of this effort in San Francisco. They worked tirelessly through many complex steps and reviews required to secure a permanent public space, they raised all of the funds needed to build and maintain the monument.

I want to thank the staff of the San Francisco Arts Commission, in particular Nancy Gonchar, Deputy Director, and Jill Manton, the head of our Public Art program, for their focus and consistent follow through with many city agencies. We need to acknowledge and thank the Port of San Francisco and Monique Moyer, the Port Director, and Dan Hodapp, their planner, for their help in securing this site for the monument.

I want to recall a name for you: Cayetano Redondo Aceña. Why? He was the Mayor of Madrid during the Spanish Civil War. He assumed his



Luis Cancel. Photo by Len Tsou.

role and courageously performed his duties during the Battle of Madrid from November 1936 until April 23, 1937, and his moral courage stands in stark contrast to his predecessor, who fled the city at the outset of the Franco rebellion.

This moral and political courage is a characteristic we can all recognize in our own mayor, who has been leading not only our city, but our nation, by example—providing same sex couples the right to legally marry, the right for every San Franciscan to have health care, and providing a safe haven for illegal immigrants until such time as the federal government can find a path to integrate these families.

These moral acts of courage are part of the legacy that we honor today, and it is my pleasure to give you Mayor Gavin Newsom.

Editor’s Note: The San Francisco Arts Commission is one of the many municipal organizations that approved the placement of the monument. ■

Making



Peter Glazer. Photo by Richard Bermack.

By Peter Glazer

We live in difficult and dangerous times. Most of us here today live in a country, this country, where one major party vies unapologetically for its radical right-wing constituency, panders to its reactionary whims, yet the other major party must avoid even naming, or having clear public affiliation with, the Left, as though the people in this room, and so many like us, don't exist. We live in a time when the Right in America has attempted to appropriate patriotism, as though dissent was ever unpatriotic, as though these men and women before me weren't defending rights and values at the core of our

Peter Glazer is the author of *Radical Nostalgia* and co-editor with Peter N. Carroll of the forthcoming *War is Beautiful: Journal of an American Ambulance Driver in Spain 1937-1938* (New Press, 2008).

democracy. We live in a time where our national kin—4000 and climbing—have died in a war begun on wholly false pretenses and pursued with the blindness and arrogance only the blithering Bush and his vicious cronies could come up with, a war *beyond* reason. We live in a day and in a land where the gap between the rich and the poor is ever-widening, where almost one quarter of the world's prisoners sit in our jails. And we move towards an election where a presumptive candidate boasts of a 100-year war in Iraq. Clearly, there is great work to be done.

Why, on this momentous day, do I speak of such trouble? Because people need your history, and your history is in danger. We all know there was a time when the Left was a visible and undeniable voice in American political discourse; when to imagine a better, saner, more just and peaceful world of

people more equal and more free could not be, *would* not be, put down, and to hold those beliefs, and act on them, was full of hope and possibility; and a time when the gross injustice of a military coup against a democratic government, and fascist collusion and collaboration in that coup, was met with outrage across this country, and many thousands of men and women stood up against Franco's revolt, on the home front, and also, of course, in Spain. During the Spanish Civil War, an American volunteer asked a Spanish anarchist if he hated the International Brigades. "How can we hate you," he answered, "who come from a rich country to a poor country to give your lives for an idea!"

Actions like that make history, and as millions of people walk the Embarcadero today and in decades to come, this monument will make its own kind of history, because it will stop them in their tracks and tap them on the shoulder and say . . . "Here is something important, here is something beautiful and tragic and essential, something you must know, that once upon a time in the 1930s, men and women came from a rich country to a poor country and gave of their lives for an idea."

For years, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives have been working to protect this impossibly important history, but there's always been the risk of preaching to the choir, to the converted.

Likely none of you need to be told the story of Spain. And yes, this monument serves you, gives us all a place of

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History MATTER



Bay Area performance of “What They Stood For,” written by Bruce Barthol and Peter Glazer, with visuals by Richard Bermack and Judy Montell. Photo by Richard Bermack.



Hilda Roberts. Photo by Anita Toney.



Carl Geiser. Photo by Kristin Becker.



Mark Billings. Photo by Len Tsou.



Nate Thornton. Photo by Len Tsou.

memory, honors the American volunteers, is humbled by the men and women still with us here today, their families and loved ones, and those who lie so honorably in the Spanish earth. But I have to tell you something—this monument is not for *us*. It is more for the people outside these doors; it is for decades of passersby, who will come upon history on the Embarcadero. We don't need this monument as they do. They need this past, and by looking back, they may march forward with confidence and strength.

