

# The Volunteer

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

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

JOURNAL OF THE VETERANS OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE

Vol. XXV, No. 1

March 2003



Vet Coleman Persilly converses with Angela Davis, the keynote speaker at the Vet's San Francisco Bay Area Reunion, page 3. Photo by Richard Bermack

# Letters

To the Editor,

Lincoln Brigade Veteran Abe Osheroff spoke at the University of California under the sponsorship of the Center for Ideas and Society in Riverside, California on November 19. Osheroff showed his film about the Spanish Civil War—*Dreams and Nightmares*—gave a talk entitled “War without End?” and participated in a lively discussion with the audience of some 200 University and community members.

The audience was fascinated by Osheroff’s experience in the Lincoln Brigade and glad to have the opportunity to discuss the legacy of the Spanish Civil War. But it also seemed that many people were equally moved by Osheroff’s exhortations—to young people in particular—to commit themselves to lives that derive their meaning from something other than the accumulation of wealth. His hopeful message that the combination of passion and hard work can bring a satisfying life was well received. Several students that this writer talked to after the presentation were inspired and came away with a more hopeful vision of the future.

At the same time, Osheroff minced no words when it came to the Bush administration’s current war drive, which he called an act of “criminal insanity.” Complementing this were the eerily appropriate last words of Osheroff’s award winning film: “In Spain we had a chance to stop a war before it started. I don’t know if it’s possible, but shouldn’t we be able to tell our children we tried, we really tried?” In the discussion that followed, Osheroff noted that 5,000 children die every month in Iraq because of U.S. led sanctions. Anti-war sentiment ran high in the room.

The film, Osheroff’s presentation, and the discussion left audience members considering what a life of activism might mean for them, and how, in this current context,

we can best resist the U.S. government’s bid for global domination. On conclusion, this Lincoln Veteran of so many historic struggles received a standing ovation.

Keith Danner

Lecturer, English Department

UC/Riverside

Dear Editor,

During and after last year’s reunion, four young German anti-fascists met and interviewed some of the U.S. veterans. They are involved in a progressive history project in Germany and have been working on a documentary following Harry Fisher’s 2001 book tour across their country.

The filmmakers Frank Dittmeyer and Jörg Briese along with Ulrich Kolbe are planning to return to New York in April and would truly appreciate an opportunity to continue their efforts and preserve more personal stories and experiences for generations to come.

Anyone interested in helping them with their project and willing to give interviews, please contact the vets office or e-mail the German friends at [info@consulteng.de](mailto:info@consulteng.de)

Thank you very much!

Salud from Germany,

Ulrich Kolbe

Bergstr. 10, D-06502 Weddersleben, Germany

[www.consulteng.de](http://www.consulteng.de)

*Letters* Continued on page 19

## Bill Susman

1915-2003

ALBA mourns the loss of its founder and inspirational leader, Bill Susman, who died on February 21 in Sarasota, Florida. We will publish an extended article about Bill in our next issue.

For now, we remember how well Bill could motivate a meeting, delight in singing Spanish Civil War songs off key, and dream the dream that this earth would be inhabited by free people. His legacy to us includes the challenge to carry on in that spirit.

—ALBA Board of Governors.

## The Volunteer

Journal of the  
Veterans of the  
Abraham Lincoln Brigade

an ALBA publication

799 Broadway, Rm. 227

New York, NY 10003

(212) 674-5398

### Editorial Board

Peter Carroll • Leonard Levenson  
Gina Herrmann • Fraser Ottanelli • Abe Smorodin

### Design Production

Richard Bermack

### Editorial Assistance

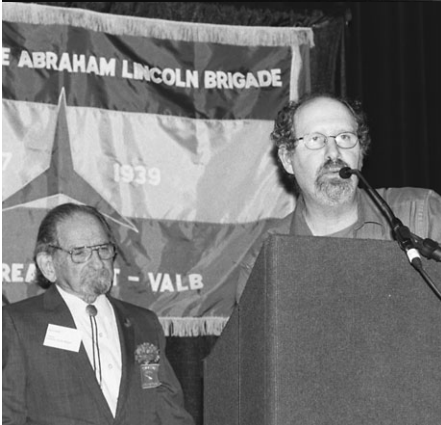
Carla Healy-London

### Submission of Manuscripts

Please send manuscripts by E-mail or on disk.

E-mail: [volunteer@rb68.com](mailto:volunteer@rb68.com)

# Angela Davis, SF Mime Troupe Stir Bay Area Reunion



Roby Newman accepts a plaque honoring Oliver Law. Newman's father served under Law.

**By Peter Carroll**  
**photos by Richard Bermack**

**W**ith war clouds gathering in the air, 600 friends, associates and 11 Bay Area vets found inspiration for antiwar protest and resistance from speaker Angela Davis and the songs of the San Francisco Mime Troupe at the 66th anniversary reunion at Calvin Simmons Theater in Oakland on February 23.

The musical troupe started the ceremonies with a rendition of

*There's an axis of evil in the year 2003,  
It runs from Houston to Miami  
up to Washington, DC*

"Which Side Are You On" with an added verse by musical director Bruce Barthol:

*There's an axis of evil in the  
year 2003,*

*It runs from Houston to  
Miami up to Washington, DC*

Post commander David Smith led the 11 vets onto the stage, and nearly all expressed feelings of outrage at the impending war in Iraq. Nate Thornton earned an extra round of applause by reminding the cheering crowd that never before had so many demonstrated in the streets against a war before it had begun.

On behalf of the Post, Smith saluted his commander in Spain, Oliver Law, the first African



Angela Davis repeats the words of Dolores Ibarruri, "You are history. You are legend."

Continued on page 21



# News Briefs

## 65th Anniversary at the Ebro

July 1938 marked the beginning of the Battle of the Ebro, an all-out attempt by the Spanish Republic to avert defeat and gain more time for the anti-fascist forces of the world. The small town of Corbera became an important hub because of a huge natural cave that served as the major hospital for the wounded. It was also a transportation center. The current Mayor of Corbera invites all members of the International Brigade, their families and friends to celebrate the 65th anniversary of that battle for the weekend of July 4, 2003. It will probably be our last hurrah in Spain!

## VALB Marches for Peace

The February 15 peace demonstration that drew over 200,000 people in New York City included a group of Lincoln veterans. As part of the Veterans Against the War in Iraq and for Constitutional Liberties, which includes Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Veterans for Peace, Lincoln vets Harry Fisher, Moe Fishman, and Matti Mattson marched with the VALB banner from the New York Public Library to the meeting place at 49th Street and First Avenue. The huge gathering demanded that the U.S. stop the war plans against Iraq.

In San Francisco, vets David Smith and Nate Thorton, backed by family, friends, and VALB Associates joined strong peace demonstrations that numbered above 100,000 on February 16.

—Moe Fishman

## Gabriel Jackson Honored in Spain

Historian Gabriel Jackson, emeritus professor of the University of

California/San Diego and long time ALBA Board member, has received the Antonio de Nebrija Prize valued at 24,000 euros for his outstanding contributions to the study of Spanish culture.

Jackson's book, *The Spanish Republic and the Civil War, 1936-1939*, published by Princeton University Press in 1963, won the American Historical Association's Herbert Baxter Adams Prize and has set a standard for Spanish Civil War scholarship.

Ignacio Berdujo, Rector of the University of Salamanca and president of the jury that voted the award, said, "Professor Jackson has marked out for several generations of Spaniards an entry point to the knowledge of a fundamental period of our recent history."

Jackson, who lives in Barcelona, expressed appreciation "for the recognition of my work as a humanist."

## Paris Photo Exhibit Opens

In Paris, the Library of Contemporary International Documentation and the Museum of Contemporary History are hosting an exhibition of photographs titled: "No Pasarán: Images of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War" from March 27- June 14. The unique collection of photographs from archives, libraries and photo agencies as well as from private collections around the world is curated by François Fontaine, historian of photography and Rémi Skoutelsky, author of the history of the French IB contingent: *L'Espoir guidait leurs pas*.

The opening includes two round table conferences featuring special-

ists in photography, historians, and archivists: "Photography and Photojournalism during the Spanish War" on March 26 and "Remembering the Spanish Civil War: Myths, Issues and Transmission" on March 31 at the Invalides Museum.

Two catalogues will also be released in French: *The International Brigades: Newly Discovered Images* by Michel Lefebvre and Rémi Skoutelsky (Paris: Editions du Seuil) and *The War in Spain: A Flood of Fire and Images* by François Fontaine

## Reconciliation After the War

**ALBA & VALB invite you to join us for an Evening of Film & Discussion**

Friday, April 25 at 6:15pm

### Death in El Valle

(CM Hardt, USA, 1996)

In Spanish and English with subtitles. A young American woman travels to her family's village in Spain to solve the mystery of her grandfather's 1949 murder.

### Remarks by H.E. Emilio

**Cassinello, New York Consul**

**General of Spain.** Followed by Q&A with filmmaker CM Hardt. NYU's King Juan Carlos I Center 53 Washington Square South

(Paris-Nanterre: Editions Berg International/ BDIC).

After Paris, the exhibit will travel to Madrid from July 15-September 20 and then to Barcelona, from October to January 7, 2004.

## Film Screening: Into the Fire

On Thursday April 3, Julia Newman's documentary film, *Into the Fire* (2002), will be screened at NYU's King Juan Carlos I Center, 53 Washington Square South, at 6:15 p.m. Julia will be introducing the film. ■

Due to a typographical error in *The Volunteer* (December 2002, p. 13), a sentence in the letter from Claude Bowers to FDR, April 18, 1938, should have read: "The one way to bring this criminal war to an end is to restore to the legal, constitutional, democratic government of the Spanish people its right under international law to buy arms for its defense."

# UNCOVERING THE TRUTH

By Mary Kay McCoy

Newly unearthed documents and oral testimonies are revealing horrifying evidence of Franco's repression. In Spain, the silence has been shattered, forcing the country to confront its past.

During the long years of dictatorship, fear had cast its shadow over the government's violation of human rights. That fear, sustained through Franco's machinery to humiliate, torture, oppress, and exterminate, molded the people in silence. After Franco's death an "unwritten pact of amnesia" orchestrated by the Transition let another 25 years slip away in the belief that it was better to forget in order to move forwards. But today the silence is over. Even though many are still afraid to talk and others prefer silence to the pain of remembering, there are significant numbers of victims courageous enough to share their stories so that the truth will be known.

The Association for the Recovery of Historic Memory (ARMH), one of the principle catalysts in breaking the silence, continues to recover the remains of the "missing" that lie in unmarked graves throughout Spain, to restore the names and dignity of victims and to commemorate their struggle for liberty and democracy. There have been 21 excavations and 54 bodies recovered so far.

