



Irene Gomez-Bethke Papers.

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TONANTZIN

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CHICANO ARTS IN SAN ANTONIO

MARCH 1985



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A black and white photograph of a small, cluttered room. On the left is a wooden bunk bed. In the center, a doorway leads to a darker area where a person is partially visible. To the right, there is a small table with a chair, a sink, and a toilet. The walls are covered with various items, including a shelf with bottles and a small cabinet.

“LA CELDA”

Jack L. Barber's work entitled: **Sole Painting** (18" X 24"). About his painting, Jack says: "...**Sole Painting** came about as the result of my lifelong admiration of Liz Taylor's beauty. The youngster on the left shoe is me with the larger-than-life brush which is a symbol of the dedication and academic discipline it took to do justice to Liz Taylor's beauty. It was painted from life. I felt kind of foolish when inmates walked by my cell and I was drawing the shoes on the bars. Also, I had a good view of the guard lighting his pipe in the gun tower. This painting took me two months (to complete) and it is in mixed media: acrylic/oil on masonite panel. A technical challenge, but a lot of fun. Wish I could have painted Liz from life, too!"

SAT
JANU 2

SAT
JANU

The Writing On The Wall
raúl salinas
author of
UN TRIP THROUGH THE MEXICO
in conjunction with
PINTO ART
Friday

Guadalupe center ho

By RAMIRO BURR and DAVID HAWKINGS
Staff writers



The attempt to halt showings of the film "Short Eyes" was pressed by Councilman **Nardo Eureste** and approved — reportedly with

powerful vision

...Center
aken identity and
would be rule

is effe-
self-
? wi-
n di-
just
g or
of Ju-
orge
se-

The film betrays its theatrical
origins in being more verbal than
is supposed to be. It does
"the full visual re-
me-
her-

...ities or indifference. "Short
eyes" is artful in its apparent art-
lessness, its success in creating a
slice of life I would not willingly
choose over lemon meringue.

...Center
aken identity and
would be rule

PINTO

ART

Journal of Interpersonal Violence 26(10)

Antonio Light

HOUSE." **Short censored**
 BEST PER IN SOUTH TEXAS
 eyes
 eque... showing of R-rated mo...
 the full council in an ex... story of the prison expe...
 NEW

Officials agreed to comply with the request after an afternoon. They said screenings will continue through Thursday also.

officials agreed to comply with the re-
afternoon. They said screenings
y through Thursday also w-

the center 1-

child abuse.
"We"

EXPRESS-NEW

largest daily circulation in South Texas

EXPRESS & News

es' scre

ay also w

PRESS

The largest daily circulation in South Texas

'Eves' sc

'Eyes' screened despite hubbub

By **SUSIE PHILLIPS**
and **MIKE GREENBERG**
Express News Staff Writers

The Guild's first order of business was to schedule Monday night after City Council members' attempts to cancel the movie fizzled.

In an emergency meeting called by the Guild, the city council members agreed that the council direct the city to shut the film down for lack of funding. The motion died by a second.

Instead, council accepted a motion by Councilman Frank Wing asking that the city staff and the Guild form a joint committee to draft guidelines for City Council and draft guidelines for the committee with objections from the Guild being played by city-owned.

junction with an exhibit by inmates of the Boca "Short Eyes" was a claimed screen display that was two years old. Eusebio's request to the city to purchase the letter to the centennial. That letter is Friday from P. Darnese, whose views the theater said City Council the Guadalupe "Short Eyes" jew matri- May's request members F. At Mr. Henry C. tion last strained. Manne mat-

OUTSIDE GUADALUPE
despite all the hoop

May

Continued from
of city facilities
"Absent a policy
single entertaining
a position of cen
After the Gu
ston Saturda
Eyes," board
Rios sent a
Cisneros.
letter

THE WRITING ON THE WALL



IN MEMORIAM: RICHE

And he died...
2 years later---
in the putrefying bowels
of a dismal prison---
death's impact
SLAPS!
the face of consciousness
and jars the torpid brain
AWAKE!

Farewells were said
in other
Caverns of Detention
when winds of Freedom
carried him away;
nevermore to be seen.

Until, that is,
time came to lay him down
to rest
and shovel earth over his corpse.

(THE DEATH-KNELL CAUSES FLESH
TO SHUDDER ONCE AGAIN)

Kayo, laying rigid in the streets
which were his playground;
the rains found him
and blessed
his lifeless bones.
Inflated beyond limit,
tender veins became balloons
that burst too soon,
his heart was stilled.

And so, dear friend & brother,
The System
(not God!)

created you...
that system
took
you
away.

u.s. penitentiary
LEAVENWORTH

SOJOURN DOWN THE STYX
(a glimpse of Hell)

PART III

The charnel-house awakens.
toilets flush
and pent-up fears/frustrations/
poison & desires,
float out: Missouri River-bound.
Soul Music!
piped-in nirvana
for pre-conditioned pawns.
I wake to coffin
made of
bars & locks & wire & walls & GUNS;
while every pore and fiber
in my still mobile cadaver
screams out
for
Liberation!

And my children?
Esos niños:
Ricardo, Eleanor y Lorenzo.

Yes,
they joyfully romp
through the timeless
corridors of my tormented mind
(when I allow myself the pain).
Those seedlings sowed
somewhat carelessly
(with love):

now tended (dotingly)
by one-half
the initial harvesting crew.
Unfortunately
clocks don't run backwards
nor does youth
raise from its prison death
to mock grey hairs
nor mourn society's accusations
of unfatherliness.

(Dolores Ibarruri, I remember your sacrifice.)
We reach out
& teach.

Out of the depths of degradation & despair
out of experiences forged in terror and in fear,
we hope for better sons & daughters,
to grow stronger than iron bars and walls of stone.
As strong as spears & lances & machetes;
as strong and deadly
as the assault rifle
of
FREEDOM.

LEAVENWORTH

late '71

NUTMEG NUANCES

We were (almost) children
yesterday
we chose (do you s'pose?)
our own insanity
refusing/rejecting
forms
forced & prescribed.

We chased fleecy lambs
through
meadows n/ pastures
in the clouds.

We laughed
an unrestricted
(with no shackles!)

LAUGH!
at funny-people movies
human tragicomedies.

We rapped to
SunFlower
who dared peek
over prison walls
to welcome the SUN.

Later we learned
she was sentenced
by sadistic tower guard
(for consorting/conversing
with two humanoids:
one black/
one brown
(or red?)
to be chopped down at sunset
aren't they weird?
We communed with nature
yesterday
so we know THAT'S wrong.
(the part about the guard, I mean)
yesterday
we were being children
(the warden forbid!)

we were for-reals.

USP-LEAVENWORTH
1971

raulsalinas is a poet, freelance writer, political activist publisher/editor of **Red Salmon Press**, and owner of **Resistencia Books** in Austin, Texas. Born in San Antonio, Salinas gained his "educational experiences" through life and in various prisons from 1958 to 1972. Since that time, Salinas has published widely and taught at both the pre-school and university levels; he is currently a lecturer in Mexican-American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of **Viaje/Trip** (Hellcoal Press, 1973), and **Un Trip Through The Mind Jail** (Editorial Pocho-Che San Francisco, 1980). While in prison Salinas was widely published and was actively involved in the prison struggles of the 1960's and the 1970's. He continues to be involved in many national and international social movements, including the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee. **TONANTZIN** is proud to feature his work on these two pages.

SINFONIA SERRANA

how can
i
sing you
songs of love

when all
i
ever learned were
Howls of Hate

i
cannot gift you
with
bouquets of joy

my
garden only yields
wild
Weeds of Sorrow

you
asked for the sun
i
could not provide

the
blame is not yours
i
wanted the moon
i
cried for the moon

when the
wrappings came off
i found
plastic and sham

so
to nurse both
our wounds from the
thorns of deceit

we
will sign our
last love-pact
in blood

with
the scalpel of loneliness
i'll carve you a sliver
of my soul

to
paste up in
the scrapbook
of your heart

even
tho
i
know

poems
don't bring in
much money
these days.

Leavenworth/1971

PUEBLO QUERIDO

En aquel
AUSTIN
maldito/bendito
where ragged/jagged
tender bits of my body/flesh/
!PEYEJO!
still adorn
Tejas barb-wire
existence of courtroom injusticias
down desolate doper streets.

There/where
tomás wolfe's
fool proof-read novela
contains no truth pa' mi.
¡SI SE PUEDE!
volver al cantón
once again.

ex-Convictos/Activistas
doing righteous gente work
involved in sharing
homeboy (cockroach poet)
with the WORLD!

Doing GOOD
in city
of chavalo gone BAD
Inspiring tender mentes
de gente nueva
related to
parentela out of the past.

Vast memorias/
(!norias of nostalgia!)
gust forth como el
raging río Colorado/
whose banks once served
(still might today)
as jardines primeros of grass
despues shooting gallery/
aguaje to abate madrugando mendicants'
narcotic-ridden
nerviosidad.

La universidad calls
up! jump (hoping IT falls!)
seis vatos locos
listos to prowl otra vez/
vecindad of worldly
(teen-age) vagabundo days
spent
"skelly-bibbing"
student apartamentos
to survive.

Live
assembly hall address
en Austin Hi,
escuela que dejé long abandonada/
missing out en
senior prom & ring...
Class of '52.

¿Y tu?
some anti-prison lobbying
and back to being
cantor de cantina/
hanging out en la esquina
(del barrio)

pasándole poems a
perennial pachucos prendidos
(hoping somewhat to ease their pain)
as the rain entertains us
con su
Tattooed Tecato Tap Dance.

WhirlWIND quincena/
Escena
de muchos colores/
bastantes sabores
de multi-café.

REViviendo
reLIVING/RE-Viving
rose-gardens that never ceased to bloom
wounds that scarcely (muy despacio) heal
yet feeling good n' tight
on birthday partynight.
"La fiesta se celebraba
el mero día de san juán.
cuando llegaron al baile..."
four levels of
incestuous promiscuity.

El Hurraca con su current
Love
affair/his primo
w/ la second ruca d'el.
Su primer esposa (having been
primo's movida's sister-in-law)
con el vato d'ella
He having been poetic cuñado
(making his movida-chueca/
primos' cousin/cuñada)
in those confusing times
before the "raids,"
in those confusing times
before the bust.

Just as the evening is ending,
just as night comes to a close
having chosen
Buena Suerte Lounge,
just as the party is over
Palomia del pasado
attempt somewhat débil...
!adiós!

"Despedida no les doy..."
on this day que ya me voy,
because i knew we'd cry
as grown men/women cry.
As tender warriors cried/
shed tears (for years!)
devoid of prison fears
while shackled/
bound in chains---
chattel slaves---
Prisoners-of-War,
headed for that
Marion Monster
in my never-

to be-
forgotten
prison past.

Austin to Seattle/'74



"Spiritual Indian," By Jack L. Barber



"Reveille At Barberville," By Jack L. Barber

Chicano artist, Jack L. Barber, was born in San Antonio, Texas, on March 24, 1935. He attended John B. Hood Elementary, Washington Irving Jr. High and Fox Tech High School. During his senior year, Barber entered in a city-wide high school competition for senior art students, sponsored by the "Men of Art Guild." He won 1st place and received as his prize a 1 year scholarship of Fine Art study at the San Antonio Art Center. He stayed on for three years, working part-time cleaning studios. While at the art center, Jack studied with Cecil Casseler and Leslie Larson in Fine Art, and with Rod Ayres in Commercial Art. When the center moved to a new location, Barber left to seek out other work in the same field.

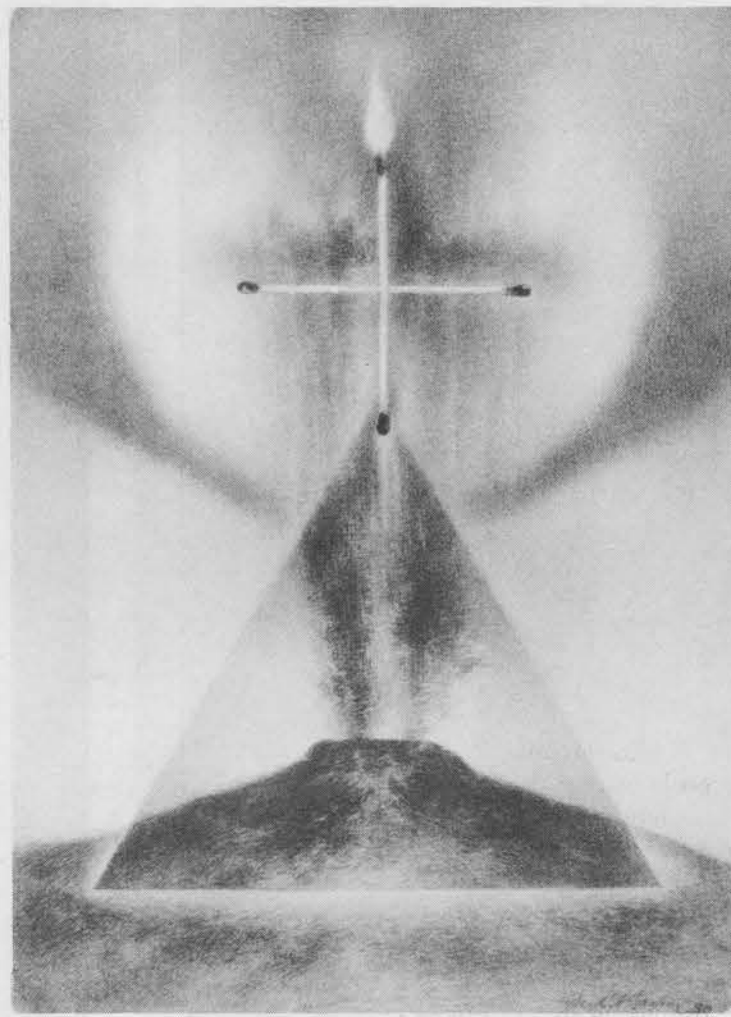
In August of 1956, Jack Barber was arrested for possession of marijuana, and was sentenced to two years. He served this time in La Tuna, Texas, Terminal Island, and California Federal Correctional Institutions. In November of 1958, he was again arrested and sentenced to ten years in the Federal Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas. In all, Jack would serve over 23 years in prison, maybe more.