This monument was not created without controversy. There are people who are not here today because they object to this monument, and people present who wish deeply in their hearts that it was different. Those feelings are real and must be respected. Every single person in this room has this war in them, somewhere, and how they see it and what it means to them is theirs and only theirs. But as soon as a monument is designed and built trying to capture history and honor memory, it fails. It fails because memory is not made of words and photographs and onyx and steel; memory lives in us, and is unbounded in its richness and depth. Monuments have edges, hard edges, and those edges hold some things in and close others out. Monuments are finite, and our individual and collective memories are infinitely complex and multi-faceted. But we live in dangerous times. As Abe Osheroff said at today's unveiling, the stuff the veterans are made of will never go away. But your history—of progressive action, of idealism and possibility—is at risk, could be lost forever. You are all doing everything you can to prevent that. This monument, though, can

do something you can't—flawed, edged, and finite as it is, it can reach more people than you can speak to in a lifetime, catch them with an image, reach them with words, tease them with an idea, call them into history, offer them hope and a new way to think about the world. Monuments are flawed attempts to present and evoke a history, but we have no choice, because we dare not let this moment go.

This wall of ideas is not only a wall but also a door, a way in. And the fact of its presence in public space, its scale, its substance, the concentrated effort manifest in its structure, make an indelible mark in the landscape, and in the public imagination. This history *matters*, it argues; it deserves your attention; it is *real*.

As a commemorative body, we *must* not preach only to the choir. "An active transmission of memory requires. . . a broadening of the 'we,'" it has been written. The "we" who must "remember" *has* to be broadened. More people must feel that urgency, that desire, that commitment, those ideas that have defined

this community for over 70 years. We have "to come to grips with the Necessity that [the] past represents."

The poet Langston Hughes, who went to Spain reporting on the war for a black newspaper, wrote a poem for Eddie Rolfe, a volunteer and a poet himself. Langston Hughes's words mark the onyx on the Embarcadero. "Poet on the battlefield of the world," he wrote to Rolfe, "what does your heart hear? What poems unfurl bright banners made of words with red wings to fly over the trenches, and over frontiers, and over all barriers of time, through the years, to sing this story of Spain on the ramparts of the world?"

I think I can speak for the makers of this monument—its devoted, brilliant designers Ann Chamberlain and Walter Hood, its generous funders, the tireless local monument committee, and ALBA—and say that *that* is our fervent hope: that over frontiers, and over all barriers of time, that it will sing this story of Spain on the ramparts of the world.

Thank you. ■



Four daughters of vets. Photo by Richard Bermack.

The Artist Statement

Editor's Note: Ann Chamberlain, artist and designer of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Monument, collaborated with landscape architect Walter Hood in creating an unusual design. Her thoughts were presented at a small ground-breaking ceremony at the site of the monument on February 28, 2008. Because of her illness, a family member addressed the crowd. Chamberlain passed away shortly after the monument dedication.



Photo by Richard Bermack

Ann wishes she could be here with you today, celebrating this important step toward the completion of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Monument. I would like to share with you briefly a few of Ann's thoughts and words, as she worked on the design for the monument.

The Spanish Civil War and the heroic acts of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in all the complexities, contradictions, as well as the eerie similarities to our present time, compelled Ann. The subject is not only both very appealing and challenging, but also resonates deeply with Ann's identity as an artist:

"So I like to think...[that] the kind of works of art I'm most interested in, the kind of art I try to make, [is] the kind that navigates the gap between ideologies and actualities, the life of the mind and body."

In designing the monument, Ann identified with the approach of contemporary artist revolutionaries, both posing the question and offering an

answer from the perspective of the artist "faced with a situation that didn't fit the old definitions of class revolution, or right or left or east or west..."

"How do you face a time that, with new technology, new globalizations, new hybridizations of art, entertainment, race, politics, genes, new economic principles, can't be described in old terms, but demands a response before it's too late?"

Her answer: "With imagination."

"Witnessing an event and 'bearing witness,' conveying the weight and implications to others, is the challenge and example of these apparently mundane gestures and why they hold our imagination. To make active the process of memory is perhaps what is the most difficult in art; to enable the viewing of work to become an act of participation, a 'witnessing.'

Our challenge is to create a memorial that actively engages and provokes the imagination of those who visit it..."

The Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade fascinated Ann in their use of performance to tell the story of the Spanish Civil War, not for the sake of nostalgia, but instead "to inspire activism today," to "re-infuse lost histories with emotional resonance and contemporary relevance....It is this spirit of activism that we want to reflect in the creation of the monument."

