



# The Volunteer

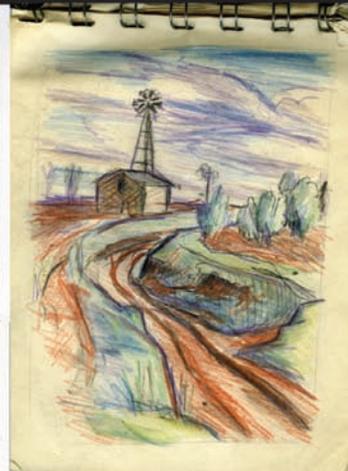
JOURNAL OF THE VETERANS OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE

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

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## THE CULTURAL LEGACY OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE



## Letter from the Editor

As most readers of the Volunteer know, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives are the most important collection of documents, images and artifacts in the world chronicling the lives of the almost 3,000 American men and women who, from 1936-39, volunteered to go to Spain to fight Fascism.

Housed and cared for at NYU's Tamiment Library, the Archives are a unique resource for students and researchers interested in the American volunteers, radical politics in the US in the years between the two world wars, or the history of antifascism. Over the years, historians like myself and social scientists have made extensive use of the archives.

A few years ago, James D. Fernández, Chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and Director of the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center at NYU spoke to the ALBA Board about another angle of the Archive: while teaching an undergraduate course focused on ALBA, he had become interested in the archive—and the volunteers themselves—as sources of culture: published and unpublished poems, drawings, short stories, and memoirs, radio and film scripts, etc.

Fortuitously, around the same time, two of ALBA's greatest supporters, Perry and Gladys Rosenstein of the Puffin Foundation made another splendid donation to the organization, so that we could continue our educational and cultural outreach initiatives.

Today we celebrate the results of that happy coincidence of a fresh idea—the Cultural Legacy of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade—and a couple of loyal and generous sponsors. With Puffin Foundation support, a recent NYU graduate, Elizabeth Compa—who had been a student in the ALBA course taught by Jim Fernández some years ago—was able to co-curate this exhibition, conducting an extensive search of the archive, identifying, ordering and describing its cultural components, and creating an inventory of the cultural output of the volunteers. The pages that follow represent a sampling of the artists and works uncovered by the project. And the exhibition we will inaugurate at NYU's King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center on September 17 is just the most visible, tangible outcome of this initiative. There will also be a semester-long series of events to complement the exhibition (see the back cover for details), and a web-module on the topic will be added to our educational materials.

The public event that will coincide with the closing of the exhibition is titled "The Archive Comes to Life." That event will feature readings, recitations, performances, and interpretations of cultural material culled from the Archives. But the title, more generally, is an apt one for virtually all of the activities undertaken by the organization ALBA, as we strive to keep alive the memory and the legacy of the struggle against Fascism.

—Peter Carroll

# The Volunteer

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# THE CULTURAL LEGACY OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE

The year is 1934 or '35. Phil Bard, a self-trained painter and printer from the Lower East Side, leaves his position as Director of Cultural Activities at Camp Unity in New York State because he has been elected President of the newly formed Artists Union. Bard's position at the camp is taken over by Robert Steck, a native of Rock Island, Illinois, who is on the staff of the New Theater magazine, and who occasionally acts with the Theater of Action Group of the Workers Laboratory Theater. Meanwhile, Mildred Rackley, a teacher and artist from Carlsbad, New Mexico, moves to New York City where she works on the staff of Fight magazine, is active in the Unemployment Section of the Artists Union, and takes on a number of Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects. Vaughn Love, of Dayton, Tennessee, becomes involved with the Federal Theater Project and begins to work with the National Negro Theater.

Around the same time, Solomon Fishman, born in Philadelphia and raised in Coney Island, puts the finishing touches on his first book of poems, *To My Contemporaries*, which he will publish in 1936 under the pseudonym Edwin Rolfe. William Colfax Miller, a photographer and filmmaker from South Dakota, and member of the Screen Directors Guild, the Film and Photo League, and the American Writers Union, pens articles for Film magazine, for Stage and Screen. Alvah Bessie, a graduate of Columbia University, publishes his first novel, *Dwell in the Wilderness*, and is awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship. Paul Block, a sculptor from Los Angeles, leads a sit-down strike of WPA artists in New York City, and helps organize a "Public Use of Art Program" to bring exhibitions to wider audiences.

In this same time frame, a young musician from Texarkana, Arkansas, named Conlon Nancarrow moves to Boston, where he studies counterpoint with Roger Sessions and conducts a WPA orchestra; he will later perform as a jazz trumpeter on a cruise ship. Evan Shipman, a Sorbonne-educated friend of Ernest Hemingway, publishes his first book of short stories, which explores the world of trotting-horse races. Lan Adomian, a Ukraine-born musician who some years before had helped form a Composers Collective with Aaron Copland, Mark Blitzstein, Charles Seeger and others, helps Lawrence Gellert arrange the African American protest songs Gellert had collected, and leads an active choral group known as "The New Singers" that makes recordings of works by Hans Eisler and Berthold Brecht.

This busy gallery of thumbnail sketches in many ways could be a random cross-section of the remarkable cultural effervescence that characterized the mid-1930s in the United States. It is

## **IDLE ARTISTS MARCH IN PROTEST ON CWA**

**100 Demonstrate in Front of  
Mrs. Force's Offices, Charging  
Unfairness in Giving Jobs.**

Unemployed artists demonstrated yesterday in front of the offices of Mrs. Juliana R. Force, chairman of the New York regional committee of the Public Works of Art Project, in the Whitney Museum of American Art, 10 West Eighth Street. The demonstrators, members of the Unemployed Artists Association, charged discrimination in the placing of artists in jobs.

More than 100 persons, about one-fourth of them women, took part. They met first in Washington Square and then marched over to Eighth Street. Police told them to walk in single file as they approached the museum, which they did.

A delegation of five was permitted to enter. Phil Bard, their spokesman, told their grievances to Mrs. Force, who explained that the government had asked her to choose the best qualified for the positions and that she was doing so. She asked that they put their demands in writing, which, she said later, they refused to do.

One of the banners carried by the demonstrators read: "Art Work for Needy Artists or Immediate Cash Relief." Another read: "The Word Need Is Not in My Vocabulary." Miss Bernarda Bryson, secretary of the association, said the latter slogan was a quotation from Mrs. Force's remarks at an earlier conference. Mrs. Force denied making such a statement, explaining that she had said that artists were selected for their ability rather than their need.

Miss Bryson asserted that the police had been "fairly rough" and that she and others had been pushed by them. No one had been struck, however, she said.

"SPAIN CRYSTALLIZED  
MY PHILOSOPHY OF  
THE CLASS STRUGGLE,  
AND IT STILL IS THE  
PRINCIPAL WINDOW  
OPENING ON HISTORY  
AND THE WARS AND  
CULTURE..."

JOSEPH VOGEL



Joseph Vogel's lithograph "Nero," portraying Mussolini, was reproduced in the *New Masses* in 1936. Vogel would soon be in Spain.



The international Workers Order made a special effort to appeal to young people, offering a range of social activities.

A 1930s-era NTL calling card lists all types of performances.

typical of that moment, first of all, and somewhat ironically, because of the diversity of its members. This cast of creative people came from all over the United States and emerged from a wide range of social backgrounds: from children of privileged American families, to children of struggling recent immigrants (or, in some cases, immigrants themselves); from graduates of the Ivy League to alumni of the School of Hard Knocks. The collection of creative figures is also fairly representative of the cultural sphere in the mid-1930s because of the astounding web of institutional affiliations that can be traced in it—the alphabet soup of IWO, WPA, TAC, CIO, etc. As active members—and in some cases founding members—of clubs, camps, labor unions, artists' collectives, fraternal benefit organizations, and mutual aid societies, these writers and artists are far removed from what has become the stereotypical vision of the creative person as a solitary and disengaged individual. The gallery is also a cross-section of the cultural milieu of the 1930s because of the range and diversity of the creative output of its members. This diversity is remarkable not only across the group—from cartoonists to easel painters, from tin-pan alley songsmiths to avant-garde orchestral composers—but also within the cases of individual artists. That is to say, in the extraordinary cultural ferment of the mid-1930s in the US, it was not unusual, for example, for an individual to study the history of polyphonic counterpoint by day and perform on jazz trumpet at night, or to work on mural painting one month and political caricature the next.

