

The Volunteer

JOURNAL OF THE VETERANS OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE

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

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Patriots Act!



Joan Blades, co-founder of MoveOn.org. The organization was honored by the Lincoln vets at the San Francisco Bay Area reunion for its patriotic acts in battling the Bush administration on the frontlines of cyberspace.

From Madrid to Cyberspace

"What is it to be a patriot? To wrap
yourself in the flag, or really stand up
for what it represents? To trample on
democratic rights, or defend them?"

from *Patriots Act!*

This year's San Francisco Bay Area reunion featured *Patriots Act*, written and directed by Peter Glazer with musical direction by Bruce Barthol. The show was performed by members of the San Francisco Mime Troupe on February 29 and included a stellar performance by veteran folk singer Barbara Dane. Don't miss the New York performance on May 2. See back page for details.

More photos of the SF reunion on page 3.



PHOTOS BY RICHARD BERMACK

Letters

Dear Editor,

My trip to Spain of October 27-November 2 (with son John Kailin and daughter Julie Kailin and Member of the Wisconsin Friends of the Lincoln Brigade, Judith Klehr) was personally very rewarding because it was the occasion for the release of the Spanish translation of my 1992 manuscript of the letters of, and testimonials to John Cookson, "*Recordando a John Cookson un antifascista de Wisconsin en la guerra civil española, 1937-1938*" ["*The Memories of John W. Cookson, a Wisconsin Anti-Fascist in the Spanish Civil War*"].

In Albacete, Antonio Roncero, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Castilla-La Mancha, which published the book, held a press conference announcing the publication, where the book was first released to the public in the presence of a host of TV cameras and broadcast and print journalists. This was covered on the local TV news. Several local residents and employees of the Europa Hotel where we were staying who saw the conference report, stopped me and gave very warm congratulations.

Two daily papers, *La Tribuna de Albacete* and *El Pueblo de Albacete* featured stories of the press conference and the

SAH"] where I returned to John Cookson's grave. There we laid a wreath of laurel leaves, joining over a hundred people in a solemn remembrance. They were part of a tour of important sites where the Internationals last marched in Marçà just before the famous repatriation march in Barcelona in 1938. Two other brigadistas joined us here: Harry Randall, Lincoln Brigade photographer whose war photos were on display in a local gallery; and Milton Wolff, the Lincolns' last commander. I later spoke briefly about Cookson and the Spanish edition of the book at the City Hall to an audience of several hundred.

We also participated in a special session of a conference held at the City Hall. This was an interview conducted by two of my kids who joined me on the trip with two highly respected Spaniards, Leandro Saun and Carmen Casas. They had briefly and accidentally met John and Julie at the 1996 Homenage in Barcelona, and we had all since connected and become friends. Leandro fought with the Republican army. He and I have almost identical shrapnel wounds in our arms, mine at the Ebro from Hill 666, and his from very nearby. After the war both Leandro and Carmen became important leaders in the Resistance in France, and in later years in the underground of Franco Spain, where he led the organization of the Communist Party in three provinces. Leandro and Carmen were both

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

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book's release. The same evening I spoke to a class of 55 college students in the class of History Professor Manuel Requena Gallego, who had arranged for the University to publish the book.

At 11:00 p.m. that night I was on Albacete TV (Ch. TVA) with my friend and translator of the book, Juan Maria Gómez Ortiz and Manuel Requena. We appeared live on a 20 minute segment of a magazine-format show hosted by the popular TV anchor Raquel Haro, a delightful person who asked many insightful questions.

The next day, October 31 we drove to Marçà ["marr-

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Patriots Act!

"I am a revolutionary in the sense that I understand the word. I don't find it a threatening word. It's a nice word, it's a good word. It's an honorable word. And people who are revolutionaries are honorable people....Some of them have even emerged as national heroes, like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson." Saul Wellman from *Patriots Act!*, VALB reunion program



The vets take the stage (top); Hilda Roberts (above left); activist Medea Benjamin, who introduced Joan Blades, and vet Nate Thornton (above right); Joan Blades (right). Photos by Richard Bermack.



Abe Osheroff and folk singer Barbara Dane had their own reunion at the event. "The last time I saw Abe was in 1964. He was hammering nails on a roof, building a community center in Mississippi," Dane recalled, noting their involvement in the civil rights movement during Freedom Summer.

In the 1930s taking a stand meant picking up a gun and fighting fascism in Spain. Today the internet has replaced the gun, and MoveOn.org, the vets' honoree, is on the frontlines, using the internet to fight the war-mongering agenda of the neo-cons and the Bush administration. MoveOn.org has forged a nationwide network of more than 1.7 million activists and has raised millions of dollars for key congressional campaigns. To find out more, visit them at www.moveon.org.

"Play/Dead": Chicago Youth Show Spanish Civil War

By Jamie O'Reilly

On a frigid January afternoon in Chicago, a loyal audience of family, friends, teachers, and neighborhood youth braved the weather to attend a performance of "play/dead jugar/muerte, a shout out from the Spanish Civil War for the freedom of the world." The house was packed in the intimate third floor Free Street Theater on Chicago's Northside.

Written and performed by a 10 person multi-ethnic ensemble of Chicago area high school and college students and directed by Jenny Magnus, with myself, Jamie O'Reilly, acting as musical director, "play/dead" energetically explored the events of the Spanish Civil War and its meaning for today's generation. Inspired by songs, texts, and personal histories from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, the program also made an emotional statement from the urban youth who presented a frank and entertaining perspective on today's political climate.

The original script consists of songs integrated with short scenes, many based on theater games. "'Play/Dead' or, in Spanish, juega/muerte (as in to play a game), tocar/muerte (as in to play an instrument), obra de teatro/muerte, (a play, obra means 'it builds,' so it's literally 'to build a theater'); all these meanings were important to the student/creators of this performance," said Director Jenny Magnus.

"In learning, mostly for the first time, about the Spanish Civil War and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, they struggled with the enormous complexity of the history, and were struck by the role of women, the racial equality, and the uneasy parallels to our current situation in the world. Their confrontation with the historical material inspired them to design a collective collage of their own impressions, fears, jokes, and challenges.



These actor/creators undertook a risk; the risk that all creativity, and particularly collaboration, is a force for social change, inherently positive and constructive in the face of so much destruction."

The music and songs embolden the piece, contributing both a sense of history through the performance of the best-loved songs of the War, and a sense of the present. The original music: a folkdance, an anthem (based on a Langston Hughes poem), and a bit of hip-hop, exhibit the composer-actors' ability to honor the stories and interpret them in a contemporary voice.

"Now that I know what I know, I want everybody to know about it!" said Columbia College Theater student and cast member David Watkins, 21, in a stirring post show discussion, when asked what struck him about the project.

"I didn't expect it to be so interesting," said Keisha Hill, 19, a Free Street Ensemble member, who chose the letters of Salaria Kea for one of her scenes.

For Abram Rabinowitz 27, an improv actor and writer of the Execution Game Show scene, it was the reality that in Nazi concentration camps Jewish prisoners dug their own graves and participated in their own executions that struck him.

What affected the ensemble most occurred early in the creative process, when they viewed the film *The Good Fight* and then heard from Lincoln vet Charles Hall and his wife Bobby. It was Chuck's story of courage and determination, they said, that made them want to tell the story.

Background of the Project

In 2002, I agreed to help Chicago Friends of the Lincoln Brigade find a context to pass on to young people the history that can inform and inspire current generations to make a commitment to peace and justice in their time. I turned to Free Street, an award-winning community arts organization that creates original theater with youth. With the help of former director David Schein and Special Projects Director Bryn Magnus, we were able to form a unique collaboration between Columbia College Theater Department, Music Theatre Workshop, Free Street Programs, Proyecto hACE, Urban Missions Program of the Office of Community Arts Partnerships, Columbia College Chicago (OCAP), and Chicago Friends of the Lincoln Brigade, ALBA Associates.

Funds came in large part from OCAP, with additional gifts from the

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Spanish Exiles Pay Homage to Lázaro Cárdenas

By Shirley Mangini

When hundreds of thousands of Spaniards fled for their lives into France in 1939, they languished in concentration camps—cold, hungry and often ill and wounded. Fascism was quickly taking over France; the Spaniards were in the midst of a second apocalypse. Thousands died along with the Jews in German death camps. Yet for the more fortunate, sympathy came from the post-revolutionary Mexican government of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), the only Latin American leader who supported the Allied forces during World War II.

The day after the end of the Spanish Civil War, April 2, 1939, aware of the imminence of the Nazi invasion of France, Mexico signed a treaty with the Vichy government to protect the Spanish exiles. Thousands of Spaniards began to arrive at the port of Veracruz that year; some twenty to thirty thousand would reach Mexican shores in the early 1940s.