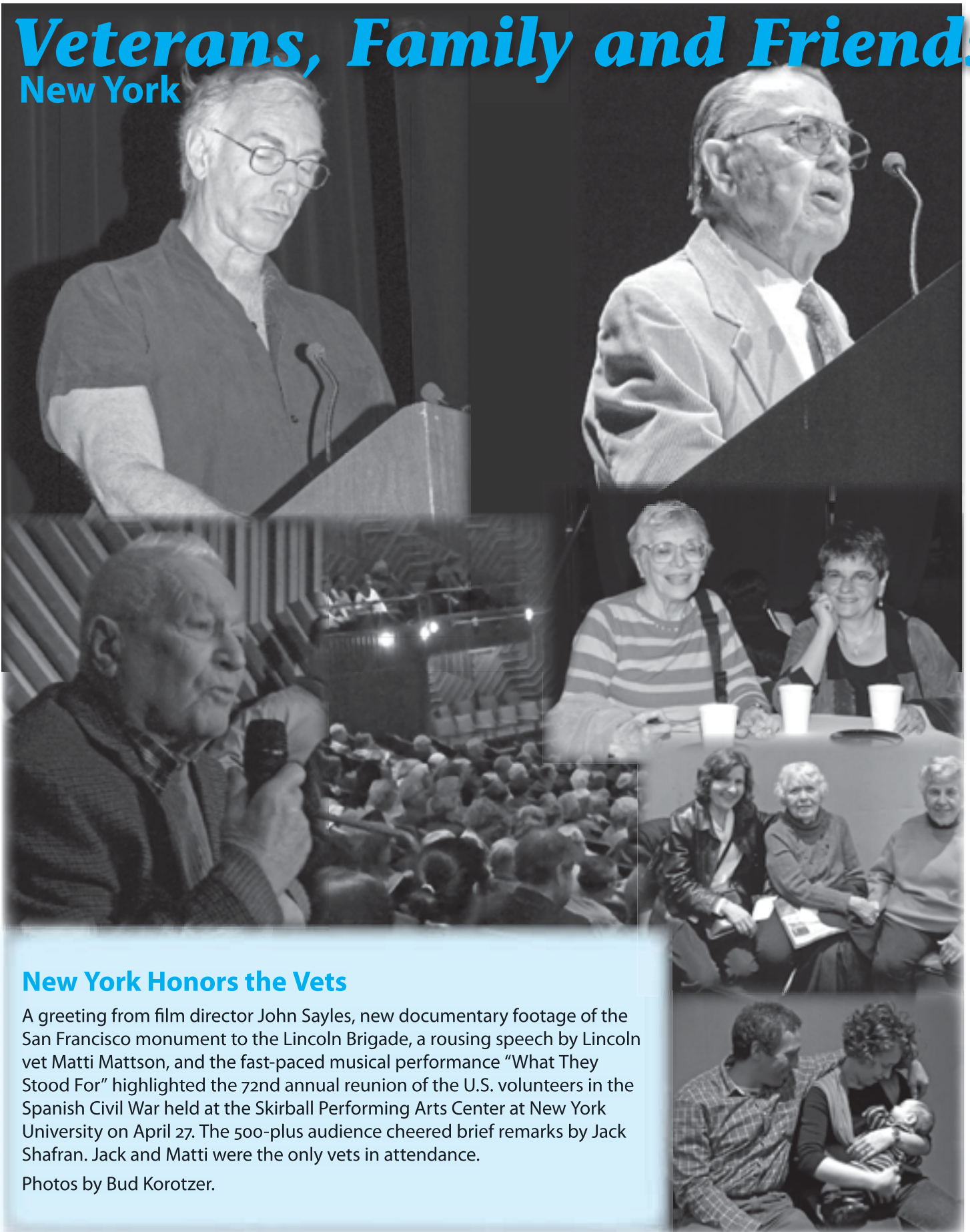
Ann sees this monument as being much more than a finite physical structure in a specific place. She envisions that it will engage many, many

others, performers, students, citizens throughout the community and the globe in the culture of activism, an education "to explain, to train and develop awareness, a sense of participation and agency in the world." ■

Ann Chamberlain, artistic designer of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Monument in San Francisco, died on April 18, 2008, after a long illness. Formerly Program Director of the Headlands Center for the Arts, Chamberlain taught at the San Francisco Art Institute, the California College of Arts and Crafts, San Francisco State University, and Mills College. She received a Fulbright Fellowship and many other awards. She exhibited widely and devoted a tremendous amount of energy and time to completing our monument.

Veterans, Family and Friends

New York



New York Honors the Vets

A greeting from film director John Sayles, new documentary footage of the San Francisco monument to the Lincoln Brigade, a rousing speech by Lincoln vet Matti Mattson, and the fast-paced musical performance "What They Stood For" highlighted the 72nd annual reunion of the U.S. volunteers in the Spanish Civil War held at the Skirball Performing Arts Center at New York University on April 27. The 500-plus audience cheered brief remarks by Jack Shafran. Jack and Matti were the only vets in attendance.

Photos by Bud Korotzer.

Celebrate from Coast to Coast

Bay Area



Photos of Bay Area event by Richard Bermack. More photos of Bay Area on page 17.



Manus O'Riordan. Photo by Richard Bermack.

and dangerous times," he began. "Most of us here today live in a country, this country, where one major party vies unapologetically for its radical right-wing constituency, panders to its reactionary whims, yet the other major party must avoid even naming, or having clear public affiliation with the Left, as though the people in this room, and so many like us, don't exist. We live in a time when the Right in America has attempted to appropriate patriotism, as though dissent was ever unpatriotic, as though these men and women before me weren't defending rights and values at the core of our democracy. . . . Why, on this



Hank Rubin. Photo by James Fernandez.

From the International Brigade Memorial Trust:

On behalf of all of our members in Great Britain and Ireland, and particularly our International Brigade veterans, may I offer our congratulations to you all for this great achievement.

For many years to come, this wonderful memorial will stand as a beacon to honour those who fought alongside the Spanish people and supported them in their anti-fascist struggle 70 years ago.