"...My painting has matured and evolved during this time to the point where I have found a language through my work. This life sentence is the worst/best thing that has happened to me, because I feel that the ordeal of prison serves as an emotional stimulus in the evolution of my intuitive painting, which I feel is my best work. I think of my work as Neo-Expressionism in isolationist terms, to say the least; as opposed to the current New York School of Neo-Expressionism."

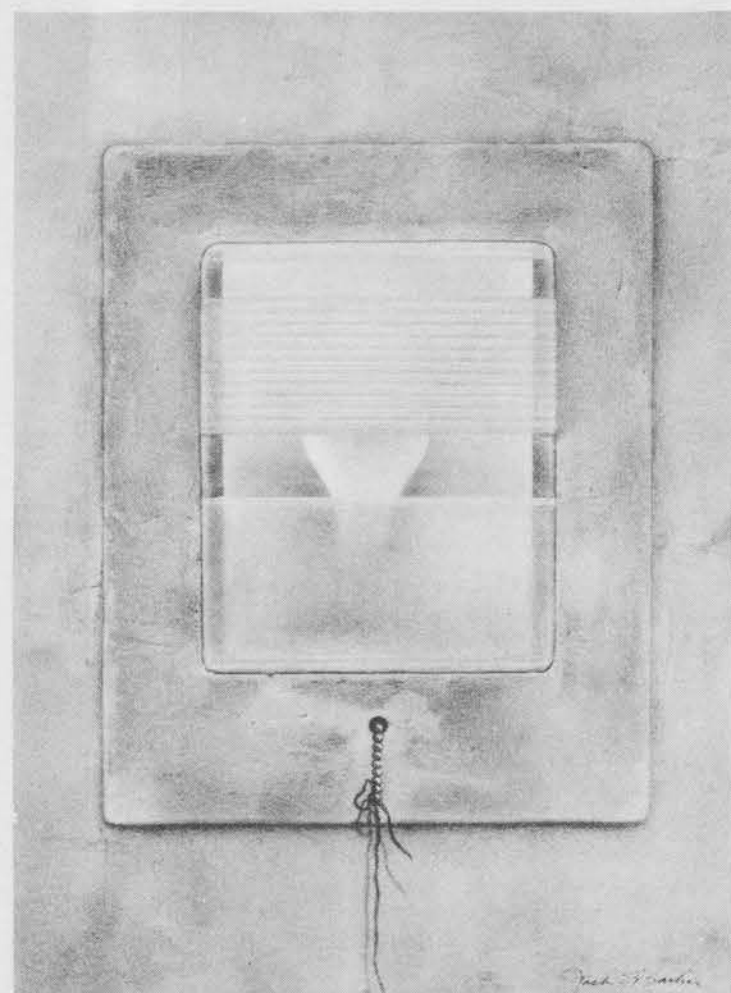
Presently, Mr. Barber is staff artist in the Media Center at the Walls Unit in Huntsville, where he works from 8:00 to 5:00, five days per week, devoting to his own work three hours per evening, weekends and holidays.

"...The major part of my work is of a very personal nature. 'Gut' painting I call it because I'm always looking for that 'pull' or 'tension' that comes from the gut; that gut feeling that satisfies my passion for painting and even though I paint conceptual pieces at times, my greatest satisfaction comes from intuitive, organic, free-flowing work that I call 'Gut Painting.'"

Jack L. Barber



"Volcano Motive," By Jack L. Barber



"My Huntsville Cell Light," By Jack L. Barber

ARTE/LITERATURA



ELIAS 84

Vuela, vuela, Pajarito
vuela para todos lados
platicale a todo el que oiga
que aquí estamos encerrados

que nos encontramos presos
en la prisión del estado
haciendo día por día
en el Elias mentado

que estamos en la solapa
por no querer trabajar
por que estos gabachos gachos
nomás no quieren pagar.

Vuela, vuela Pajarito
y avísale al mundo entero,
que nos tienen encerrados
en una jaula de acero

que nos tratan como bestias
y no como seres humanos
que hasta pa ir a bañarnos
ya nos amarran las manos

que de delito tras delito,
nos acusan falsamente,
nos castigan en el pozo
pero seguimos de frente,

y como si fueran pocos
estos juegos de tortura
más nos tratan de humillar
con sus reglas de resura
y con darnos de tragar
poquito más de basura.

Vuela, vuela Pajarito
dale cuenta al mundo entero
que estos perros sinverguenzas
se enbolsan todo el dinero
que sale de los sudores
del esclavo prisionero.

Vuela, vuela Pajarito
y avísale a Justo Juez
que queremos que investiguen
y nos digan de una vez...
que nos digan, Pajarito
donde está la pinche rez...

David Muñoz
Ellis Unit

QUIZAS

Ya son las doce de la noche
y no me puedo dormir
recordando mi pasado
y pensando en el porvenir

Aquí me encuentro en mi celda
donde vivo yo encerrado
haciendo día por día
en la pinta del estado

Escogí caminos chuecos
sin ponerme yo a pensar
que a esta pinche penitencia
un día fuera a llegar

Comenzé desde muy joven
a robar y a disvariar
y en los bailes y cantinas
me gustaba a mí pelear

Mi madrecita, muy firme
siempre, siempre, me decía
deja esos caminos chuecos
no te vaya a pasar un día

Pero, yo caído de risa
muy chingón le contestaba
no se apure madrecita
no me pasará a mí nada

Ahora si ya me pesa
ahora que ya es muy tarde
me pesa no haber tomado
los consejos de mi madre

Pues, ya ni llorar es bueno
este arroz ya se quemó
quizás y con esta sopa
se me quite lo pendejo

Quizás, quizás...

David Muñoz
Ellis Unit

FANTASIA

"I like the one in high-heel shoes,
fancy hose and designer clothes,"
I said to my friend with an audible sigh,
as three foxy Chicanas trot flauntingly by.
With a smirk on his lips and a glint in his
eye,
"I favor the hot-pants," he adds to my lie.

Discerning our prattle, but avoiding our
eyes,
they glance at each other in mild surprise;
then slapping their foreheads our farce
they realize.

Blushing and giggling they turn to go,
but first they deliver their own verbal
blow:
"Locos, pendejos," we hear them relay,
then bursting with laughter they scurry
away.
In t-shirts and sneakers and tight cut-off
jeans,
they flit off to enter someone else's
dreams.

David Muñoz
Ellis Unit



"Untitled," By Albert Aranda/Ellis Unit



Jorge Antonio Renaud is one of the most articulate and prolific prison poets we have encountered. He has published in the *Texas Observer*, *Red Bass* and *Joint Endeavor*. He also appeared in the movie: *Lions, Parakeets and other Prisoners*, a documentary filmed within the Texas prison system in 1983. Jorge speaks of his poetry as "...my attempt to show people that unlike the stereotype one sees in the movies of calloused and unfeeling individuals with only numbers for identities, we convicts are men; we hurt and cry and rage and love."

must of been about fifteen
when

maryanna lydia lupita
francisca gloria diana

when
she walked by
in that blue
ben franklin
one size too small shirt
her hair falling
into the opportunity
provided by the top
button left unbuttoned
y dios mio

something was choking
me i could not breath
and i answered
her eyes and followed
her to this cow barn

where she
touched mouthed kissed
loved whispered sang

where she
showed me what
a woman is/was.

Three years now
that I have not seen
norma graciela cristina
olivia susana jovita

my lord
forgive me but
much more and
I fear that I
will forget what
it was/is
to be a man.

i don't miss
your chinchilla

touch
any more than a
used to be junkie misses

his hourly fix
of fifty per cent flour
forty per cent sugar
& ten percent pure
(sure enough good shit.)

don't need to feel
your satin tongue

any more than
i need to feel

some chilly starbreath
unfiltered through
rusty barbpoints
durham droppings
or 2500 musty liars
(innocent, man, innocent.)

ain't got to see
your flourescent

face
like i ain't
got to see

some black lace

panties
with yesterday's date
lying next to my
bed still where
i hurried them
(hot, hot.)

don't miss you
don't need to feel you
ain't got to see you
(come back, come back. come back.)

hilda

your scent touched me yesterday
it fled to me
over earth and steel
and glass and time
and weary of its flight
it danced over the fence
and disturbed my reading.

your touch burned me last night.
it descended through
dreamed woven blankets and
caressed me with memories
and desperate in its denial
its heat forbid me sleep.

your face startled me today.
it was painted on
the quivering air
as if conjured
by someone's need.

leave me alone.

please.

no times three

he holds
her letters
to his ear

like seashells
with their captive
waves
he listens to
her scattershot

echos tied to
a string
softly stirred
by yesterday's
words drifting
to earth on
slowly melting wings.

this one legged
half white
half mexican
all crazy old child molester
been bumping into my dreams lately.

he's got this weird habit
of filling his pockets with
pork chops/dried lettuce/hard
biscuits
carries glass jars
fills them with milk
pokes them in the crooks of his
crutches
ties up the one empty pant leg
stashes plastic bags with
shit i don't want to think about.
hops down the hall
you can hear him coming.
rattling/clanging/squishing.
says he's looking out for his diet.

dreamed i was walking down the hall
at night
he was sprawled across the floor
slurping milk
crunching some bones in his jaws
spitting out fingernails
telling the dark
how he and his leg
came to be separated.

i
denied the privilege
of pressing flesh
to singing flesh
i resort to
make believe love
and long distance lust.

to penetrations performed
by dangling participles,
wet ministrations applied
by abject adjectives.

lingering kisses,
sighed
upon a page.

~~~~~

nine to five used to bore me.  
square people  
in square houses  
tending square lawns  
just was not  
me.

i  
was different.  
always a new horizon,  
another mountain,  
another path.

mountains are hard to climb when  
you're wearing leg irons.

the people, the house,  
the lawn, a dog, a cat  
and a parakeet look damned good.  
forget the parakeet.  
cages make me nervous.

~~~~~

she sent me a note
asking
why i didn't write.

i told her
that i would swim
in the waves of her hair
and dry
by the light of her eyes
live with her
love with her and
die with her
but i would not write
because
sooner or later
she would stop
and another piece of me
would be on the floor
and
i'm missing too many now.

~~~~~

friend of a friend  
of a friend  
has  
a date at the Walls  
where they're  
gonna mainline revenge  
a drop at a time  
down  
atube  
through  
aneedle  
into  
hisarm  
while innocents outside  
cheer  
at the goodness of it all.