Undoubtedly the most famous case of enforced disappearance is that of poet Federico Garcia Lorca. In a recent documentary shown on Spanish television titled *Lorca and the 'paseados' of Viznar*, Ian Gibson, the poet's biographer, insists that it is Spain's duty to find Lorca's remains. "It's a disgrace this hasn't been done yet," he adds.

Last November 20, the 27th anniversary of Franco's death, Aznar's conservative government backed the parliamentary opposition motion condemning Franco's dictatorship and promised support and economic aid to locate the graves and rebury the dead. Though moral recognition is a first step, Emilio Silva, co-founder of the ARMH, says he awaits a formal plan implicating the program. "A simple declaration of intentions is not enough," he declares. Expectations declined three weeks later when Aznar's Popular Party vetoed the socialist's proposal to invest 7 million euros in the recovery of Spain's missing.

Those who survived Franco's firing squads have much to say about the dictator's machinery of repression. Franco's declared aim, no longer a hidden secret, was the extermination of the "reds"; his method was terror.

In the summer of 1938, Antonio Vallejo Nágera, Chief Psychiatrist of Franco's army, obtained Franco's consent to create the "Bureau for Psychological Research." After carrying out bizarre experiments on prisoners, Vallejo Nágera reached the conclusion that the political dissident was socially and mentally inferior as well as potentially dangerous due to his intrinsic evil. Among the prisoners tested were 72 Lincoln Brigaders who were detained in the prison camp at San Pedro de Cardena, near Burgos. Those still alive today remember having their heads and noses measured, answering hundreds of questions, especially about their sex lives, and recall being photographed. The psychiatrist concluded that the probability of obtaining a change in

the political attitude of such individuals was very low.

His theories, published in military medical journals, had grave consequences on prison life during Franco's dictatorship. Because the opponent was believed to be subnormal and psychotic, the only thing to do was to isolate him. The penitentiary system was one of the best mechanisms to carry out this proposal. Men were separated from the women to make reproduction impossible; children were separated from their parents to make the transmission of "defects" impossible. On the basis of these theories, Franco constructed his machinery of repression. The objective was "to multiply the select and leave the 'weak' to die"—the weak meaning the "reds," of course.

Juana Dona, today in her mid-eighties, spent 20 years in Franco's prisons. "The repression under Franco was terrible, very criminal, very cruel...like what we see in the movies about Hitler. The same. We weren't thrown into crematories but the people died in the jails and in the concentration camps; they died of hunger and filth, from a lack of vitamins, from parasites, they died from all the cruelties known to man. What happened to us was a holocaust and the people don't know about it yet."

Vallejo Nágera's theories provided Franco with a pseudo-philosophy that would justify and protect the regime's acts, institutions and segregation policies. Franco and his supporters could live in peace with clear consciences.

It was historian Ricard Vinyes who recently unearthed the medical

Continued on page 6

# THE TRUTH

Continued from page 5

journals with Vallejo Nágera's theories. He was studying the confinement of women during Franco's dictatorship when he came across files with the words *destacamento hospicio* (detachment hospice) written in pencil. These would lead him on a search where he would discover evidence never revealed before about Franco's repression.

His findings appear in the heartwrenching documentary, *Los niños perdidos del franquismo*, (The Lost Children of Franco) made for Catalan television's 30 minutes, by reporters Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis. They talked with many of the women survivors who shared grim stories about their children—children who had accompanied their mothers to prison or who were born behind bars. They also interviewed some of the surviving children.

Prison conditions were subhuman. Hundreds of infants died of tuberculosis, meningitis, cold or starvation. But death was not the only way a mother could lose her child.

In March 1940, Franco's Ministry of Justice passed an order establishing the separation of children from their mothers after the age of three. Children were literally torn from their mother's arms and sent to hospices and religious schools, institutions created by Franco with the intention of isolating them from republican environments and re-educating them to hate the ideas of their parents and embrace those of the falangist and Catholic New State. The order would cause numerous cases of separations and disappearances of children from their real parents.

Then, in December 1941, a new law was passed allowing the changing of names of these children. This would impede parents, if they survived prison terms, from finding their children and would also facilitate hundreds of irregular adoptions.

Ricard Vinyes also unearthed documents from the Falangist Foreign Service where he discovered the plan to repatriate children who had been evacuated to foreign countries during the war in order to reintegrate them into the new Nationalist Spain. When obstacles were encountered with their adopted families, children were virtually abducted by falangist agents. The majority of these children's parents had been executed or caused to disappear, while others were confined in concentration camps, not only in Spain where there were nearly 100 camps, but also in Auschwitz,

low prisoners in Mauthausen, is what has brought García Barón back to his village in Huesca 65 years after leaving to join the Durruti Column and fight fascism during the Spanish war.

Captured in France by the Nazis, García Barón survived five years in Mauthausen where he saw hundreds of thousands of comrades die. In 1944, as the war grew more complicated for the Germans, the commandant at Mauthausen singled out García Barón to be the bearer of secrets of the SS. He was led to the undergrounds of the camp and shown bottles that stored the ashes of the four and a half million bodies cremated in the ovens. When he asked how many of them were Spaniards, he was told over one hundred thousand.

---

*If the parents were still alive, the children were often not returned to them since the parents were considered "incapable" of their education.*

---

Mathausen, and Dachau. If the parents were still alive, the children were often not returned to them since the parents were considered "incapable" of their education.

In 1942, according to Vinyes, there were 9,050 children under State tutelage; in 1943 the number rose to 12,042; during the next two years that number would increase to thousands more. These are the "lost children," lost because they were deprived of the education their parents would have given them, lost because they had been separated from their families for long periods of time, if not forever.

The documentary about the lost children created great social impact. Spaniards were horrified with the revelations.

Just as shocking is the recent testimony of Antonio García Barón. "If one of us gets out of here alive, he must tell it all, the world has to know." That promise, made with fel-

Responsible for this crime against humanity is Serrano Suñer, Franco's brother-in-law and Foreign Minister, who sought out the help of the Nazis to exterminate the Spanish enemies that had been detained in exile. Today, over 100 years old, Serrano Suñer lies peacefully in his bed.

García Barón has petitioned the Spanish government to review Franco's responsibility in the crimes of Nazi Germany.

Meanwhile, a recent avalanche of excellent books, exhibits and other events in Spain illuminate other aspects of Franco's dictatorship—the exile, work battalions, and the role of the Catholic Church. The magnitude of Franco's terror can no longer be silenced. Memories do not dissolve with time. Memories become history, for memories are history. ■

---

Mary Kay McCoy is a translator living in Madrid.



# Children's Drawings Opens at Dartmouth



**T**hey Still Draw Pictures: *Children's Art in Wartime from the Spanish Civil War to Kosovo*, ALBA's latest traveling art exhibition, will open at Dartmouth College's Hood Museum from April 5-June 15, 2003. The Hood has organized a series of activities around the show, including a talk by co-curator and ALBA board member Tony Geist. On Saturday, April 12 at 4 PM Geist will give a lecture titled "Children of War: Drawings from Spanish Civil War Refugee Camps" in Loew Auditorium. A reception will follow.

On April 26, Jennifer Armstrong, author of books for children and young adults, will lecture on "Why



"Give War Stories to Children?" Additionally the Museum is making arrangements with an art therapist to speak on the subject in relation to these drawings.

Introductory tours of the show are offered on the following Saturdays at 2 PM: April 19, May 10 and 24.

*They Still Draw Pictures* brings together 77 drawings done by Spanish children during the Spanish Civil War with 22 works of art by children from more recent conflicts. The Spanish journalist Ana Tenorio wrote of the show: "This exhibition brings to light an important and virtually unknown record of the Spanish Civil War; it also presents the most terrible and the most noble expressions of the human spirit, capable of the greatest atrocities but also of creating beauty in conditions of overwhelming adversity." The young artists' wrenching depictions of their experiences stand as a powerful statement against war and are particularly relevant at this moment, as we lurch toward military intervention in Iraq.

The exhibition opened at the University of California, San



Diego, in September 2002 and in January traveled to Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. After Dartmouth it will move to Southern Illinois University in Carbondale and to the AXA Gallery in midtown Manhattan in February 2004. For further information about the exhibition schedule or to bring it to a location near you see the ALBA web page: [www.alba-valb.org](http://www.alba-valb.org). For a detailed schedule of events at Dartmouth College go to: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~hood/special-exhibitions.html>. ■



# Hank Rubin: Wine and Food Maven

By Jeannette Ferrary

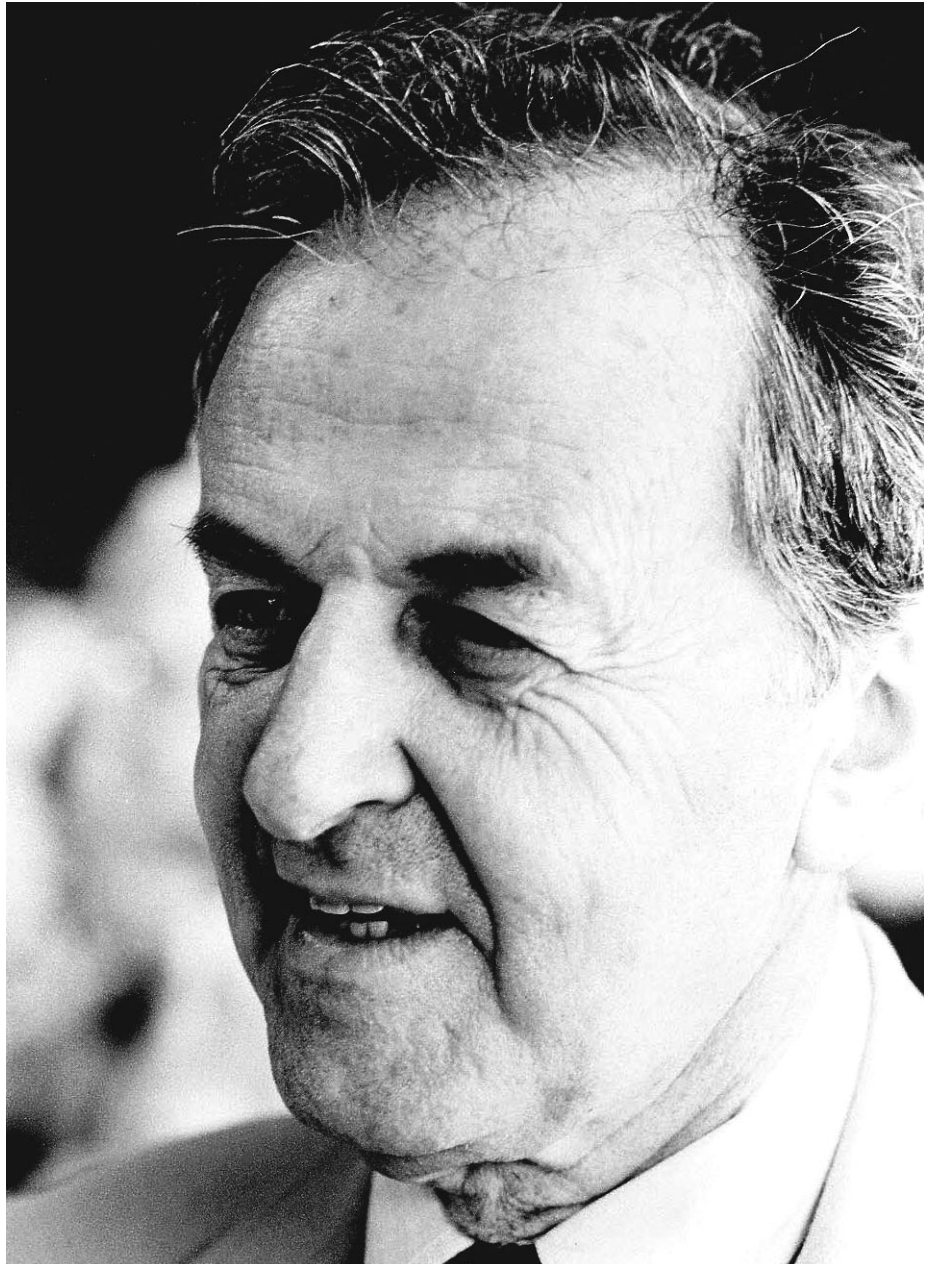
**V**et Hank Rubin has always been a busy guy, but lately he's been showing up in unexpected places. At 86, the author of *Spain's Cause Was Mine* is back in print; he's the star of a feature article in the latest issue of *Gastronomica* (Fall 2002), a University of California Press publication about food and culture. He has also produced his second book, *Kitchen Answer Book* (Capital Books, 562 pp., \$22.95).