The British and Irish volunteers who went to Spain have a special affinity with their comrades from the US. They fought alongside each other as part of the XV Brigade in the great battles at Jarama, Brunete, Belchite and the Ebro.

It is sad that our friends Moe Fishman and Milt Wolf cannot share in the celebrations and see the memorial which they had planned for so long. But their memory will live on as long as people look at it and are curious to know more about the sacrifices made by ordinary men and women in the spirit of international solidarity when they fought for democracy while their governments shamefully looked the other way.

Our President, Jack Jones, Chair Sam Lesser, and all our surviving International Brigade veterans are active in keeping alive the memory of their comrades who died in Spain and those who have gone since. It is up to us, the next generations, to continue their work and be inspired by their ideals.

We can all work together to achieve this by forging stronger links with you, our brothers and sisters in America and around the world. We are bound by a common aim and we can reassure the veterans still with us that they, like their comrades before them, will never be forgotten.

I am sorry I cannot be with you personally, but some of our members are with you today to share your joy and celebrations. On behalf of the IBMT I send good wishes to you all from across the water.

Yours fraternally,
Marlene Sidaway
Secretary, IBMT

momentous day, do I speak of such trouble? Because people need your history, and your history is in danger." Glazer emphasized the vitality of the new monument as a way of reaching our own contemporaries as well as future generations.

Carroll read the roll of the Lincoln vets who had died during the past year and paused for a long moment of silence. Then he introduced the small contingent of vets. The theater shook

with gratitude and delight.

The music began again with a stirring performance, "What They Stood For," written by Bruce Barthol and Peter Glazer and performed by some of San Francisco's elite actors and musicians, with visuals by Richard Bermack and Judy Montell.

Afterwards, the congregation lingered for hours, savoring finger foods and beverages and the incessant feeling of wonder. What a day! ▀

Paul Robeson in Spain

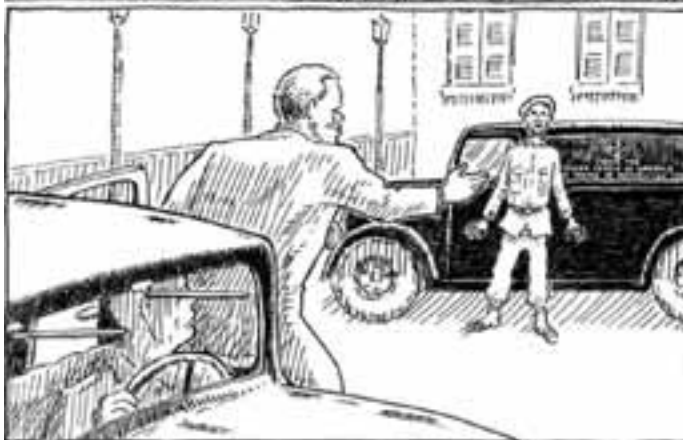
By Joshua Brown & Peter N. Carroll

about Paul Robeson's adventures with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in 1938.

CHAPTER 3



TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 1938...



JOHN BROWN & CARROLL

THE NAME'S JULIUS RODRIGUEZ. BORN IN TAMPA, BRED IN SPANISH HARLEM - WHICH IS WHY I **COMPRENDE** THE LINGO HERE. BEEN IN SPAIN, IN THE LINCOLN BRIGADE, ELEVEN MONTHS.



I HEARD THERE WERE HERMANOS FIGHTING FOR THE REPUBLIC. YOU'RE THE FIRST I'VE MET. BUT WHAT ARE YOU DOING AT THE HOSPITAL?

OH, I GOT A BLIGHTY IN THE TERUEL FIGHT. I'M FINE NOW, I'LL BE BACK AT THE FRONT IN NO TIME.



BLOODY HELL - IT IS HIM!

COMRADES, OVER HERE! IT'S PAUL ROBESON!



I SEEN YOU IN KING SOLOMON'S MINES.

I HEARD YOU SING IN TORONTO - IN MASSEY HALL.

YOU WERE DAMNED GOOD IN **SHOW BOAT**.

HE'S A LOT BIGGER'N HE LOOKS IN HIS FILMS.



YOU KNOW, YOU'RE THE **ONLY** FAMOUS ENTERTAINER WHO'S COME FROM AMERICA TO VISIT THE VOLUNTEERS.



REALLY? WHAT ABOUT HEMINGWAY?

YEAH, MATE, HE'S BEEN HERE.



BUT HE CAN'T SING!

LATER

I MUST KEEP FIGHTIN' UNTIL I'M DYIN'.

BUT OL'MAN RIVER, HE JES KEEPS ROLLIN' ALONG!



BRavo
YAN KILLER
BRavo

AND BRAVO FOR CHANGING THE LYRICS!

2008 ERWIN CARROLL



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Letters to the editor

Dear Editor,

I just wanted to pass on a thank you to Burt Cohen for his work on trying to get a plaque recognizing the NH members of that most courageous Abraham Lincoln Brigade. I read your press release about the first national monument going up in San Francisco and it reminded me that I never got around to sharing with Burt a little story connected to his effort.