~~~~~

la pisca. push the heat
to one side. move your bucket
a few more feet. turn the vine
over y saludale a tu hermano.
you know him, eh? he knows

you, and his padre knew
yours. years now your familia
has gone up and down this row.
your knees are familiar with
this tierra, every rock and
stone speaks to you. your

mother's sweat nourished this
vine when you were a chavalo
sleeping under the truck
content with the tortilla
in your belly, the strains of a

hummed ranchera floating to you
bouncing its way down the
row from crouching man to
bent woman to kneeling
child. its melody comes
back to you now and you

sing of amor, desesperación y
orgullo. it is but a song.
nothing is real but this
dust, this heat and this row.
treat this vine well, carnal, and

~~~~~

next year it will produce  
more for you, and for your  
hijo and for his hijo.

gaiety  
is a rash.  
say the regulations. to  
be stamped out  
before it  
pollutes the population  
with its menacing mirth.

an effective prison  
should be  
dreary,  
forbidding humor, thus  
fostering guilt  
and penitence.

undercover chuckles subvert.

smiles break out  
and the man watches  
from the corners of his eyes  
turning  
burning  
on the spit of  
his authority.

### TOUGH GUY

Brass pipe echoes  
of an alley education,  
high gloss veneer  
of a low cost  
communication  
with cool.  
A parody  
of punk  
he

struts  
swaggers  
leans  
sways.

pledging allegiance  
to the godling  
of number one.  
bending a knee  
to the deity  
of i me and mine.  
nothing  
sacred but

his style

nothing  
living in

his smile.

he keeps a towel  
under his bed  
so  
his tears won't  
shatter  
when  
they  
fall.

## BLIND AWARENESS

A wise and knowledgeable blind man sat under a large oak tree in the churchyard, as was customary on Sunday in this hillside community. He conversed with the local philosophers, poets, scholars, and clergymen, debating God, Science, and other enigmas of life. On this day the conversation was focused upon the blind man and the great province of Feindre in which he had completed his studies.

A woman with much curiosity and an avid interest in the cultures of the world, exclaimed: "Oh, do tell of Feindre, that wealthy, aesthetic utopia of which we have all heard tales, but never from one who was an actual sojourner."

The blind man pondered hesitantly, for he was a man of culture and meditative thought. "Of what I know, I will tell," he said. "Feindre, to me, is a synthetic city where everyone wishes to sit in judgement of their fellowman, causing fear and apprehension to the entire province. Those of difference are shunned and subjected to many hostilities, both inward and out. Those of the ruling caste are of one mind, without faculty for exterior knowledge or emotion. Their streets, superstructures, and dwellings are without the warmth of love. The people are religious of protocol, without grace."

Pondering more on the subject, the blind man brightened, "But perhaps I am over-critical of Feindre," he said, "Perhaps I am comparing it to Droit, a border section of Feindre in which lies aesthetic beauty and culture so grand that comparison with all the empires of the world would be ineffable."

"Tell us of this splendid community then," The people asked.

"Droit," said he without hesitation and with a secret smile, for he longed to speak of this beloved place, "is a refuge of brotherhood and common humanity wherein all are recognized with kinship. There are many doctrines of thought and theology, each one considerate of the other, each one attentively listening to the other for truth and tranquility. Their dwellings and work areas are, as themselves, humble and warm, cheerful and loving. Elaborate edifices are absent in Droit; however, the sound of birds and the sweet smell of flowers and other growing things along the pathway construct an artistic arrangement that no architect has ever created."

"I beg pardon for this interruption," said a new arrival to the oak tree council, a young man who was respected by all of the community for his kind and virtuous manner, "but, I thought I heard you speak of Droit, and I am going there myself on the morrow. My mother's brother has summoned me by letter to labor with him there. He is a strong mason and will have much building to do in Droit after the devastation, as surely you know the citizens of Feindre have deemed Droit a distortion to their province and a ghetto to be laid waste and reconstructed. Its people, they say, consist of criminals and social misfits, and are to be relocated to areas of rehabilitative interest."

The blind man thought that he could not contain the crushed heart throbbing within his breast. His trembling hands made no attempt to aid his tearstained face. The people had never seen him so distraught and could not understand the abyss of his sorrow. He spoke as if to his very soul. "That which represents beauty to me, is to the world repulsive."

He was never to be seen sitting under the oak tree in the churchyard again.

M.E. Marrs  
Ellis 1 Unit

**HUMAN RIGHTS**  
begins  
at  
**HOME.**



THE OLD MAN

I stared out the window at the growing fields of corn and thought about my very first child and the day that it was born.

A sadness came over me as I listened to the old man talking in the cell next door, about all his wasted years and the many different prisons where he'd served time in before.

He spoke about the good days and the bad ones too, about his faded youth and the things he used to do.

Sometimes he'd tell a joke or two without any laughter in his eyes, and though his laughs were loud, deep down within his very soul I thought I heard him cry.

He told me I was lucky to have a baby and a wife, he said he used to have both before they had sentenced him to life.

He paused for a moment to roll a cigarette from his half-full Bugler can, then reached around the bars to show me his old worn out wrinkled hands.

He said to me, "I wore these old hands out working for the State; you're still young and strong, for you it's not too late."

"All you need is a good woman to stand by your side, who's not afraid to wait on you because of selfish pride."

"One who understands you and knows all that you must feel, who helps you do your prison time because her love is real."

The old man choked and coughed as he took a long drawn out drag, then offered me a shot of coffee from his last Maxwell House Coffee bag.

"Yep, sonny," he said to me, "I wish you all the luck in the world; it seems by what you've told me, you got yourself a pretty good ol' girl."

"But I've seen 'em come and I've seen 'em go cause there's alot here doing time, and one by one they lose their wives, just like I lost mine."

"So my advice to you would be, if you really care about yourself, think about your family now and listen to no one else."

"Cause it's you and them against the world once you leave this place, and there isn't a friend you meet in here that will ever remember your face."

I thought of how right the old man was and felt I'd made a friend, but then I realized he could never be, for I'd never see him again.

It was then I felt my heart grow strong, to know my goal in life, to leave this place and make a world for my children and my wife.

For in a prison a Doer dies so young and a Dreamer dances on, upon the clouds of Hope and chance, that his stay will not be long.

Esteban R. Garcia  
Rosharon, Tx.

"...I am Italian and have some American Indian lineage, and am a practicing Shaman of the American Indian tradition. I am also a successful writer, author/publisher, columnist, artist and prison activist..."

"...I have tried to steer some of our brothers toward the type of knowledge which will transform their levels of consciousness. When the veil of illusion is lifted for those who have eyes to see-true INSIGHT shall be revealed, and with the TRUTH and a pen as our flaming sword, we shall be set free, for these concrete bars cannot hold the spirit of the oppressed."

"...I write numerous monthly columns and articles. I also have several booklets and my autobiography in print. I have designed an astrological / hermetic calendar for 1985, and I have several booklets to be processed this year as well. I am a member of COSMEP (Committee of Small Magazine Editors & Publishers); I have written for several law journals, **The Houston Post**, **The Daily Texan**; and later this year I hope to launch a prisoners writers guild to promote works of literary excellence. I am enclosing some tearsheets of various styles of my articles and columns. I am also enclosing a copy of my book. Since you wanted to feel what it is like to be in a prison cell, this book will do that, and a lot more. My style and format is like no other I know of..."

"...Literature is my life and educating the masses into the esoteric TRUTHS (universal truths bring All people together) is my goal. Your thirst and mine are of the same essence."

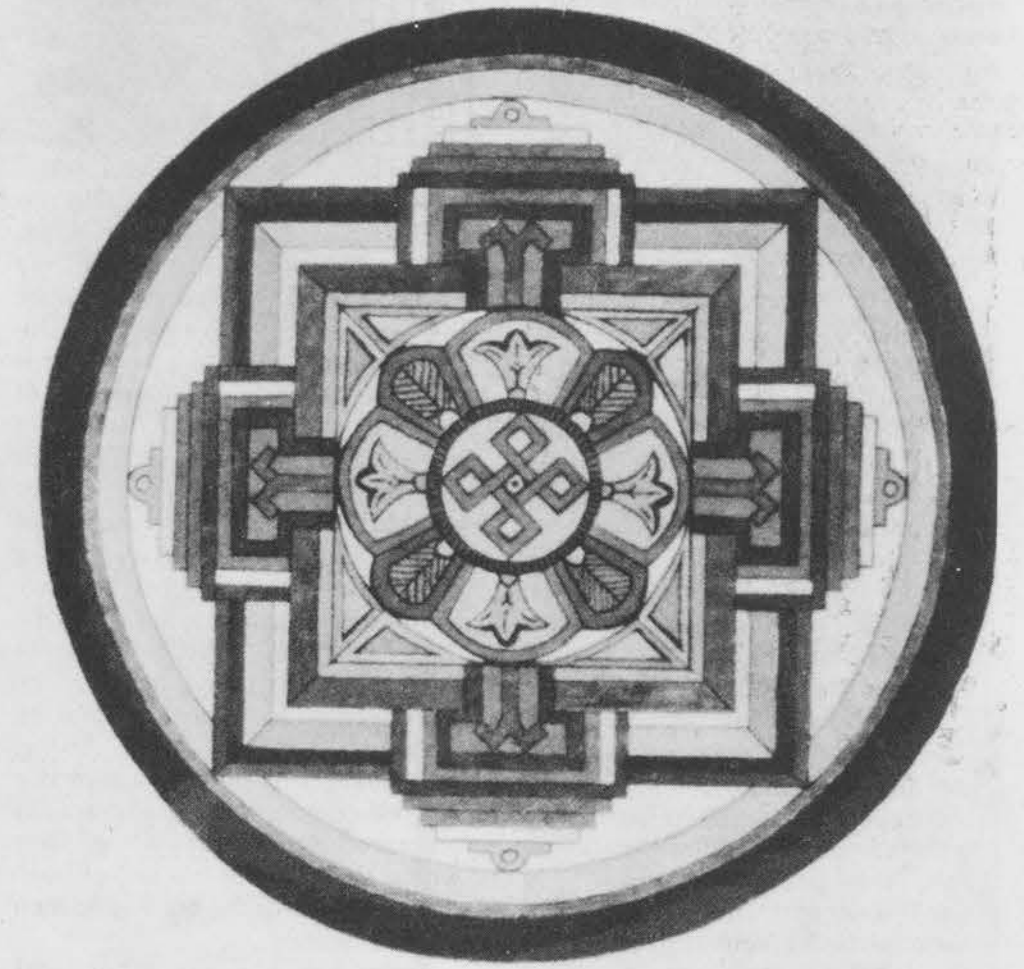
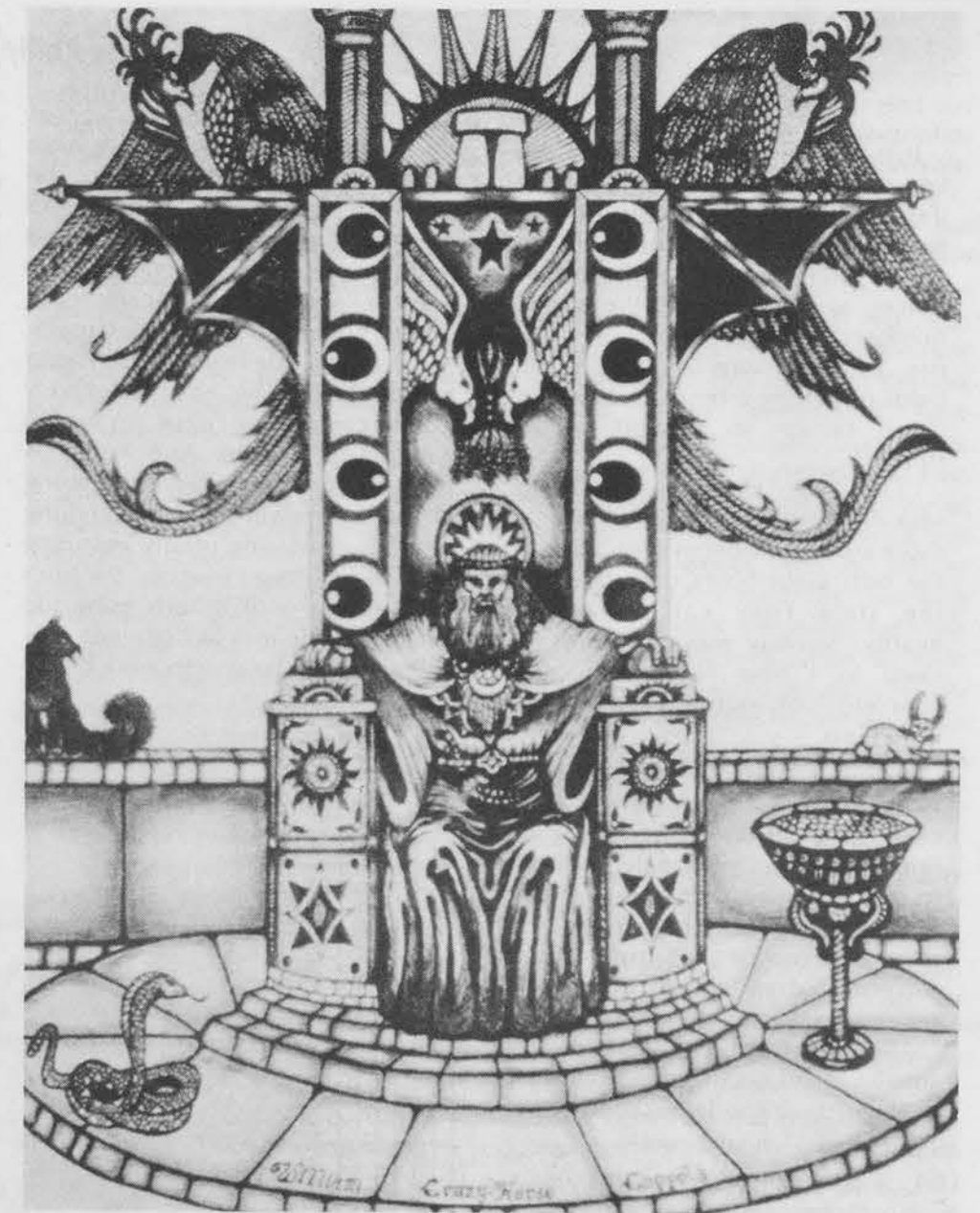


In the garden,  
of eternal love;  
grows two tall trees.

Roots separate;  
their trunks blend;  
branches embrace;  
juices mingle.

Centuries pass--  
they still are one.

So will it be,  
with us- forever;  
lovingly entwined.



 **william "crazy horse" coppola** 

# FIELD WORK

by Philip Brasfield

It is my habit to awake from the soundest sleep just before dawn. When the possibility of working is real, I lie beneath my covers straining to hear the picket officer as he calls out the squad numbers scheduled to work that day. Until I'm sure of going to the fields or getting a reprieve, crawling dread centers in the pit of my stomach.

"Fifty-Five Hoe!" the officer squeals. Audible groans follow as those around me begin preparing for the next eight hours demanded by the state. They call to others nearby. Nobody wants a buddy to sleep in. I hear feet hitting the concrete floor, toilets flushing, radios turned on.

Within minutes of work call, the field officers invade the wing, clambering up the stairs, steel spurs jingling as they swiftly walk from cell to cell. They roust the slow to move, peer under bunks for those who might attempt to hide. They forcefully drag those not quick enough to leave their cells.

The litany begins. "Get your goat-smellin' asses out of here! Move! Get on down them goddamn stairs before I put a boot up your ass!"

And the insulting abrasive language continues and seems to feed upon itself, growing louder.

Squad by squad we move out into the early morning light, counted two by two. Once past the turnout gate, you are well advised to forget any remnant of human dignity you might have retained, to put away stray thoughts of human worth or intrinsic knowledge that you're created in the image of God. Once past the gate, your awareness of being the property of the state is irreconcilable and profound. For that day, that week, that month or years upon end, even unto a lifetime, you are accounted only by the amount of labor you can produce for the state. If you're smart, you'll walk to that back gate with downcast eyes, forgetting your name and ever-receding past. For it is that short walk between the building and the gate, where you're again counted like sheep, that your memory unwinds in the most heart-wrenching way. It is there, before running to the flatbed trailers lined up behind the tractor, that the past slams into your consciousness and the present becomes something surreal, almost too difficult to comprehend or endure. You move like the automaton the keepers attempt to create. A mad scramble for a seat

always erupts, once your feet have carried you to the trailer. The pushing, shoving, threatening prisoners then settle themselves and huddle together, back against back, knee to knee, balancing against each others' bodies along the rutted roads.

It is a slow ride from the back gate to the fields. We roll past lovely countryside; grazing cattle, wildflowers waving sad hellos. A fieldlark's greeting is discerned rising above the growling tractors, and the nervous chattering of idly gossiping prisoners. Today I watched the sun's slow ascent until its orb grew too bright to gaze into as I prayed.