The individuals mentioned above undoubtedly formed part of what has been called the "Cultural Front": that extraordinary alignment of art, radical politics, industrial unionism and international solidarity that characterized the culture of the United States and many other countries in the years between the onset of the Great Depression and World War II. But Bard, Rackley, Rolfe, Adomian and these other artists have something else in common.



They would all soon converge on another, less metaphorical front: Spain, 1936-39.

For all of these artistic individuals—and scores more—were volunteers in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, the group of almost 3,000 American men and women who volunteered to go to Spain to fight Fascism.

With the support of the Puffin Foundation, the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center of NYU, the Tamiment Library and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, we have assembled an exhibition that explores and celebrates the Cultural Legacy of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

Using the extraordinary holdings of NYU's Tamiment Library and its Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, the exhibition aims to illustrate: the cultural work and activism of the volunteers during the years leading up to the Spanish Civil War; their forms and means of cultural expression during the war; and the creative production of the surviving volunteers after their return from Spain, including the works of the large group of volunteers who became writers or artists only after the war. A special section of the exhibition titled "Profiles of Loss" looks at the works and lives of a number of the many creative Americans who died in Spain.

There are a handful of Lincoln Brigade cultural figures that have received considerable critical attention. One can read book-length scholarly studies of Ralph Fasanella, Conlon Nancarrow and Edwin Rolfe, for example. But little work has been done on the more basic and broader questions of the direct involvement of US writers and artists in the Spanish Civil War. For that reason, the exhibition does not pretend to be an exhaustive statement on the "state of the field," but rather, an exploratory survey of a fascinating group of individuals, the milieux from which they emerged, and the cultural artifacts they have left behind. Who were they?

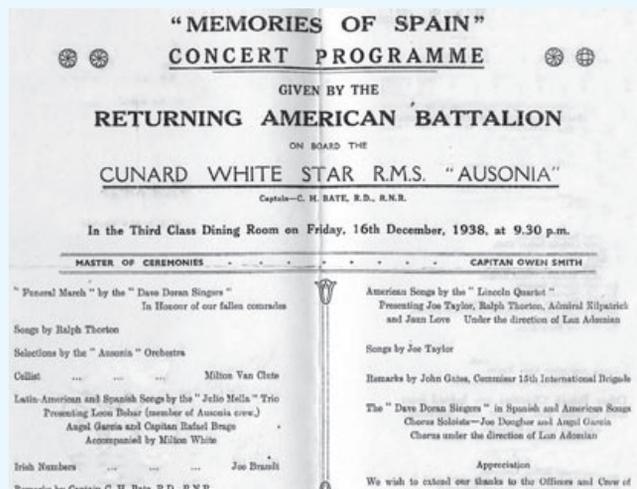


The Lincoln Brigade periodical Volunteer for Liberty was published weekly in Spain for most of the war. Several volunteers served (in succession) as its editor, and a number more were staff members.

Several irreplaceable volunteers planned and performed at a memorial concert aboard the ship that was bringing them back from Spain to New York in December, 1938.



The extremely popular format of the wall newspaper, or "periódico mural," was a site on which the volunteers could display their creative efforts: poems, drawings, cartoons, etc.



What were their works like before, during, and after the war? How were their works received? How did they make use of their creative faculties while in Spain? What connections can be drawn between their works and the war? What became of their artistic careers after the war?

We do not wish to argue a strong thesis, nor to make judgments or rankings regarding the aesthetic qualities and values of the works produced by these Spanish Civil War volunteers. Instead, by identifying, arranging and displaying a diverse and unique set of texts, images and artifacts, we hope to help open up a field of inquiry, one that might be pursued by others in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives and elsewhere. In addition to the intrinsic interest of the works and professional trajectories of the Lincoln Brigade writers and artists, we are convinced that these archival materials will be of interest to anyone concerned with the broader outlines of US culture in twentieth century, and with the connections between ideological strife and cultural production.

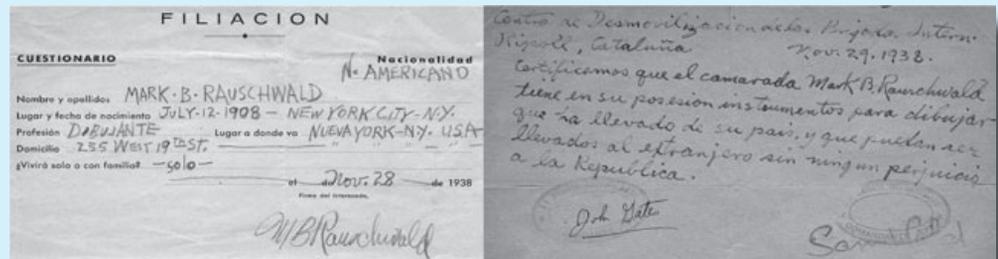
Any attempt to be definitive on a topic like this would be futile. A number of the creative volunteers are still alive and still producing. The odyssey of the Lincoln Brigade forms part of the living memory of a vast community of citizens, friends and family members. And the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives is itself a living collection, which constantly receives and uncovers new material. We embrace this open-endedness. We look forward to receiving comments, corrections and additions to our work. And we are honored to participate in this ongoing conversation, particularly in the pages of *The Volunteer*, the publication in which the works of many of the figures we study first appeared.

Elizabeth Compa  
James D. Fernández  
Curators



Drawings by Joseph Vogel explore a range of human predicaments .

Lincoln volunteer Mark Rauschwald lists “draftsman” as his occupation on this form. The second document gives Rauschwald permission to carry artist’s supplies out of Spain.



## Joseph Vogel

Joseph Vogel was born in 1911 in what is today Poland. His family emigrated to the US in 1927 and settled in New York.

Vogel soon began studying on scholarship at the National Academy of Design and the Arts Students League. He later would study in Paris at the Grande Chaumière and the Académie Julian. During the 1930s he was active in the John Reed Club, an organization set up by the Communist party for young artists and intellectuals. He also worked as a WPA artist, and assisted Ben Shahn on a mural project at Rikers Island.

Vogel was most interested in surrealism and semiabstract art; he also developed an interest in documentary film and photography. He struggled to conjugate formal experimentation with socially relevant content.

In January 1937, Vogel volunteered for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and served with the 86th Brigade's Mixed Company on the Córdoba front. He also drew and sketched regularly while in Spain, and toward the end of his service he illustrated the weekly edition of the *Volunteer for Liberty*.

Joseph Vogel, whose first west coast show you must not fail to see, is something new in surrealism. Don't let the word shock you, for this young man is healthily and lustily removed from the neurotic vaporings so unfortunately associated with most of the surrealist group.

He deals with the world rather than with himself, and he deals with it in something considerably stronger than rose-water and moon-glow.

Here you will find sound draftsmanship, vivid color and challenging fantasy, focused expertly upon a world which could not be photographed with one-half the accuracy and perception of his paintings, lithographs and gouaches.

All of which is not surprising in an artist whose eagerness to come to grips with his surroundings has carried him through a Sixth Avenue boyhood to the Spanish Loyalist Army, and finally to the Whitney Museum, Corcoran, New School for Social Research, and Valentine Galleries.

—Dalton Trumbo,  
*Arts and Architecture*, November 1942.



Vogel enlisted in the US Army in 1943 and served as a combat cameraman in Europe. After the Allied victory there he went to the Philippines and Japan as a combat artist. Following the war, Vogel moved to Los Angeles and taught documentary film at the University of Southern California. He also worked as an artist and filmmaker, wrote television scripts, and taught art at the Chouinard Arts Institute. Over the course of his career Vogel had several one-man and group shows in New York, Los Angeles, Paris and Mexico. Most of his art combined styles reminiscent of cubism and surrealism with leftist political imagery.

His art can be found today in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian, the National Archives Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Philadelphia Museum, and the New York Public Library.

Vogel died in December 1995.

# James Neugass

"It is possible to walk down New York streets without being shot at, to work without listening for sirens, to



sleep in a bed and to take many showerbaths.

There is much food to be bought and the water is good to drink.

All over New England are weekend lakes each with its sunlight, birches and pines, canoes, laughter, and sunsets.

Along the seacoast it is possible to lie in the sand and later,

when the light begins to fail, to look out over the ocean towards Spain until vision melts into darkness and night blinds the eye."

So begins James Neugass's brilliant memoir of his experiences as an ambulance driver in Spain, *War is Beautiful*, as yet unpublished. The introduction is entitled "Afterwards," the only pages looking back on his time in Spain from the relative safety of home ground. The rest of the gripping book was written in his ambulance, or a field hospital, or a ditch, as he supported the troops at the front.