Among the Spanish exiles, there were hundreds of prominent intellectuals who were invited to take refuge in Mexico. Most of them made their way to Mexico City and rapidly became engaged in a cooperative effort with the Mexican intellectuals who had supported and welcomed them. They made a mark in pedagogy, philosophical thought, literary and artistic endeavors, and publishing. Some, including Octavio Paz, think they provoked the turning point for the creation of Mexico City as one of the two greatest cultural centers of the Americas (the other was Buenos Aires).

Recently, the descendents of Spanish exiles formed the Asociación de Descendientes del Exilio Español. As their first activity on April 14, 2003, they paid homage to Lázaro Cárdenas. The commemoration of a monument in his honor took place in the Parque Norte in Madrid, erected there when

democracy was restored after the death of Franco. The Association is now planning to request that the Madrid government place a commemorative plaque at the base of the monument with the words of statesman Alvaro de Albornoz who in 1940 expressed gratitude for Cárdenas' support of the Aid to Spanish Republicans Group (J.A.R.E.).

The plaque will read: "Foreigner, stop and remove your hat: This is the President of Mexico, Lázaro Cárdenas, the father of the Spaniards without a country and without rights, persecuted by tyranny and disinherited because of hate."

Alvaro de Albornoz had promised that when democracy was restored in

Spain, there would be a monument to Cárdenas with a granite base from the Guadarrama Mountains with this inscribed statement. Since only Cardenas' name and biographical dates are stated at present, unfortunately, most people do not know who he was and how he saved so many Spanish exiles from the fate of those who could not find shelter from Nazism.

Lázaro Cárdenas' son, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Batel, recently reaffirmed his interest in having Albornoz' words of gratitude inscribed at the base of the statue. The Association invites anyone who wishes to support them or has any ideas about how to achieve their goal to contact:

redaccion_exiliados@yahoo.es ■

Dispatch from Madrid *A Mothball Revival*

By Miguel Ángel Nieto

The year 2003 ended in Spain with an historic and heartfelt homage to those who fought for freedom and those who were victims of Franco, not just during the Civil War of 1936-39, but also to those who suffered under four decades of dictatorship. They had to wait more than sixty years until the end of the war, and more than twenty-five until the death of the dictator, for the political parties to reach a consensus that the flag of the Republic should finally fly in the Congress of Deputies, borne by 350 aged antifascists who filled the seats of the Cortés.

There were more than 60 moving statements in which each speaker made specific reference to those who suffered exile, those who languished in jails and concentration camps, to the International Brigades who left their youth in that distant war, and of course, to the fallen, many of whom still lie in unmarked common graves. There were cheers for the Republic as the politicians

praised those present, telling them: "You are the voice and the face of those who cannot be here today."

And everything would have been perfect, splendid and historic, if the ruling party of Spain, José María Aznar's Popular Party, had also supported this long awaited act of national reconciliation. This act so necessary for its symbolic significance, an act that the country had awaited for so long. But no. The PP's spokesman to Congress, Luis de Grandes, rather than offering a gesture of respect for those who defended the Republic, publicly repudiated the event, calling it a "mothball revival" orchestrated by people "intent on paying homage to God knows who."

The fact is that they, the right wing, don't know who. They do not recognize the thousands who suffered Franco's reprisals and still have no right to compensation, who receive no pension or recompense for their suf-

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A Eulogy for Innocence: Meditation

By Elyse Pineau

An enlarged slide of a drawing by Miguel Ercano Garcia, age 12, is projected, like a backdrop, for the duration of the talk. The drawing tells a story of a man held captive while a soldier on horseback charges down a woman flinging herself from a cliff. The central characters—a soldier and falling woman—are duplicated in a series of ghostly palimpsests, barely visible on the paper.

When I was invited to contribute to an interdisciplinary panel on the children's wartime art exhibit, "They Still Draw Pictures," I committed to the project despite feeling cowed by the stakes. In the course of spending time amongst these children and their extraordinary drawings, I have come to appreciate the provocative ambiguity of my assignment: "From the perspective of your discipline, speak as the spirit moves you."

As a performance artist in speech communication, my work centers on autobiographical narratives and methodologies of embodiment. I am interested in the ways people story their lives in artful ways and what can be learned from engaging these narratives empathetically, in and through the medium of an articulate performing body. It is from this disciplinary stance that the spirit moves me to tell you a story of attending to one child's drawing—just one child and one drawing out of hundreds in this exhibit—attending to it closely and carefully, and struggling to embody, as artfully as I can, what I discovered through the encounter.

This is a tale about witnessing, about *bearing witness* to a story by Miguel Ercano Garcia, age 12, drawing somewhere, sometime, from an "unidentified locale" during the Spanish Civil War. And it is a tale about trying to maintain a disciplined perspective when the spirit moves you to the edge of an interpretive cliff and demands a leap of faith.

But all stories rest upon other sto-

ries for their significance, and this one begins sometime, somewhere else, in a chance encounter with a tree one day and a story it told me about children and the artfulness of their traumatized bodies.

A Narrative Frame

In the backwoods of Giant City State Park, tucked into a ravine—clinging, really, to the side of a small

others in the forest, arms reaching toward the sun.

So step closer.

Look carefully.

There is more to this tree than is apparent from a distance. And it is worthy of your attention.

Many years ago, say 40 or more, this tree was struck by lightning. Many years ago, when it was "knee high" so to speak, a bolt of lightning



cliff—there is a tree. It catches your eye immediately, this tree rooted into the side of a cliff, because even from a distance you can see that is just a tangle of roots around an odd, squat base and then, quite wondrously, two separate trunks rising up like leafless arms and reaching out and away from the edge of the cliff until they break from the shadow of the overhang and burst into leaf, suddenly, against the clear blue sky. From a distance, and not a very great distance, not unlike the distance that separates you from me, or any of us from *this image*, the tree appears to be normal. It is a tad idiosyncratic, perhaps, but a healthy tree nonetheless. A tree happily going on about its tree life, like all the

shot down from the sky, snaked down out of the clear blue sky one day and cracked this tree in two. With an explosion of fire and a crash, I imagine, that could be heard from a great distance, a bolt of lightning cleft this young tree at its foundation, leaving there in the heart of its small body, a great hole, black and burning and smelling of death. But cleft and cored though it was, this tree did not die. This tree survived its trial by fire and continued to grow, because that is what trees do, when they survive. Up and over the hole in its center, the trunk grew back, grew over in knots & whorls shaded in with the residue of

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ns on Art and the Traumatized Child

ash that the lightning had seared into its flesh. And from this gnarled scar of burnt bark, two trunks like arms reaching, tall and slender and perfectly parallel to one another like conjoined twins held in equipoise, each giving balance and symmetry to the other.

Now you might be tempted to say that this tree simply grew past its cataclysmic brush with death, that this tree got beyond it, got over it, resolved and refigured itself, integrated this hole in its body and left that death-dealing-blow-in-the-dust on its way to becoming a tree, healthy like all the others, rooted on the edge of a cliff, arms reaching. And in many important ways you would be right. But this tree will *never not* be a tree struck by lightning. This tree will *never not* smell death on its body when the wind is right. This tree will *never not* be a double of itself, its “self” doubled by this cleaving. Because such splitting and growing on, growing double is a characteristic of trauma, when trauma strikes your foundation, when trauma strikes you knee-high, and leaves you with a hole in your center and the task of surviving.

Post traumatic stress disorder is like the residue from a bolt of lightning. When a cataclysmic blow strikes to the core of your being with such force that you face death and live on... your body is permanently cleft. It's as simple as that. Your entire sensory, sense-making system is shocked to its core and rewired, hotwired some would say, to accommodate the now omnipresent fragility of your existence. For some, some struck when they're young, surviving such a blow enables a doubling of the body into a dialectic of past and present both, half-and-whole both, like death and defiance both. In every breath both held in balance, held in animating equipoise, like two arms around a hole where wholeness used to be. What trauma kills, when it kills, is the nonchalance of daily living, that

grounding presumption that one breath will follow another, that one's body breathing now, is the same body of breath you were earlier. What trauma strikes is the illusion that living or dying come naturally, like breathing, when in fact, we are all, we are all of us, always, just making it up. With every breath, we are making it up as we go along, as carefully and artfully as we can in the aftermath of things that strike us.

I know this about PTSD because I have been reading, from a disciplinary perspective, about the relationship between trauma and bodies of memo-

ry and the stories they tell. But I attend to it carefully for reasons less disciplined or distant. As you might have surmised at this point in my story, I too was struck by lightning. Many years ago, say 40 or more when I was “knee high,” a storm came to live in my house, in my home. And for 5 years this storm raged and rained down on me daily with great jagged bolts of lightning that could snake out of the clear blue sky and mark my body with mortality, until I could smell it, when the wind was right. And the years of that storm cleft me in

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Children's Exhibit at NY's AXA Gallery

“**T**hey Still Draw Pictures: Children's Art in Wartime from the Spanish Civil War to Kosovo” appears at New York's AXA Gallery (787 Seventh Avenue at 51st Street) from February 19-April 3.

Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 11am - 6pm, and Saturday, noon to 5pm. The Gallery is closed on Sundays. Admission is free.

Curated by ALBA's Tony Geist and Peter Carroll, the show presents 78 drawings made by Spanish children whose parents had sent them to government-supported colonias to spare them the hardships of the war. In these colonies, the young refugees - many of them orphaned or sent by their parents to safety - received schooling and medical care, kept each other company, and produced the thousands of drawings that serve as a moving, collective testimony of the experience of being a child in wartime.

Coinciding with the exhibit's opening, ALBA also hosted a one-

day symposium on “Children in War” at NYU's King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center on February 21. A morning panel of surviving children included Angela Giral, Marysa Navarro, Oriol Pi-Sunyer, and Sol Sender, each of whom spoke of their experiences and the legacy of uprooting. The afternoon panel brought together several scholars who have studied the effects of wartime trauma on children's lives. These included J. Lawrence Aber and Robin Goodman of NYU and Elyse Pineau of Southern Illinois University/Carbondale. Tony Geist of the University of Washington gave the keynote talk. The symposium was co-sponsored by the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center (NYU), the Consulate General of Spain in New York, and the Division of Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Washington.

The Juan Carlos Center is also presenting a series of Spanish films dealing with children of the civil war on Thursday nights. ▀

half and left me with a twin of myself. Not a shadow, or a double, or an alter; nothing so dramatic as that. Just an image of myself, like a 'palimpsest-self,' looking forward and back, over my own shoulder through time.

This capacity for doubling in space and time that trauma bestows on the body, that trauma hotwires into the body, becomes over time as natural as breathing. I have come to believe that this is both the cost and the gift of surviving. What trauma creates, when it creates, is the ability to slip the bonds of the singular, naturalized body and inhabit an alternate space, a liminal space where 'real' and 'imagined' get *curdled*, where time folds in on itself and the electrified body tells a tale of its own. This is the ground of self-constitution writ large, the ground so easily obscured in the nonchalance of daily living, of living at a privileged distance from trauma. But *life after lightning is never nonchalant*. In the wake of mortal trauma comes awareness that *if mortality is the ground of being human, then survival is an art with high stakes*. What trauma illuminates—like a bolt of epistemic lightning—is that the agency one has over life, sometimes the only agency one can wrest from one's life, is the continuous, careful, artful construction of a self who lives on.

I know this from experience. But I know it also from a disciplinary perspective and a professional life spent attending to the artfulness of autobiographical memory. As a teacher and an artist, I double my body daily in order to imaginatively inhabit a character's or a student's perspective. I attend to life stories told in the blood and the bones of articulate bodies and I write my own tales in and around others' in poems and public performance. In my discipline, we call this "generative autobiographical performance;" it describes a poetic, intertextual history woven from the places where lives correspond. This "narrative reciprocity," if you will, gives homage and testament both; it is

a way of attending to another's life story that cannot be achieved from a distance. For me, it was the only response I could ethically make when I encountered, one day, a group of small children lined up on the wall, each with a story to tell.

And so that is why I have taken such a long and circuitous route toward the object of our collective attention this evening: this story by Miguel Ercano Garcia, age 12, a child of war whose world was struck by lightning, but who lived to draw the tale. I wanted you to know what generates my response, what roots and directs my attention—person and profession both—on an exhibit of drawings by traumatized children from another space and time whose art may be all that survives of their bodies.

A Performative Reading

Standing stark and isolated on a barren cliff, *this tree* in the drawing by Miguel Ercano Garcia, age 12, bears witness to a drama of human brutality that is eerily archetypal in its familiarity. I have seen this image before. We all have seen or heard this image before in the gruesome folklore that accompanies every war: a captive man watches as a soldier on horseback charges down a woman flinging herself from the edge of a cliff. And while this is just one out of a hundred other drawings in the exhibit, just one of 600 other drawings by children in the collection of wartime art, this is the drawing that called me by name. This is the one that haunted me, that haunts me still, the one I've asked you to witness for some time now as a backdrop while I attended to other stories.

See how easy it is to look without attending? To look intermittently? Do you see how easy it is to let your eyes sweep across an image of a man caught, and a soldier charging, and a woman leaping—just sweep left to right and assume you have *seen* it? And having grasped the drawing with

a glance, do you see how easy it is to look away, as if in the presence of such a tale, *such a tale*, you should be free to attend to other things? I have asked you to witness this drawing without reference for a long time now, because I wanted to underscore how easily such a story can fade into the background, how a story can become so folkloric and familiar that it ceases to hold your attention at all. Because that too is the nature of trauma if you witness it from a distance. A distance not unlike that which separates us from *this*. Just enough of a safe distance to afford us the privilege of attending or not. As the spirit moves.

The first time I encountered this drawing I was spending several hours by myself in the gallery. I needed some extended private time to get acquainted with the exhibit overall, you know, to just get the feel of the whole and the ways it might speak to me. We're all familiar with the drill, I'm sure; there's a set museum procedure for engaging art framed on a wall. One walks in linear fashion, left to right, one frame to another, constructing a story about of how each picture relates or how they evolve, lingering, perhaps, for a moment before moving along, moving down the line. The reading guides that frame this particular exhibit exemplify for me, this serial engagement. Begin with images of "Before" they counsel on brochure and poster, then move on to "Displacement," "War," "Life in the Colonies" and "Peace"—that ubiquitously uplifting finale that I suppose "art on exhibit" is supposed to conjure for you, that the reading guides on the wall recommend for you. But even as I moved from picture to picture, one after another down the walls in the order instructed, this drawing by Miguel Ercano Garcia, age 12, followed me like a shadow, like a double, like a ghost staring after me, calling out to me, just over my shoulder.

And so I did what I do in my classroom and rehearsal hall when I need to really focus on what is play-

ing out before me. I hunkered down there on the floor in the middle of that empty gallery and I gave this drawing my full attention.

And instantly, I find myself cast into the heart of this drama from the very location, the precise geographical vantage point of the invisible witness. Crouched in the low right hand corner, just outside of the picture's frame, Miguel Ercano Garcia and I stare up . . . and up. . . and up. . . so impossibly high up the face of a cliff where a soldier charges and a woman makes her leap. From this vantage point, the story unfolds chronologically, but right to left, against the grain of the usual read as if the passage of time were at war with itself in the drawing. A faceless man is caught and bound to a tree by a rope? a whip? Too small to see clearly. The foot soldier who has bound him is bent double by the effort, his body caught somewhere between reaching out and pulling back, holding taut against his captive's struggle. In the center of the drawing, a soldier on horseback—a Stormtrooper with insignia like crossed lightning—charges down on a woman poised at the cliff's edge. Two arms lifted, reaching out and beyond the edge of the cliff, the woman has just left the earth in a leap of faith, I imagine, that crashing down on the rocks is a better fate than remaining to weather the approaching storm. In the low left hand corner of the drawing, just on the horizon of sea and sky, the sun sits—setting or rising I cannot say. Nor need to, I think, for "time" seems a paradox this drawing arrests in its 'freeze-frame' of charging and leaping.

Sitting here, gazing intently up at the drawing, it is easy for me to imagine what my students might say, or some colleagues might say: "Did that really happen? Could a child really see from the shore up a cliff to a tree in the background? Do you think he got caught? Who told him to draw this? And is this a *true story*?" And I know that these are legitimate questions, but as they are not the questions

staring me in the face right now as I sit and gaze upward through a child's eyes, I cannot fathom why they ask them. Why is a story *outside* of the story the one they are drawn to, the one they can see? Why are they so quick on their feet when this is a time for sitting still, a time for looking and listening? But as I am a teacher accustomed to the literalism of students, and as I am an academic accustomed to the cynicism of colleagues, and as I am an artist accustomed to seeing differently, and as I am a performer trained to look through another's eyes, and as I am a child who has seen what others dare not face. . . I like to I imagine that I would swallow my impatience and simply remind them that, in the absence of Miguel Ercano Garcia, age 12, all we have is his story. All that we have is an invitation to look and to listen to the story he has drawn. And sometimes, when you're invited to a story, it can be wise to just take a leap of faith and see where it leads you.

And so then I imagine that is exactly what we do.

The remainder of my presentation was improvised around "reading" the drawing by performing my body's engagement with it. Replicating the poses and positions of each figure, I would think aloud about my felt sense of a man caught or a soldier charging or a woman leaping. I've tried to write up, as best as I can, both the method and its running commentary.

"Can you see this man by the tree?" I might ask, bending double and reaching out with one arm like a whip, reaching out as if armed with a whip that can bind a man to a tree. Can you see, can you feel the force that it takes to snake out a whip and encircle a body? Can you see, can you feel how taut a rope need be to hold a man motionless? Can you feel, do you see the price of such binding? The way that it bends a body double, how it bears down with a weight that can cripple? Attend to this. Attend to the way roping and whipping and binding can bend a body double, can

cripple the binder until one wonders if a body could ever again stand upright, could ever recover, could ever be other than one who has thrown his weight to bind up another.