Praying on the way to work began



almost by accident. I was haunted by what I'd heard and seen out in the fields. I feared the years on death row had siphoned so much of my health that I'd be unable to endure the work pace demanded in The Line. I was not at all certain, at first, if I could avoid the temptation of running, so long had I been held inside a cage. So I prayed for strength. I prayed my temper wouldn't get me into the bad graces of the field bosses. Like my waking now before dawn, the prayers have become habitual. I found that on the days I chattered and gossiped with the others, forgetting to pray, the work seemed more tiresome and the rigorous demands more trying. Eventually the prayers assumed a less self-centered tone and gradually embraced those around me. Only within the last year has prayer been directed towards the bosses and their studied tyranny.

Today was like any other work day. Once we arrived in the garden, we were ordered to various locations for picking okra. The stuff is covered

with tiny, sharp spines that cause immediate irritation and itching.

What we harvest in the cool morning fills the kitchen of the officers' houses; the rest goes to feed Coffield. This is a gentle, life-affirming labor as old as humankind...but the agrarian calm exists only in my memory. From the moment we jump from the trailers and pair it up to be counted again, the harsh, demanding voice of the bossman begins to jeer, taunt, insult, prod, order and threaten us.

Instead of harvesting the crops we have planted and tended all season, our bodies are pitted against themselves because it is the habit of

Convicts grow and harvest the food for themselves, their keepers and the keepers' families. The farms and units are prisoner-constructed, from clearing the land by hand to making the bricks. Cotton crops are tended and harvested, ginned and milled within the system, as they were in the Civil War. It is then sewn into our clothes and our sheets, or stuffed into the mattresses we sleep on, or made into towels to dry our bodies with. We wash with soap rendered here and stamped with the Texas State Seal or an outlined Lone Star. The entire, complex system is built upon the unpaid labor of human beings working at breakneck speed. Through every phase of operation the maxim remains: obey or else.

Or else you'll be beaten down in the fields by your fellows whose anger and frustration is misdirected at you instead of those untouchable tyrants astride their appropriately emasculated horses, branded with a number and a Lone Star. Escaping that fate, you're ordered to "stand on the wall" after work where the field bosses take you into a small, crowded room and make their point with a beating that later "never happened" because no witnesses are ever available.

Almost any job is preferred over the fields. Years ago it was not uncommon to see men sever their achilles tendons to escape field work. The conditions were more brutal then. But there are still incidents of physical mistreatment and assault of prisoners by bosses. I've lost count of how many such incidents I've personally seen. Nowadays, boiling water is poured on feet scalding them badly enough for a thirty-day lay-in from the unit clinic. Men punch their fists into swollen claws, standing and hitting the concrete walls of their cells. They lie, saying "I got my hand caught in the door, boss." If believed, they're excused from work until the swelling goes down.

In the 68th Legislative Session of the State of Texas, a bill was introduced that would have resulted in Texas prisoners being paid a small, token wage for each day they work. The amount of a dollar a day was first suggested but, the Texas Department of Corrections publicly vowed to oppose the bill with its substantial lobby. In a compromise soaked in irony, a dime a day was substituted, with a nickel of that to be earmarked for the state's Victims Compensation Fund. But even that

compromise was defeated by the prison powers.

In the hearings on prisoner wages, a TDC spokesman testified that the reason the system demands so much of its labor done by hand instead of by the more modern methods, is to "help establish a work ethic among the inmates." But the only sure thing that comes out of established state-sanctioned slave labor is an intense hatred of labor, a needless association with humiliation and physical pain. This is an especially crippling legacy for young offenders who've never had the opportunity to work for a living, due to their economic position, their race or a combination of the two in a failing economy such as we presently see in America.

The threat of physical harm, the reality of physical suffering and abuse due to the pace and variety of work demanded by the state, and the additional threat of good time credits being snatched away: these create a trinity of physical, emotional and psychological controls on your life as a prisoner. Those who are genuinely attempting to pay their debt to society, no matter the reason for their imprisonment, cannot help but leave here worse than when they arrived.

Lunch for the field crew is a tasteless meal consumed in great haste among strangers. Building guards roam the chow hall mouthing meaningless commands. We are told where to sit. Once seated, you cannot rise again. If your table for four has no salt and pepper shakers and you can't get the next table of filthy, ravenous men to pass theirs, you do without. Approximately five minutes was given us to eat today before the fat guard came by, pounded his fist on the corner of the stained table and demanded we leave. I had waited in line to be served for twenty minutes.

Back at the garden for the second half we're ordered to grab an "aggie" from the trailer-mounted rack of tools. "All right, ladies, y'all know what it is. Gimme a line down through that watershed. Move your asses!" We move. We know what it is. Aggie time. The handles of aggies, heavy-headed field hoes, are made from oak trees felled by prisoners. Some may have come from trees I helped slay two seasons ago, help carry on my shoulders to trailers where we heaved their weight and watched, breathless, winded, as they were carried to the sawmill. That year I had a brand new aggie. Within a couple of months the rough surface of its handle was stained with blood that came when the blisters broke and later polished smooth by my calloused hands. I remember this and think of the

hundreds of hands that have held this sharp tool I now carry. I wonder if other hands gripped as tightly as mine does when I am tricked into memory. I wonder when those hands last held the hand of a loved one or even knew the comfort of any tool when it is used with a sense of dignity instead of in the hopeless rage of the enslaved?

I work as the striker in our squad. I don't have to line it up with the others but instead I go along, helping the slower workers keep up with the rest of the line, or "catting": doing the easier work along the water shed and turn rows. The line of men stands, each one almost touching the one in front, all facing in one direction. The aggies are held at right angles to the line, resting on the weed-choked earth, stilled, ready for the command. The Lead Row faces the squad and sets their work pace according to the bossman's desire. The idea is to stay in a straight line that just might satisfy him. But bossmen never seem satisfied.

"Pull it back now. . . Pull on it you mother....! Put ya' backs into it. Pull! It's work time," he shouts. And the line of men with downcast eyes jump into frenetic motion like tightly-reined thoroughbreds who will never win a race but only run as cripples,

cast-offs desperately trying if not to win, then to escape, to get through this hot afternoon, to make it from here to the next water break an hour away in slowmotion time. Dust rises in clouds from the savaged earth. The cadence is uneven, the beat missing. Aggies that should be rising and falling in tempo like a sixty-armed monster wielding thirty hoes now seem crazed, reeling and wounded. The men move backwards, slowly pulling hacked, tangled weeds and mounds of dirt from the steep ditch. The bossman isn't satisfied. He orders them back into the ditch, demanding every single blade of grass, every shred of weed and piece of stubble removed.

I drink it in like a bitter cup as it continues like this, hour after hour. The squad will be driven down this lonely road, clearing first the left then the right ditch. At one point we scurry out of the path of a road-grader and stand dumbly as it speeds by. The prisoner driving this bright-yellow maintenance machine doesn't see us. His machine could have done what we're doing in ten minutes. It will take us four hours.

It's over a hundred degrees out here and at the second water break a fight erupts near the buckets. It's quelled just as suddenly as it started,

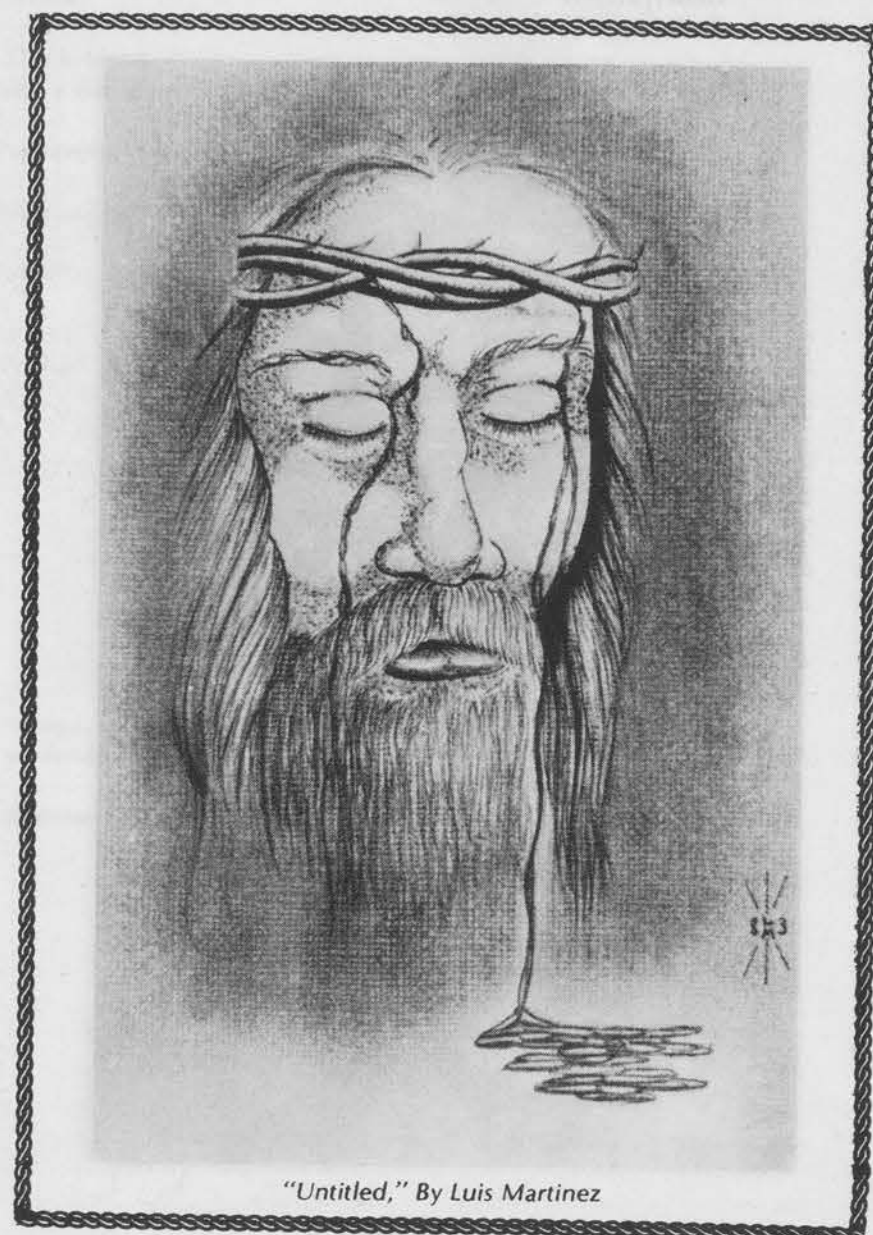
but not before the bossman sees it and explodes in a rage. He orders both buckets of water dumped out before more than a half dozen of us have poured a tepid cupful down our parched throats.

"Fat boy, you meet me on the major's wall after showers," the bossman says. Because the obese Hispanic has fought with the Lead Row, he'll be the only prisoner disciplined in that way. But the rest of us, already dehydrated, have missed a water break. During the next hour, three members of 55 Hoe will fall out from the heat. But we've managed to clear the water sheds and ditches of weeds. And by talking quietly to a few men, the Tail Row and I have kept the squad together and in control even when we each want to throw down our tools. There are no more fights today, no more heat exhaustion that goes untreated and unreported. We make it one more time, not because we want to. We have to.

"Y'all pair it up...goddamn it!" The squad limps into pairs, removing our ragged hats without being told. We march in a quick, tight formation past the lieutenant, who counts us for what must be the fifteenth time today. No one has managed to escape. Nobody ever does.

It's silent on the ride back. The heat is shimmering on the horizon and sweat pours from my body. All I can smell is myself and the acrid mixture of other bodies. I wish there were more peace around me, more dignity in being a slave. But there is not. There never has been. At best, my faith allows me to tell myself that I'm offering up this present suffering, helping to complete the suffering of Christ and that, as a part of his mystical body, I am being completed in him.

It is what I believe, what I've been told and accepted all my life and found comforting when no other explanation, no other recourse was available. But what of the others? What have they to believe? What is their strength that gets them through the days and nights? In the end, perhaps one must be satisfied with the simple dignity of being human. If not, dear God, what then?



"Untitled," By Luis Martinez

Philip Brasfield is serving a life sentence after a second trial that removed him from death row. This article, an edited version of a chapter from a work-in progress, first appeared in September, 1984, in Fellowship. Mr. Brasfield has published several articles and poems and currently he is searching for a "small respectable Texas press" to publish his book.

## POESIA

## DESPIERTEN SOLDADOS DE AZTLAN

Despierten soldados de Aztlan  
Tenemos que buscar nuestro plan  
Lo que nos pasa es algo horrible  
Debemos de ser una Raza soberana y libre.

El derecho de luchar y resistir  
este derecho no debe morir  
Nuestro espíritu Mexicano es viviente  
Ese de Azteca Guerrero nos tendra sosteniente.

Los ejemplos pasados de nuestra resistencia  
Con España, Francia y ahora los gringos de Norte  
America  
Estos seran ejemplos recordados  
Que nosotros tenemos que ser organizados.

Justicia, igualdad y liberación  
Todo esto será nuestra obligación  
Seremos maestros de nuestro destino  
Esto lo cumpliremos con nuestro sacrificio.

Nosotros nos tenemos que determinar  
Nuestra liberación tomaremos con sacrificar  
El espíritu sacrificador es la llave para nuestra causa  