Neugass was born in New Orleans in 1905. The biography on the back cover of his novel *Rain of Ashes* — published the year he died — describes a man who "studied mining engineering at Yale, fine arts in Michigan, Maya archeology at Harvard, and political science at Balliol College, Oxford," all before he was 23, and goes on to say he was also book reviewer, shoe salesman, social worker, fencing coach, housing inspector, and janitor. It never mentions his service in Spain. His son Paul says his father was also a great chef, true to his New Orleans upbringing, a toy designer, and a sailor who built his own boats. He died of a massive heart attack in 1949 while standing in the Christopher Street subway station in Greenwich Village.

A 1934 review in the *Nation* of a collection by ten young poets including Neugass called him "perhaps the most engaging of the group [who] writes straightforwardly and with wit, in cadences that are sometimes prosaic."

—Peter Glazer

In a chronicle published in *Salud! Poems, Stories and Sketches of Spain by American Writers* (1938), Neugass recounts an episode he would later rework into the poem "Give Us This Day."

## Transubstantiation

Four dead cavalrymen fully dressed and unspotted by blood lay on stretchers in the hospital courtyard. Saxton, blond tall young English surgeon, knelt beside one of them. He had rolled a sleeve past the elbow of a gray arm.

"What do you think you're doing, Doc?" I asked, suddenly remembering that he was our blood transfusion expert.

He did not answer.

Angry, I leaned over the surgeon's shoulder. The single vampire tooth of a big glass syringe was slowly drawing the blood out of a vein in the inside of the dead cavalryman's forearm. The vessel filled and Saxton stood.

"New Soviet technique," he said, holding the syringe between his squinting eye and the late winter sun. Purple lights shadowed the glistening bar of ruby.

"Seldom get the chance. Most of them are pretty well empty when they go out. Those four over there were in one of the dugouts in the wall of the main street. No timbers in the roof. Direct hit. Asphyxiated, all of them. Their comrades brought them up here. Thought we could help. Their bad luck," Saxton pointed to the four gray young clay-stuffed mouths, "was our good luck. We are running short on donors, and the transfusion truck has been too busy."

"You mean... that you're going to..."

"Well, first I'll have to type and test it...have to hurry."

I touched the bright tube with my hard black fingertips. Was the glass warm with the sun or with human life?

Now I understand why we must win. Men die but the blood fights on in other veins and their purpose fills other hearts.

# Mildred Rackley

Mildred Rackley was born in Carlsbad, New Mexico, in October 1906. She lived there until 1930, excepting two years when her family lived in Colorado, and a year at the University of Texas. She earned a teaching degree from the Las Vegas (NM) Normal School in 1927 and taught history, typing, English and phys-ed at Taos High School for three years.

Rackley became involved in the artistic community there, especially through the Taos Society of Artists, and she began painting and drawing. In 1930 she married visiting German artist Hans Paap and left for Europe. They lived in Germany and traveled extensively for several years, including to Barcelona and Mallorca, where Rackley witnessed the newly formed Spanish Republic and met German refugees of the Nazi regime.

When their marriage ended Rackley returned to Taos, but in 1935 left for New York City, to work on the staff of *Fight* magazine, published by the League Against War and Fascism. She was also active in the Unemployment section of the Artists Union, and at some point worked in the WPA's graphic arts division, as she kept up her own artistic career. Rackley was planning and sketching a mural for a Treasury Department building when Dr. Edward Barsky asked her to be secretary-translator for the American Medical Bureau to Aid Spanish Democracy. She traveled to Spain with Barsky and served as his assistant, notably in the aftermath of the Jarama battle soon after they had arrived.

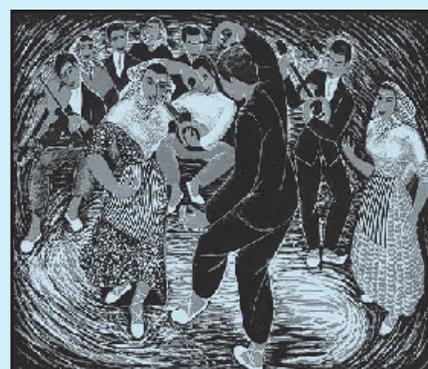
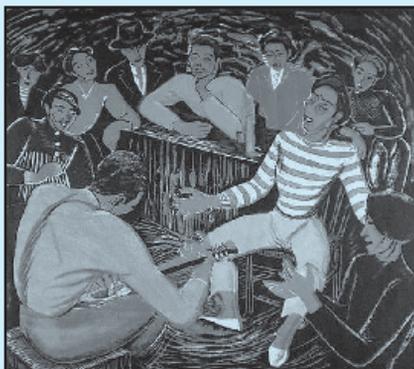
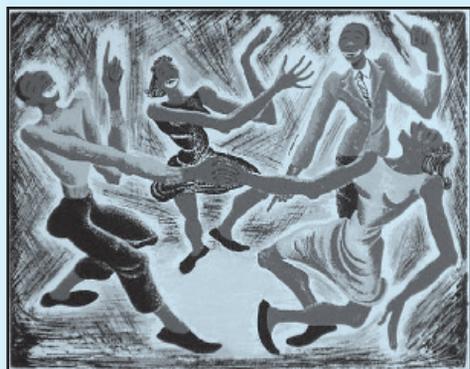
She was chief translator at the first American hospital in Spain, and attained the rank of Lieutenant in the Service Sanitaire. She was fluent in French, Spanish and German, and was responsible for maintaining contact with the Medical Bureau office in New York. She later transferred to

the British Medical Unit where she was responsible for supplies and food. She found time to draw whenever she could, and was officially licensed to have a camera, taking a number of pictures which, after her death, would be exhibited in New Mexico. Rackley returned from Spain in July 1938, the year she became vice president of the Artists Union, and ran a summer camp in New Mexico for kids from New York City. In 1939 she did a speaking tour of the



Mildred Rackley

southeastern United States on behalf of Republican Spain. She studied at the Art Students League in New York on and off for several years then moved to northern California in 1943 to work as an engineer in the Oakland shipyards. The following year she married Rawlings Simon and they adopted two boys. Rackley returned to teaching in 1960, and was active in the Bay Area Post of the VALB. She died in November 1992. Several of her drawings and prints are in the collection of the Smithsonian.



With her unique style, Mildred Rackley captures three distinct dance traditions of Spain and the US.

# Conlon Nancarrow

Samuel Conlon Nancarrow was born in Texarkana, Arkansas in 1912. The Nancarrow home had a player piano, and Conlon's early exposure to this instrument would be of great importance later on in his career. He began studying piano as a young boy –“with a horrible old spinster”– and trumpet –“with a nice old drunk.”

His ideological formation also began at an early age; at ten he discovered the Little Blue Books, a vast series of 5-cent mail-order pamphlets on all kinds of topics from “anarchism” to “zoology,” published, and often written, by the Wobbly, Haldemann Julius.

He attended the National Music Camp in Interlochen, Michigan, and there discovered jazz. He later studied engineering at Vanderbilt, but by then he knew that music was his calling. He spent time at the Cincinnati College Conservatory, playing in different groups in the area. Around 1930 he heard Stravinsky's “Le Sacre du Printemps” and found the score's rhythmic complexity “a revelation.”

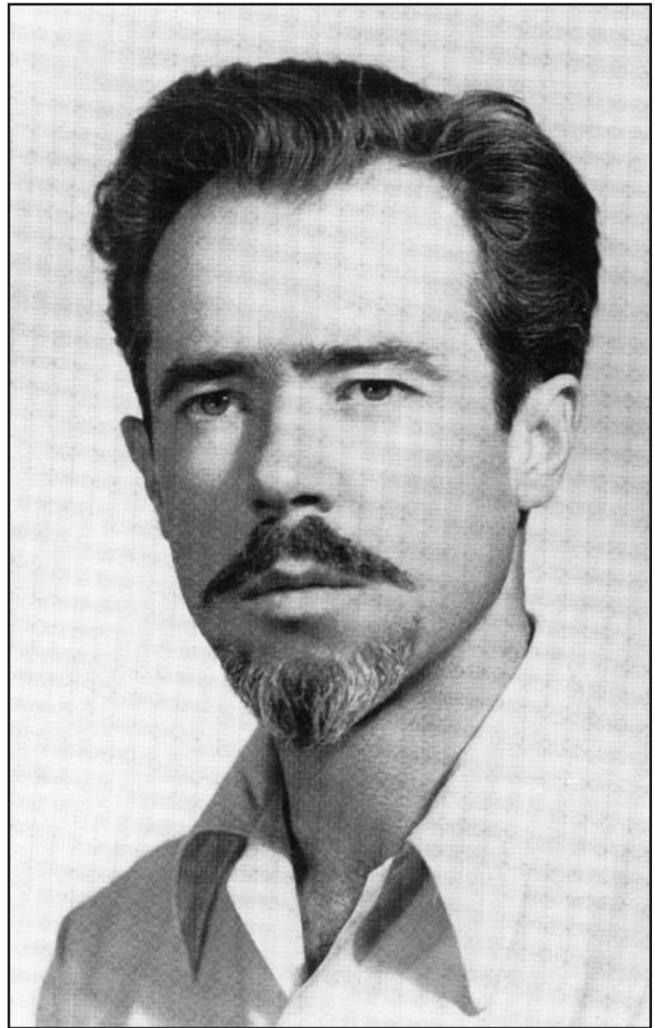
In 1934-35 he moved to Boston, where he studied privately with Roger Sessions and conducted a WPA orchestra. He joined the Communist party in 1935 and in 1936 worked as a jazz trumpeter on a cruise ship in Europe.