Do you see this man bound to a tree? This man faceless, without motion, volition to do other than stand still and witness. This man is forced to witness the motion of others: the one who is binding, the one who is charging, the one who is leaping. An enigma, this man with no face, with no active place in the drama unfolding, this everyman tied to a tree while time rushes by on the pounding of hoofs.

And the Stormtrooper, so straight and controlled, mounted there on his charger. Yet the stiff, upright body seems to rein in the horse even as they rush toward the edge where a woman is choosing her death with defiance. The soldier's double, sketched as a faint, diminutive palimpsest of himself, appears just ahead of the main figure, replicated in intricate and accurate detail down to the reins and insignia. And this is no mistake by the artist. This drawing is too careful, too meticulous to feature an error, as if in corrective afterthought, the artist had simply drawn the figure over and neglected to cover his tracks. I like to imagine that Manuel Ercano Garcia was careful and meticulous when he erased and retraced his antagonist. I like to imagine that this young boy, age 12, was using his drawing to steal back time, to reach out and rein in the inevitable, to arrest the charge of death and stop a horse dead in its tracks. And I know that this child understands, in some way I can only imagine, that death can diminish, that death makes us hollow when we are the charger, when we are death's harbinger, charging a woman to leap from a cliff. But what I imagine can wait, for there is more of this story to tell, and it begs my attention.

Stepping forward, I arrive at the heart of the drawing, face to face with

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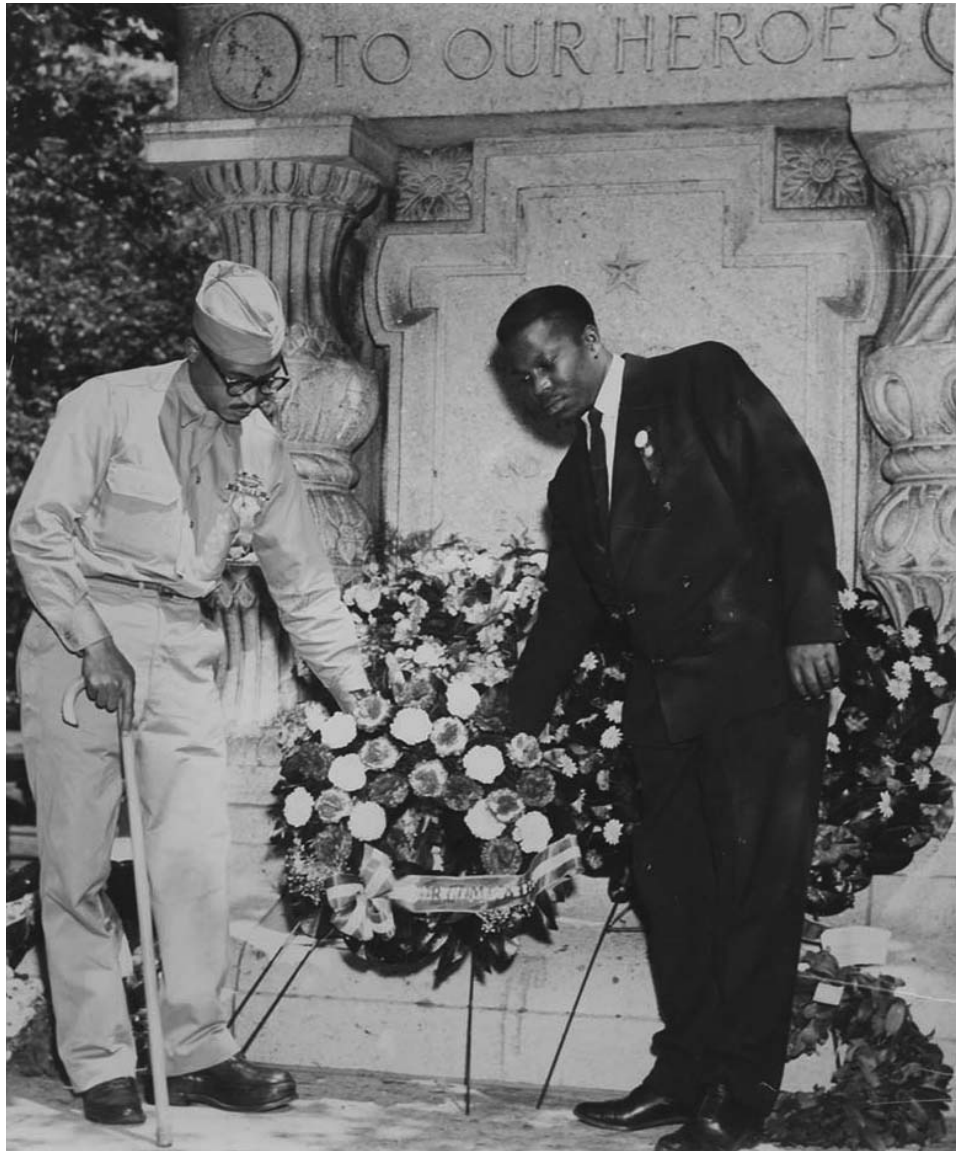
Tamiment Library Acquires Bunny Rucker Papers

By Michael Nash

James Bernard (Bunny) Rucker (1912 – 1992) was one of the eighty-three known African American volunteers who fought with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War. In December 1936, Rucker sailed for Spain via France. Arriving in Paris, he was assigned to the American sector of the Primer Regimiento de Tren, the front-line transport regiment attached to the Spanish Republican Fifth Army. During the long siege of Madrid, he transported supplies from behind the Fascist lines into the city, often driving at night without lights, unable to use any of the major roads because of the continuous Fascist bombing.

In Spain, Bunny met Langston Hughes, who was there as a journalist-observer for the African American press. Bunny frequently drove Hughes through the Fascist lines during the siege of Madrid. They developed a friendship and corresponded for many years after the war. Some of these letters are included in the collection along with typescripts of three poems: "Airplane Factory," "Too Bad not True," "Explain it Please," and an essay, "Simple in the United Nations."

Bunny left Spain when the International Brigades were withdrawn, by crossing the Pyrenees into France. In May 1942 he was inducted into the United States Army. Like many Lincoln Brigade veterans he was discriminated against because of his Spanish Civil War record. He was initially assigned to a garbage pick-up detail of black soldiers in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Even though he passed the test for Officers Candidate School, Rucker was denied admission. Finally, in 1944 he volunteered to go overseas and was sent to Italy with the 92nd Infantry Division where he was assigned to a Medical Division. He subsequently volunteered for combat service and saw action in the Rome-



James Rucker (left), with the President of the United Negro and Allied Veterans, laying a wreath at the Eternal Light in New York City, Decoration Day 1947.

Arno, Northern Apennines, and Po Valley campaigns. Rucker was wounded in action in April 1945 and hospitalized until August 1947. He received the bronze and silver stars as well as three battlefield citations.

Following his release from the hospital with 100% disability, Rucker remained involved in left-wing politics. He was active in Henry Wallace's 1948 campaign for President. The next year he ran for New York City Council on the American Labor Party

ticket headed by the legendary Congressman Vito Marcantonio.

In 1952 Rucker enrolled in Columbia University where he received a BA and a Masters degree in Library Service. Upon graduation he tried to get a job as a librarian in New York City, but refused to sign the loyalty oath that was required for public employment. He then moved to East Orange, New Jersey with his family where he served as principal librarian

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New Website History of African Americans in Spain

By Fraser Ottanelli

The story of African American volunteers in the Spanish Civil War is now on the World Wide Web as part of ALBA's website www.alba-valb.org.

As part of its ongoing web-based educational series "For Your Liberty and Ours," ALBA has just released a new multimedia educational tool on African Americans in the Spanish Civil War.

Co-authored by William Katz, Fraser Ottanelli, and Chris Brooks, "African Americans in the Spanish Civil War" traces the experience of this group of US volunteers, from their involvement in the political and social struggles of the 1920s and early 1930s to their decision to pursue their struggle against exploitation and racism on the battlefields in Spain. A final section traces their continued activism through the 1990s.

Of particular interest to educators and students are the short biographies (most of them with accompanying photographs) of every African



The History of African Americans in Spain:

<http://www.alba-valb.org/curriculum/index.php?module=2>.

Walter Garland's FBI file:

www.alba-valb.org/curriculum/index.php?module=2&page=P004.

See you on the World Wide Web!

American volunteer, the list of suggested readings for additional research, and the special section "Ask the Experts" linked to hundred of

scholars of the Spanish Civil War. In addition, "African Americans in the Spanish Civil War" makes available for the first time a complete (and downloadable) copy of Walter Garland's FBI file: www.alba-valb.org/curriculum/index.php?module=2&page=P004.

