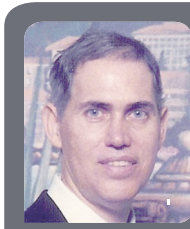


Raúl Castro and the 'Dolores' connections

While visiting my uncle in Miami, I came across an old and partly torn photograph which captured my attention; it was of his graduating class at Dolores, a Jesuit school in Santiago de Cuba. My uncle, Lorenzo Fresneda, noticed my interest in the photograph, and asked me if I recognized any of the students which, of course, I did not. My uncle pointed toward one of them. "This is Raúl Castro. We were classmates throughout our stay at Dolores." The next time they met, he would be dressed in army fatigues commanding a small army of "rebels", and holding about 30 to 40 American sailors from the Guantanamo Naval Base hostage. "I had been sent to negotiate their release", he continued narrating.

The year was 1958, months before Fidel Castro and his band of rebels would ride victoriously into Havana. I had been working at a mining complex in the city of Moa, located in what was then known as the providence of Oriente. The mine was operated by an American company, benefiting from the recently discovered deposits of Cobalt, Sulfur, and other minerals. At the time, I got a call from the American Consul in Santiago (I was an American citizen, as both my mother and myself were born in Brooklyn) asking for help in freeing military personnel from the Guantanamo Naval Base that had been kidnapped by the Rebels. After conferring with the administrators of the mining company, I was given a U.S. Army World War Two Jeep which had been purchased by the company in Panama as surplus



José L. Bolívar
Opinion

sailors hostage. We were stopped by a soldier from the "Movimiento 26 de Julio". This movement was named for Fidel Castro's July 26th, 1953 attack on Fuerte Moncada, a Government stronghold in Santiago (the attack, though, ended in defeat when most of the Rebels participating were either captured or killed). I recognized the soldier as a fellow Dolores student. Initially, he wanted us to leave the Jeep with him and walk the rest of the way. However, after he recognized me, he let us continue.

Raúl's headquarters were at an old abandoned coffee plantation. When I saw Raúl, I instantly felt that, in spite of having been classmates at Dolores, our conversations would be tense, as Raúl and his movement were hostile to-

equipment for a rather insignificant amount (Had it been purchased in the U.S., this vehicle would have commanded a much higher price).

The U.S. Consul and I rode to Mayari—the Rebels known location—unarmed. It was here that Raúl Castro was

holding the American

ward American companies and interests, and I was working for a stateside firm. After various days of negotiations — when at one point I thought the U.S. Consul and myself would join the American sailors as hostages—we succeeded in obtaining an agreement between the Cuban government, the U.S. government, and the rebels. The Cuban government agreed to stop bombing the rebel's campsite, and the rebels released the sailors unharmed. A U.S. military transport was then allowed to land at a small landing strip at Mayari, taking the sailors, the U.S. Consul and myself to the Naval Base at Guantanamo. Raúl and his band of Rebels kept the Jeep.

Shortly afterwards, I was placed in charge of the Moa mining operation. However, due to local labor laws, which required that a certain number of employees be of Cuban decent, I gave up my U.S. citizenship. As the Cuban situation deteriorated, I left the Island for the Jamaica. Not having my U.S. citizenship, I was detained. Fortunately, before long, I was allowed to fly to the United States. I have never returned to Cuba.

José L. Bolívar is a historian and businessman and is completing a book on the economic impact of the Second World War on Puerto Rico, which is scheduled to be published this year by the University of Florida, and another on the history of the Development Bank of Puerto Rico.

Footing the bill

The media has incorrectly reported that President Obama wants to "close Guantanamo." Not exactly true. He wants to close the prison, not the U.S. Navy Base. I also see that Fidel has called for the return of the base to Cuba as it was essentially stolen (just like Puerto Rico) after the so-called Spanish-American War.

It does seem weird that the U.S. occupies a large military compound on land owned by an American "enemy." I say move the base. But, with today's terrible economy, the cost would just be too great.

So, I propose the United States tell the Castro brothers that we'll leave if Cuba pays the bill. Then, if the U.S. military establishment still believes it needs a Caribbean base, why not on land already under U.S. jurisdiction? After the Vieques/Roosevelt Roads decision, I doubt they'd pick Puerto Rico, so how about the U.S. Virgin Islands? And, since it's bigger and has less tourism, why not St. Croix?

Will Sims
San Juan

Why not PTS victims?

To Amado Segura:

You start off telling us you're a Vietnam vet and you're against awarding the Purple Heart for PTS Syndrome. But you never tell us why. You go on to ramble through five paragraphs more and never get back to the point.

Why is damage to your nervous system different from a wound by a bullet? Might a shot through an arm, that you recover from in weeks, qualify you over a nervous condition that wrecks your life for years?

Psych warfare was extensive in the Vietnam War. Many came back like the soldier at the beginning of The Deer Hunter. And on top of that how Uncle Sam treated Agent Orange victims. All we need is someone like you.

Mariano Marte
Santurce

The Three Stooges Bridge

The bridge at the end of Ashford Ave. in the Condado, leading to Puerta de Tierra and Old San Juan is know as El Puente Dos Hermanos (The Two Brothers Bridge). This bridge has existed for many generations and was fine. A few years ago, someone in government had the bright idea to "modernize" and widen the bridge. It is still incomplete. It looks terribly ugly; the unfinished part contributes to traffic jams, and tourists at the nearby beach adjacent to the Condado Plaza Hotel are "treated" to ear-splitting construction machine noises. A project that should have taken a few months in the hands of incompetent folks is now dragging on for several years. Therefore, I suggest that the name of the bridge be changed to "El Puente Tres Chiflados" (The Three Stooges Bridge), because it appears that Moe, Curly and Larry (or their descendants) are the idiots in charge of the endless unfinished project.

Kal Wagenheim
Condado

On cattle and welfare

To: Crisálida Martínez

I concede to you the point that cattle do not pay taxes. On the other hand they do not receive welfare from a system that has failed to properly educate its masses.

Time after time I read how the system has failed the people by under educating those it is responsible to. Only in this way can those in power retain there control of the under educated. Offering programs like reforma and cupones keeps the masses from complaining to loud. Offer them free lunch at school for their children and keep the quieter. These programs are not rights of the individual, rather benefit for the individual.

I am as much opposed to taxes as anybody else. That said, where would you suppose we get the money needed to pay for the

programs that the state provides. Programs necessary to help the under educated. Education needed to COMPETE in society. Cooperation is essential and at the same time so is competition. We compete everyday for what we have; otherwise we would not have anything.

As you say we developed speech and intelligence as we evolved. It is through these modes that one learns to advance when given the opportunity. When we see students walking the streets when they should be in school because the teachers didn't go to work. Yet these same teachers want more money. The system is failing them and what can we do except to complain to the administration. Since I am not a parent my voice is not heard as loud or sometimes not at all.

The system is supposed to be a helping hand not a hand out. So many have are generation after generation receiving this hand out that is all they know. Why, because they were encouraged to cooperate rather than to compete.

I have mine and you probably have yours but what of those that don't. If we don't pay that little extra in order to better others then who will. I say better not keep them as we are now.

Amado Segura
Aguadilla

Adjustment

I last Tuesday's edition (2/3/2009) page 4, Speaker González discusses the adjustment problems Aponte is undergoing, but she forgets that she is also undergoing an ego trip herself. Politicians DO suffer of ego trips in a daily basis. She is having an adjustment problem herself to her new position. Let's be real This is not new news, Speaker Aponte.

Prudencio Méndez Moll
Ponce