In March 1937 he enlisted in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and sailed for Spain from New York. Nancarrow served with the Dimitrov battalion's anti-aircraft battery and later rejoined the Lincolns on the Aragon front. Once his musical abilities became known he served as the bugler for the battalion. (He was also famous among the brigadistas for his prowess at rolling a cigarette with one hand!) Even as Nancarrow was fighting in Spain, New York City's Town Hall presented a concert of his music, and the New Music Quarterly published a number of his works. In early 1939, he was among the last Americans to flee Spain and then spent several months in a French concentration camp.

Back in the states, Nancarrow was unable to get a passport, and in 1940 decided to move to Mexico City, where he spent the rest of his life. He became a Mexican citizen in 1956.

In 1947 he returned to New York briefly to obtain materials to build a mechanical player piano, the instrument for which he would compose almost all of his post-Spain music. While in New York he managed to attend the premiere of John Cage's “Sonatas and Interludes,” a landmark composition for the “prepared piano.”

Freed from the constraints of composing for human



Conlon Nancarrow

performers, Nancarrow's music for player-piano is among the most rhythmically complex ever written, often using several different tempos simultaneously. He gained public recognition in 1982, when he received the MacArthur Foundation's “genius” grant. He died in Mexico City in 1997.

Nancarrow's music is increasingly appreciated and performed, most recently (2004-2005) in the Nancarrow Festival at Columbia University's Miller Theater, and in the Remembering Nancarrow concert in November 2004 in Cologne, Germany.

According to musicologist James Tenney, “Twenty-first century historians will rank Conlon Nancarrow's ‘Studies for Player Piano’ with the most innovative works of Ives, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Webern, Varese, Partch, Cage. . . . as the most significant works composed since 1900. . . . They manifest an incredibly thorough investigation and creative realization of countless new possibilities in the areas of rhythm, tempo, texture, polyphonic perception, and form.”

Further reading:

Gann, Kyle. *The Music of Conlon Nancarrow*.

Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Gann, Kyle. *Liner notes to CD Conlon Nancarrow: Lost Works, Last Works*. San Francisco, Other Minds, 2000.

Gettelman, Marv. *Obituary of Conlon Nancarrow in The Volunteer*, Fall 1997.

Greeson, James R. and Gretchen B. Gearhart. "Conlon Nancarrow: An Arkansas Original." *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Volume 54, Winter 1995.

## Edwin Rolfe

Edwin Rolfe was born Solomon Fishman to radical Russian Jewish parents in Philadelphia in September 1909. The family moved to New York in 1915 and Fishman grew up in Coney Island.

During high school, Fishman began using pen names, choosing "Edwin Rolfe" for some publications in the 1920s. He published his first editorial cartoon in the *Daily Worker* in 1924, and his first poem, "The Ballad of the Subway Digger," in the same newspaper in 1927. He apparently joined the Young Communist League in 1925, but quit the Communist party in 1929 when he moved to Madison, Wisconsin, to enroll in Alexander Meiklejohn's Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin. He left the university during his second year and returned to New York City, where he rejoined the Party. After a number of temporary jobs he began working full time at the *Daily Worker*.

Rolfe published his first book of poems, *To My Contemporaries*, in 1936. The book was favorably reviewed in the *New York Times*, in an article titled "Three Young Marxist Poets": "His is a poetry of precise direct statement, of a clear analysis of the young proletarian artist's problems.... *To My Contemporaries* is a very interesting and moving book of poems. Certain poems in it will be remembered for a long time" wrote the reviewer. According to Cary Nelson, that review was the last bit of attention Edwin Rolfe would ever get in the mainstream press for another 50 years.

Rolfe joined the International Brigades in the spring of 1937. In Madrid in August 1937 he began editing the *Volunteer for Liberty*, the periodical of the volunteers, and did so until he joined the troops in the field in the spring of 1938. His wife Mary joined him in Barcelona that fall. He subsequently went back to his position as editor of the newspaper. In January 1939, Rolfe and his wife returned to the United States.



Edwin Rolfe with Langston Hughes in Spain.

As government harassment of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade veterans worsened, Rolfe published *The Lincoln Battalion* in 1939. He subsequently worked for the Soviet news agency Tass until he was drafted in 1943. After the war, he and his wife lived in Los Angeles, where Rolfe published the mystery novel *The Glass Room* (coauthored with Lester Fuller) and found occasional work in the film industry. He was blacklisted by the movie industry in 1947 and was twice named as a Communist during the Hollywood hearings of 1951, which effectively ended his movie career. He was subpoenaed in 1952 to appear before the HUAC, but never did so. The memory of Spain haunted Rolfe and his poetry, particularly in *First Love*, and *Other Poems* (Los Angeles: L. Edmunds Book Shop, 1951). Rolfe died of a heart attack in 1954.

Further reading:

Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendricks: *Edwin Rolfe: A Biographical Essay and Guide to the Rolfe Archive at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*. (University of Illinois, 1990).

Rolfe, Edwin. *Collected Poems*. Edited by Nelson and Hendricks (University of Illinois, 1993).

Nelson, Cary (editor). *The Wound and the Dream: Sixty Years of American Poems About the Spanish Civil War*. (University of Illinois, 2002).



Alvah Bessie, photo by Richard Bermack

## Alvah Bessie

Alvah Cecil Bessie—novelist, journalist, literary critic—was already an outsider when he departed for Spain in 1938 to join the Lincoln Brigade. Born in June 1904 to a well-off family in New York City, he graduated from Columbia and spent years writing short stories in Paris and New York until the Depression hit. In 1930, Bessie married and moved to rural Vermont. Amidst extreme poverty and malnutrition, he continued to write short stories and achieved substantial critical success. His stories frequently depicted couples living on the edges of starvation. He wrote his first novel, *Dwell in the Wilderness*, in 1935.

Bessie's political development accelerated when he returned to New York City. Working as a reporter for the *Brooklyn Eagle*, he circulated with literary radicals and communists. His journalistic efforts soon became overtly political, addressing such subjects as the student anti-war movement and lynchings. Bessie later quit his job and took flying lessons to acquire some practical skills that might assist the Spanish Republican army.

He sailed for Spain in January 1938 and joined the Lincolns for the Retreats and the Ebro campaign in the summer of 1938. Appreciating the value of Bessie's literary skills, battalion leaders decided to spare him further military exposure. They appointed him editor of the weekly

newspaper, *The Volunteer for Liberty*, and sent him away from the front lines.

After returning to New York in 1938, Bessie determined to fulfill his identity as a communist intellectual, a writer who blended literary craft with radical ideology. Besides writing *Men in Battle* (1939), an account of the Lincoln Battalion, and a second novel, *Bread and a Stone* (1941), he wrote columns for both the *New Masses* and the *Weekly Review*. In 1943 the Warner Brothers studio gave Bessie a lavish salary to become a Hollywood screenwriter. When the HUAC summoned a group of Hollywood writers, producers, and directors to testify about their political beliefs in 1947, Bessie became one of the notorious "Hollywood 10" who refused to cooperate on the grounds that the investigation violated First Amendment rights of free speech. He was soon placed on an industry blacklist, convicted of contempt of Congress and sentenced to a year in federal prison.

Devastated by the ordeal, Bessie vividly depicted the situation in a novel titled *The Un-Americans* (1957), which received little attention. He then wrote a non-fiction account, *Inquisition in Eden*, which appeared in 1965. He would die of a heart attack some twenty years later.