Hank has a unique and important place in America's culinary history. With the restaurant he opened in Berkeley, California, in the 1960s, called The Pot Luck, he began a revolution at the table that emphasized the importance of fresh, local ingredients, organic produce, and sustainable agriculture. As one food editor put it, we all owe a debt of gratitude to "the man and the restaurant that helped bring the idea of good food and wine out of the classical closet into the contemporary light of our culinary times."

The Pot Luck was a pioneer in many ways besides exploring a world of ethnic cuisines and introducing less familiar flavor combinations to its appreciative customers. It began the institution called the "bottomless bowl" refill, a practice beloved by college students with limited food budgets, especially because the accompaniment was some of the best fresh sourdough baguettes then available.

Another innovation was a Monday Night prix fixe dinner of inventive dishes and wonderful wines which Alice Waters, the founder of Chez Panisse and the grande dame of California cuisine praised: "For years it was really the only place in Berkeley to eat."

The Pot Luck was also the first restaurant in the San Francisco Bay Area to hire African Americans as waiters and urge its employees to join unions.



Rubin also wrote a weekly wine column for the San Francisco Chronicle from 1965-1985, the first regular column in a metropolitan daily newspaper in the country. Another of his wine columns, "Wine Press" ran for 23 years in Bon Appetit, and he also hosted a weekly radio show, "Lines About Wine," on Pacifica's KPFA.

Last month saw the publication of Rubin's *Kitchen Answer Book*, a 560-page tome about food and its preparation. Written in a Q & A for-

mat—there are approximately 5,000 questions answered within! The book is a handy, comprehensive reference work on foods, cooking techniques, and general kitchen knowledge. It resulted from a decade of experience with students as volunteer cooking instructor at a San Francisco vocational school, work that Hank Rubin continues to do. ■

Jeannette Ferrary is the author of six cookbooks and *M. F. K. Fisher and Me: a Memoir of Food and Friendship*.



# From the Archives

By Michael Nash

**A**s the new head of the Tamiment Library at New York University responsible for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, I was looking through the portion of the collection documenting the volunteers' experiences during the Second World War. A particularly poignant box of letters labeled "World War II Discrimination against Veterans" describes more than 500 cases of Abraham Lincoln Brigade veterans being kept out of combat, or after completing officer training school, being denied commissions. Ironically, many of these Abraham Lincoln Brigade veterans were assigned to headquarters units with known fascists who were also deemed to be security risks and ineligible for assignment to combat units. After a number of congressmen petitioned the War Department and the famous syndicated columnist Drew Pearson exposed the situation, things began to change. Beginning in the summer of 1943, Abraham Lincoln Brigade veterans were assigned to combat units and became eligible for promotion to the officer corps.

This story made me recall my own experience with the Selective Service in 1968 during the Vietnam War. In September 1968 when I was a first year graduate student at Columbia University, I received notification to report for a physical at the Whitehall Street Selective Service Center in lower Manhattan. Like many of my generation I had been

active in the anti-war movement and could not see myself serving as a soldier in Vietnam, participating in what I considered to be an imperialist war.

However, I was not overly concerned as I had flat feet, a bad back, and was assured by my orthopedist that I would never be drafted. Much to my surprise, despite a doctor's note and accompanying x-rays, I was told that I had passed the physical. I now found myself filling out the loyalty oath questionnaire. Pondering the then standard question "are you now or have you ever been a member of any of the following organizations," I was stunned to see the Abraham Lincoln Brigade on the list. Laughing out loud, I shouted that this could not be serious. No one in this room, and nobody who was young enough to be subject to the draft at that time, could have possibly been alive during the Spanish Civil War.

I left this question blank, signed the loyalty oath and raised my hand. With a mischievous grin, I asked the young soldier who was in charge of the room if this question was a serious one. He said, kid, sit down and sign, but I persisted to try to explain why I thought this was a ridiculous question. He then began to threaten me, saying that if I did not shut up, he would label me as a subversive and send me next door to speak to a security officer. When I continued to argue, this is exactly what happened.

After waiting on a bench for nearly two hours, I was ushered into a room labeled "security screenings," where I met with a young second lieutenant. He was pleasant enough at first asking me about graduate school, but then he began questioning me about the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. He clearly had never heard of it so he asked me to tell him what it was and I launched into a ten-minute speech about the international brigades and the Spanish Civil War. He soon stopped me and said you were born in 1946

you could not have been a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, stop this nonsense and sign the form. I said if this is such nonsense why are you asking this question to 22 years olds in 1968? His whole manner changed. He said you are either crazy or a subversive. I was told that if I did not fill in the blank certifying that I had never been a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, I could not be drafted. I said to myself, wow, this is a way out. Telling the officer that on principle I would not certify that I had never been an Abraham Lincoln Brigade member, I was informed that my fingerprints were being sent to the FBI with a memorandum stating that I was a potential subversive. Biting my lip as hard as I could to suppress the laughter, I skipped out of the office not quite believing what had happened, but immensely grateful that the Abraham Lincoln Brigade had saved me from Vietnam.

Clearly, the Second World War was different from Vietnam. The real Abraham Lincoln Brigade veterans, who had risked their lives fighting fascism in Spain, wanted to contribute to the fight against Nazi Germany and Japan. The fact that their so-called premature anti-fascism often stood in the way was both frustrating and wrong. This generation of young warriors wanted nothing more than to fight for their country, but many of them had to wait for more than a year and a half after Pearl Harbor to get a chance to go to war against Hitler. For the War Department, membership in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade made them subversives and untrustworthy at the front. This perverse logic was best expressed by Congressman Carl Curtis of Nebraska. Referring to Staff Sergeant Irving Goff, an Abraham Lincoln Brigade veteran who had been decorated for his brave service, Curtis asserted that: "This is in line with the Communist policy of winning the confidence and standing for future exploitation." ■

Michael Nash is Head of Tamiment Library, New York University

## The ALBA Listserv

Readers of the Volunteer are invited to continue the debate on the ALBA sponsored Internet Discussion List. To become a member simply send a blank e-mail message to the address: [join-alba@forums.nyu.edu](mailto:join-alba@forums.nyu.edu) or go to the ALBA website [www.alba-valb.org](http://www.alba-valb.org) and click on the "Dialog" button.

# A Return to Spain

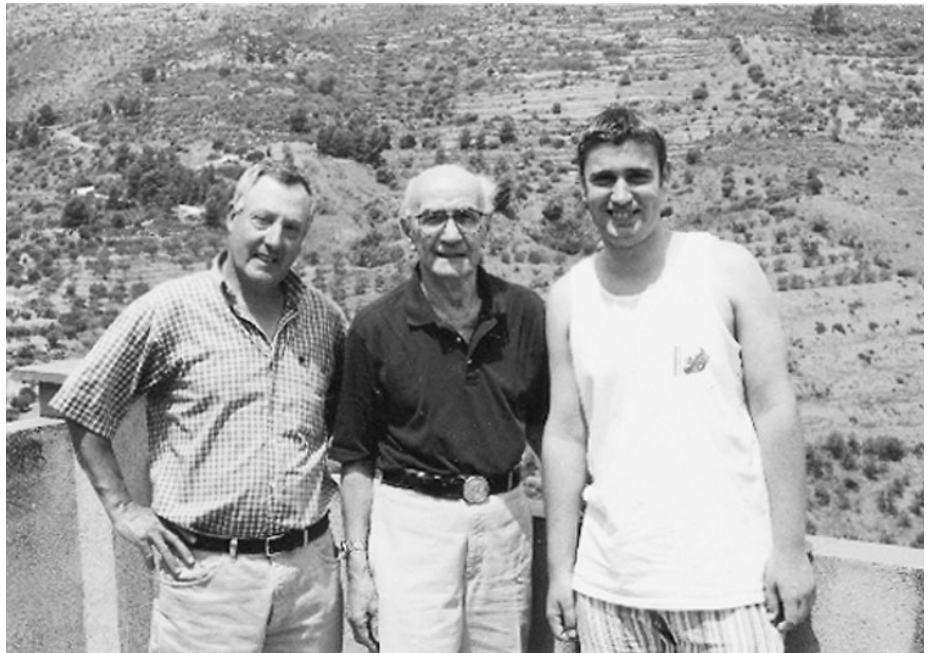
By Len Levenson,  
with Bob Coale

**A**fter attending several IB anniversary celebrations, recent widowerhood impelled a decision for a personal return to Spain. Enlisting the talents of my co-author, I headed off to Spain for a two-week retracing of my wartime experiences more than 60 years ago.