Back when Senator Cohen submitted the legislation for the recognition of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, my son was a senior in high school. His school held academic contests at the end of the year, and he chose to participate in the Spanish speech contest, using the Abraham Lincoln Brigade as his topic. The Senator's work on the issue and the subsequent "controversy" cried out to him, and he was determined to make a public statement.

My son won the preliminaries and on the big night, his speech was far and away the best—his command of the language and his accent were superb. Prior to the announcement of the winners, both his teacher and his principal approached me to pre-congratulate and commend his performance.

We were all shocked when another student was announced as the winner.

It was unbelievable. The other competitors were inferior to even the most untrained ear. It has never been stated, but it was pointed out to me that the judges were influenced by the "controversy" and choose not to honor the student who spoke out in favor of the Brigade.

Irony, isn't it?

It was a great lesson in justice for

my son and for those who witnessed the event and who were privy to the background and information. And I recently learned that American hero Helen Keller was a staunch supporter of the Brigade, so I am pleased to see that my son was in such good company!

So a belated thank you to Burt, and a message: keep on keeping on, you never know who you will influence!

Peace,

Sheila Evans

Formerly of NH, now happily residing in Maine

Dear Volunteer,

I've enjoyed reading the interesting and informative articles I've come across. With one exception—and that is the September 2007 article on Norman Bethune. I don't know what the author read, but it is pretty

clear what he didn't read—Canadian sources or the information available from the extensive archives of the ALBA [which give] a better idea of how Bethune's contribution was viewed. At the time, an article by S.H. Abramson in the March 15, 1938, issue of what I believe is the *Volunteer*, gives a more accurate picture of Dr. Bethune's contribution. His agreeing to go to Spain was celebrated, as he was quite well known as a surgeon and for his commitment to social justice. The pages of the Canadian papers, the *Clarion* and the Yiddish paper, *Der Kampf* (*The Struggle*) during those years 1936-37, are full of material describing what an impact he had on making people aware of the civil war. It was his name that enabled enough donations to be quickly gathered to support the Mobile Blood Transfusion unit and an ambulance. His innovative technique transporting blood by refrigerated ambulances

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IB Monuments Around the World

Monument to IBs in Spain

On Saturday April 12, the "Associació Republicana González Chermá" and the local town hall unveiled a monument honoring the "internacionales" who died in Benicàssim.

A metal memorial is replacing the previous marble plaque, which was found broken last year. It bears the names and countries of the dead and a poem as epitaph.

The monument is of modern design. It is fixed to the wall and grounded on the floor.

The ceremonies also paid homage to the men whose remains were removed from their niches during the Franco regime. There were at least 30

from many different countries, mostly French, German, Polish and Italian, but also from Great Britain, Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania and the USA.

During the war, the Director of the IB hospital showed respect to the first dead, a French locksmith called Joannes Ponteille, by naming a villa in his honor.

—Guillermo Casañ

gcasan@telefonica.net

Plaque for Lincoln Battalion Poet Donnelly

On February 26, 2008, the eve of the 71st anniversary of his death, the Irish anti-fascist poet Charlie Donnelly

Continued on page 18

Celebration

Continued from page 11





Poets at War

Poetas en la España leal. Facsimile edition. Prologue by Manuel Aznar Soler. Madrid: Editorial Renacimiento y Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, 2007.

By Shirley Mangini

In July 1937, the organizers of the Second International Congress of Writers in the Defense of Culture edited an anthology of verse entitled *Poets of Loyal Spain*, to be distributed among the antifascist intellectuals from around the world who attended the congress in Valencia that month. Most of those included in the anthology were members of the Alliance of Intellectuals for the Defense of Culture that was founded in Madrid when the war began. All of the poems deal with the war, many with the Madrid front.

One of the poets not included was Federico García Lorca, murdered in his home province, Granada, by the Nationalists in August 1936. The first poem in the volume, "The Crime was in Granada," is by Antonio Machado—one of Spain's greatest lyricists of the 20th century—whose life would also be cut short because of the war, as he fled to France in 1939, along with thousands of his countrymen. The first verses describe Lorca's untimely death:

He was seen, surrounded by rifles,
moving down a long street
and out to the country
in the chill before dawn, with the stars still out.

They killed Federico
at the first glint of daylight.
The band of assassins
shrank from his glance.
They all closed their eyes,
muttering: "See if God helps you now!"

Federico fell,
lead in his stomach, blood on his face.
And Granada was the scene of the crime.
Think of it—poor Granada—, his Granada . . . *

*Translation by Alan Trueblood in *Antonio Machado, Selected Poems*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982. ■

IB Monuments

Continued from page 16

received the honor of a memorial plaque at University College Dublin, where he had been a student.

Donnelly, aged 22, was killed in action while serving in the Lincoln battalion at the battle of Jarama on February 27, 1937.

The plaque features a profile of Charlie and the following text, which incorporates the very last words he had been heard to say:

Charles Patrick Donnelly. Poet.
1914-1937.