Nosotros triunfaremos unidos con nuestra Raza.

El espíritu de Cuahemec, Villa, Zapata, Cabañas y  
Genaro Vasquez  
De sus tumbas nos gritan, Mexicanos no se arrastren  
Ahora yo les digo a ustedes Mexicanos  
Que vamos hacer por la sangre de Nuestros  
Hermanos?????

**Heriberto Huerta**  
Angleton, Tx.

## WINTERBIRD

Where will you go, my agile little bird  
Your wings will tire if you fly very long  
If wind and storm should bring you sadness  
If you look for shelter and find none

Come to me, a soft warm nest I offer  
Where the winter season will pass you by  
For I also wander in places just so lonely  
Amid cold and wind, and have no wings to fly

I left a land that was beloved to me  
That had given me life, for this distant shore  
A vagrant lone wanderer  
I left a home to return no more

You cherished swallow, a bird beloved  
My heart draws near you  
Over you a watch I will keep  
Your tender song on my ears falls sadly  
Recalling my home, only to weep

**Keith Roach**  
Eastham Unit

## AMOR ETERNO

Cuantas veces son las que te he visto llorar por amor?  
Si quieres como otro te quiere a ti; ven conmigo y te enseñaré el camino de amor eterno. Escucha, y si cuando termine, no está satisfecho tu amor; tu llanto no es por amor, si no caprichos en el rostro del amor.

El amor es como las olas del mar siempre firmes y puras  
en veces violentas para enseñar su poder,  
Pero nunca abandonan su ritmo y armonia,  
Va a la playa y cuenta las olas del mar.

Mirando asi al cielo de día ves el sol que ilumina el mar,  
No pide nada por su servicio ni se queja de no descansar,  
A veces se covia con las nubes para meditar,  
Pero está sellado que nadie puede ocupar su lugar.

En el mar las olas, en el cielo de día el sol,  
Por la noche la luna se viste de gala para celebrar su honor,  
Cuarto son sus vestidos que siempre guardan su valor,  
Pero nunca condena o denuncia su iluminación.

Cuantas son las olas del mar....  
Porque en el cielo de día el sol....  
Porque en el cielo de noche la luna....  
Dime si es Amor?

*Para la bella dama sin misericordia*

**Gilbert Garcia**  
Rosharon, Tx.



Rose By David Muñoz / Ellis Unit

## FOR MY DAUGHTER RACHAEL

Prison tries to strip you  
of the things you love the most  
I cling to your memories  
and in my heart . . .  
I hold you close.

**Mary Shallhorn**  
Gatesville, Tx.

## CAMOUFLAGE

Blink quickly.  
Blink, blink. Slower now.  
Crystalline beams of argentine gold  
shower  
down from incongruent angles to  
strike in  
splashes here and there on my body.  
Blink. Slowly. Blink, like the  
nictitating eyes of a lizard.  
Lethargic.  
Hazy, crystalline verdura surrounds  
me  
with its lush, moist velvetiness,  
steamy  
and misty comingling with fragrant  
wisps  
of sylvan blooms and deciduous  
foliage.  
The cool springy sand of the ancient  
ravine belies the surrounding shroud  
of heat shimmering in and out among  
the gargantuan and ageless trees  
which  
canopy my solitude.  
Blink. Blink. Quickly.  
Sensory overload presses about me  
and  
counterforces from within to give me  
an  
impression of ephemerality, floating  
in  
the embryonic placenta of the world  
suspended in temporal protractions  
of an elusive cosmos which drifts  
briefly in and out of kaleidoscoping  
awareness.  
Blink.  
Blink, blink.  
Just cruising around in my body  
being  
cool on a lazy afternoon in the  
mountains.

**F.M. Newman Briseño, III**  
Lovelady, Tx.

## UNTITLED

The winds of change  
Flow with fitful abandon  
Across the ever darkening  
Chronological landscape

Clinging helpless  
The human flotsam  
Destined to emerge  
Stunted, but free

Is this our final solution?  
To pose an insidious answer  
To an incomprehensive situation

Or is there yet a chance  
That where time continues  
Life remains...Unchanged

**Rolando W. Facundo**  
Ramsey II



## THIS IS THE SIDE OF LIFE I KNOW

I have seen  
The bulging belly of a Dope Fiend Whore,  
I have walked on the cramped grave of a Rat,  
I have seen the luster gone from a young girl's eyes  
after her first tour to a paying man's flat,  
I have seen cut wrists and I have watched bile flow  
Where?  
You guessed it right here on  
This Side Of Life I Know!!!

I have heard the Dope fiend's screams in the deep  
dark night  
I have seen the pillhead's mouth froth and foam,  
And I have learned why a lone man likes to roam  
Does this Amuse You?  
Well I hope to Hell so,  
Cause you are getting a look at The Side Of Life I  
Know!

I have been with a harem in a savage bed,  
My body pressed between legs there,  
Doing those things which were considered wrong,  
Without thought, worry or care.  
Oh yes, I have filled my veins with the Poppy's glow,  
and it has all been here on  
The Side Of Life I Know ...

I have been to rooftops, a burglar intent,  
I have shoved twin Deaths in a banker's face,  
There are few things I have not seen or done  
I have drunk the message taught in this prison place,  
Too late I have realized that I cannot run.  
Does this make you happy?  
Well, that is the way it goes,  
Right here on The Side Of Life I Know.

I have been a Hobo, a gambler, a jack-of-All,  
I have rode trains, Planes and even a god-damned  
Boat,  
I have walked mile after mile with gnawing gut and a  
scorched throat,  
I have been in misery down that highway of a million  
pains,  
too sick in my mind to understand why,  
A gambler's road among insanes,  
Half mad, half sad, and waiting to die,  
I am living in a world that is lower than low,  
I have been created by the Police  
So;  
Tell me how do you escape from  
The Side Of Life I Know.

**James R. Preble**  
Ellis Unit

When the judge smiles and in a syrupy  
southern drawl calls your sentence  
"justice."  
you'll realize your soul is being damned  
to an eternity of hell on earth.

**Mary Shallhorn**  
Gatesville, Tx.

## FRAGMENT OF FIRELIGHT

That fragment of firelight  
Which burns so bright  
Is still only a part  
And not a whole  
Of the love from me you stole

There is no more consuming flame  
You could not accept my name  
In the midst of your shadows  
You were barely alive  
And into your darkness  
I would only strive

To find the fire of which  
You were only a part  
Only a part

**Keith Roach**  
Eastham Unit



Rose By David Muñoz / Ellis Unit

What could've been  
and should've been  
Isn't and may never be.  
Sometimes the weight  
Of this sentence almost crushes me.

**Mary Shallhorn**  
Gatesville, Tx.

## YOUR MASTER KEY

Cement floors and concrete walls,  
Steel bars as a door,  
Can't conceal what I feel,  
Or hide my love no more.

Chilly days and dark cold nights,  
Within this tomb of stone,  
Can't prevent this flow of warmth,  
Which loving you turns on.

I'll never allow one single key,  
To dead-lock my feelings here,  
This life I have belongs to you,  
And babe I'll always care.

Knowing you love me I refuse to hurt,  
By being locked-down each day,  
Your master-key to my heart and mind,  
Releases me all the way.

## CURIOSITY

I peeked,  
Clandestinely . . .  
Allured,  
By each heartbeat.

Prying eyes,  
Behold! . . .  
Curiosity,  
Feeds the mind.

**Ronald Leon Cummings**  
Midway, Tx.

## PLAGUED WITHIN

I hate the world that struck me down;  
hostility quickly learned.  
Results -- rebellion, a universal sound,  
cause no one cares, no one's concerned,  
Leaving the core partially burned.

I'm fatigued by unyielding strife -  
conscious of self-pity consoling the  
abused.  
Yet, the bludgeoning of daily life -  
leaves a gentle mind . . . confused,  
While the world remains amused.

**Rudy Rios**  
Lovelady, Tx.



# SHARDS

## THE SPLINTERED MEMORIES OF A MADMAN

By  
Ruben C. Vela

It has been raining lightly, a cold, grey, incessant mist, for ten full days without surcease.

The world is dark and damp outside, and upon my turbulent spirit, an alien quietude has settled, soft and constant as the descending mist.

I sit and watch the falling rain out of the midst of my tiny universe of three upright walls of reinforced concrete, with a ceiling of the same, a sheet of steel for a bed, enamel commode and washbowl at the corners, iron bars for a door that never opens.

Here, in this miniscule world, I eat and breathe and sleep; dream, rage, lust, despair. And, in most desperate moments, even dare to hope a little.

A bit of green, dark and spectral in the rain, separates the cellblock wherein is contained my minute cubicle from another cellblock exactly like it, honeycombed with tiny cells that hold wretched human worms silently writhing.

I watch the rain wash away the dirt and grime from the crimson bricks across the way, altering their hue to that of old dried blood.

Tiny fat runnels scamper erratically down the thick glass encased in steel frames. The bit of green is grass. Seared and bald in patches in the winters, bright green and achingly alive in the spring, I have watched it turn—year after year after eternal year.

There are no trees to tell me it is autumn, and solely the brightness of the green informs me when it's spring—although something ever stirs within me then; stirs faintly in the heart, indifferently in the blood. Like a shrug.

I sit on the cold concrete by the barred door, puffing ruminatingly on a handrolled cigarette—an old, shriveled-up, wasted hulk of a man whose jaundiced eye looks out upon life as no more than a piteous collection of events which, at the time of their occurrence, held a measure of significance as to have been fixed in remembrance. And I have hoarded my little store of such events as a miser his gold, spreading them out before me from time to time to finger wistfully.

Well do I know the gentle delusion that remembrance induces; that my memories are naught, save the stuff of dreams, illusion, and utterly meaningless. For memory, ever altering and embroidering, has by now muted and softened even the most painful of these, cushioning to bearable degree the sharp pang of brute reality. Yet, still do I succumb to the lure of remembrance. For it is all that I have. All that is left to me now.

Between event and event, what has there ever been in my wretched existence save drear monotony and meaninglessness? Who has recorded the day to day events, noted the commonplace, the tripe and trivia that has ever been the meat and substance of my everyday living?

It has been only the rare event, the extraordinary experience, that alone has jolted me momentarily from the somnolent slough of plodding, meaningless existence.

And now, suddenly, those remembered events come burbling forth, rushing to the fore and clamoring for expression. I sit passively and allow them to cascade from me unimpeded, for now is a time to remember. I do not know why this should be. I just feel, know, that it is.

It is not good, in this place, to remember too much, nor too often, and I have ever kept remembrance at a great distance, shrugging it roughly away whenever it has nudged me.

But now is a time to remember and I let the mood grow, fill out and engulf me. And it is not a morbid mood, but a soft and soothing one that quietly yields like a lifting fog so that I am in its midst as through some imperceptible osmosis.

# SHARDS

I cannot recapture the smell exact, the smell of clean poverty. But it is with me still.

There was clean and there was dirty poverty then.

Dirty poverty was old rags, worthless tires, rusty cans and cobwebby bottles strewn about the backyard; dirty dishes left overnight in greasy, tepid water; warped boards on sagging wooden porches; a missing step from the front stoop; yellowness where white had been. Dirty poverty was resignation—*sea por Dios*, no-hope, no-pride, no-smile and no-pity, and big, fat, black cockroaches scurrying about in daylight, sensing they could do so with impunity, for the pride, the will to make them wary, was no longer there.

Clean poverty was washing and scrubbing and mended clothes with no visible patches; it was crocheted things to hide a scar or crack; a simple tablecloth covering a raw surface; a faded linoleum over warped and splintered boards. Clean poverty was pride and hope and sacrifice. It was shame and deep hurt and deeper rage. It was a tiny, flickering flame ever alit before His Image in a corner, lighting the cold, dark nights a little, warming the sunless days just a might.