It began with a warm, official and personal reception by the “Amigos” in Madrid. This was followed by a return to the training grounds of La Mancha, where my soldier’s life began. There, hosted by Manuel Requena, contemporary history professor at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, Bob and I spent some time in Albacete. The visit included a guided tour of the Amigos-sponsored IB Documentation Center in the impressive regional archive building. Professor Requena taped an interview for the University. We also visited important IB sites in Pozoblanco and Madrigueras.

The first high point was a visit to the Mac Pap training base of Tarazona de la Mancha. Our arrival coincided with a national general strike. We were hosted by the señora assistant mayor and several strikers. After exchanging recollections, we toured the town with trade unionists and farmers who remembered the Internationals from the war.

More than 60 years earlier, a wound received in Teruel sent me to the hospital. This fact made Benicassim our next stop. There, Guillermo Casañ, teacher and local historian of the IB Sanidad, led us on a guided tour of the remaining villas, including the site of the Paul Robeson concert in late January 1938. The next day we were guests of the Casañ family for a paella lunch in the country. They enthusiastically drilled me with questions on the war. As 30 and 40 year-old Spaniards, schooled under fascism, they had never learned the full loyalist side of the



Len Levenson in Vilella Alta with two generations of the Paramon family.

story, let alone heard first hand tales of the IBs.

We hit the road the next day, arriving first at Quinto where we located the church, still in its wartime condition, where a critical battalion meeting was held with Commissar Joe Dallet who was killed the following morning when he went over the top at Fuentes de Ebro.

Our route then led to the Ebro battlefields of Corbera and Gandesa. At the former we were warmly received by the mayor, Jose Luis Gamero Gamazo. Remains of the old town, destroyed during the battle and liberated on July 25 by the Mac Paps, have been preserved as a peacetime monument. We also visited the construction site of the planned Ebro Battle Museum.

Following the trek to the battlefield side of the Ebro river, we crossed to the eastern shore for a moving return to Vilella Alta. There, with the assistance of Mayor Gamero, we tracked down the Paramon family who hosted myself and Ben Sills, Company One commissar of the Special Machine Gun Battalion. This town was where the Battalion trained for recrossing the

Ebro in July 1938. Sixty-four years later, we were met by several generations of the Paramon family and escorted to the family home. I was impressed by the modernization of town and countryside and the economic prosperity of this wine and olive producing region.

A surprising discovery upon entering the house was that the family tractor occupied the exact location where in 1938 the burro lived. My comment, translated into Spanish, brought laughter from our hosts. After looking through family photographs, I was able to identify the “madre” of decades ago. When I had shared the room with Ben, the parents lived alone. It was not until this visit that I discovered their son was then away at officers’ training school. He survived both the war and postwar concentration camps and was happy to meet us.

An advantage of this trip over previous organized anniversaries, was that I was able to get into the countryside. Wind-generated power lines now straddle the mountains and valleys of Catalonia, providing

Continued on page 18

# Spanish Vet Found as Canadian War Hero

By William Carrick  
and Bob Steck

The anti-fascist Spanish war did not end in 1939, it continued into World War II and after. Too many of our young countrymen do not know the real stories of the U.S. volunteers who defended democracy. Some volunteers remain faceless and forgotten.

Carl Geiser dedicated his *Prisoners of the Good Fight* "to the memory of the International Brigadiers who were captured, both those who were killed and the survivors. May the courage they displayed and the suffering they endured serve to inform and strengthen all who are striving for a peaceful and more just world."

Carl has a real appreciation and instinct for the art of participatory democratic involvement. This was reflected in his pursuit of input from Franco's American POWs. As part of this effort, he asked Bob Steck to search for Joseph Grigas in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Joe, born in 1915, was raised in Worcester. He never settled down and he has no family. He attended two years of high school in Worcester, and served in the U.S. Army from 1933 to 1935 attached to the 14th infantry at Fort Davis in the Panama Canal Zone.

But Joe was not listed in the phone book, so Bob went to the Social Security office. "We don't have an address for Joseph, so he picks up his checks here." "When does he pick them up?" Bob asked the pleasant woman. "No fixed time. He comes when he chooses. What's your interest in Joe?" "We

were comrades in the fight against fascism in Spain." She asked several questions about the conflict and Bob told her "Another veteran is writing a book about our experiences and we want to interview Joe." She smiled, "I knew there was something special about Joseph. I like talking with him." Bob continued to search, but after much effort and coming very close, he was unsuccessful because Joe had no permanent home.

Last year, Bob heard from Bill Carrick, who is a volunteer Long Term Care Ombudsman. He had met Joe at a nursing home in Worcester, and they became friends. Joe has since been able to share his recollections of Spain with Bob Steck and Carl Geiser, and contacts have been made with Joe Young, Dave Smith, Abe Osheroff, Max Shufer, Moe Fishman and Jules Paivio.

After his service in Spain, Joe didn't wait for US entry into World War II. He enlisted in the Canadian Army in May 1940 and was assigned to the Royal Canadian Regiment. The regiment participated in the invasion of Italy, as part of a joint British and American operation under the com-

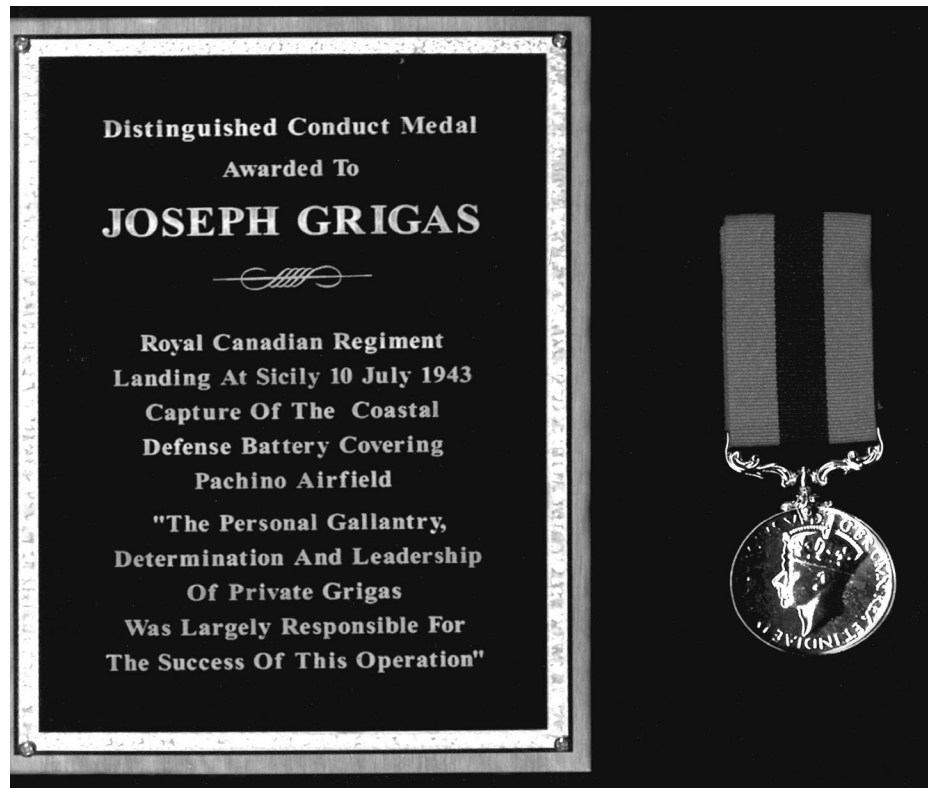
mand of General Eisenhower.

The Canadians arrived on July 9, 1943 as part of the invasion armada of nearly 3,000 Allied ships and landing craft. Some 180,000 American, British, and Canadian soldiers with 15,000 vehicles including 600 tanks and 1,800 guns landed on the island of Sicily. When the Royal Canadian Regiment waded ashore, it was in bright daylight. Their objective was the airfield at Pachino, which was defended by a heavily armed garrison.

The following information was provided by Captain Duncan McMillan, Regimental Adjutant at the Royal Canadian Regiment:

## CITATION

"On 10 July 43 in vicinity of PACHINO Airfield "A" Company of the Royal Canadian Regiment of which Private Grigas was a soldier was operating against enemy coastal defenses. At 1000 hours the Company commenced an assault on a coast defense battery immediately north of Pachino Airfield. Grigas' Section Commander became a casualty. Private Grigas took command



Continued on page 20



# ALBA's New Planned Giving Program

## Tax Advantages for Gift Annuities



ALBA's planned giving program provides an extraordinary way to make a gift, **increase income and slice the donor's tax bill – all in one transaction!**

The charitable gift annuity program was created for our many friends who have expressed a desire to make a significant gift, while still retaining income from the principal during their lifetime. A charitable gift annuity gives the donor additional retirement income, while affording the satisfaction of supporting ALBA's continuing educational programs and its traditions of fighting for social justice and against fascism.

### HOW DOES A CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY WORK?

A charitable gift annuity is a simple contract between you and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA). Under this arrangement, you make a gift of cash or marketable securities, worth a minimum of \$5000, to ALBA. In return, ALBA will pay you (or up to two individuals) an annuity beginning on the date you specify, on or after your sixtieth (60th) birthday.

### WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF A CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY?

A charitable gift annuity has four distinct advantages:

**Income for Life** at attractive pay-out rates.

**Tax Deduction Savings** – A large part of what you give is a deductible charitable gift.

**Tax-Free Income** – A large part of your annual payments is tax-free return of principal.

**Capital Gains Tax Savings** – When you contribute securities for a gift annuity, you minimize any taxes on your "paper profit." So gifts of securities save twice!

### PAYMENTS

You choose how frequently payments will be made – quarterly, semi-annually or annually.

You can also choose a one-life or two-life (two people dividing the income) annuity. Cash gifts allow maximum tax-free income; gifts of securities allow you to minimize capital gains taxes.

### DEFERRING PAYMENTS

If you are under 60 years of age, you can still set up an annuity and defer the payments until any date after your 60th birthday. This gives you an immediate tax-deduction for your gift while still guaranteeing you income payments in the future. Because you are deferring payments, your annuity payments will be larger than if you had waited to set up the annuity until your 60th birthday.

For more information on a customized proposal for your Charitable Gift Annuity, please contact:

Julia Newman  
ALBA-Room 227  
799 Broadway  
NY, NY 10003  
Ph. (212) 674-5398



# Comments on Colonel Copic's Diary and the April 5th Action

By David Smith

John Kraljic writes in the September 2002 issue of *The Volunteer*, "One can hypothesize that Copic wrote the diary...to justify his actions, and to point his finger at others for various military failures." Copic writes of the February 27<sup>th</sup> attack, "It is supposed to begin at 10 a.m." under the orders of General Gal. BUT THAT IS BROAD DAY-LIGHT!!! Omitted from the diary is any mention of why the attack was ordered without any basic support at hand. Nor is there any mention of a discussion between Copic and British commander, Jock Cunningham or Frank Ryan of the Irish. The violent disagreements of Merriman, the Lincoln Battalion Commander, were not even mentioned. Copic refused to listen to any reasoning that questioned the orders that he had received from General Gal.