This remarkable resource has been made possible through a generous grant from Alfred Knobler and the Estate of Isabel Johnson Hiss. ■

Fraser Ottanelli is chief editor of the website series "For Your Liberty and Ours."

Rucker Papers

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for the City of East Orange for more than twenty years. During this period Rucker was active in the civil rights movement and worked hard for progressive social change.

The Bunny Rucker correspondence, which is now part of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, is primarily comprised of letters written to his wife Helen during World War II and in the years between 1945 and 1947 when he was in veteran's hospitals in Halloran, Virginia and Staten Island, N.Y. These letters chronicle Rucker's three years of military service and describe his experiences serving in a segregated army.

Bunny often acted as a mentor to

young African American soldiers from the rural south. He helped them write letters home and tried to act as a buffer between them and the white southern officers under whom they served. In his letters home, Rucker expresses his political idealism, commitment to fighting fascism, and to advancing the struggle for civil rights and radical political change. He often told the young African Americans in his unit that they "could never win freedom and democratic rights as long as Fascist thinking prevailed." ■

Michael Nash is Director of New York University's Tamiment Library.



"Red Bessie" Takes the Stage

By Daniel Czitrom

Among the offerings at the 2003 Edinburgh Fringe Festival last summer was "Red Bessie," a new play with music inspired by the letters, lives, and experiences of Joe and Leo Gordon, two well-known members of the Lincoln Brigade. "Red Bessie" ran for 25 performances in August, receiving glowing reviews from critics and enthusiastic responses from audiences. Writing in the *Times Literary Supplement* (London), Keith Miller described "Red Bessie" as "clear-headed and humane, not unaware of the hurt that political idealism can cause, and more fun than might be expected of such a high-minded project." Ron Nissin, in the London magazine *Three Weeks*, hailed it as "extremely appealing...A brilliantly illuminating, frequently hilarious political show." And Neil Ingram in the *Edinburgh Guide* called the play "a telling story of how youthful idealism moves toward mature disillusionment. But it is also a view of what ordinary people can sometimes do if they stand together, whatever their government may think."

Joe and Leo Gordon (nee Mendelowitz) grew up on the rough streets of Williamsburg, Brooklyn and like so many others who volunteered to defend the Spanish Republic, they saw their fight with fascism abroad as directly linked to their radical activism at home. Both Joe and Leo were veterans of picket line confrontations, unemployment demonstrations, and organizing drives against Jim Crow in Depression-era America, and both were active members of the Communist Party. In December 1936 Joe Gordon set sail from New York with the first group of volunteers to make the arduous journey to Spain. He was wounded at Jarama, losing an eye, and suffered a leg wound in the Brunete offensive before being repatriated home. Leo Gordon arrived in Spain in the summer of 1937, becoming a lieutenant in command of a

machine company. After seeing heavy action at Fuentes de Ebro and at Teruel (where he was wounded in the face by shrapnel splinters), Leo Gordon was killed in March 1938 while helping to cover the evacuation of the Mac-Pap battalion from Azuara. His brother Joe returned to Spain yet again in a vain attempt to find him. Joe Gordon himself perished in 1942 when, working as a merchant seaman in the Murmansk run, his ship was torpedoed in the North Atlantic.

Some years ago my aunt Gussie Moskowitz gave me a collection of let-

ters that her cousins Joe and Leo had written to her during the 1930s. The letters document their fascinating odyssey, including the teen-age brothers' cross-country travels, stints in the Civilian Conservation Corps, and accounts of the CP-led organizing drive among cannery workers in California. The letters written from Spain were particularly interesting to me for the picture they gave of both the political and military conflict in Spain, and the more private struggles accompanying them. Leo's decision to

Continued on page 13

In Brief

Abe Osheroff Tops the News

"I've been a social activist from the age of 15 without interruption," Abe Osheroff told reporter Gregory Roberts of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* in a front-page story about the lifetime activist that ran on January 13, 2004 in the city's largest circulation newspaper. Roberts described the Spanish Civil War vet speaking "in a still-vigorous baritone tinged with the accents of his native New York." As Osheroff put it, "If you went to Mississippi in 1964, you'd find Abe Osheroff working there. If you went to Nicaragua in 1985, you'd find me building a village there...As my mother would say, if there's trouble, that's where he'll be."

For the full article, visit the web site address:
http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/156359_osheroff13.html

Jarama Museum Opens

A new museum dedicated to preserving the history of the battle of Jarama opened on February 14 in Morata de Tajuña, a small town very close to Madrid. Exhibits include battlefield remains: maps, texts, photos, audio, and video. The museum is in Mesón del Cid, inside the village.

Reporting the Spanish Civil War

"We knew, we just knew," says Martha Gellhorn in the documentary film *Reporting America at War*, "that Spain was the place to stop fascism." With vivid footage of the Spanish Civil War, including clips from the ALBA collection, filmmakers Amanda Pollak and Stephen Ives carefully integrated stories of Spain into the multipart documentary that was broadcast on many public television stations last November. The four-hour video, written by Michelle Ferrari, tells the story of American war reporting from the Spanish American War through the Persian Gulf. Gellhorn's appearance is particularly moving, including her unsentimental epitaph for the Republican cause: "All that bravery and suffering for nothing."

The video may be ordered from Insignia Films, 41 Bond Street, #400, New York, NY 10012; 212-979-5350.

SCW Film Wins Prize

The Spanish Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has given this year's Best Cinematography award to *Soldados de Salamina* (*Soldiers of Salamina*), a film about the Spanish Civil War.

leave his pregnant wife to go to Spain (she later had an abortion) embodied the sometimes tragic tensions between radical political commitment and the demands of family life. (I published these letters, with an introduction, as "Volunteers For Liberty,"

Massachusetts Review, Autumn 1984).

The idea of using these letters as a starting point for writing a play came from Jack Gilhooley, an alum of the New Dramatists in New York and a widely produced playwright based in Sarasota, Florida. Jack and I had collaborated previously on an historical drama centered on the disastrous Triangle Shirtwaist fire of 1911 ("Big Tim and Fanny"), and we teamed up for "Red Bessie," a two-character, two-act play with songs. Jack invented the lead character of Bessie Markowitz, a radical folk singer with two cousins in the Lincoln Brigade. Act One is set in 1938 at an event that is both a fundraiser for the Lincolns and a memorial for her cousin Leo, recently killed in action. Bessie reads letters from Leo, describes how she and her cousins became radicals, and alternately hectors her audience and inspires them with songs. The other character is Martin Franklin, Bessie's brand new guitarist, and her temperamental opposite. Martin is a Yale grad, a soft-spoken WASP, and a pacifist, in stark contrast to Bessie, a brash, confident, and dedicated Communist, rooted in Jewish working class experience. The first act brings Bessie and Martin together for the first time; its key dramatic subtext is that Leo has left his pregnant wife to go to Spain.

Act Two takes place fifteen years later, in 1953, on the eve of the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Bessie and Martin are now married and have kids. They're still folksingers ("The Aragons"), and they've been fighting the good fight and rallying the troops for years. Returning from a final, fruitless demonstration demanding clemency for the Rosenbergs, they now confront a very different political reality. Fifteen years earlier they were much more optimistic and felt they had a place in American political life. Now, anti-communism and political repression define the American scene.



Lauren Wood and John Barron. Photo by Daniel Czitrom.

Act Two explores what happens to political idealism as the two struggle both with blacklisting and the revelation of atrocities in the Soviet Union under Stalin. The feeling is now more wistful and elegaic, but the wit and the singing continue as well.

"Red Bessie" includes performances of a dozen songs. Some of these are well-known period pieces, such as "Jarama Valley," "Workingfolk Unite," and "Hallelujah, I'm a Red" (nee Bum). But original songs written for the play (words by Jack Gilhooley/music by Preston Boyd) inject the production with energy, enthusiasm, and humor.

Act One opens with the foot-stomping "Hands Off Spain, Señor Franco," and we are back in 1938:

From Stockholm, Cracow, Dallas
and from the Zuyder Zee

The International forces will fight
for liberty

So...

Hands off Spain, Adolph Hitler
Deutschland has no need for war
Why prostitute your own nation?
You've got Eva Braun as a whore!

In Act Two, "The McCarthy Rag" offers a spirited, Tom Lehrer-like take on Senator Joe:

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the defining trauma of the story: a woman flings herself from a cliff while a boy watches, a boy no older than 12, who now must bear witness. Small wonder I pause there, poised at this edge of the drawing. Have I courage to see what he sees? to bear what he bears? For I sense that to take on her body is to *take it on faith* that this drawing is not about death. This story is not documentary, but art; and art means survival when the stakes are this high. And so I step up. I step into her body and raise up my arms; I reach out and away, and I lift. . . And I experience an epiphany that I could not foresee from a distance, because it cannot be grasped in abstraction. With arms raised and reaching, body arched and uplifted, I *feel* death fall away in the moment before gravity hits. From flinging to flying, my body is reconfigured—it's as simple as that—and the woman and I reach up and away until our bodies break *free* against the clear sky.