Both clean and dirty poverty have a smell, and I have known them both. But it is the clean that I remember now; the one with me still. It is the smell of love and innocence. The smell of Mama and childhood. The smell of another world.



"Mother/Madre," by Juan R. Herrera, taken from an original painting by Derillo

The old house must have been yellow once, but by then, much time and weather had faded it to the weak taint of an old tea stain. There were trees in front, an orange and a lemon, one to either side of the stoop. And flowers: rose bushes, a magnolia, flaming gladioli and giant elephant ears. A chain swing creaked lazily on the front porch and slat shutters had somehow been preserved at the two windows fronting the narrow, winding street. The boards of the porch that warped, as well as the steps of the stoop that broke, were always promptly replaced by Don Virginio, the landlord, whose family of eight occupied the four front rooms. Everything was clean and spruce and cheerful, and a stranger passing by would have known that there was life and love in the old house still, despite its mean setting.

Don Virginio's wife, Doña Sofia, would send out Velma, their youngest daughter, to water the flowers and the trees, the porch, swing, shutters, the stoop, and the dirt path leading to it from the hard-packed yellow earth beyond the salt fence where the sidewalk must have been long before. And I would come watch Velma, slipping round from the back of the house to the front corner where stood the lemon tree.

There I would stand, utterly entranced, as the stream from the black cut-off hose sprayed the flowers, riffled the leaves, and drummed a tumbling tune at the shutters. I wanted very much to hold the black hose, but I dared not ask and

would hold myself very still, afraid lest Velma should order me away. For she never spoke to me, and I sensed that my presence annoyed her although she would never acknowledge it, spraying all round the lemon tree and waiting until I had retreated beyond the house's edge before watering it.

Velma was black-brown, and wore thick lenses. She perspired tiny beads above her ample lip, and Doña Sofia braided her straight, unruly hair into stiff pigtailed.

I was not the only one who Velma snubbed. She rarely spoke to anyone. And this was a great boon, for her voice was loud and grating, her sentences bursting forth in bundles as if she had been compressing into bricks all she had thought and felt during the long periods of not speaking and, once started, was afraid someone would stop her before she could hurl her burden from her. I thought then that her reticence was due to hauteur; to that certain aloof disdain that the offspring of landlords everywhere ever affect toward the inferior spawn of those who must rent their squalid rooms. But it must have been loneliness that made her so, for her lot was hard and dread, and she must have felt very much alone, as did most of us in those days.

Velma was the family drudge, forever sweeping, cleaning, washing, mending clothes, cooking, making beds, and caring for her mother who had an unremended hip injury that caused her to limp painfully and to tire easily. Velma prepared bottles for her infant brother, breakfasts and lunches for her father and three elders brothers, all of whom worked at the shipyards, and she had their suppers ready when they trudged home late in the evenings.

And then one day, as she brought the thick spray skipping near the lemon tree, Velma gave a sudden twist to her wrist and the fat stream hit me full on the chest. I gasped, terrorized, and thrust up my hands in a futile effort to stem the terrible torrent. She turned it away from me in an instant.

"Oh!" she had cried. "I didn't see you!"

But there was a bellying mirth in her dark pupils that had turned my terror to anger in a trice.

I stooped swiftly and picked up a smooth stone lying at the base of the lemon tree and would have surely crowned her with it had she not of a sudden laughed aloud. The sound rendered me immobile, for I had never heard her laugh before. It was a rich, deep, melodious sound, utterly unlike her speaking voice, and seeming to belong there among the pungent smells of wet wood, glistening green and damp, yellow earth.

I laughed with her then, soaked and soggy, and beginning to itch in my wet, woolen pants. I bounded onto the porch and politely asked to hold the black hose. Velma readily consented—and immediately I turned the fat stream upon her. She squealed and we struggled, and we laughed uproariously together—just like all children are supposed to do.

Velma and I became close companions that day, and just a short time later, lovers. And I have ever wondered how this latter circumstance came about, for she was ten and I scarcely a year older. Sex talk was totally taboo—the most forbidden subject in our respective households—pornography was unknown, and such were the movies that we were taken to, that a light kiss and the holding of hands were the most passionate scenes. It may be that I had picked up part of this secret knowledge at school, for I had heard sex vaguely discussed there, and Velma may have too. But I know that the greater part of that knowledge came to us in the nights; in the whisperings and surreptitious creakings; in the suppressed moans and the unsuppressable smells that came to us as we huddled altogether in the crocheted blankets on the warped and splintered boards at the foot of the great masterbeds where we ourselves had been conceived, listening; knowing without knowing how we knew the meaning of the night noises; and feeling the hot blood begin to stir restlessly in our very young veins, long before it should have. And the blood remembers.

Our friendship brought Velma and I much joy and warmth and laughter, but it was short-lived.

Our lovemaking, such as it was, brought us nothing save bitterness and an added torment. There was really nothing much to it; a bit of rubbing together, grimaces of pain, surges of emotion quickly arrived at and just as swiftly expended, and leaving us feeling soiled and guilt-ridden. It destroyed our friendship and we soon began to quarrel. Velma, swiftly expended, and leaving us feeling soiled and guilt-ridden. It destroyed our friendship and we soon began to quarrel. Velma, ever the sensible one, shortly terminated this sad state of affairs by threatening to tell her brothers should I persist.

She never spoke to me again, and I no longer went to watch her water the flowers and the trees, although there were still times when I would stand well back in the shadows beyond the house's edge and watch the thick stream spray the pale lemon tree. But it wasn't fun anymore. The strong current seemed to gouge out a deep furrow in my being just as it did the yellow earth whenever Velma left it too long at one spot, as she then seemed to do much too often at the base of the lemon tree.

# SHARDS

Home was a single room at the rear of the old yellow house whose high pitched roof was a single sheet of uncorrugated tin. The floors were board, warped and splintered in many places. A common hallway gave access to the stoop of the backyard. A dozen strides away sagged the unpainted outhouse used in common by the four families, a total of seventeen souls who occupied the house's eight, medium-sized cubicles. Immediately next to the old metal trunk in which Mama had brought all of her worldly possessions from the old country stood the icebox—a badly scarred, chocolate brown affair with a cracked pan underneath to catch the runoff from the melting block at its top. It had a food capacity, rarely approached, of twelve cubic inches and could hold a twenty-pound block. The kerosene twinburner reared up next to it, precariously balanced on a pair of upturned crates. In approximately the center of our tiny room, loomed the table, an old-fashioned monstrosity with heavy round legs and a shimmering sheet of spotless white enamel covering its ample surface. A bed and dresser stood at attention against the wall opposite the door with the chiffonier wedged between them. This bedroom set had been my Father's wedding present to Mama, and she polished it lovingly and most fastidiously every Saturday afternoon after the washing and the ironing, singing quietly, and oftentimes tearfully, to herself the while. My army cot hung from a nail hammered to the inside of the wooden door. There must have been wallpaper on the walls sometime before, but by then only gauzy patches and a smattering of rusty thumbtacks testified to this.

What a sharp contrast, this, to the beautiful homes of my Aunts and Uncles, and the plenty they contained! What insufferable crampedness, this, compared to the sweet-smelling, endless space of Grandpa's ranch!

My initial mistake concerning my central position received a mighty impetus, and that as yet gelatinous idea of superiority congealed a bit more firmly, for I began to loathe my world and everything and everyone in it, and came to believe that I belonged in those other, beautiful ones. Whenever we now visited the homes of Mama's people, it became increasingly difficult to disengage me from my activities, and I utterly refused to assist in the preparations attending our departures. Outright disobedience was out of the question, for Mama yet asserted her authority swiftly and stingingly. But subterfuge served me well and I often "forgot" and "dropped" things, "misunderstood" orders, and failed to locate things I was sent after. Many were the times that we had to retrace our steps from the bus stop to retrieve an

article left behind through my machinations. And whereas in former times our departures had been as warm and exciting as had our arrivals, with much kissing and hugging and urgings to return, they became an ordeal for all and such a wrenching proposition to me that it closely approximated physical pain, a hollow, exceedingly lonely feeling, as of betrayal. I hated the tears that stung my eyes and my strenuous efforts to contain them turned my disappointment to bitter anger, a tight-lipped, smoldering rage that could not be articulated nor given vent to. It was to accumulate and fester until the breast was unable to contain it, and my Father's backhand released its awesome fury for the very first time. But that was still in the future.

The city bus that took us into town on the first leg of our long trip home was always new and sleek and shiny. We never had to wait long for its arrival, which was a boon for Mama and such an added torment to me that I wanted to cry out. Our excursions were invariably on weekends so that most of the times we had the entire bus to ourselves. The drivers were friendly and always smiling. They never lost their smiles, and would even chuckle indulgently whenever my younger sister wailed, or the eldest stood up on the plush seats, singing loudly to herself, or else pointing out the strange sights excitedly to me, sights which I most adamantly refused to acknowledge. I came to hate those smiling drivers so that many years later when I had occasion to rob a few of them I always stuck the barrel of my gun deep into the fat of their necks and made them smile for me grotesquely. I was full of my misery. Each smoothly clicking mile that carried me farther away from that magic world and closer to my own, increased my inner tension so that it was only through a prodigious effort that I was able to restrain myself from jumping up in the middle of the empty bus and just scream and scream. As the bus neared the business district, a tear would sometimes escape my terrible restraint. I sat rigidly in my seat, apart from Mama and my sister as a remote and total stranger. Mama would glance often in my direction, a look of fret and reproach, but she never commanded me to sit closer. The sleek bus completed its circuit behind the tall buildings, smart shops, elegant stores and massive banks where worked and traded the men and women who peopled the fairland from which we had come and to which the shiny bus would now be returning without me. Its huge, lashless, headlight eyes and gleaming bumper mocked me as it left.