I arrived at the Jarama front on February 25 together with 80 others whose only training had been shooting a rifle 3 times into a hillside and I became a member of the Irish section. The next day, we were informed of a pending attack where there would be tank, artillery, and aviation support. We prepared large symbols on the ground behind our positions to direct the aviation support.

We were up early on the 27<sup>th</sup> and when nothing occurred over the next few hours, John Powers and Pat Murphy took me aside and in no uncertain terms said, "This will be a fuck-up. If you want to live, just do as we do." There was no sign of any support. Minutes later we went over the top. Fascist fire was tremendous compared to ours and many of our worn out machine guns broke down. We went a few yards, lay down and dug a shallow foxhole as much as possible. Those men who continued were dropping all around. We returned to the trenches. I noticed

that the British who were stationed to our right had already returned to their trenches. Later on I learned that both Jock Cunningham and Frank Ryan ordered only a token gesture to test the enemy. Yet as more information came through during the following days and weeks, we learned that the 24<sup>th</sup> Spanish Battalion, after going over the parapets withdrew from the battlefield. And the Dimitrov Commander did not respect the "attack" order.

It seemed to me that the Lincolns who were at the front from early February and took part in the skirmishes and the Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> action just went through the "gesture" on the 27<sup>th</sup>, while the new Lincolns suffered tremendous casualties. Art Landis' book, *The Abraham Lincoln Brigade*, pages 71-90 covers the action in detail. Professor Robert Colodney, also a Lincoln Vet said, "a careful reconnaissance would have shown that the northern hinge of the fascist lines were very weakly held. .. Pingarron Heights, our objective, had been strengthened. Yet it was against Pingarron that the most costly attacks were held. There was a triple line of interlacing machine gun fire and through this curtain the Americans tried to advance."

After this action there was a stalemate. The fascists realized that they couldn't cut the Valencia/Madrid road and isolate Madrid. Nor could we advance against them.

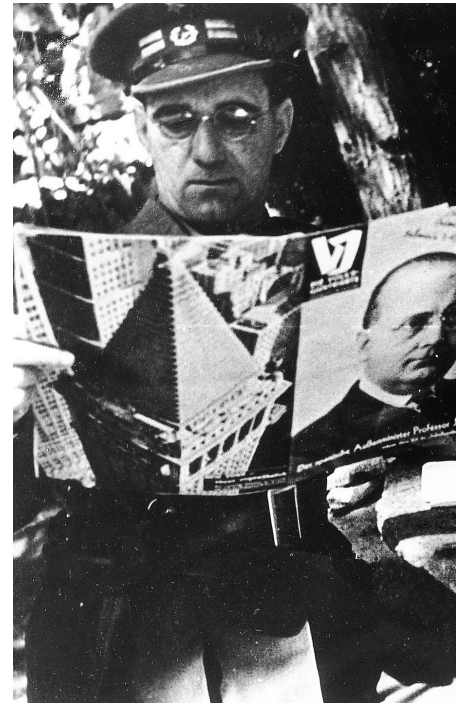
The recurring question in my mind has been, Why did Merriman and his staff follow the suicidal order? Many have answered:

It might have been construed as a mutiny if we did not follow the order.

Our staff was naive and inexperienced compared to the other international brigades.

I still wonder??

Copic writes in the diary,

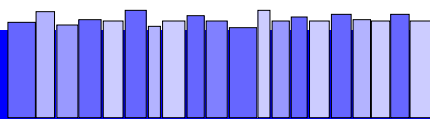


"Morale among Americans to be very poor." This remained a constant theme in the diary. There is no question that after the February 27<sup>th</sup> fiasco the men's morale was low and we were searching for answers. But as the days followed, change for the better was noticed—new machine guns and other equipment arrived. There is no question that we were a rank and file bunch, but our morale and fighting ability was on par with all the brigades. The Lincolns were known and honored throughout Spain.

## April 5th

In broad spring sunlight at about 11 in the morning, Martin Hourihan, the Lincoln Commander, came storming down the lines and ordered all infantry men to attack the fascist lines. No one moved. A few minutes later he again appeared, pistol in hand, ordered the same attack and the machine gunners to join in. Nobody moved. What had taken place?

Continued on page 20



# ALBA EXPANDS WEB BOOKSTORE

## Buy Spanish Civil War books on the WEB.

*ALBA members receive a discount!*

### WWW.ALBA-VALB.ORG

#### BOOKS ABOUT THE LINCOLN BRIGADE

**Kitchen Answer Book**

Hank Rubin

**Honoring Sergeant Carter**

Allene G. Carter and Robert L. Allen

**The Dead Leaves**

Barbara Jacobs

**The Selected Poems of Miguel Hernández**

Edited by Ted Genoways

**The Wound and the Dream: Sixty Years of American Poems about the Spanish Civil War**

by Cary Nelson

**Passing the Torch: The Abraham Lincoln Brigade and its Legacy of Hope**

by Anthony Geist and Jose Moreno

**Italian Workers of the World**

by Donna R. Gabaccia & Fraser M. Ottanelli, Editors

**Ralph Fasanella's America**

by Paul S. D'Ambrosio

**Alvah Bessie's Spanish Civil War Notebooks**

Edited by Dan Bessie

**British Women & the Spanish Civil War**

by Angela Jackson

**Another Hill**

by Milton Wolff

**Our Fight—Writings by Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Spain 1936-1939**

Edited by Alvah Bessie & Albert Prago

**Spain's Cause Was Mine**

by Hank Rubin

**Comrades**

by Harry Fisher

**The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade**

by Peter Carroll

**Rare Birds: An American Family**

by Dan Bessie

**The Politics of Revenge**

by Paul Preston

**The Triumph of Democracy in Spain**

by Paul Preston

**The Lincoln Brigade, a Picture History**

by William Katz and Marc Crawford

**The Color of War**

by Jordi & Arnau Carulla

#### EXHIBIT CATALOGS

**The Aura of the Cause, a photo album**

Edited by Cary Nelson

#### VIDEOS

**Into the Fire: Women and the Spanish Civil War**

Julia Newman

**Art in the Struggle for Freedom**

Abe Osheroff

**Dreams and Nightmares**

Abe Osheroff

**The Good Fight**

Sills/Dore/Bruckner

**Forever Activists**

Judith Montell

**You Are History, You Are Legend**

Judith Montell

☐ Yes, I wish to become an ALBA Associate, and I enclose a check for \$25 made out to ALBA. Please send me *The Volunteer*.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

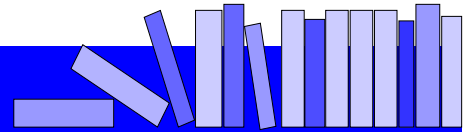
Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I've enclosed an additional donation of \_\_\_\_\_. I wish ☐ do not wish ☐ to have this donation acknowledged in *The Volunteer*.

Please mail to: ALBA, 799 Broadway, Room 227,  
New York, NY 10003



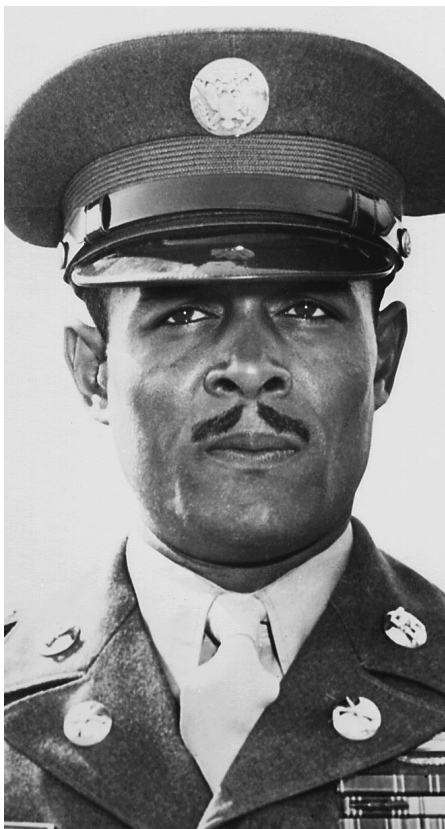


## Honoring the Forgotten Soldier, Sergeant Carter

Allene G. Carter and Robert L. Allen.  
**Honoring Sergeant Carter**  
 Amistad/Harper/Collins,  
 214 pages, \$23.95

**By William Loren Katz**

In recounting the story of her father-in-law, Sergeant Eddie Carter, whose anti-fascist impulses sent him to China, Spain and Germany, Allene Carter, and noted historian Robert L. Allen, have skillfully merged a loving family memoir with a fascinating detective story. Born to an African American missionary in China, teen-age Eddie Carter rushed off to serve Chiang Kai-Shek when the Japanese invaded in the early 1930s, then fought fascism for two



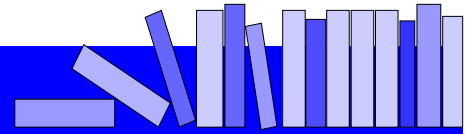
years in Spain where he was wounded, imprisoned by Franco and escaped.

Carter's struggle against fascism reached its climax in World War II. Charging toward the Rhine, now US Sgt. First Class Carter, Thompson machine-gun in hand, confronted a Nazi squad and "got every one of them." But, seriously wounded from shrapnel and bullets, he saw another eight soldiers advancing on him. Carter brought down six men, captured and brought the last two back to US lines. Carter returned home a hero. But he ran afoul of the "Red Scare" when he publicly expressed his disgust at the way Black soldiers "were always being attacked by white civilians and police" in Georgia, and he appeared at a rally—that also featured Frank Sinatra and artist Bill Maudlin—sponsored by the American Youth for Democracy, a group that had passed into in the cross-hairs of the FBI and other fanatical red-hunters. Army Intelligence placed Carter under surveillance, decided his achievements in China, Spain, and Germany made him a "security risk," and then denied him a right to reenlist. Without learning why, he officially passed from patriot hero to pariah. Carter died in 1963, and his family tried to investigate and challenge his persecution only to face stonewalling. But one victory came in 1997 when President Bill Clinton posthumously awarded Eddie Carter a Congressional Medal of Honor for his courage in Germany 52 years earlier, and 33 years after his death. He is the only Lincoln Brigader to have earned the medal. Allene Carter's exciting page-turner with its personal letters and period photographs,



introduces us to a loving, united, fighting family. Her research and persistence finally managed to vanquish the fanatical general and his cabal who denied Carter vindication or even a hearing. In 1999 Clinton publicly apologized to the Carter family because "he was denied the opportunity to continue to serve in uniform the nation he so dearly loved." Allene Carter's meticulous detective work unfolds in a gripping narrative, revealing how official racial bigotry and red-baiting unleashed against returning Lincoln veterans corroded their constitutional rights and denied their pursuit of happiness. Unlike many others, this story ends on a late if triumphant note. If it draws the wide audience it deserves, and reaches young citizens in schools and colleges, the sacrifices made by the Carters and others for democracy at home and abroad will not have been in vain. ▀

William Loren Katz is co-author (with the late Marc Crawford) of *The Lincoln Brigade*.