Bessie's literary shortfalls mirrored the futility of his struggle to resume a Hollywood career after the blacklisting finally ended in the 1960s. Despite considerable talent—and Bessie was a skilled, engaging narrator—he could never suppress his didactic voice or the pleading for his personal cause. In the end, his indignation drained his creative juices, but kept him alive politically. He was therefore not a happy man; he had a tendency to grouch. But he was supremely loyal to his friends and people he liked. He was a superb raconteur. And what he had to say was passionate, intelligent, and important.

—Peter Carroll

## Harry Randall

Born in Spokane, Washington on December 20, 1915, Harry Wayland Randall Jr. attended Reed College for a year in 1933-34. "I was formerly sympathetic to Christian Socialism. In 1933 in college my study of sociology, literature, the soviet cinema, etc, influenced me to study the CP program, which I accepted."

While at Reed, Randall joined the Young Communist League, and in 1936 he joined the Communist party in Seattle. He worked for a leftist theater group, and distributed 16 mm Soviet films. He had written motion picture reviews and criticism in the college newspaper, *Quest*.



During the Depression years Randall worked as an unskilled laborer, as a waiter, in a movie laboratory and as a film projectionist, while actively involved in the Communist party.

In Portland he collected food for maritime strikers in 1934 and distributed leaflets during a lumber strike in 1935, an activity for which he was arrested. He picketed the Seattle Post-Intelligencer during a newspaper strike in 1936 and assisted maritime strikers in Seattle in the same year.

When Randall embarked for Spain, Portland and Seattle were the only two cities he had ever known. It was the first time he would leave the United States. He arrived in Spain on July 1, 1937, joining the International Brigade Headquarters at Albacete and training with the Mackenzie-Papineau battalion. He became a sergeant in charge of the Photographic Unit of the XV International Brigade, where, with three other volunteers, and often under extreme conditions, he produced hundreds of images of the everyday life of his comrades for the Press Commission of the Brigades.

When the war ended, Randall managed to save more than 2,000 negatives of photos taken by the Photo Unit: those negatives are now preserved and are being digitized at the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives at NYU.

When Randall returned to New York from Spain, customs officers took away his passport. He would live without one for twenty years. He kept in touch with his comrades from Spain and started work at a photo lab to make copies of the negatives he had brought from Spain. Randall worked as an electrician for a progressive documentary film producer and later as a projectionist at the 1939 New York World's Fair. On New Year's Eve, 1939, he met Alice, and they were married six months later. For two years he worked for an advertising film producer and joined the newly created Film Editors Union, but was eager to work for a more progressive film sector. Inspired by the films produced by Canada's National Film Board, he contacted them and was offered a three-month contract in Ottawa: his stint there lasted 10 years.

In 1944, Randall volunteered for the Canadian Army and was soon offered a transfer to the Canadian Film Unit overseas. He spent most of the next two years in London, editing newsreels and training as a combat cameraman. After the end of the war, eager to rejoin his wife, he returned to Canada to write and direct documentary films. He was soon put in charge of a Scientific Film Production Unit whose creation he himself had proposed.

In 1952, he accepted a job writing and directing medical films in New York City and took on freelance work on television commercials, newsreels, documentaries and educational films. In January 1956, his wife unexpectedly passed away. In November he met Doreen, an English nurse, and they were married the following year.

Randall then started working for the American Heart Association as Director of Audiovisual Materials. He later moved to the Professional Education Department of the American Cancer Society, where he worked until his retirement in 1983. Harry and Doreen have two daughters and a grand-daughter. They now live in Tucson, Arizona.

—Juan Salas

[WWW.ALBA-VALB.ORG](http://WWW.ALBA-VALB.ORG)

# Profiles of Loss: *It is estimated that roughly one million people died in the Spanish Civil War, including writers, artists and cultural workers such as...*

## PAUL BLOCK

[New York, 1910 – Belchite, 1937]

A WPA sculptor, artist, political activist, and one-time president of the New York Artists Union, Paul Block organized a Public Use of Art Program to bring exhibitions to wider audiences, and led a sit-down strike of WPA artists in 1936, which was covered widely in the media because of the brutality of the police that tried to dislodge the striking artists. In Spain he fought in several battles and became commissar of the Lincoln battalion's Third Company. When the company's commander and adjutant were wounded during the battle of Belchite in September 1937, Block assumed command of the outfit, but then sustained a mortal wound and died at Benicasim hospital following the battle.



Meredith Sydnor Graham, Spain

## MEREDITH SYNDOR GRAHAM

[New York? 1912? – Brunete, 1937]

Little is known about Syd Graham, an African-American commercial artist and member of the Artists Union who left New York for

Spain in March 1937. He was killed in action at Brunete in July. In his relatively short time there, Graham filled three sketchbooks with notes and with pencil studies of landscapes,

of the Book of the XV International Brigade, published in 1938, while his cover art was on every edition. Jacobs was killed in March 1938 near Hajar during the retreats, to-

**I see the unwritten books, the unrecorded experiments  
The unpainted pictures, the interrupted lives...**

**--Kenneth Rexroth, 1938**

soldiers and citizens at work, at rest and at war. The sketchbooks are in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives.



Edward Deyo Jacobs

## EDWARD DEYO JACOBS

[Highland Falls, NY, 1913 – Hajar, 1937]

Deyo Jacobs grew up in Highland Falls, New York, graduated from Antioch College, then studied painting, drawing and etching at the Art Students League. He traveled to Spain in early 1937 and became a cartographer for the Mackenzie-Papineau battalion. He was soon named official battalion artist, and joined the International Brigade historical commission. Several of his drawings were included in the French edition

gether with his close friend, Doug Taylor (see profile on next page).

## JAMES LARDNER

[Chicago, 1914 – Sierra Pandols, 1938]

The second of four sons of journalist Ring Lardner, James grew up in Greenwich, Connecticut, and Great Neck, Long Island. He was educated at Andover and Harvard. He became a reporter for the New York Herald Tribune, and in 1938 joined their Paris bureau. He wrote a number of articles about the Americans in Spain, and traveled to Barcelona in March with Ernest Hemingway and Vincent Sheean, where he wrote more articles and planned to write a book about the Lincolns. He wanted desperately to take up the cause of the Spanish Republic and decided the most effective way to do so was to enlist. He was among the last men to enter the Lincoln battalion in April 1938. He became a corporal and squad leader by July, and occasionally contributed verse to the battalion wall newspaper, once satirizing the fact that ALB soldiers had to march to a position when other battalions of the 15th International

**One-third of the American volunteers never returned from such as those profiled here.**



William Titus

Brigade were transported by truck. He was wounded at Gandesa in July and was asked to do a speaking tour of the US after his convalescence, but instead he returned to the front. He was reported to be the last American soldier to die in the war, presumably executed after being captured in the Sierra Pandols in September 1938.

## HAROLD MALOFSKY

[New York – Belchite, 1937]

Musician, playwright and songwriter, Harry Meloff (or Malofsky) was active in the International Workers Order's Youth Section in New York. He was also a member of the IWO's theater group, the Convulsionaries, and wrote political songs and skits, including the theme song of the IWO musical, "All Together Now," which became a kind of anthem of the organization after Meloff's death. He went to Spain in 1937, where, when not in combat, he performed for troops and townspeople, and wrote poems

and songs—including a "Song of the International Brigades." He was killed in action at Belchite in September 1937.

## DOUGLAS TAYLOR

[Carbon County, Utah, 1910 – Hajar, 1938]

Taylor and his buddy Edward Deyo Jacobs (see profile on previous page) had haunted the art scene together in Greenwich Village before deciding to volunteer to go to Spain, where they served together as map-makers. Somewhere in Spain, Taylor and Jacobs had acquired a large and heavy volume of Goya etchings, which, according to fellow volunteer Len Levenson "they lugged in and out of combat and which served them as a constant source of reflection and discussion." During the retreats, Jacobs' sprained ankle prevented him from following the troops in flight; Taylor refused to leave his side, and together they disappeared.