Three blocks away, my own world began.

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"The Shadow,"

By Albert Castillo/Bexar County Detention



"Mona I - Gesture Drawing,"

By Albert Castillo/Bexar County Detention

In this cell of mine there is always darkness;  
the darkness of pain and frustration  
darkness wiped away for a solitary moment  
but there is still darkness...  
the darkness of weeping and fears  
unspoken  
unheard by our captors  
there is a single strand of lite that shines  
thru  
into this cell of mine; in this lite I write now  
and feel the freedom that exists in my mind  
still the freedom is only of mind  
and they are as always my keepers,  
I spill out my freedom thru my blood...  
and my blood turns to ink...  
and there is freedom in my words;  
so you can read them...  
for all it takes is a single strand of lite.

Gray cell bars  
The sound of steel  
People's cries  
No one hears  
Locks and chains  
With no keys  
Minds are broken  
No one flees

The sun no longer shines  
the wind no longer blows  
no longer green grass  
no longer the sweet smell of flowers  
rain has stopped falling  
seasons stand still with time  
arms with nothing to hold  
love unfulfilled  
tear drops falling  
where rain once was  
you no longer near

Darcelle M. Lingerfelt  
Gatesville, Tx.



"Pinto Girl,"

By Albert Castillo/Bexar County Detention



"The Teacher,"

By Clemente Vasquez/Bexar County Detention

### FATHER TO SON

You were just a baby...  
when I was locked away.  
Oh so many years ago...  
but I've still a debt to pay.  
I can't remember holding you,  
your first words I don't know.  
But I do remember seeing...  
your little face all aglow.  
I remember being proud  
when I knew I had a son.  
I remember the joy that I felt  
when telling everyone.

Many years have passed since then,  
and I've spent them in a cell.  
Wondering if my son's like me,  
whose destiny could be hell.  
I only hope you're smarter, son,  
and my wrongs have taught you right.  
That you never follow my footsteps,  
looking through bars each lonely  
night.

You'll probably never read these words,  
and I'm sure it's just as well.  
For never will words of wisdom,  
come from a prison cell.  
The only thing I've given you  
was love you could not see.  
And all to hope for in return,  
is that you'll never be like me.  
But be proud of who you are, my son,  
the world belongs to you.  
Do the things that must be done,  
but be right in what you do.

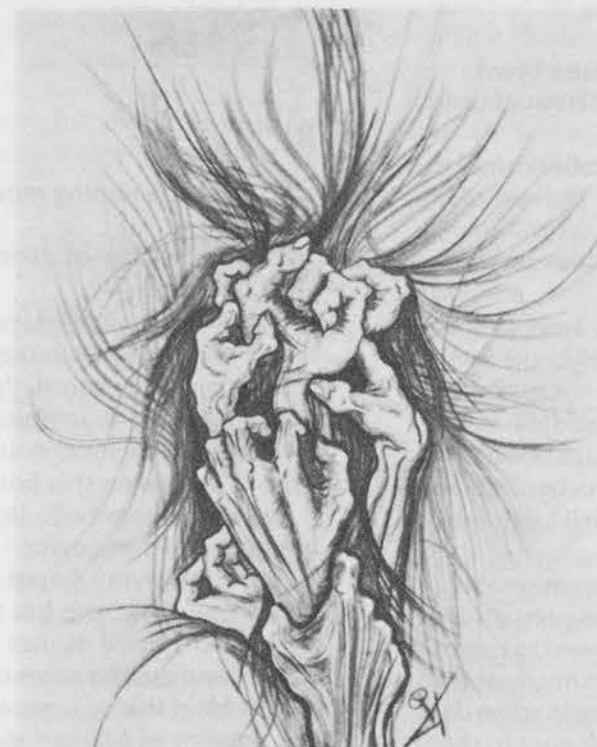
### SUNSHINE DREAM

She once walked beside me,  
but only for awhile.  
She gave me the sunshine  
and reason enough to smile.  
I remember when we met  
a thousand years ago.  
Well maybe not a thousand years,  
but it sure seems like so.  
I guess because she's just a dream  
I've had most every night.  
Sleeping now without her dream  
just doesn't feel quite right.  
She always seems to understand  
when I must go away,  
when the alarm beside my nightstand  
says time for another day.  
But every night as I lay down,  
I know she waits for me,  
remembering the night before,  
anticipating the one to be  
when she will walk beside me  
again for just awhile,  
giving me the sunshine...  
and reason enough to smile.

Gary A Martin  
Ellis Unit



"Untitled," By Luis Martinez



"Capitalismo," By Ruben Estrella



"Untitled," By Luis Martinez

### I SIT ALONE, WITH FIFTEEN YEARS:

Yeah, fifteen years on my back,  
singing to see you again:  
But now is just another day for me.  
Behind these closed steel doors:

You see I look out my window and see  
nothing but the blue sky above me:

Yeah, fifteen year, and only a picture of you  
I will always hold in my hand,  
to remember you by:

So today is another one that will go by:

I SIT ALONE,  
WITH FIFTEEN YEARS:

### YEAH, I'M NO COLD BLOODED MAN:

I'm a lonely man,  
Yeah away from what I love:  
So here I walk alone in this prison.  
Alone and with pain:

You see, they say I'm a cold blooded Man;  
I share no pain: But if you  
See me down a freedom road;  
Please stop, cause I'm your lonely man:

These tears on my face,  
Show the hurt in my Heart;  
Cause you see,  
I'm no cold blooded man  
I also carry your pain, I'm your lonely man:  
Yeah, I'm no cold  
Blooded man:

### YOU JUST ADD ALOT OF NICE TOUCHES; WHEN I'M DOWN:

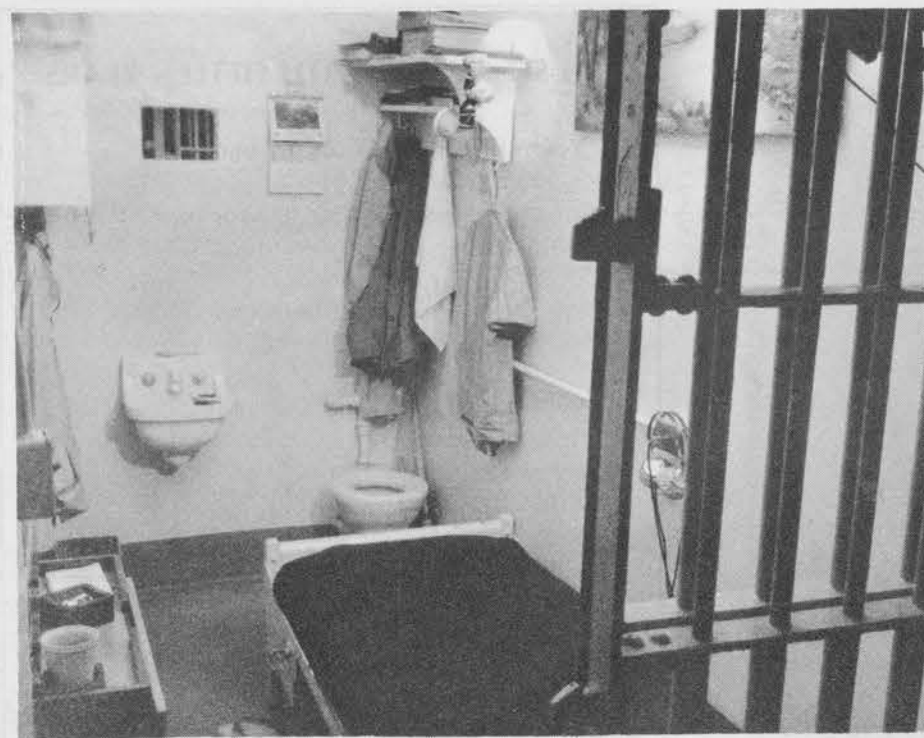
Everytime it seems to me,  
When I'm down, lonely and,  
no one hears or sees;  
And the tears are about to run  
down my face, I hear the mailman  
picking out names:

Baby, you see he is down this run,  
And I wait to hear him call mine:

So here he stands, and hands me  
your letter, and everything,  
and everyday becomes much brighter,  
for me:

YOU JUST ADD ALOT OF,  
NICE TOUCHES;  
WHEN I'M DOWN:

Ismael G. Olguin  
Huntsville, Tx.



# TRIPPING

By  
Ruben C. Vela

## TRIP:

I did a whole life sentence. Nineteen calender years without a break. Half-mad, I stumbled into this dark tunnel one day, stumbled through, and still half-mad, stumbled out the other end.

Early one morning, just like early any other morning, my number came up, the gates opened, and I walked out, a free man on parole for the rest of his natural life.

Nothing except that perfect August morning existed. The life sentence, with all its unspeakable terrors, was dead; moot; no more.

From one moment shuddering imperceptibly into another, I stepped out into this other world, this other dimension, and began this other life sentence.

I had never understood this other world; that is why I had fled to that other. But within one short week outside I knew without shred of doubt that, although physically, this outside world had become wholly unrecognizable to me, intrinsically, nothing at all had changed. It was still very much a rich man's world, and I a poor man in it.

Born into this world at that time and place, under those most miserable of circumstances, my place, my station in life had from of old been prepared for me. I had but to accept my lot, like a man, and I would be allowed to live out my days poor, but proud. Which thing, I must confess, even in my most mad moments, many times crossed my mind while naked and starving in some dark cell. And it did not then seem like too bad of a bargain! Which goes to show just how cold and hungry and delirious even a madman can get down there.

Here had I started another trip twenty years before: exactly here. And the very same question that had rudely thrust itself upon me then urges itself upon me now: What are you going to do? Then, still short of eighteen and already hurting badly in a lot of deep and sensitive crevices within, I had gone straight downtown to the heart of the uncaring city and given my answer there on the corner of Main and Texas, in the shadow of the Rice Hotel where, over brandy and fat cigars, the fates of multitudes had been decided. I had buried a nine-inch Bowie into the heart of another tormented human being, twice; once for each letter of my anguished response: NO!

And immediately I had been swallowed up into the dark tunnel. That had been then.

Today, though strangely at the same place, I stand in another time, in another world, and I do not have to answer a goddamn thing. Let fate or destiny or whatever it is asking find out for themselves. Just as I have had to.

Maybe I will go this way, or maybe I will take some other route. Maybe I will go many ways at once, or follow but one path alone. Maybe I will just stand here and go nowhere, or maybe there are ways that I have never gone and now would walk.

I do not know.

What am I going to do?

I am liable to do anything, be anyone. Or do nothing and be no one at all. But I cannot foretell it.

The light turns green, and I walk.

## TRIP:

It should be raining miserably. The sky should be as grey and leaden as my soul.

It is the first day of summer instead, the sky limitless and fragiley azure. A most beautiful day.

How strange and sad it seems to me that I should be standing here, in this silent, poignant place, reading these meaningless epitaphs.

How ineffably unjust that it should be I standing and they lying there, beneath this cold, impersonal crust of earth.

What possible merit could I have possessed above the very least of them that I should be given this boon of looking down on their tiny plots of clay?

For whose senses do these sad and wilting flowers loose their bittersweet fragrance save my own?

And this velvety carpet of green that rolls gently down this tranquil knoll pleases no other eye but mine.

The richveined stones and timid crosses, the minute grottoes, eternal flames, and golden censers I alone appraise. For the dead see not. Nor know.

And amid this opulence, in the very midst of this disquietening silence, lie the remains of Mama - she who in life never saw lawns so green, streets so paved and curved; she who in life never had more than a few crumpled and hardearned dollars with which to feed and clothe her four offspring. Here lies she, in the lap of affluence, in a bed of rich soil, surrounded by manicured lawns, flame trees, and a purling brook nearby - she who in life knew only the stones of the barrios, the pitted, twisted alleys and weedchoked lots, the stunted shrubs that there somehow managed to grow to warped and misshapen height.

Mama! Mama! Mama!

What hideous irony!

How unspeakably ironic that those who in life forsook you all of the long days of your wretched existence, forcing you to work in rough and inclement weather for a pittance merely to keep yourself and your helpless brood alive, that these very same hypocrites should not have allowed you a miserly grave; that they should have lain you in death where in life you were not allowed to tread!

What matters? What matters, once dead, where one's bones moulder? I cannot quite say. It is just a feeling - something deep within my innermost being that informs me that this should not be.

I shall not be by here again. I knew Mama when alive; she is a stranger to me dead.

## TRIP:

She collects butterflies, and she shows me her collection this morning while we're still in bed.

Mounted moths. Some are very beautiful. Some had preyed; others had hunted diffidently. Most had merely browsed and nibbled here and there awhile, sipping from the tiny perfumed cups of the wantonly waiting flowers.

You could tell how they had flitted, how the wings had beaten. And how, when at rest, the sculpted, etched beauty of their beings had reposed.

But, they were dead now; very much dead. There was no mistaking this, despite the meticulous care that had been taken to preserve their likeness while alive. Dead they were. And very much pinned. And it was probably this that fascinated me most about them. Dead beauty pinned under airless glass. I could empathize.

"And what do you do?" she brings me back. She has that facility of always bringing me subtly, smoothly back.

"I write."

"Oh?" she is up on an elbow, her beautiful body twisted as she lays the butterfly slates on the night table, her greygreen eyes glued to my face. "You never told me that. What do you write about?"

"Of dead, pinned things. Of airless spaces, glasscovered, where anyone that cares to may look and see the dead, pinned things. And sometimes I write of what the pinned things would say if they could but speak. Like, a look from the bottom, you might say."

She looks down at me frowningly, puzzled, and then smiles. "Oh! you mean butterflies!" she leans, finds my mouth and lightly kisses me, like a Monarch tasting nectar. "Maybe you'll write of my butterflies someday. Okay?"

"Okay," I agree into her cascaded silken hair as I turn her over to spread beneath me so that I may enter the world of the very much alive and leave that of the very much dead, and pinned.

## TRIP:

After nine months out here without having contacted anyone whom I knew from the past, I spent the day among a small remnant that has survived of those with whom I grew up in the barrios and the state institutions.