This is the moment the child has chosen.

This is the heartbeat of time he has captured.

This is the story he tells to live on, the story he lives on for the rest of his life.

As he is our witness, he is the one who must story us all.

And story he does, this 12 year old artist. Falling faint and ghostly down the face of the cliff, three palimpsest women juxtapose the flyer-in-flight. In the generative space between real and imagined, this child, Miguel Ercano Garcia, has drawn three shadows: one is bent double from the weight of her body descending; the second grown larger, her face parallel to the rocks that await her; the third has turned outward. With commanding equanimity, this face—which is the single largest image in the drawing—looks out at the witness: the boy who is watching. The artist who's drawing. This body performing. The reader attending. Together we witness—across time and

space—an image of death and defiance held in animating equipoise, and seen through the prescient art of a child who lived on.

I would like to imagine that Miguel grew to a ripe old age, that he saw peace return to his homeland and the ghosts of this war ceased to haunt him. I would like to believe that ever after, when Miguel saw a man bent double with effort, or a mounted horseman on a chessboard, or a cliff diver raising his arms, or a tree on a barren hill, or the spray of water against rock, or the sun sitting on sea—I would like to believe that when these palimpsests of memory came haunting (and I know that they did, ever after), that Miguel Ercano Garcia could raise up his arms and remember to fly while he fell. And this thought gives me comfort. This thought gives

Dispatch

Continued from page 5

fering and the loss of loved ones. And they are still in this situation precisely because the Right that is in power, the fascists of today, still refuse to formally condemn the tragedy of the Civil War and as a consequence, to recognize the others, the Republicans.

Concerning the conspicuous absence of the Government in this Republican “mothball” ceremony, one of the Left’s most distinguished journalists, Eduardo Haro Tecglen, wrote the following: “Franco discarded pieces of the murderous and ultra-religious Right on his long march, accepting new words, bikinis, consumerism. Aznar’s road, though, seems to run in the opposite direction. His starting point was a grudging attempt at democracy, and he has been moving to the right ever since.”

Another Spanish writer who died recently, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, left a posthumous essay titled *Aznaridad* (La Aznaridad). In it he argues that while Francoism could not survive without Franco, Aznaridad—the regime

me courage to witness, in turn, to turn your attention on a world where children draw pictures like this, *such pictures as this*, in the aftermath of wars that strike them. I would hope that when strangers meet Miguel—Miguel and the 600 others whose drawings survive—I hope they are struck just as I was by the death-defying leaps of these artful memories. Perhaps they’ll attend if they know how to look, if they can look through the eyes of a child who no longer lives on, and whose art is all that remains. And I would like to imagine that I have helped you to do just that. ■

Elyse Pineau is a member of the Department of Speech Communication at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

of the new Right governing Spain today—is a political style that is perfectly transferable to new leaders. The proof is in the numbers: Aznar’s anointed successor, Mariano Rajoy, has higher ratings in the polls than even José María Aznar himself. Not because he is more charismatic. It is simply because he promises continuity.

From this perspective alone we can understand the moving cheers of the old republicans who came to the homage that all the political parties, except the one in power, offered them in congress. With tears in their eyes, their voices breaking with emotion, they shouted with clenched fists held high: “We shall forgive; we shall never forget.” ■

(Translated by Tony Geist)

Miguel Ángel Nieto is one of Spain’s leading investigative journalists.

Red Bessie

Continued from page 13

Got nothin 'gainst coloreds an'
Jewboys an' such

But ask if I like 'em, well not very
much.

But in this great country folks can
disagree

'Cept who in his right mind
would side against me?

So let's raise our voices for
Senator Joe

And those who object, they know
where they can go.

Wellll, I'm doin' The McCarthy,
doin' The McCarthy, 'doin The
McCarthy Rag.

Before we took the show to
Edinburgh, Jack Gilhooley cast two
Sarasotan actors/singers, the husband
and wife team Lauren Wood and John
Barron, both known in Florida for
their country-folk group, Not From
Texas. Lauren and John performed
"Red Bessie" in several venues around
Florida as well as at the Victory
Gardens Theater in Chicago. We then
landed some crucial financial support
from the Puffin Foundation and
Mount Holyoke College and headed
for Scotland.

Our small troupe—Jack, Lauren,
John, stage manager Naomi Miller,
and myself—arrived in late July utterly
unprepared for the enormity of the
Edinburgh Fringe, an offshoot of the
larger Edinburgh International Arts
Festival. There were hundreds of pro-
ductions going on, many of which had
their own web sites and promotional
machinery. We had only ourselves,
our play, and our minimal set, which
included blown up reproductions
from the ALBA Spanish Civil War
poster collection. "Red Bessie" was
staged in the aptly named Caves
Theater, a 150- seat house originally
built over 300 years ago as an artisan
workshop, and later used as a
morgue. The biggest problem we
had—the biggest problem everyone
had at the Fringe—was attracting
audiences amidst the sea of shows.
But the people who found us were
generally enthusiastic and responded
emotionally to the songs, humor, and

bittersweet political themes in the
show.

For me, the most remarkable
moment came at the opening perfor-
mance with the arrival of James
Maley, a 95-year-old British Brigade
veteran from Glasgow. Maley had
been a friend of Alex McDade, the

alternative way to bring the past alive,
to find historical truths, and to help us
understand the often painful choices
people face at a particular time and
place. I like to think that Joe and Leo
Gordon would have appreciated this
project. On Thanksgiving Day, 1938,
as they awaited their trip home in the



James Maley, 95-year-old British Brigade veteran from Glasgow, with cast members Lauren Wood and John Barron, at the Edinburgh Fringe opening of "Red Bessie." Photo by Daniel Czitrom.

Scottish volunteer who had written
the words to "Jarama Valley" just
before his death. Clear eyed, spry, and
eager to talk about contemporary poli-
tics, Maley charmed and inspired us
all—despite the fact that his thick
Glaswegian accent made it tough for
even the Scots to follow him. We
introduced him after the show to a
standing ovation.

Jack Gilhooley and I would of
course love to mount a production of
"Red Bessie" in the US, and we are
currently exploring several possibili-
ties. Historical drama offers an

tiny Catalan town of Ripoll, the
Lincolns celebrated by putting on a
six-scene play dramatizing everything
from battle scenes to their eagerly
anticipated homecoming. The produc-
er was Joe Gordon. We hope we'll get
the chance to entertain, provoke, and
move American audiences with "Red
Bessie" in the near future. ▀

Daniel Czitrom, co-author of "Red Bessie"
and former chair of the ALBA Board of
Governors, teaches American history at
Mount Holyoke College.



Chicago

Continued from page 4

Puffin Foundation, CFLB patrons and individuals. The funds covered production as well as the cost of employing youth and artistic personnel for a three-month period in which time they created a script, rehearsed, and presented four performances at several venues.

What resulted is a powerful program that inspires young audiences and will serve as a prototype for educators and cultural arts organizations wishing to teach the Spanish Civil War and its effect in an innovative and pertinent way. ■

Jamie O'Reilly became associated with ALBA in 1996, while co-creating and performing "Pasiones: Songs of the Spanish Civil War," an original folk cabaret and CD, directed by ALBA's Peter Glazer. She acts as a consultant and volunteer with CFLB in addition to being the "play/dead" musical director.

Hindsight

We should have known
when Ferdinand was shot;
back there, beyond the
Pyrenees and Alps,
where the soldiers speak Catalan
and the French are wishy-washy.

We should have known
when Marx called us to arms,
when Europe was the center of the
world
and nomads rallied for
anarchy...

We should have thought of it then

(We might have known
Generalissimo, that your only goal
wasn't catholic
at all, and that your face
would paste the streets
where children died!)

We might have known
but for that last little
cowardice that let
you lead your people
into purgatory!

We might have known, but you'd
have died,

and your church would have sided
with truth.

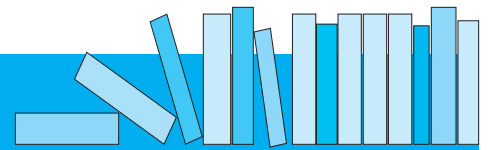
But we know now,
after the smoke has cleared
and your dusty corpse
rests beside your laws,
that you were never meant
to reap the good of those you killed.

Oh, we should be proud of what we
know!

Yes. Now we know,
The decades pass, and we
still ask ourselves if
men are good at heart,
since we kill for sport and claim it's
best for all.

Yes. We know now
to question whether it's
right enough to live
for strength alone; and
we can breathe in earnest
knowing that our paths aren't set
to relive old myths that end in death.

by David Harewood,
Columbia College Theater Student
from the script for "Play/Dead,
Jugar/Muerte"



Forgetting Memory

Paloma Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia: The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy*. Trans. by Mark Oakley. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002.