# *Creating Spaniards: Culture and National Identity in Republican Spain*

by Sandie Holguín  
University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.

### By Sebastiaan Faber

For the progressive Spanish bourgeoisie, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were intensely frustrating. Generation after generation, its vision of a modern, Republican Spanish democracy was thwarted by the conservative bloc that dominated national political life.

For the forward-looking middle classes—whose main center was the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, founded in 1876 as a secular island in a paltry educational system monopolized by the Catholic Church—what Spain needed above all was “culture,” understood as a mix of modern civilization, cultural literacy, and conscious citizenship, to be brought about by education.

“Culture” implied a sense of organic wholeness or social health through which Spain could come into its own as a national community, integrate into Europe, and regain its rightful place at the forefront of nations. The *institucionistas* were strongly influenced by the German philosopher Krause, who in turn was heavily indebted to romanticism. The Krausist middle-class intellectuals admired the Spanish folk, which in their opinion harbored the energy and resources necessary for national regeneration; but they also believed that the *pueblo* needed to be put back in touch with its own cultural heritage—a heritage that fortunately had been preserved in Spain’s masterpieces of art and literature.

Educating the *pueblo*, therefore,

meant teaching them to consume and appreciate a “high” culture that was really the folk’s to begin with. While the Krausists realized that modernization also implied political, economic, and agricultural reform, at bottom they believed Spain’s problem to be “spiritual,” and that it could only be adequately addressed through the leadership of an enlightened class of educators.

When the ailing system finally collapsed in April 1931 and the Second Republic was proclaimed, these intellectuals found themselves at the helm of the nation. Against tremendous national and international odds, they immediately began implementing an ambitious program to infuse Spain with the cultural elixir necessary for its regeneration. Sandie Holguín’s *Creating Spaniards* provides a detailed assessment of the Republicans’ efforts to educate, unite, and modernize Spain from 1931 through the end of the Civil War.

Holguín focuses on the so-called *misiones pedagógicas*, the teams of educators who traveled the Spanish countryside to teach, perform plays, and create schools and libraries in an attempt to bring even the remotest, most disadvantaged communities into the national fold. Holguín argues that these educational programs, which especially flourished under the Republican-Socialist governments of 1931-33, were guided by a clear notion of Spanish nationhood (albeit a Castile-centric one); that, in their effort to “shape a national identity that was held together by the glue of culture,” they were inspired by educational programs of revolutionary Mexico and the USSR;

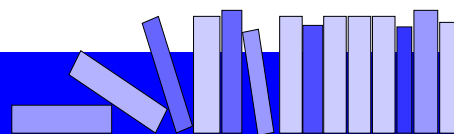
and that they accomplished a great deal, despite strong resistance from the right, the radical left, and the regionalists.

Holguín makes clear, however, that the Republican leadership was unable to overcome the contradictions between its own centralist bias and the demands of Catalan and Basque nationalism, or between its own reformist attitude (and the top-down structure inherent in its self-appointed educational mission) and the revolutionary goals of the Socialist and Anarchist rank and file.

Finally, Holguín shows there was a tragically quixotic dimension to the Republicans’ attempt to lead Spain into modernity through a program based on nineteenth-century notions of cultural literacy based on literature and a “cult of reading.” Especially striking in this respect is the Republicans’ almost religious faith in the redeeming and unifying potential of “high” culture, particularly Spanish Golden Age theater. Holguín argues that this traditional, bookish bias prevented the Republican elites from appreciating the potential of film as a medium.

The strength of this book lies in the detail with which it describes the work of the *misiones pedagógicas* and related projects such as García Lorca’s traveling theater: we learn what towns they visited, what they presented, and how both their audiences and the press reacted to their efforts. The book contains some wonderful archival photos as well. This work’s greatest weakness is its lack of precise political contextualization.

Continued on page 17



## The Finns in Spain

**Meidan Poikamme Espanjassa [Our Boys in Spain].** Edited by K. E. Heikkinen (Finnish Workers Federation, 1939, 96 pp.) Translated by Matti A. Mattson, 2002.

**By Peter Carroll**

The 350 or so Finns who served in the International Brigades built a fine record of courage, commitment, and valor that is still exhilarating to discover in this recently translated and reprinted booklet. Originally published in 1939, it was put into English by Lincoln vet Matti Mattson. It stands today as a compelling documentary history of one ethnic group's participation in the Spanish Civil War.

The Finnish volunteers went to Spain from Canada and the United States, as well as from their native land, and saw action in nearly every battle from Jarama in January 1937 through the Sierra Pandols twenty months later. They served in the 15th Brigade (both with the Lincoln-Washington and MacKenzie Papeneau battalions), the 11th Brigade (German), and in many other units, including the medical corps, artillery, transportation, and guerrilla groups. Within the 15th Brigade, there were two predominantly Finnish machine gun companies: Toivo Antikainen with the Lincolns and Ilkkan-Toivo Antikainen among the Mac-Paps. Brigade leaders also chose a disproportionate number of Finns to fight with guerrilla units behind enemy lines. Their experiences in Spain provide a cross-section of the history of the IBs.

Here in simple, understated prose, and with memories fresh from action in 1939, the ex-soldiers

describe the face of combat, the split-second luck of survival, the stunned agony of injury and death, and the daily fortitude that kept their spirits alive. Carl Syvanen, for instance, tells in a matter of fact way how he and another frightened soldier accidentally captured 25 fully armed fascists at Brunete. "After that," he says, "we were more careful of entering houses of which we knew nothing."

There is much information woven through these personal narratives. Frank Rogers gives an eyewitness account of the fascist breakthrough near Belchite in 1938, depicting the deaths of Commissar Dewitt Parker and Battalion Commander David Reiss when a fascist shell scored a direct hit on

battalion headquarters. Bill Aalto's memoir of partisan warfare—one of three such accounts in this work—describes the difficulties of guerrilla warfare as the fascists learned to anticipate Republican tactics. Simo Kavhu's "A Sketch of Life in a Concentration Camp in Democratic France" still sets the reader's teeth grinding in frustration.

This is a modest but captivating volume. We applaud Matti Mattson for making it available to English readers.

*Copies may be ordered for \$10. Send checks made out to VALB to VALB, Room 227, 799 Broadway, New York, NY 10003. ■*

## National Identity in Republican Spain

Continued from page 16

It never stops to explain the political history of the Republic from 1931 to 1936, and there is barely any mention of the *bienio negro*, the two years of conservative rule preceding the February 1936 elections.

As a result, the reader might get the mistaken impression that the Republicans' pre-war progressive reforms lasted five years, or that their cultural work was done in a political vacuum. And while Holguín goes to great lengths to clarify the different educational views of Republicans, Socialists, Anarchists, and the right, her overall use of political terms such as "Republican" or "revolutionary" is vague and confusing. (Communist policy during the Civil War, for instance, can hardly be called "revolutionary.")

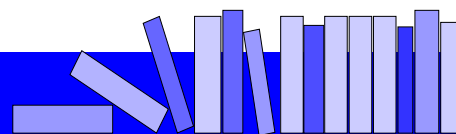
Finally, the book could have been better edited. Some passages

are repetitious, and the text is marred by some unfortunate stylistic and factual slips (Juan Negrín, for example, was not a Communist [173]; CNT does not stand for "Confederación Nacional del Trabajado" [29, 172], etc.).

Nevertheless, *Creating Spaniards* is an important study that helps explain how the Republicans' faith in "culture" as a cure for Spain's many problems spawned an unprecedented and relatively successful educational project that was not, however, without its limitations. ■

Sebastian Faber is assistant professor of Hispanic Studies at Oberlin College and author of *Exile and Cultural Hegemony: Spanish Intellectuals in Mexico (1939-1975)* (Vanderbilt, 2002).





# The Swiss in Spain

**Les Combattants Suisses en Espagne Républicaine** (1936-1939).

By Nic Ulmi and Peter Huber.

(Lausanne: Editions Antipodes, 2001).

### By Robert Coale

The Swiss experience in the Spanish Civil War is unique and has not previously received the attention it deserves. Ironically, if one takes into account the 800 volunteers in relation to total population, the Swiss contingent was proportionately one of the largest.

Much like numerous works on the Spanish Civil War published over the last ten years, this volume makes extensive use of the "Moscow Archives." The authors also successfully mine sources in the Swiss Federal Archives, including police documents and military tribunal records. These archives are surprisingly rich in intercepted letters to and from Spain as well as sworn declarations made during postwar trials. The result is a well-documented study of the Swiss who fought in Republican Spain. In addition to the valuable research, documents originally in three languages are centralized into this French text. The study also includes 25 photographs, biographical information, and a statistical breakdown of volunteers' socio-economic backgrounds.

Structurally, the book is organized around the three key periods of the volunteer experience: motivations and the road to Spain, the struggle in Spain, and finally, the return home.

Given the relative proximity to Spain, many Swiss arrived at an early stage in the fighting, enrolling in a wide variety of militia units even before the Brigades were created. Many served in anarchist or Poumist

units, although the large majority of Swiss volunteers served in the ranks of the International Brigades, many finding their way there after serving in other groups. Despite the considerable number of Swiss nationals in the IBs, linguistic differences prevented the fielding of a national unit; instead they served in French, Italian and German battalions. Interestingly, whereas the Swiss worked smoothly with their French or Italian comrades, the more severe manners of the Germans were not always appreciated by their Swiss cousins.

For veterans from western democracies, after dissolution of the Brigades and repatriation, their immediate problems were over, but the authors emphasize that this was not so for the Swiss who faced military tribunals for violating national neutrality. So rapid was the repression that a full third of the military trials were held "in absentia" while the men were still in Spain. A chilling result is that Swiss authorities unknowingly convicted dozens of men after the latter had encountered death on the battlefield. Of the veterans who survived and were tried, 80 percent received prison sentences of from one to six months. These sentences were more severe than those handed down to Swiss men who served in the French Foreign Legion, but just as severe as the 30 sentences to men who volunteered on the Franco side.