They exist, just as they have ever existed except when doing time, crowded six and eight and up to a dozen in highceilinged rooms of weathered houses that were old and rundown and ratinfested already even when I was a child. Down around Runnels and St. Charles, and in the alleys and twisted streets that run off into weedchoked lots from Harrisburg, Navigation and Canal; around Mason Park and DeZavalla and Seventy-Fifth; in the Clayton Homes and the Irvington Courts, and up around Brooks and Harrington, Burnette, Quitman, Lorraine and Fulton.

It was not as if I had stepped back in time. It was more as if I had never left, for nothing changes in this nether world of the very poor and wretched.

These people still shoot dope, scuffle, hustle, boost, burglarize and rob; panhandle, strongarm, drink wine, eat pills, smoke grass, sniff glue, get busted, make bonds, are beaten, get ratted on, are brutalized by police, get shot and stabbed, burned and bumrapped, O.D. if they are lucky, get sixty years aggravated or life if they are not.

Everyone is much older now. Most are greyhaired, some favor an arm or a leg; most are stooped; most wear state-issued glasses and teeth made on the Ellis. Many are frail and dying, their creased faces exhibiting the yellowish pallor of the chronic hepatitis they long ago picked up from the unsterile needles and never treated; the yellowish pallor of the long, long years spent in dark, sunless places. Most of them have been out hustling on the streets since they were nine and ten years old. Most of them have had dope habits from age fourteen. All of them have been in prison. All of them were born to dire poverty, and will surely die in it. Most of them have by now accepted their mean lot and, if not altogether content in it, are at least, at long, long last, stoically resigned to it. The fierce rage, gnawing fear and implacable hatred that had made them impotently lash out at a repressive society which they had perceived as being the root cause of their wretchedness has long ago been muted; beaten, bled, sweated and wrung out of them. They want no more now than to fix their dope and nod away whatever little time may be left of their mean existences. They would be at peace with the world.

But, there can be no peace for them this side of the grave, for they are still as poor as when they had been born and must go out still and scuffle for their dope just as, in the very beginning, they had to go forth and scuffle to eat and survive.

And so, early in the morning, they roll painfully off the sheetless beds and

up from the warped and splintered boards of the naked floors and, looking about them dazedly and bleary-eyed and without washing, or breakfast, they shuffle out to scuffle their morning fix.

For some inexplicable reason, as if dinner awaited them, most of them return at the noon hour; some smiling with a bit of cash in their pockets, dope in their burned-out veins, or the cellophane papers clutched tight in sticky hands and headed wildeyed and frantic to the stashed rigs to get the sick off.

Others shuffle in dejectedly, having been thwarted in their attempts to get together the fifteen dollars for the pinch, the thirty for the half, or the fifty for the full gram. These hurry to the bathrooms and the tables where the luckier ones are cooking up and fixing and beg them to leave just a few drops in the bottom of the sooty spoons so they can at least take off the sick enough to go back out and try to scuffle enough again.

After everyone fixes, there is euphoria. Most simply kick back and nod; others wash up and comb their hair; some shave, others bathe; some wash out their socks and shorts; a couple of them take over the stove and cook for all.

Those sitting around nodding, exchange information. There is nothing going on within a twenty-mile radius that they don't know about. The narcs got Tone and Sapo on Cavalcade; Niko got busted last night; Choco is back out on bond; Gano is hot, and so is the Kroger's on 45 and Randall's in the Heights; somebody beat Lupe and Crow for their stash - four ounces!

By three in the afternoon, the highs are waning, the dope is depleted, and they have to shuffle forth once more. Alone, in pairs and sometimes threes, they shamle out.

This is the entire cycle of their lives - just as once, long, long ago, it was mine.

I watch them go out, nodding to the dull eyes, the halfraised fists and tight grins that salute me as they pass. I grin back and shake my head, declining their invitations to join them just as I have declined the fixes they have offered.

I get up slow after the last one has filed out and shake Hazus' boney hand. He is the houseman and does not have to go and hustle. Everyone gives him a little of what they bring back for letting them fix and crash there.

"You leaving?"

"Yeah. Got to go."

He grins affectionately and pats my shoulder.

"See you, eh?"

"Yeah. See you."

He steps inside and closes the door softly behind as I go down the broken steps and up the worn path through the weeds to the street and away.

## TRIP:

....And then, there are times when I go so far away that all I can do is sit crosslegged on my green carpet and stare raptly at Love Being Torn Down, the painting that hangs on my wall.

And then my mind and heart and soul depart from me, leaving the body crosslegged in its closet.

My mind becomes a thousand eyes that click and snap and trip, capturing takes for future development.

My heart takes off, on foot, to the barrios that it so loves: Quinto Barrio, Segundo, Sexto, Magnolia, Northside.

My soul does not have to go anywhere. All is within it. But, on some days, it tags along with the mind, to color its pictures. Other times, it follows after the heart, to point out where the flowers grew and the urchins played in the dust before the concrete was poured.

But most times, the soul stays close to the body, knowing it mustn't leave it for too long, lest it grow afraid and close the closet door upon itself.

Only once in a long, long while does my soul go away by itself. I do not know where it goes then. But it always returns, smelling of green, refreshed, and less still. As if it had been at a tryst.

Ruben C. Vela is a native of Houston, Texas. The two prose pieces included in this issue: *Tripping*, and *Shards: The Splintered Memories of a Madman*, are from a larger body of material. Ruben says: "...when there was time and world and hate enough, I made notes; many, many notes. Now, time is at a premium and I would cull these notes and weave them into some sort of order." These writings, then, are a result of such culling.

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#### CENTER FOR PEACE THROUGH CULTURE

Inmates in the Bexar County Detention Center are presently working with Center for Peace through Culture Volunteers, a community of professional teacher-artists from San Antonio. The volunteers work with the idea of peace through culture, culture being an essence within that connects man to his fellow man. It is that part within each person that believes in life, that desires to bring forth new ideas, create beauty, and bring these to others so they may share in their beneficial effects. It is the need to seek peaceful solutions to individual as well as national conflicts. Our finest values: beauty, brotherhood, joy, tolerance, all stem from the essential culture within and are the source of humanity's greatest achievements.

The volunteers are seeking to help the inmates discover beauty, brotherhood, joy, and tolerance through the arts. Through discovering these values in themselves, the inmates can take an active role in changing themselves, and therefore, in changing society. The volunteers conduct workshops in drawing, painting, pottery, commercial lettering, puppetry-design, acting, performing and creative writing. The inmates receive a hands-on approach to the arts, prepare exhibits for the public and practice plays and poetry readings to be performed for fellow inmates. This program creates a chance for development of self-esteem, self-awareness, and therefore, the development of a sense of community.

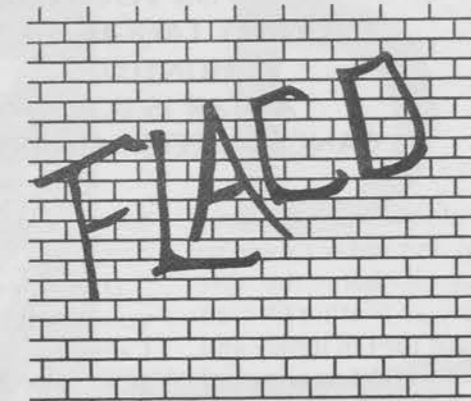
The inmates response to the program has been extremely positive, so positive in fact, that the Center for Peace through Culture Volunteers, headed by James Brandenburg, Volunteer Arts Coordinator, plan to work closely with the Human Services Department, under the leadership of Tom Price, Assistant Director at the Bexar County Detention Center, to expand the program. The volunteers include Linda Seidler, water colors; Karen Sides and Bernice Williams, sketching and painting; Rudolph Gonzalez, commercial lettering; Effi Brandenburg, puppetry workshops; Isabeth Hardy, pottery; David Walker, music and acting; Linda Oliver acting, poetry and stage movement. The expansion will include the use of more volunteers, the integration of more art-therapy ideas into the workshops, and an attempt to educate various church groups and organizations about the special problems of inmates who seek reentry and integration into the community, especially into the job market.

The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center is taking the lead in welcoming former inmates to participate in its activities. The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center also co-sponsored an Exhibit of Inmate Art with the City of San Antonio and the Center for Peace through Culture. The opening reception was held on Friday, January 25, 1985, at the Guadalupe Theater. The Center for Peace through Culture hopes that this participation by the Detention Center and the local community will lead to a better understanding of the great talent and sensitivity of the inmates and will generate some interest among community groups and organizations to work with former inmates and establish programs for them. Interested groups or individuals should contact James Brandenburg through the Center for Peace through Culture, 217 Pershing Ave., in San Antonio, 822-0461.

Written by James Brandenburg  
Ideas on peace through culture taken from a pamphlet published by the Center for Peace Through Culture in New York City.



"Tatuaje Tonantzin," Pinto Tattoo Art



José "Flaco" Saldivar, among the many prisoners who sent us their work for this special issue, certainly stands out as one of the more promising, and productive, writers. He was born on the West Side of San Antonio in 1943, and is the brother of well-known, local conjunto musician, Mingo Saldivar.

We first featured one of his prose pieces, *Impresiones*, in the June/July, 1984, issue of *Tonantzin*, and though we had sufficient material from him for this issue, we felt that his one short story, *Body by Fisher*, was especially comical and appropriate to conjunto music, that we have decided to feature it in the upcoming special issue of *Tonantzin* dedicated to the 4th Annual Tejano Conjunto Festival in San Antonio, 1985, to be held in May. Stay tuned!



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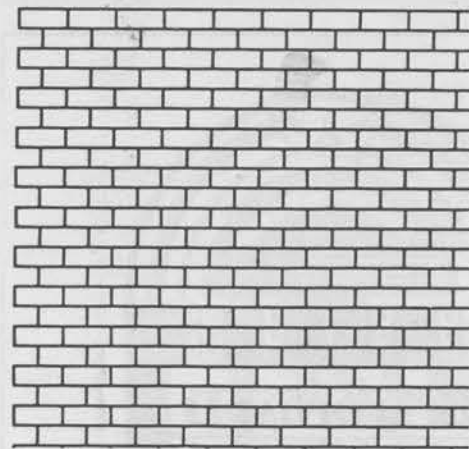
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"...I am not an Artist but know art. I used to write poetry but the harsh reality of my confines, coupled with my work in trying to better the conditions here, which are brutal, inhumane, filthy, and where men are oppressed to the ultimate and enslaved by the rules of the institution where they are forced to work without incentives and deprived of the most essentials of their needs, precludes me from sitting down and doing what I enjoy the most. Poetry. I do not perceive beauty within this harsh reality, nor how men can themselves find time to construct word forms for Poems/Poetry. Poetry itself comes from the depths of one's feelings, experiences and maybe illusions and dreams. I am, however, not an illusive person, nor can I afford to be drawn away from this sad miserable reality. I love beauty and know beauty for what it really is..."

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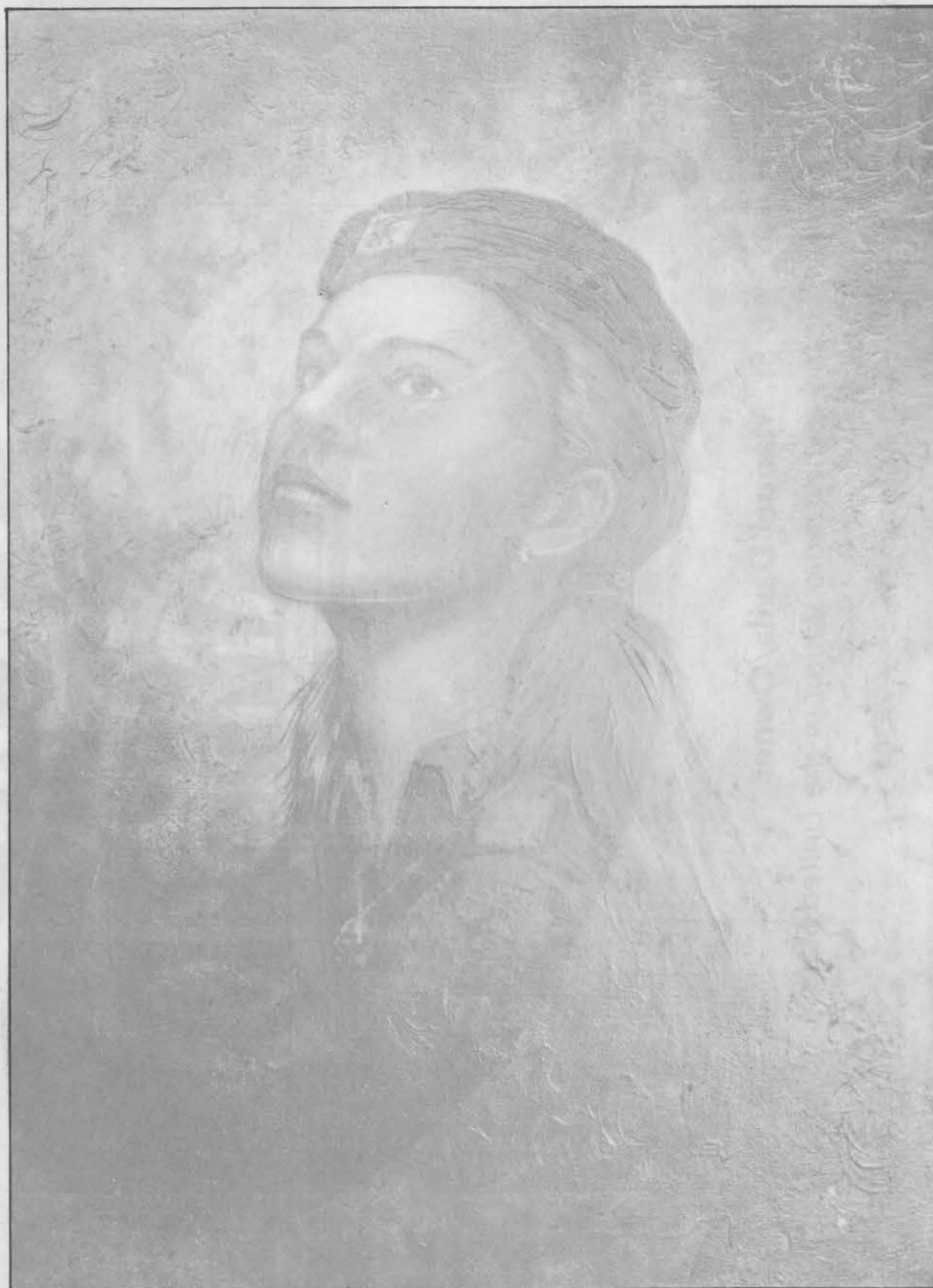
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