"Even the olives are bleeding..."
Born 10th July 1914,
Killybrackey, Co. Tyrone.
Died 27th February, 1937
in defence of the Spanish
Republic at the Battle of
Jarama - Spanish Civil War.
Member of the James
Connolly Centuria
Abraham Lincoln Battalion
XV International Brigade.

The plaque was unveiled by Donnelly's sister, Christine.

Twenty years ago, on February 27, 1988, Donnelly's brother Joe had

launched his pioneering book *Charlie Donnelly—the Life and Poems*. Joe had been very much to the fore in this plaque project, and it was in fact designed by two of his own children, Rosemarie and Joe Jr. Sadly, Joe himself died only 12 days before the ceremony to honor his brother. His widow Kay spoke on his behalf, saying that the evening represented closure for the Donnelly family. In lieu of the funeral they were never able to hold for Charlie, they finally had this memorial plaque ceremony.

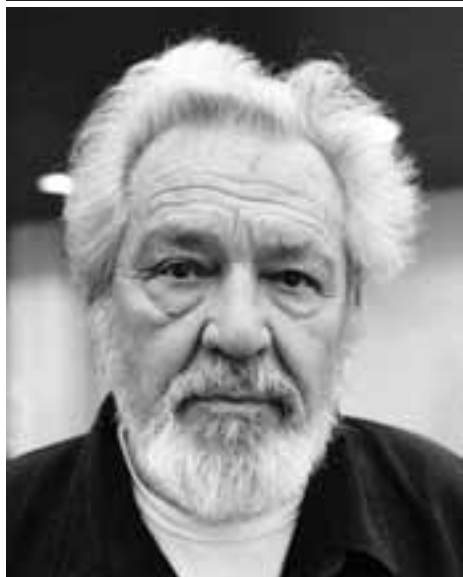
—Manus O'Riordan, Dublin

Irish Memorial

A local committee from Kilkenny, Ireland, has organized commemorative events for the "Kilkenny men who fought in the XV International Brigade," with special emphasis on George Brown, on June 27-28, 2008. There were three others from Kilkenny: Michael Brennan, Sean Dowling, and George's brother, Michael Brown.

For more information, email Ciaran Crosse: irelandscw@yahoo.co.uk. ■

Added to Memory's Roster



Abe Osheroff (1915-2008)

As Abe Osheroff's body slowly began to betray him in his 80s and 90s, one of his favorite lines was, "I have one foot in the grave, but the other keeps dancing." That dance ended on Sunday, April 6, when the 92-year-old Osheroff died of a heart attack at his Seattle home.

Osheroff is most remembered for his rich life of political activism. From the battlefields of the Spanish Civil War to streets all across the United States, he was a master strategist, energetic organizer, and courageous fighter.

But when I think about a world without Abe, it's Osheroff the philosopher I will miss the most. Conversations with Osheroff typically turned into wide-ranging philosophy seminars—inquiries into the maddening complexity of being human in an inhuman world, focused on the difficult moral and political questions that he always pursued with intellectual rigor and a demand for accountability expected of himself

and others. And at the same time that Osheroff was engaged in this relentless pursuit of more knowledge and a deeper understanding, he squeezed all the joy possible out of this life. He taught and he told stories, he learned and he loved, with incredible passion.

First, the activism: Beginning in his teens, Osheroff organized tenants, the unemployed, and workers. In 1937 he joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, the U.S. wing of the internationals fighting in Spain. After Pearl Harbor, he re-entered the fight against fascism with the U.S. Army in Europe. While working as a professional carpenter, he also spent part of the 1950s moving around the country semi-underground, avoiding the FBI's campaign to jail Communist Party members. After leaving the party in 1956, Osheroff moved to California and got involved in community organizing against real estate developers on the Venice canals. In 1964 he went to Mississippi to help build a community center. He worked behind the scenes in the Vietnam antiwar movement in California. In 1985 he went to Nicaragua with the Lincoln Construction Brigade, which he organized to build housing with a workers' collective. Living in Seattle since 1989, he and his wife, Gunnell Clark, worked in that city's antiwar movement. Osheroff continued to give talks at universities and high schools until several spinal surgeries made it increasingly difficult for him to travel. Along the way he made two documentary films about Spain and the legacy of the civil war, the award-winning *Dreams and Nightmares* in 1974 and *Art in the Struggle for Freedom* in 2000.

Second, the philosophy: Abe was a doer and talker, but rarely a writer.

Honor Roll 2007-2008

Clifton Amsbury, California

Moe Fishman, New York

Al Koslow, New York

Ben Lane, California

Coleman Persily, California

Irving Rappoport, New York

Robert Steck, Arizona

Hy Tabb, New York

Milton Wolff, California

Perhaps the only disappointment friends have with Osheroff is that he never wrote a book that would have organized for us the lessons he took from his life. That's why a few years ago I asked him to sit for a long interview, to make sure some of those ideas would be available. A transcript of that interview is online in chapters at www.thirdcoastactivist.org/osheroff.html, with the full interview in a PDF file at www.thirdcoastactivist.org/abe-osheroff.pdf.