## WILLIAM TITUS

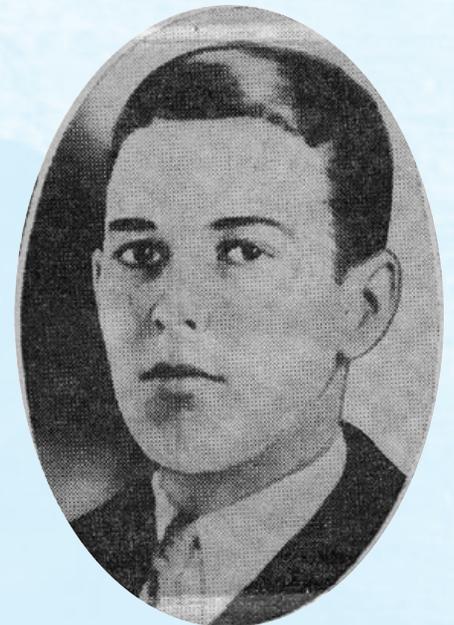
[Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1912 – Seguro de los Baños, 1938]

William Titus produced plays at the YWCA's Camp Grey as a young man, in addition to writing poetry and plays. He was a member of the Civic Players and later became Associate Director of Dramatics at Brookwood Labor College. Titus went to Spain in June 1937 and was a soldier at the Brigade commissariat; he was later promoted to company commander. He died at Seguro de los Baños in February 1938.

## LEO TORGOFF

[New York, 1916 – Jarama, 1937]

Leo Torgoff grew up in Brooklyn and graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School, where he was active with the school newspaper and the math, poetry, actors and Latin clubs. He studied English at Brooklyn College and the City College of New York, then transferred to the University of Colorado, where



James Lardner

he joined the staff of the campus newspaper Denver Clarion. He longed to be a writer. A number of Torgoff's writings—poems, drafts of newspaper articles, college term papers—can be found in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives. Torgoff sailed for Spain in January 1937, and was captured and executed near the Jarama front the following month.

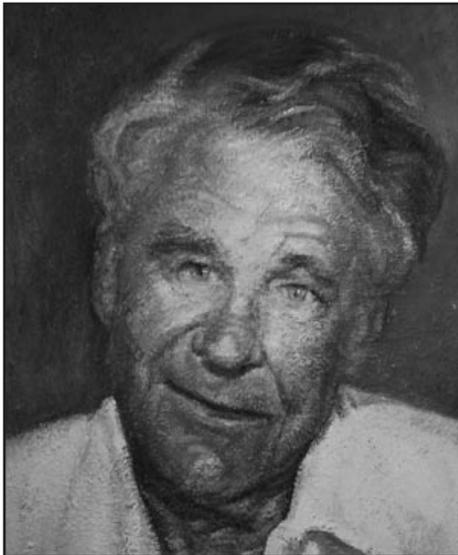


Lan Adomian

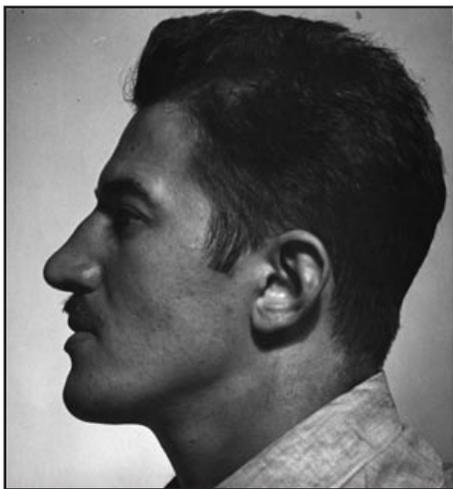
## LAN ADOMIAN

[Ukraine, 1905 – Mexico, 1979]

Son of a Jewish cantor, Lan Adomian immigrated to the US around 1922 and studied at conservatories in Baltimore and Philadelphia. Having settled in New York, he composed, organized choruses in Harlem, and was director of the “New Singers,” a choral group that performed and recorded very actively. He arranged African American protest songs collected by Lawrence Gellert, and grew close to musicians Henry Cowell and Charles Seeger. He went to Spain in February 1938, where he worked as a composer, writing the anthem of the Sixth Division and a series of songs to accompany Spanish poetry—including three songs with lyrics by the great poet Miguel Hernández, who would later die in a Francoist prison. After the International Brigades were disbanded, Adomian helped organize a memorial concert called “Memories of Spain” onboard the ship R.M.S. Ausonia (see page 5). During World War II he wrote music for the radio and for Navy documentaries. As the Red Scare intensified in the 1950s, Adomian moved to Mexico and continued composing. He wrote several symphonies, and the music for a number of films in Mexico and the US; he was honored with several prestigious prizes, including a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1976. His Symphony #2 is known as “The Spanish Symphony” and is dedicated to Lincoln Brigade volunteers.



Bill Bailey, portrait by Anthony Toney



Phil Bard

## BILL BAILEY

[Jersey City, 1910 – San Francisco, 1995]

Seaman Bill Bailey participated in the 1934 waterfront strike in San Francisco, and made headlines in 1935

when he tore the swastika banner off the main pole of the German ship Bremen while it was docked in New York Harbor. Bailey went to Spain in 1937 to fight in a machine-gun company. After the war, he worked as a longshoreman and labor organizer, and belonged to a number of industrial organizations. He wrote regularly for *The Hawsepiper*, the bulletin of the Marine Workers Historical Association, and appeared in several documentary and fictional films. He authored an autobiography, *The Kid from Hoboken*, published in 1993, and an unpublished novel, *The Odyssey of the Morning Star*.

## BARNEY BAILEY

[Arnett, Oklahoma, 1910 – Santa Rosa, California 2001]

Barney Bailey lived in California before going to Spain in October 1937 to serve as a machine-gunner. He joined the merchant marine during World War II and later lived and worked in Southern California as a construction worker. *Hand Grenades*, a 60-page volume of Bailey’s poetry, was published in 1942. In the poem “Gandesá—April, 1938,” Bailey wrote, “The first few months in Spain I was a good/ Soldier in many ways. But even as late/ As April the thought of shedding human blood/ I could not stand. I was not steeled in hate.”

## PHIL BARD

[Lower East Side, 1912 – 1996]

Self-trained painter, printer, and WPA artist Phil Bard was director of cultural activities at Camp Unity in New York State until he was elected president of the Artists Union in 1935. He was also a founding member of the Communist party’s John Reed Club in New York, a youth group that promot-

ed artistic and creative culture. In Spain, Bard became the first political commissar among the American volunteers. Because of his severe asthma, he returned to the US after only a short stay, but worked extensively with the Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade for the duration of the war. He studied at the Art Students League and soon began working as a comic book artist for Fawcett's Comics. Bard was co-creator of the superhero group Crime Crusaders Club and his work appeared in Master Comics. In 1951, Bard became half-paralyzed following a heart operation, and he trained himself to draw left-handed. His artwork was featured in a number of group and one-man shows over the course of his career.

## EDWARD K. BARSKY

[1897 – 1975]

Physician Edward Barsky led the American medical volunteers in Spain during the Spanish Civil War, setting up hospitals at the frontlines and treating wounded soldiers at Jarama, Teruel, Belchite, and the Ebro offensive. After the war he served as Chairman of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, an organization dedicated to aiding Spanish refugees and lobbying US leadership on behalf of Spain's deposed Republican government. When he refused to turn over the group's records to the HUAC, Barsky was convicted of contempt of Congress and sentenced to six months in jail. His book-length unpublished memoir, *The Surgeon Goes to War*, written with Elizabeth Waugh, can be found in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives.

## JAMES WALKER BENÉT

[Port Washington, Long Island, 1914]

Born into a literary family – his father William Rose Benét was editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature* – James Walker Benét was raised by a wealthy aunt, the celebrated novelist and columnist Kathleen Norris. He attended Stanford University and worked at the *New Republic* before going to Spain in early 1937 (where his cousin Dave Thompson had gone six months earlier). Benét served as a truck driver with the transport regiment and drove an ambulance. He returned to the *New Republic* after the war, and later worked at the Soviet news agency Tass and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Benét published several novels and non-fiction books including *A Private Killing* and *The Knife Behind You*.

## JUDSON BRIGGS

[Philadelphia, 1906]

Judson Briggs had wanted to be a painter since age eight; when he reached New York with no money during the Depression, he sold cardboard paintings on street corners. Before long he was an instructor at the New York School of Fine and Industrial Arts, and by 1936 his work was being exhibited and sold at galleries in the city. Briggs was working on the WPA Easel Project in 1937 when he volunteered to drive an ambulance in Spain. After several months with the medical staff, he was named official artist of the Lincoln battalion and left the front. He painted 25 expressionist pieces that were displayed in Madrid. Later, as they were being transported through Barcelona, several of the paintings were damaged in an air raid. Briggs lived and painted in Mexico for several decades after the war.



