Award (A Gold Watch to the FBI Man Who Has Followed Me for 25 Years)

By Ray Durem



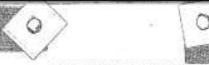
Well, old spy looks like I led you down some pretty blind alleys, took you on several trips to Mexico, fishing in the high Sierras, jazz at the Philharmonic. You've watched me all your life, I've clothed your wife, put your two sons through college, what good has it done? the sun keeps rising every morning. ever see me buy an Assistant President? or close a school? or lend money to Trujillo? ever catch me rigging airplane prices? I bought some after-hours whiskey in L.A. but the Chief got his pay. Lain't killed no Koreans or fourteen-year old boys in Mississippi. neither did I bomb Guatemala, or lend guns to shoot Algerians.

I admit I took a Negro child
to a white rest room in Texas,
but she was my daughter, only three,
who had to pee...
and I just didn't know what to do,
Would you?
see, I'm so light, it just don't seem right
to go to the colored rest room;
my daughter's brown and folks frown on that
in Texas,
I just don't know how to go to the bathroom
in the free world!

Now old FBI man,
you've done the best that you can,
you lost me a few jobs,
scared a couple of landlords,
You got me struggling for that bread,
but I ain't dead.
and before it's all through,
I may be following you!

Born in 1915 in Seattle, Washington, Ramon Durem left home at 14 and joined the Navy. Discharged following an injury to his leg, Durem worked as a laborer along the West Coast. He eventually enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley and joined the Communist party in 1931. Active in various radical causes on campus, Durem was arrested for picketing against silk imports from Japan. Durem left for Europe, aboard the Aquitania, on March 31, 1937. During the Brunete Offensive, an enemy bullet struck Durem in the same leg that had been injured in the Navy. While recuperating at the American base hospital at Villa Paz, Durem met, courted and married a nurse from Brooklyn, Rebecca Schulman. In the summer of 1938 when the front lines broke and the hospital had to be evacuated, Durem returned to the 15th Brigade and served throughout the remainder of the Retreats and the Ebro Offensive. Durem was among the Americans who participated in the farewell parade in Barcelona and returned to the United States aboard the Ausonia on December 20, 1938. Durem and Shulman moved to Los Angeles where they had three daughters. Durem continued to be an active union organizer and was arrested on a number of occasions. During the 1940s Durem discovered an African American identity. He separated from his wife, remarried- this time to an African American woman- and moved his new family to Guadalajara, Mexico in order to escape government harassment. In 1962 Durem and his family returned to reside in L.A. In the late 1940s Durem began writing poetry under the name of "Ray Durem." His poems were first published in the *Crusader*, a journal edited by Robert Williams, the Black Nationalist leader who in the 1960s was forced into exile in Cuba and China. Other poems were published in the literary journals *Phylon* and *Venture* and in the Herald Dispatch newspaper. Durem's early poems attracted the interest of Langston Hughes, and in the mid-1950s Hughes tried unsuccessfully to help Durem secure a publisher. Hughes did include one of Durem's poems in the anthology New Negro Poets: USA. In the early 1960s Durem saw selections of his poetry published in the Heritage Anthology Sixes and Sevens and in the magazine *Umbra* 2. In 1963, at the age of 48, Ray Durem died of cancer in Los Angeles. A volume of Durem's poetry entitled Take No Prisoners (1971) was published in London posthumously.

Snapshots of FBI Report on Ray Durem...

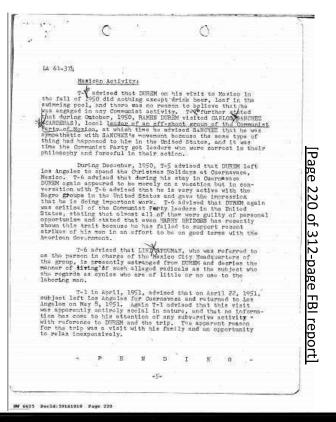


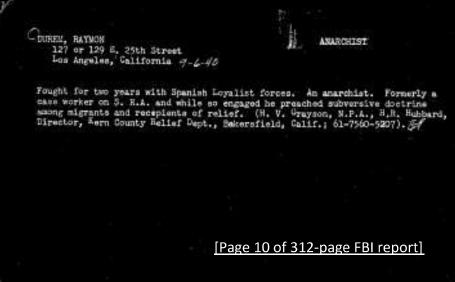
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