By Shirley Mangini

In *Memory and Amnesia*, Paloma Aguilar describes how the collective memory of the Second Spanish Republic and the civil war mediated the transition to democracy after the death of Franco. Aguilar points out—as she outlines various theories of memory—the many ways in which memory can be manipulated and reshaped to conform to political exigencies and how time changes the perception of historical events. Her goal is to demonstrate that the “official” memory propagated by the Franco regime about the causes of war motivated the actors in the transition to reach consensus and therefore, in their minds, avoid another war. Under Franco, the author points out, the dictatorship never acknowledged any guilt for having overthrown a democratically-elected government, but rather sought to legitimize its role by characterizing the war as a necessary act that was meant to “save” Spain from the “reds” and from an eventual Soviet takeover.

Aguilar demonstrates how Franco achieved the consolidation of this “historical memory” through the creation of the No-Do, the documentaries that were required to be shown at the cinema, which highlighted the “heroism” of the Nationalists and of Franco. Written history of the period, especially by Ricardo de la Cierva, also aided in the creation of an official history, as did the many commemorative events celebrating victory and “peace.”

Censorship of the press was undoubtedly the most effective method for creating the Franco myth.

The war had been a “heroic” feat, and this myth was effective in maintaining the Manichean dichotomy of the victors as the good and the vanquished as evil since, in addition to saving Spain from the reds, the war had been a crusade sanctioned by the Catholic church and God. All this provided the justification for the lack of any reconciliation for the cruel and constant punishment of those who fought against Franco, and for the justification of aiding only the Nationalist war wounded. Aguilar also discusses at length the significance of the Valley of the Fallen, the monstrous monument to those who died on the Nationalist side that was constructed by slave labor recruited from Franco’s prisons.

Only very late in the regime did the civil war emerge in the collective memory as a tragedy that could have been avoided, Aguilar points out. Franco reacted adversely to any attempt to prove that Spain’s civil war had been anything but necessary since the memory of his heroic war was all that kept his dictatorship legitimate, according to Aguilar. But by the 1950s there was a shift in the memory of the war, and the official story of the “heroic” war was headed for the bin of amnesia. The turning point was the “Munich conspiracy,” when in 1962 several moderates met with European leaders to discuss how to lead Spain to democracy—and erase the memory of the civil war—in order to be embraced by the European community. The talk of *aperturismo* (the opening up) became more frequent, especially with the appointment of Fraga Iribarne as Minister of Information and Tourism

in 1962, which eased the strict censorship of the press and led the way for a new myth about the war: it had been “collective insanity” and all Spaniards were guilty.

Aguilar’s final chapter demonstrates how consensus was reached during the transition because of the mythified memory of what had happened in the 1930s: the Republic had failed because it was flawed and had caused deep fissures among the various constituencies, causing the war. By comparing the transition to the Republic, all parties involved wished to tread carefully to avoid another war. Aguilar shows how King Juan Carlos contributed to the process as a mediator, and how the press—she uses the conservative daily *ABC* and the liberal *El País* to prove her point—cautiously avoided the confrontation that ensued in the media during the Republic. She also discusses the effects of the legitimizing of the socialist party (PSOE) and the communists (PC), and how the socialists quickly began moving toward a centrist position.

In conclusion, Aguilar’s skillful argument on the collective memory of the civil war proves that repression and, I would add, both physical and cultural starvation, can manipulate an entire nation into forgetting history and believing what has been purposefully designed for their consumption. In the case of the transition to democracy, there was a happy ending for most, but especially for the Francoists who were never obliged to ask for forgiveness for crimes committed against those who had defended the Republic. ■

Shirley Mangini is a professor of Spanish at California State University, Long Beach, and author of *Memories of Resistance: Women’s Voices from the Spanish Civil War* (Yale, 1995).



Esther Blanc

By Peter Carroll

SCW Nurse Esther Blanc, Storyteller

victory in a few weeks. As Franco launched the attack on Madrid, the citizen militia fought back, and the world held its breath. "Spain was all everyone talked about," Esther recalled.

In San Francisco, a desperately ill woman was wheeled unconscious into Esther's ward. The woman remained asleep in a fever for a full day, then awoke abruptly.

"Has Madrid fallen?" she asked.

"No," Esther replied.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

The woman fell asleep for another day.

Such drama inspired Esther to act. At the beginning of 1937 she contacted a group called Medical Aid for Spanish Democracy in

San Francisco and started the screening process to become a volunteer nurse in Spain. She had to pass a physical examination, psychological tests, and a personal interview to rule out the possibility, as Esther once put it, that she was an "adventuress." By the end of April, she had resigned from her job and headed for New York to join a contingent of medical personnel. "The boys politicized me," she later told an interviewer, referring to the atmosphere in her ward. "They were fighting to make things better and they had a philosophy to back them up. That made sense to me."

After the Spanish war, Esther resumed her nursing career and served as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps during World War II. She also continued her education, obtaining a Ph.D. in the history of medicine, a subject that she taught at the University of California in San Francisco until her retirement in 1984.

A natural storyteller, Esther wrote two charming children's books. The first, *Berchick*, won the Sydney Taylor Award from the Association of Jewish Libraries in 1990 as well as the Bay Area's BABRA Book Award. The second, *Long Johns for a Small Chicken*, has just been published posthumously with the help of Esther's sister Godeane Eagle.

Books by Esther Silverstein Blanc

***Wars I Have Seen* (1992)**

***Berchick* (1989)**

Long Johns for a Small

***Chicken* (2003) with**

Godeane Eagle

Volcano Press

PO Box 270

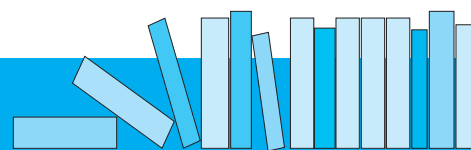
Volcano, CA 95689

Esther Silverstein was working as a nurse for the US Public Health Service's Marine Hospital in San Francisco when she volunteered for service in Spain. Most of her patients were sailors with a strong working class identity and an awareness of the fascist threat to peace. As four columns of rebel soldiers marched from southern Spain toward Madrid in the fall of 1936, the sailors in Esther's ward taped a map to the wall and inserted pins each day to follow the course of the impending battle for Spain's capital city.

Esther tells the story in *Wars I Have Seen*, a moving collection of autobiographical stories and a three-act play. By November 1936, the rebel generals were predicting that a "fifth column" would arise inside Madrid—traitors to the Republic—who would support the insurrection and bring

Both books draw on Esther's childhood experiences on the western prairie. Her parents were Jewish immigrants who moved to Wyoming to farm 160 acres of unbroken land and raised a family in a dry sod house. Esther was born in Goshen County in 1913. There she acquired the details for these two books about a loving Jewish mother who adopts and raises a stray colt (*Berchick*) and saves a featherless chicken by sewing a little cotton outfit (*Long Johns*).

These are warm, touching stories for young readers and their parents, and they give more than a hint of where Esther obtained those principled, humanitarian values that led her into nursing, education, and the Spanish Civil War. ■



Record of the XV Brigade

The Book of the XVth Brigade: Records of British, American, Canadian and Irish Volunteers in Spain, 1936-1938. Warren and Pell Publishing, 2003. Reprint of the 1975 reprint by Frank Graham.

By Robert Coale

The Book of the XVth Brigade appeared in Madrid in February of 1938, edited by Frank Ryan, with assistance from Dave Doran and John Tisa. This publication by the Commissariat of War, part of a series on different brigades, documents the experiences of English speaking volunteers for readers around the globe. Not intended as an official history, its objective was to share the experiences

in Spain with a wide audience and garner popular support for the war effort. It is composed of first hand accounts of battles from Jarama to Fuentes de Ebro, vignettes of numerous comrades and services topped off with period maps and photographs.

Some sixty years later, both the strengths and weaknesses of a text designed for propaganda purposes stand out. For obvious reasons, the authors minimize difficulties and casualties; morale is high and there is little doubt as to final victory. On the other hand, the descriptions of services and personnel are vibrant; homages to fallen comrades are heartfelt. Printed as the Internationals were engaged at Teruel, it offers an interest-

ing snapshot of the brigade at a precise period of time: just prior to the Great Retreats, long before the grueling Ebro and the final withdrawal were envisioned.

The present reprint is based on a 1975 edition by British veteran Frank Graham. The small publishing house of Warren and Pell should be congratulated on this initiative as the opportunity to acquire a book produced in Spain while the war was still raging is indeed rare. The publishers have just announced a second reprint, that of Britons in Spain, the 1939 history by Bill Rust. One hopes that these efforts will prove successful so that other, long out of print texts from the era can be reproduced.

Further information can be obtained and orders made directly through the website at: www.warrenandpellpublishing.co.uk. ■

Robert Coale teaches at the University of Paris.

Book Notes

Los protagonistas de la historia y los testigos de la vida (Una historia oral sobre la estancia de las Brigadas Internacionales en Madrigueras) by Caridad Serrano, Gráficas Albacete, 2003.