Edward Barsky



James Walker Benét



Judson Briggs



Albert Chisholm

## ALBERT CHISHOLM

[Spokane, 1913 – 1998]

Albert Chisholm was a young man working on a passenger ship and occasionally drawing political cartoons for the Seattle newspaper Northwest Enterprise, when he became one of the first African-American men to join the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union. He went to Spain in 1937 and drew several cartoons for the 15th International Brigade periodical *Our Fight*. Some of his official documents from Spain refer to him as an artist. During the Ebro offensive Chisholm and another soldier were separated from their unit and wound up joining a Spanish company for the duration of the war. Chisholm joined the merchant marine during World War II and continued working as a seaman until his union membership was revoked, apparently for political reasons, in 1971.



Theodore Cogswell

## THEODORE COGSWELL

[Coatesville, Pennsylvania, 1918 – 1987]

Ted Cogswell was so young when he volunteered to fight in Spain that he was not allowed to go to the frontlines, instead serving as an ambulance driver. His college studies were interrupted for service in the Army Air Corps during World War II, but he completed bachelor's and master's degrees in English by 1949. He began contributing pieces to science-fiction magazines and anthologies in the early 1960s, and went on to publish his own collections of short stories and some novels. He was also national secretary of the Science Fiction Writers of America. In a survey conducted by this organization, Cogswell's story

"The Specter General" was voted one of the best science-fiction stories of all time.

## LINI FUHR DE VRIES

[Paterson, New Jersey, 1905 – New Jersey, 1982]

An activist since childhood, Lini Fuhr de Vries worked in a silk mill as a girl and participated in her first strike at age 13. She was a graduate student in public health when the Spanish Civil War broke out, and organized volunteers for the medical staff in Spain. De Vries soon decided to volunteer herself, though it meant leaving behind her young child. After the war she continued nursing in Los Angeles and became the first president of the nurses' union, until she was blacklisted for her Communist affiliations in the late 1940s. Unable to find work, de Vries moved to Mexico where she spent several years nursing in remote rural areas and teaching health classes. She is the author of the autobiography *Up from the Cellar*.



Lini Fuhr De Vries

## RAY DUREM

[Seattle, 1915 – Los Angeles, 1963]

"My hope is that my poems will play some role in arousing that righteous anger and fury and willingness to die, without which no people wins its liberty." –Ray Durem

Ray Durem ran away from home at age 14 to join the navy as a telegrapher. Years later he fought in Spain where, while at Villa Paz hospital recovering from a wound sustained in the Brunete battle, he fell in love, married, and had a daughter with a nurse named Rebecca Schulman. Durem was of mixed black and white descent, though he had blonde hair and blue eyes, and questions of race soon became the central focus of his writing

and politics. When the Communist party ended its coalition work with civil rights groups after World War II, he ended his affiliation with the Party and joined the Black Nationalist movement. He divorced his wife and married a black woman. Poetry became Durem's outlet to express his rage and frustration about racism in America. His poems were first published in black periodicals like *Crusader* and *Phylon*, as well as in Langston Hughes's anthology *New Negro Poets*. A book of poetry called *Take No Prisoners* was published eight years after his death.

## RALPH FASANELLA

[New York City, 1914 – 1997]

Born in Greenwich Village on Labor Day, Ralph Fasanella began working on his father's ice wagon at age eight, and later spent several years in a Catholic protectory. In 1937 he served with the Regiment de Tren in the International Brigades. A street-wise tough kid compared to many of his college-educated comrades, he taught them "about what youth from beer joints, pool rooms and corner gangs feel," according to volunteer William Sennett; they taught him about literature, history, music and art. After the war, Fasanella worked as a union organizer for the United Electrical Workers until he began to draw and paint around 1945. He was soon gave up his organizing job to be an artist, and in 1948 had his first one-man show at New York's ACA Gallery. For years he worked at a gas station in the Bronx during the day, and painted at night. In the early 1970s his art reached a more mainstream audience thanks to a cover story in *New York* magazine and the publication of the book *Fasanella's City* by Patrick Watson, published by Knopf in 1973.

Fasanella's paintings depicted all aspects of urban American working class life, from baseball to politics, and were exhibited in one-man and group shows from the 1970s through the 1990s. His life and art were also treated in the book *Ralph Fasanella's America*, by Paul D'Ambrosio, published by the University Press of New England in 2001. Many of his works are on public display, including in the New York City subway and at Ellis Island.

## PETER FRYE

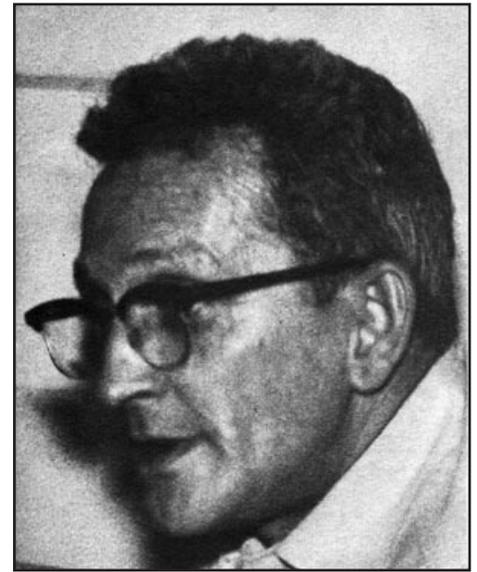
[Montreal – England, 1991]

As a young man, Peter Frye worked in theater, radio and television to support himself. After fighting in Spain, he devoted his whole career to the performing arts: he was, at different times, an actor, teacher, director, designer and playwright. He moved to Israel in 1952 to dodge the Red Scare, and helped found the theater department at Tel Aviv University. He taught acting and directing there for years, and became a central figure in the development of Israeli theater as a whole. In 1991, the chair of the university's theater department called Frye "far ahead of his time.... He brought into his classes the anthropological aspects of theater, well before such themes were prevalent. He also brought in people who discussed psychology of the arts, again before this discipline was widespread." After Frye's death, the university established an annual memorial theater production in his name.

## CARL GEISER

[1910, Orrville, Ohio]

In the summer of 1932, college-educated electrical engineer Carl Geiser traveled to the USSR, and when he re-



Ray Durem



Ralph Fasanella



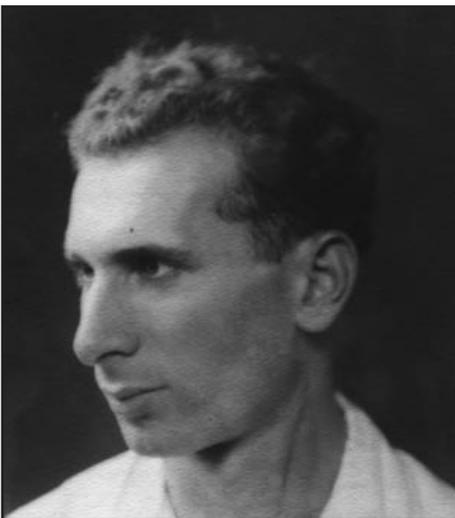
Peter Frye



Carl Geiser



Poster from the movie of William Gresham's novel.



William Herrick

turned to the US, joined the Young Communist League and attended the Workers School in New York City. He occasionally wrote articles for the Daily Worker on revolutionary movements in South America. Geiser enlisted in the International Brigades in May 1937 as a soldier, became commissar of the George Washington battalion's 4th Company, and was later elected commissar of the Lincoln-Washington battalion; he fought at Brunete, Quinto, Belchite and Fuentes de Ebro. Taken prisoner by the fascists in April 1938, Geiser spent 13 months in San Pedro de Cardeña prison camp. Decades later, he conducted a study of Americans taken prisoner during the war and wrote the book *Prisoners of the Good Fight*, published in 1986.

## WILLIAM LINDSAY GRESHAM

[Baltimore, 1909 – New York City, 1962]

When he was young, William Lindsay Gresham drifted through unskilled office and factory work and dreamed of being a writer. He immersed himself in the bohemian scene of Greenwich Village, did a stint with the Civilian Conservation Corps, then married a rich woman who would support his full-time writing. After learning of a friend's death in the battle of Brunete in July 1937, Gresham went to Spain and joined the 35th artillery battery. He was one of the last Lincoln Brigade soldiers to leave Spain, but never fired a shot, having spent most of his time drinking and grilling volunteer "Doc" Holliday for stories about the dark side of carnivals (where Holliday had worked), which he would later use to write a novel. In December 1938 he collaborated on a script for the Christmas show put on by the soldiers in his unit, and their sardonic portrayal of commanding officers landed the writers in trouble

(see below). After the war Gresham returned to New York and entered a state of depression and alcoholism that would plague him for much of his life, through several marriages and forays into exotic religions, until after World War II, when he became a devout Presbyterian and joined Alcoholics Anonymous. Around that time he began publishing books like *Nightmare Alley* and *Limbo Tower*, which brought him commercial success; the former, based on the carnival stories Gresham collected in Spain, was made into a movie starring Tyrone Power.