I was privileged to know Osheroff for a few years. There are hundreds of friends and family members who knew him longer and better. I look forward to hearing their stories in the coming years, as we collectively remember not just the things Abe Osheroff did, but a spirit that embraced an uncompromising resistance and an endless love for this world. I think it was that balance between a rage against injustice and a love for the beauty of creation that was at the soul of what Osheroff called "radical humanism."

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Added to Memory's Roster



As we face the difficult times ahead—dealing with the mounting consequences of human arrogance and greed—more than ever we will need to find in ourselves the strength Osheroff had to continue fighting and to continue loving. We will need to harness, as Osheroff always did, both our hearts and our minds to the tasks ahead. We will need to remember to celebrate, as Osheroff always celebrated, both the joy and the sorrow of being human.

Robert Jensen is a journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin and producer of a forthcoming documentary on Osheroff's life. He can be reached at rjensen@uts.cc.utexas.edu, and his articles can be found online at <http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rjensen/index.html>.



Theodore "Ted" Veltfort (1915-2008)

Ted Veltfort, who drove ambulances in the Spanish Civil War and

later drew on that experience to propose sending ambulances to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua during the contra war of the 1980s, died at the age of 93 on April 7.

The son of a New England businessman and a church-going mother, Veltfort passed through a conventional, middle-class education, picking up Christian socialist principles on his own. Such opinions showed in his freshman year at Princeton when, instead of attending compulsory church services, Ted rebelled by joining an alternative political discussion club that focused on the issues of the Depression, socialism, the Soviet Union, and communism. In his second year, influenced by the university's star physicist, Albert Einstein, Ted helped establish the Princeton Anti-War Society. Off campus, he mingled with the town's black community, which included the family of Paul Robeson. By his third year, Ted transferred to the more liberal Swarthmore College, continuing to major in physics, but devoting more time to leftwing politics. Indeed, he spent so much time involved in organizing protests, he decided to quit school altogether.

By then, the Spanish Civil War had begun. After one of his Swarthmore classmates was killed at Jarama, Ted decided to volunteer. Arriving in Spain on July 4, 1937, he began driving ambulances, seeing action on the Aragon front and at Teruel, as well as in the later engagements of 1938.

After his return to the U.S., Ted completed his undergraduate education at Columbia University. During World War II, he served in the Army Air Corps, but his links to Spain and

the left limited options for overseas service. Ted later earned a Master's degree from Stanford University in engineering, but the FBI's anti-communist investigations put him on an employment blacklist. Ted was obliged to become self-employed in the field of radio technology.

Limited employment and disillusionment with U.S. politics prompted Ted to take an opportunity to work in the emerging electronics industry in Fidel Castro's Cuba. He lived there between 1962 and 1968, teaching electronics and applied physics at the University of Havana.

After returning to California, Ted remained politically active in the Bay Area VALB. When President Ronald Reagan ordered an embargo against Nicaragua, permitting only trade of humanitarian and medical aid, Ted proposed that VALB undertake the kind of work that had helped the Spanish Republic 50 years earlier: purchase ambulances for the elected government. The idea became a national project as the VALB raised over \$300,000, becoming one of the largest ambulance suppliers to Nicaragua.

Ted remained the corresponding secretary of VALB, keeping in touch with friends and colleagues around the world. He had expected to attend the monument ceremonies, but by then his health was gone.

"Spain started me out in learning about the world," he said. "For me Spain was an apprenticeship in the real world."

He is survived by his second wife, Leonore, and four children.

—Peter N. Carroll



**Abe Smorodin
(1916—2008)**

Abe Smorodin, the last national officer of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, died in San Francisco on April 7. Abe was among the 10 veterans who took part in the ceremony for the unveiling of the national monument to the Lincoln Brigade in the City on the Bay on March 30.

Born in 1916, Abe was a graduate of Boy's High School in Brooklyn. He joined the Young Communist League club in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn and, along with several of his school friends, sailed for Spain in 1937. He went into action for the first time at Fuentes de Ebro with the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion and fought in every subsequent battle until the International Brigades were withdrawn from the front during the fall of 1938.

In Spain, Abe's courage and reliability were legendary. Edwin Rolfe recounted that every time Abe's name would be put forth for a citation for

conspicuous bravery, his commanders would laugh it off: "Smorodin?I knew [he would] be good before we went into this. Let's give the citation to some of the men who came through, men we thought would fold up."

After returning to New York in December 1938, Abe married Rose Mendolowitz (sister of volunteers Leo and Joe Gordon) and took over the family's candy store and luncheonette.

Abe's decision to join the antifascist struggle in Spain informed the rest of his life. As he once told a reporter for the *New York Times*, "I am as proud of what the vets did in the half-century since Spain as of what we did in Spain....There has been a continuity in our lives." One of Abe's most prized possessions was the Spanish Communist Party card he received in 1938, and he always carried in his wallet a snapshot of Bob Thompson, his commander in Spain.