This newly published book contains a number of testimonies by people from the village of Madrigueras about their contact with International Brigade members stationed in the area during the war. The author's goal is to describe the cultural and social impact of the brigades on the village people. The book is a nostalgic tribute to both the town and to the Brigades members; it also pays homage to Harry Fisher, who visited Madrigueras with his family and established a warm relationship with townspeople before his death in 2003.

La Medicina en el Exilio Republicano (Spanish Exiles in the Medical Field), by Francisco Guerra, Madrid: Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, 2003.

Dr. Francisco Guerra was a Major in the Medical Corps during the civil war and later Head Physician at the Montuich Hospital in Barcelona. His book offers biographical sketches of those who were in the health professions in defense of the Spanish Republic. The book—the most exhaustive on this topic to date—also contains sketches of foreign doctors and medical aids who were part of the International Brigades and includes bibliographical sources.

Shirley Mangini

Letters

Continued from page 2

arrested and spent years in jail. Leandro spent 5 out of 12 years condemned to die, expecting each night to face a firing squad the next day. The two were reunited after being apart for all that time.

There was much more to our trip. I could mention the serene beauty of Marçà and the neighboring villages... and the Halloween atmosphere on All Saint's Day where people roasted chestnuts around a big bonfire, while children played into the evening... but I will close by saying simply that we were treated royally and overfed by our comrades the Spanish hosts in both Albacete and Marçà. We really wanted to stay on.

Clarence Kailin



Added to Memory's Roster



Saul Wellman (1913-2003)

Saul Wellman, a lifelong activist, died on December 10 in Ann Arbor following a stroke. He had celebrated his 90th birthday in August.

"I want things to change where the playing field is leveled, where equality emerges as a reality. . . where the horrible things about inequities are eliminated," said Wellman in a



1998 interview when asked to convey the philosophy that guided his 75 years of activism.

He began as a teen organizing truck drivers in New York during the Depression. He fought in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War and as a paratrooper in the Battle of the Bulge against Nazi Germany. Leader of the Communist Party in Michigan during the McCarthy period, he was the star defendant in the state's most famous political trial, and was incarcerated in Milan Prison. His conviction was overturned in 1957. After leaving the Communist Party the same year, he became a printer, a trade unionist and a mentor to many in the 1960s generation of activists. From then until his

death he had been "passing the torch" of commitment to a variety of socially involved people including students, feminists, and labor, peace and environmental activists.

Wellman joined the Young Communist League (YCL) when he was 16 and became a soap box orator at open air meetings. In 1930, he was part of a demonstration of 110,000 in New York's Union Square protesting the plight of the unemployed. As a result, he was expelled from Boys High School in Brooklyn, never to return to school.

Soon after, he became a truck driver and led a small group that organized hundreds of drivers, eventually quitting his job to become a full-time organizer for the Confectionary and Tobacco Jobbers Employees Union. In 1934, Wellman met Peggy Hobson, another YCL member and union organizer. They later married and were together 40 years until her death in 1974.

For Wellman, a totally dedicated revolutionary at 23, going to Spain "was the most natural thing in the world." Wellman's leadership in battle led him to becoming Political Commissar of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion until he was wounded and returned home.

During World War II, Wellman, by then thirty years old, was considered "over the hill," but he volunteered to be a parachutist and joined the 101st Airborne Division. He participated in the liberation of Holland and in the Battle of the Bulge. Wounded at Bastogne with shrapnel in his heart, Wellman escaped from the Germans and was hospitalized for six months and honorably discharged in 1945 with battle stars, a Purple Heart and special citations.

He went to Detroit in 1946 as the Communist Party Auto Commission Secretary. It was a period when the Party attacked Jim Crow laws and racist practices in Detroit. These activities were gradually overshadowed by the era's anti-communist hysteria, and

the Party sent over 2,000 of its leadership underground to protect them from arrest. In 1950, Wellman, then acting Party Chairman in Michigan, was among those who became "unavailable." In September 1952, Wellman was one of six Michigan communists arrested by the FBI and indicted under the Smith Act for conspiracy to teach and advocate the violent overthrow of the U.S. government. During the same period, Peggy was arrested and threatened with deportation. The trial that began in late October 1953 took four months, resulting in the convictions of all six defendants. Each spent about six months in jail. In 1957, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the Smith Act unconstitutional and the "Michigan Six" case was thrown out. Later a federal appeals court ordered that Wellman's full military pension rights be restored, and Peggy's deportation order was rescinded. Prosecutor William G. Hundley later publicly apologized to Wellman.

Soon afterward, Wellman resigned from the Communist party he joined the printers union and became an apprentice printer. By the late 1960s, Wellman's main preoccupation was with influencing many in the New Left through education and advice to its emerging leaders. Following his retirement as a printer he became a one-man link between generations, speaking in the United States, Canada, West Germany, and Italy. Young people mentored by Wellman went on to become leaders in unions, academia, and politics.

Wellman was honored at a 1979 testimonial dinner in Detroit, receiving resolutions in recognition of his lifelong contributions to Detroit and Michigan from the Detroit City council, and the Michigan Senate. In 1999, he was honored again by the Detroit City Council, receiving from Council President Maryann Mahaffey a resolution recognizing his lifelong contributions to working people and the city.

Continued on page 21

Added to Memory's Roster

In an interview shortly after he said that the "worst thing is passivity," people must "react to your problems today and to react to your problems today doesn't mean you have to carry a red banner and yell revolution. Just do something about it."

A documentary film about Wellman is in the final stages of production. He is survived by his children, David and Vickie. A memorial gathering will be held March 28 in Ann Arbor.

—Ron Aronson

Irene Goldin Speigel (1910-2004)

Irene Goldin Speigel, who served as a nurse during the Spanish Civil War, died on January 15 in Vienna, Austria after a brief illness.

Born in Brooklyn, she completed nurse's training in New York and joined a new nurse's trade union, United Professional, where she saw a flyer recruiting medical workers for the American Bureau to Aid Spanish Democracy. She applied and was given a long questionnaire to fill out. In the large space where she was to give the reasons why she wanted to go to Spain, she wrote four words, "To help fight fascism." She didn't tell her parents she was going, because she "didn't want there to be any fuss" and sailed for France with 20 other medical volunteers, on the S. S. Normandie, in May 1937.

Irene served at the Aragon Front, Teruel, the second Belchite and at Mataro during the Battle of the Ebro. It was at Mataro in 1938 that she cared for a patient who became her husband, Harry Speigel, an Austrian IB volunteer. At the end of the war, they fled to France together and found work at a children's refuge run in a chateau by the Baroness de Rothschild. After the Nazis occupied

France, they lived with forged identity papers under assumed names in the south of France and worked in the Resistance with the Austrian underground.

At the end of World War II, Irene stayed in France to direct the Unitarian Service's aid effort in Marseille for Spanish refugees. She joined her husband in Vienna in 1947 and lived there until the end of her life. She is survived by two children, Peter and Ilse, and grandchildren.

In a videotaped interview in Madrid in 1996, on the occasion of Spain's Homenaje to the Civil War volunteers, Irene summed up her feelings about that time, "The International Brigades did not fight and lose their lives in vain. I'm always glad that I went to Spain. I felt that was the great, great achievement of my life."

—Julia Newman

Alfred L. Amery (1906-2004)

Al Amery, who served with the Mackenzie Papineau battalion, and later the Lincoln battalion in Spain,



died on January 7, one day short of his 98th birthday.

LINCOLN VETS WHO DIED IN 2003

Bill Susman
Sana Goldblatt
Sid Linn
George Cullinen
Morton Wolson
Harry Fisher
Rudolph Valuch
Bill Sennett
Tom Norton
Joe Young
John Rossen
Herman Lopez
Arthur Harrison
Ed Lending
Saul Wellman
Hy Hollander

A resident of Massachusetts, Al was a frequent contributor to the letters column of the Boston Globe. His friend, David H. Spodick, described him as "a self-educated intellectual who produced hundreds of poems, some published, but mostly because he enjoyed composing them, an autobiography and a play—nearly all from the standpoint of the idealism that took Al to Spain and into the CP and which never flagged through his whole life."

Of the night in 1937 that he climbed the Pyrenees, he wrote in his unpublished autobiography that is in the ALBA collection: "That moment was the height of my life. I thought I was going to help save the world."

Spodick described him as "a remarkable person who only failed physically quite recently. (Until he was about 92, he ran several miles every day, did cross country skiing and managed a very large and productive garden)."



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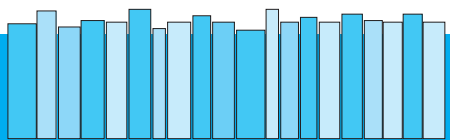
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Judith Montell

You Are History, You Are Legend

Judith Montell

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 Julia Newman, (212) 674-5398; exemplaryone@aol.com. The exhibit is available for museum and art gallery showings.

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