A section I must take issue with is the one on "Discipline, Surveillance and Repression in the International Brigades" as it is the weakest in the book. Whereas a similar section in Rémi Skoutelsky's work on French volunteers *L'Espoir guidait Leur Pas* disproves many of the bloodier claims while presenting proof of excesses, Ulmi and Huber

seem captivated by the darker legends. The authors mention two cases of deserter executions and seven other "possible" cases of "liquidation." After pages of describing the cases, they conclude that the evidence does not allow for confirmation in one sense or the other. This conclusion is disconcerting, for while the issue is undeniably an important one, there is an imbalance in its treatment. The problems and excesses within the IB are a valid issue, however conjecture is not historiography.

Notwithstanding the above, Ulmi and Huber should be congratulated for this first major study on the Swiss contribution to Republican Spain. It provides a valuable presentation of the efforts of hundreds of Swiss men and women to defend the Second Spanish Republic against reaction and fascism. Furthermore, the subject is far from closed despite the sixty years that have passed. Just two years ago the Federal Parliament refused to grant amnesty to these very men and women. ■

Robert Coale teaches Spanish at the University of Jacksonville in Florida.

## Return

Continued from page 10

electricity to towns which 20 years previous had none. Back-breaking peasant labor is a thing of the past. Fields are now cultivated and harvested with modern machines. Spain certainly has come a long way since the last time these same fields were visited.

My visit to Spain ended with the emotional homage to John Cookson in Marsa. I then returned to New York both vivified by memories and inspired by discoveries. ■

## Letters

Continued from page 2

Dear Editor,

I met Jack Oswald four years ago and have been in touch with him ever since. I know many of us who have been on the road doing speaking gigs, and other vets who have come in contact with youngsters locally, have wondered if we ever motivated an individual to join in what we called the Good Fight.

Jack is but one of many who have been moved by such as Abe Osheroff, Clarence Kailin and others...and who know by other Vets, or just the Legend as recounted in documentaries and books.

Knowing this I am asking *The Volunteer* to let you all know what your lives have meant to so many.

Milton Wolff

Dear Milt,

I have been to Cuba three times. I went after I met a guy, Ned Powell, at a socialist meeting in Madison. He had 5,000 pounds of blood infusion pumps he wanted delivered to Cuba. We stored them in a barn outside of Madison and I drove them in a 26 foot U-Haul truck to NYC to Lucius Walker of The Pastors for Peace. From there they went to Cuba on one of their many caravans. Ned Powell, a close friend of Clarence Kailin, had driven with the Pastors for Peace some ten years ago. This meeting, where I met Ned, goes on every month in Madison. It was started by Clarence Kailin twelve years ago.

For several years, I have been donating money to The Children's Hospital in Havana through VALB in San Francisco with Hon Brown; but I felt that I needed to do more, so I flew to Havana to attend The World Solidarity Conference in 2000.

When I returned to the States I started working with many groups and individuals such as Nancy Mikelson of the Chicago Friends group, of which I am a member. Nancy has been moving supplies to Cuba for years. We sent small quantities of medicine and supplies through her network of activists, who

work mainly with Santiago de Cuba. I then began renting 30-foot trucks and driving to Montreal with various types of medical supplies bound for Havana. I'd estimate that I was able to move about 60,000 pounds of supplies to Montreal alone, where it was loaded on boats going to Cuba.

Inspiration? Well, after meeting you Milt, I considered joining Marcos in Chiapas, but Cuba has presented herself and I have been involved ever since. My group has no overhead; we accept no pay. The cost is for diesel fuel and overseas containers out of Canada. We have a beat up 24 foot Volvo donated by Joe Rody, John Rody's brother, who fought in Spain.

Salud,

Jack Oswald

Dear ALBA,

I enclose a check for 50 dollars as a contribution to your organization. This amount is the contribution of my father Joan Verdager, my company MASIES SERRRA MAGRA.SLL, and myself. With this initial contribution we want to remember all Americans that have been fighting for the ideas of true democracy and freedom in Spain during the war and after it.

We can't forget what the veterans have done for the Spanish Republic. Their effort wasn't useless. Thanks to the American veterans and other international brigadistas, the republican army could resist during three years -without good weapons and almost lacking air force- a massive Italian, German, Portuguese and Spanish nationalist coalition. The volunteers pushed back in several battles the so-called "professionals" of the Spanish foreign legion as well as the mercenaries.

How to explain to the young generations that the regime that we have had during the past almost 40 years was the result of a failed coup d'etat? How to explain that the Spanish Republic suffered an international blockade, especially from democracies like France and Great Britain, because these countries feared Hitler's expansionism?

How to explain the bombings of republican cities that caused a great number of civilian casualties, made by German and Italian airplanes? How to explain that during World War II Francoist spies worked for the Japanese army and that Nationalist Spain sent 40,000 "volunteers" to the Russian front? What bothers the so-called "democratas de toda la vida" is that international brigades, especially Americans, British and Canadians, have helped the real Spain during and after the war. And when they can't avoid the subject, they only can say that the volunteers were fooled by communism. The answer is typical of the incompetent ruling people that we have in great number in Spain. I also want to wish you a Happy New Year 2003.

Best Regards

Josep Verdager

[info@massiescataqlunya.com](mailto:info@massiescataqlunya.com)

Dear Volunteer,

Thank you so much for sending the copy of the December Volunteer. As editor of the IBMT newsletter it is always important to know what's going on elsewhere, although your member Gideon Rosenbluth is excellent at keeping me abreast of the latest news in the US. The December edition was particularly poignant for me as I got to know Evelyn and Bill van Felix briefly at the 2001 Hominaje in Madrid and was sad to hear first of Evelyn's death and then of Bill's so soon after. They were lovely people.

I would like to wish veterans, their families and supporters a healthy and peaceful 2003, and look forward to meeting some of them again in Spain in July.

Regards,

Geraldine (Doran) Abrahams

PS My Irish father, Gerry Doran, went to Spain in December 1936 with the first group of Irish volunteers led by Frank Ryan. He was severely wounded at Cordoba on Christmas Day 1936 but made a recovery and returned to Dublin in the summer of '37. He later married my mother (also of Irish heritage) and moved to Scotland.

# Joseph Grigas

Continued from page 11

of the section and, advancing under heavy fire, managed to reach the perimeter wire. The remainder of the Company was by this time pinned to the ground. Private Grigas breached a gap in the wire and led his section through to assault the enemy concrete machine gun posts which were knocked out in quick succession. Although Private Grigas' section was the only section of the Company to enter the battery position the attack was led with such determination that it caused the surrender of the garrison of approximately two hundred men and in the capture of four 9.2" howitzers and large quantities of ammunition, small arms and stores. The personal gallantry, determination and leadership of Private Grigas was largely responsible for the success of this operation."

The citation was signed by Joe's commanding officers and by Generals Montgomery and Alexander. Joe was granted an

immediate Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). This is the second highest British and Canadian award for gallantry (after the Victoria Cross) for all ranks below commissioned officer. During all of World War II only five DCM's were awarded to the men in the Royal Canadian Regiment.

When I first talked with the Adjutant at the Royal Canadian Regiment, in addition to learning about the Distinguished Conduct Medal, he told me that Joe was known as International Joe because of Spain, and that he had shot down a German ME 109 with his Bren gun when it was being chased at a low level by a British Spitfire. The British pilot subsequently verified that it was Joe's groundfire that



Capt. Duncan McMillan, Sherry Atkinson, Joe Grigas, Spin Reid

brought down the German plane.

Joe was recently honored as Veteran of the Year at a ceremony at his residence at West Side House in Worcester, and two of his old comrades from the Royal Canadian Regiment accompanied by the Regimental Adjutant drove eleven hours from London, Ontario to pay tribute to Joe. It had been thought that Joe was killed in action later in the war, and the Regiment was delighted to learn from Bill Carrick that the hero of Pacino was alive and that they could be reunited with him after almost sixty years. ▀

---

## Copic

Continued from page 13

Landis' book describes the action, "The loss of the 200 meters of trench on the 14th of March was rectified on April 5th when elements of the Dombrowski and Garibaldi Battalions recaptured the positions. Captains [Allen] Johnson and Hourihan directed the action and the Lincoln's job was to cover fire for the other Battalions.

But here is my memory of the operation. I was a machine gunner and the machine gunners were located next to the Lincolns' first company commanded by Ed Flaherty. The British Battalion was further to the right. On April 4 we were told that a full scale attack would occur the next day, support would be artillery, tanks, and aviation. Aviation ground directions

were placed pointing out the fascist positions.

The next morning we were up before dawn and soon were ready. But again as on Feb. 27 we waited, and soon the full sun was out. We waited and waited. Finally about 11 a.m. we saw and heard 4 small tanks slowly coming up the hill behind us and they crawled over our parapet toward the fascists. Up to now there was no word from our company commanders. Hourihan then came storming down the trenches as noted before. The very small tanks were amateurishly shooting at the fascist trenches. They did very little damage. One tank drove into a large hole about 70 feet in front of our position and couldn't get out. The turret opened and the men were able to escape to our lines. Soon an anti tank shell hit the tank and the other tanks left the field. Our antiquated artillery

began their useless firing. And the fascist artillery was also actively firing. Both sides couldn't hit the lines because we were located on hills and the artillery trajectory caused their shells to fall behind the lines. Finally, Ed Flaherty and a group of his men went over the parapets and were met with a storm of bullets. Those who could, including Ed, returned. One of his men (Kline of Chicago I think) lay wounded in front of us—he yelled for help all afternoon, but the fascist fire kept anyone from assisting. He was finally pulled in at dusk. There weren't too many other casualties in this action. I can't help but believe that Landis was given sanitized versions of what actually took place. And again I want to emphasize that the Battalion, now seasoned soldiers, refused to go on a suicide mission. ▀





The Lincoln Vets take the stage, Hank Rubin, Clifton Amsbury, Coleman Persilly, Anthony Toney, Virginia Malbin, Spanish miliciana Amaya Tello, Hilda Roberts, Nate Thornton, and Milt Wolff.

## Reunion

Continued from page 3

American to command white troops in battle, offering a plaque in the name of the VALB to Law's daughter, Euunice Maynie. Roby Newman accepted the memorial in her absence.

The city council of Berkeley also presented a proclamation, naming the day in honor of Hilda Roberts, a nurse in Spain and an outspoken critic of U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf.