In the best tradition of a true "working class intellectual," Abe was a voracious reader, with an encyclopedic knowledge of literature, non-fiction, music, and baseball. In recent years he served on the editorial board of the *Volunteer*, spoke to an assortment of community and school groups about the Spanish Civil War, and was active in the leadership of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives. The last veteran to serve on the ALBA board, Abe always displayed a wonderful combination of common sense and grace, with a wry sense of humor: in the middle of a long discussion on the organization's finances, he smiled and quipped, "I didn't go to Spain to build an endowment."

—Fraser Ottanelli



**John Arthur
"Jack" Penrod
(1913-2008)**

Jack Penrod was a MacKenzie-Papineau veteran. He was born in Birmingham, Alabama, raised in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and resided in Gainesville, Florida, where he was a professor of English at the University of Florida. Jack died on April 12 in Gainesville at age 94.

Jack was a true forever activist. Before Spain he had been a radical student leader at Penn, his alma mater. There he joined the Communist Party USA, which he would leave and rejoin three times before finally parting from it. After Jack graduated from college, he went on to work with Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) of the newly forming Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). He left union organizing to join the defenders of Spanish democracy in 1937.

Jack entered Spain, whose borders had been closed, by crossing the Pyrenees Mountains on foot by night with fellow volunteers. He led a sniper

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Added to Memory's Roster



squadron in the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion of the 15th International Brigade and saw action in major engagements, including Teruel and Fuentes de Ebro. A high point was Smith's Maneuver, where Jack, comrade Len Levenson, and a handful of other snipers held off advancing fascist armies for hours. Jack was wounded. When he recovered, he became an ambulance driver until he returned to the U.S.

Jack was stationed in the Philippines during WWII. When the war ended, he organized a cell within his army unit to work with the radical Philippine Huks to agitate for U.S. withdrawal from the Philippines. The Huks had fought the Japanese invaders in WWII and were leading the way on land reform.

After WWII, Jack finished his doctorate on the G.I. Bill and became a professor of English. At the University of Florida, he won the Thomas Jefferson Award for excellence in teaching. In the 1950s, Jack worked against McCarthyist political repression of fellow professors. Later he helped to organize the faculty union at the University of Florida.

Jack also helped found a chapter of the United Nations Association and was a founder of the Unitarian Church in Gainesville. He gave talks about the Spanish Civil War at area colleges, high schools, and various functions. He demonstrated against the war in Iraq, was a member of the Labor Party, organized for national health insurance (HR676), and wrote letters for political prisoners for Amnesty International. He was at it all the time.

Jack was a member of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and

supported my radical women's liberation work, including letting our groups, Redstockings and Gainesville Women's Liberation, store archival material in his house, donating to our fund drives, editing drafts of tracts, getting library books for us, and staffing phone banks for our feminist scholarship.

Jack also volunteered as a reader for blind students, tutored ESL students,

Letters to the editor

Continued from page 21

enabled many lives to be saved. The blood could be delivered at the front, rather than waiting until the injured could be transported behind the front lines. As early as 1936, he also initiated calls for support for the children orphaned as a result of the war, and the Canadian people responded with what they couldn't afford (remember, this was still the depression).

Once the mobile transfusion unit was set up, it was turned over to the Sanidad Militar and as the author (Pinkerton) indicates, there was conflict between Bethune and the Spanish bureaucracy. Bethune agreed to return to Canada, where he traveled the country raising money for Spain and for Spanish orphans' homes.

Pinkerton says that it seems that "his contributions [have] received little published attention"—but the sources indicate that he means in Britain or with Dr. Jorda, the Spanish head of the Sanidad Militar who later worked with the British (with whom he evidently came into conflict). As a matter of fact, contrary to what the author says, my material indicates that Bethune had to be dragged out of

and served as a docent at the museum.

Jack and first wife, Jane Penrod (deceased), a great feminist, union organizer and environmental activist, had two daughters, Julie Penrod-Glen and Jill McGuire. He is survived by Julie and Jill, three grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, and me, his second wife, Carol Giardina. He was the love of my life.

—Carol Giardina

Spain, and was indeed very anxious to return. He was hardly playing diletante, as the author seems to imply.

Bethune, by all accounts, was a difficult person, but also a brilliant, committed doctor. If one wishes to write about probably the most celebrated hero of the Canadian left, it might not be a bad idea to read some Canadian sources, primary or secondary.

Ester Reiter

York University

Peter Pinkerton replies:

I am glad that someone was interested enough to read and comment on the recent article on Norman Bethune. I do not believe that Ms. Reiter and I are all that far apart and it is difficult to cover all the nuances of his story in a short article. Perhaps Ms. Reiter might like to read the fuller version where more detail is provided and the sources are referenced; this can be found in *Transfusion Medicine Reviews*, 21, 155-164, 2007.

With kind regards,

Peter Pinkerton ■

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For more information go to: **WWW.ALBA-VALB.ORG**

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SAVE THE DATES

October 10, 2008:

ALBA-Bill Susman Lecture, featuring English historian Helen Graham

November 8, 2008:

Honoring the passing of VALB and the 70th anniversary of the departure of the IBs from Spain



National Monument Dedication, San Francisco, March 30. Photo by Richard Bermack.

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