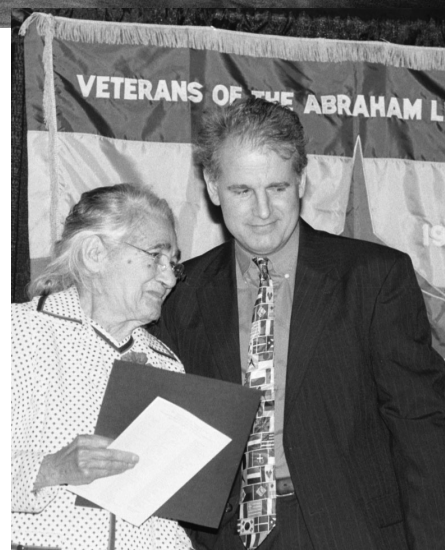
Keynote speaker Angela Davis, the well-known activist and Professor of African American and Feminist Studies at UC Santa Cruz, honored the radical political traditions that attack racism, sexism, and war. Reminding the audience that 11 million people around the world had taken to the streets in antiwar protests the previous weekend, she exhorted them to continue to challenge threats to peace and civil rights. Davis contributed her honorarium to Critical Resistance, a

prison reform project.

Bay Area Associates Martha Olson Jarocki, and Peter Carroll described the Post's activist commitment to causes of social justice, civil liberties, and international solidarity. Linda Lustig stood before a projection of the forthcoming monument that will honor the members of the Lincoln Brigade at a site near the San Francisco embarcadero and explained the status of the project. It is still months away from completion.

The troupe then presented a long set of "Songs of Protest and Resistance" that was developed by Barthol and ALBA's Peter Glazer. As Richard Bermack projected black and white images behind the musicians, the songs took the audience around the globe to evoke the heritage of anti-fascism, labor activism, solidarity, and feminism.

Suddenly, the program was interrupted by the appearance of the vice president of the United States (played by look alike Ed Holmes), who disavowed current administration policies and shared a chorus of



Berkeley City Councilman Kriss Worthington presents a proclamation honoring Hilda Roberts

The Internationale. The theater shook with laughter and then with sustained applause for a grand afternoon of political entertainment.

The audience departed into the same gloomy world outside, but for a few hours felt the satisfaction of sharing the spirit of dissent with men and women who have been fighting the good fight since the Spanish Civil War. ▀



# Contributions



## **In Memory of a Veteran**

Dr. Louis Kroll *in memory of Zachary Stadt* \$50

Freda Novack *in memory of Ed Bender* \$25

Al Tarantal *in memory of Harry Noble* \$25

Vicki Gabriner *in memory of Jack Friedman* \$18

Evelyn Brack *in memory of Dr. Ed Barsky* \$25

Suzanne & Alan Jay Rom *in memory of Sam Schiff* \$50

Bonnie Bramble *in memory of Bill Bailey* \$20

Les Fein *in memory of Dick & Gene Fein* \$100

Suzanne & David Cane *in memory of Lawrence Cane* \$100

Jeanette Dean *in memory of Wilfred Mendelsohn* \$100

Georges Sossenکو *in memory of Pedro Mateo Merino* \$25

Rhea K. Kish *in memory of Leslie Kish* \$100

Dr. Steven Jonas *in memory of Dr. Edward K. Barsky* \$50

Moe Fishman *in memory of John Fernandez and Felix Kusman* \$25

V. Rhea *in memory of Al Ziegler* \$15

Naomi Zalon Cooper *in memory of Sol Zalon* \$50

Annette Halpern *in memory of Joseph Isaac Siegal* \$50

Rita Neri *in memory of Dino Neri* \$50

Paul Fitzgerald *in memory of Danny Fitzgerald* \$50

Mae Millstone *in memory of George Israel Millstone* \$50

Marcus G. Singer *in memory of Larry Cane* \$50

Ann Cooper *in memory of Louis Cooper* \$50

Elaine Bunn *in memory of Tommy Lloyd* \$50

Gino Baumann *in memory of Swiss Veteran Paul Trocz* \$25

## **Donor in Honor of Veteran**

Robert & Lynda Jaros *in honor of Bill Susman* \$100

Robert Kimbrough *in honor of Clarence Kailin* \$100

## **Donor in Memory of**

Debra Mipos *in memory of my parents* \$25

Ruth Silber *in honor of Sophie Saroff* \$50

## **Donor in Honor of**

Sidney Emerman *in honor of Sadie Klein* \$15

Eliezer T. Margolis *in honor of the decency and courage of George Siegel* \$250

Ruth Silber *in honor of Lola Weixel* \$50

## **Contributions**

Tom Graff \$25

Andrew Scherer & Claudia Slovinsky \$25

**Visit the ALBA  
web site at  
[www.alba-valb.org](http://www.alba-valb.org)**

# They Still Draw Pictures

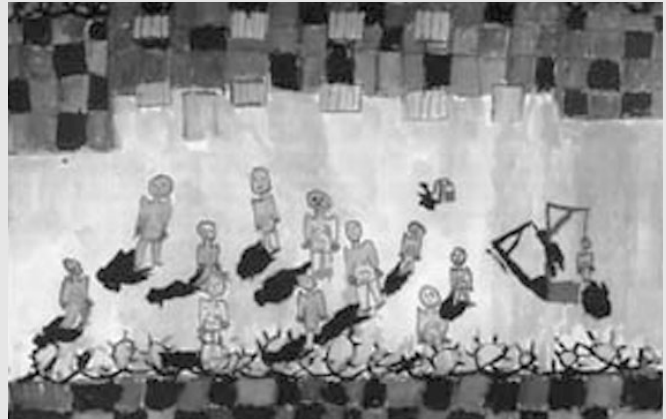
*They Still Draw Pictures: Children's Art in Wartime from the Spanish Civil War to Kosovo* is a traveling exhibition that was curated by ALBA's Tony Geist and Peter Carroll. The exhibit consists of 78 color drawings created by Spanish refugee children and 22 children's drawings from other wars.

**January 15, 2003-March 23, 2003**

Zoellner Art Center  
Lehigh University  
420 East Packard Ave.  
Bethlehem, PA 18015.  
For information, 610-758-3619.

**April 5, 2003-June 15, 2003**

Hood Museum  
Dartmouth College  
Hanover, NH  
For information, 603-646-3646



**August 13, 2003-October 24, 2003**

University Art Museum  
Southern Illinois University  
Carbondale, IL 62901  
For information, 618-453-5388

## ALBA'S TRAVELING EXHIBITION

### THE AURA OF THE CAUSE

ALBA's photographic exhibit, *The Aura of the Cause*, has been shown at the Puffin Room in New York City, the University of California-San Diego, the Salvador Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, FL, the Fonda Del Sol Visual Center in Washington DC, and the University of Illinois. This exhibit, curated by Professor Cary Nelson of the University of Illinois, consists of hundreds of photographs of the Lincoln Brigaders, other international volunteers and their Spanish comrades, in training and at rest, among the Spanish villages and in battle.

For further information about *The Aura of the Cause* exhibit, contact ALBA's executive secretary, Diane Fraher, 212-598-0968. The exhibit is available for museum and art gallery showings.

#### **Shreveport, La**

January 15, 2003-March 15, 2003

**Meadows Museum of Art  
Centenary College**

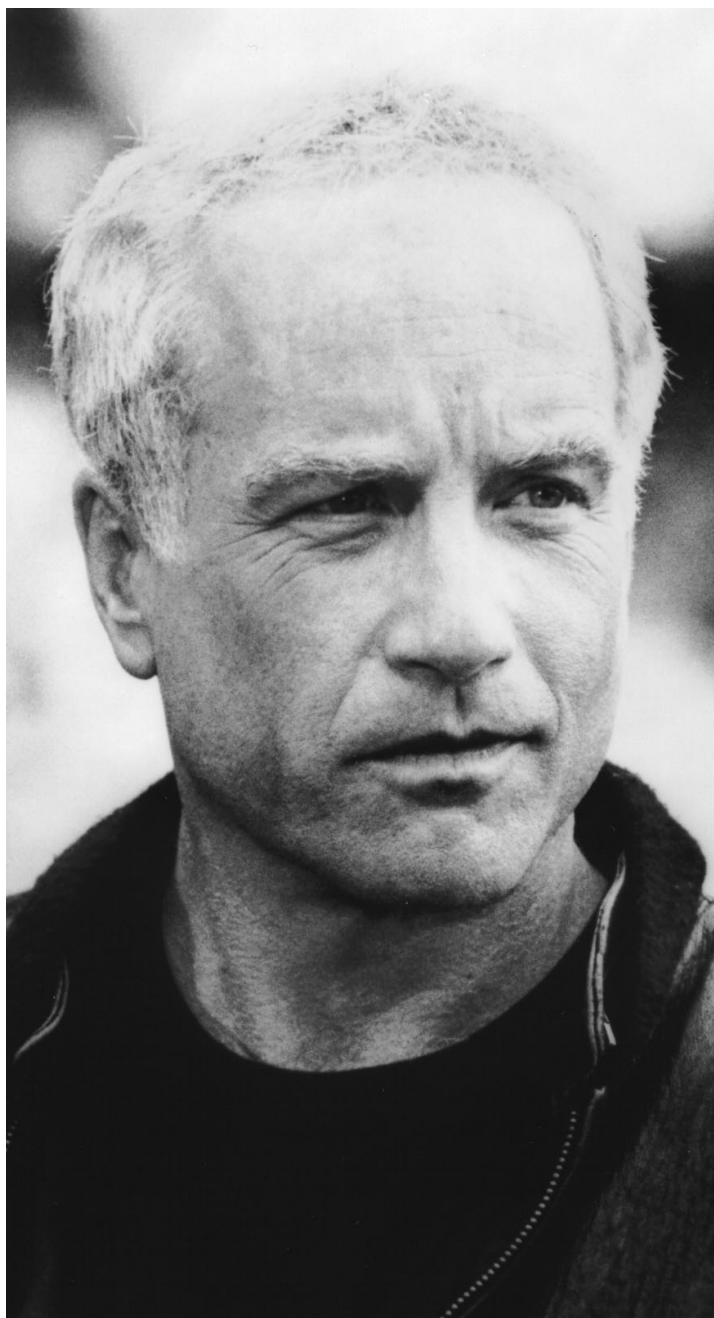
2911 Centenary Blvd  
Shreveport, La 71104  
318-869-5226

### **BRING THIS EXHIBIT TO YOUR LOCALITY**

**Contact Diane Fraher, ALBA executive secretary:**

**212-598-0968; Fax: 212-529-4603; e-mail [amerinda@amerinda.org](mailto:amerinda@amerinda.org)**





Actor Richard Dreyfuss

Highlights NY Reunion

Plus "Which Side Are  
You On: Songs of

Protest & Resistance"

Sunday April 27, 2003

For Tickets: 212-674-5398

Vets to Honor Spanish  
Consul

Friday, April 25, 6:15 p.m.

King Juan Carlos Center  
(See P. 4)

**The Volunteer**

c/o Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives  
799 Broadway, Rm. 227  
New York, NY 10003

NON-PROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 1430  
HACKENSACK, N.J.