In an oral history tape recorded in 1977, Lincoln Brigade veteran Sid Kaufman describes "the famous—or possibly infamous—skits for a Christmas show at the local theater. Bill Gresham wrote up a half dozen or so skits that were on the line of the 'burlesque blackouts' type of thing and of course he politicalized all the stuff and brought it closer to home. The business of a lovelorn 'soldado' trying to make it with one of the local gals and going to a gypsy to find out if she's true to him, and that sort of thing. Some of the skits were satirical and could be construed as satirizing some of the straight-laced leadership. As a result of some of these skits, Vince [Lossowski] found himself with his lieutenant's commission in jeopardy. He was accused of undermining the leadership and setting a poor example for the rank and file by taking the part of a major that we had had. It went over great with the guys, and we still had a sense of humor, but to some it was straight-down-the-line, no deviation, no nada."

## WILLIAM HERRICK

[Trenton, 1915 – New York State, 2004]

"I always wanted to write. So I started writing and couldn't stop." – Herrick in a 1990 interview

Before going to Spain, William Herrick worked on an anarchist commune in Michigan, organized black sharecroppers in Georgia, and worked for the Furriers union in New York. He took a bullet in the neck at Jarama in February 1937, and while recuperating in a hospital, became romantically involved with a nurse. She later turned him in to Communist authorities for having made an antiparty remark, and Herrick was furloughed home before the end of the year, thoroughly disillusioned. After the war he worked as a court reporter. He left the Communist party in the mid-1940s and in 1954 testified against the VALB to the Subversive Activities Control Board. Herrick began writing fiction in the 1960s, mostly on the psychology of revolutionaries, but also drawing from his experiences in Spain. His books include *The Itinerant*, *Hermanos*, and *Jumping the Line: the Adventures and Misadventures of an American Radical*.

## EMANUEL HOCHBERG

[New York, 1909 – Chicago 1999]

Born on New York City's Lower East Side, Emanuel Hochberg joined the army briefly as a young man and later became a factory worker in New York. He was active in organizing the Pullman Car Porters in the early 1930s. Hochberg was among the first men to join the Lincoln battalion, sailing from New York in December 1936. He worked as a battlefield mapper-observer, and also did cultural work at the bases at Albacete and Murcia. He was wounded in the leg at Villanueva de Cañada during the Brunete campaign in July 1937. After Spain, Hochberg joined the Marines and fought in the Pacific during World War II. Later, under the GI Bill, he earned a Fine Arts degree from

Arizona State University. He lived in Chicago after 1965, where he taught public school. As an artist, he worked with ceramics, oils and mixed media. His works have been exhibited in the San Francisco area, in Scottsdale, and in the Chicago area. He died in Chicago in April 1998.

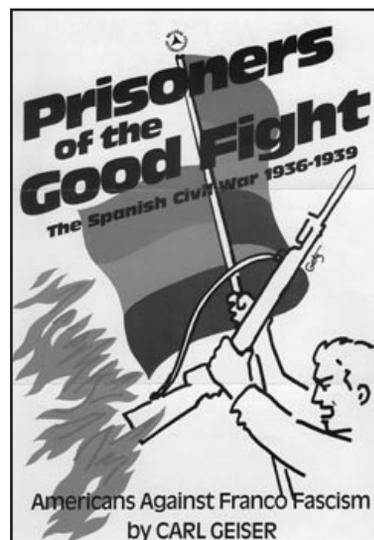
## MARION MERRIMAN WACHTEL

[New Mexico, 1909 – Palo Alto, 1991]

At University of Nevada in 1928, Francis Marion Stone met Robert Merriman, who would later command the Lincoln battalion. They married in 1932 and soon went to the Soviet Union, where Marion worked as a typist at the Moscow Daily News while her husband studied on a scholarship. Robert Merriman went to Spain in early 1937 and was wounded in the battle of Jarama, prompting his wife to go there in March. She decided to join the Republican army, becoming, along with driver Evelyn Hutchins, the only American women to serve in the 15th International Brigade. Marion became a corporal at brigade headquarters in Albacete. Her duties included keeping personal records of the volunteers. She returned to the US in November 1937 and her husband was killed on the Aragon front in March 1938. In 1986, Marion, who had remarried, co-wrote a book about her first husband, based mostly on their diaries from Spain. She had wanted to write the book by herself (without a co-author) for years but, she said, "It was just too difficult. I'd get so far and I'd block. I was afraid I'd crack up. It was so intense. I just couldn't do it."



Marion Merriman Wachtel



Prisoners of the Good Fight by Carl Geiser



William Colfax Miller



"At last a perfect soldier," drawing by Robert Minor



John Murra



Marion Noble

## WILLIAM COLFAX MILLER

[Lake Andes, South Dakota, 1911 – 1995]

William Colfax Miller was a movie director in Hollywood before going to Spain, spent some time at the Federal Theater Project, and worked as a photographer, chemist and writer. He fought on the Ebro front but was later removed from combat with tuberculosis. Once he recovered, he worked on a film about the history of wars in Spain for the Spanish Communist Party's film office. After the war, Miller moved to Mexico, where he became the official photographer for President Lázaro Cardenas. He directed, produced or worked on 150 films, including several films about the Mexican Revolution for the Mexican government. According to fellow volunteer Robert Steck, Miller once worked as a body double for Gary Cooper.

## ROBERT MINOR

[San Antonio, 1884 – 1952]

Bob Minor started drawing cartoons at the San Antonio Gazette at age twenty. By 1910 he was chief cartoonist of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Minor's politics, especially during World War I, drove him towards more left-leaning publications like *The Masses* and *New York Call*, where some of his best-known cartoons appeared. In 1924 he co-founded the *Daily Worker*. Minor went to Spain as the American representative to the Comintern. He helped organize the Lincoln battalion and was responsible for the training and morale of American soldiers. After the war he edited the Southern edition of the *Daily Worker*.

## JOHN MURRA

[Romania, 1916]

John Murra arrived in the US in 1935 to attend college and left for Spain two years later. Wounded near the Ebro in the summer of 1937, he spent the next several months at the International Brigade Staff in Albacete. When he left the country in 1939, Murra was held for six months in various prison camps before finally reaching the US. His wounds from Spain kept him out of service in World War II. As an anthropology graduate student in the early 1940s, Murra assisted Yale professor John Dollard in administering a survey for the study "Fear in Battle"; Dollard's research on the physical and psychological effects of war was based on questionnaires completed by a large number of Lincoln Brigade veterans. Murra became a professional anthropologist in the 1950s, studying early Andean civilizations. After his first research trip to Ecuador, the US barred him from travel and naturalization because of his service in Spain; he could not get another passport until 1956.

Professionally, Murra was noted for his "vertical archipelago" hypothesis, which described the Andean integrated economic system of specialized small-scale farming. He taught at Cornell University from 1968 until his retirement in 1982.

## MARION NOBLE

[Garner, Arkansas, 1911 – 2002]

Marion Noble was an auto mechanic by trade and studied at Commonwealth College in Mena, Arkansas, a labor school whose aim was to give students radical awareness and imbue them with socialist principles. It was there that Noble first developed political consciousness. He

also spent a quarter at the Workers School in Los Angeles, then worked at a garage and as an auto salesman in Detroit, before he volunteered for the International Brigades in August 1937. In Spain, Noble worked first in the transmissions unit, then as a mechanic in the transport unit's auto park. Years later he wrote an unpublished memoir, now in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, on his childhood and his time in Spain explaining, he said, "how I got into the movement... my background, the kind of schools I attended, the impression my father made on me, and what the depression did to my capitalist enterprises."

## IRVING NORMAN

[Poland, 1906 – California, 1989]

Irving Norman (born Noachowitz) served as a machine-gunner in Spain and fought in the Ebro offensive. Back in the US, he worked as a barber to support himself, but sank into a deep depression, feeling that his work was trivial. The housekeeper at the home where Norman rented a room gave him a set of paints, and soon he moved to Catalina Island off the Los Angeles coast to concentrate on painting. He soon enrolled at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco and began exhibiting his work. Norman studied art in Mexico and New York, and eventually returned to Northern California, where he worked as an artist and a barber. His paintings, in the "social surrealist style," have been featured in several museum shows.

## ABE OSHEROFF

[Brooklyn, 1915]

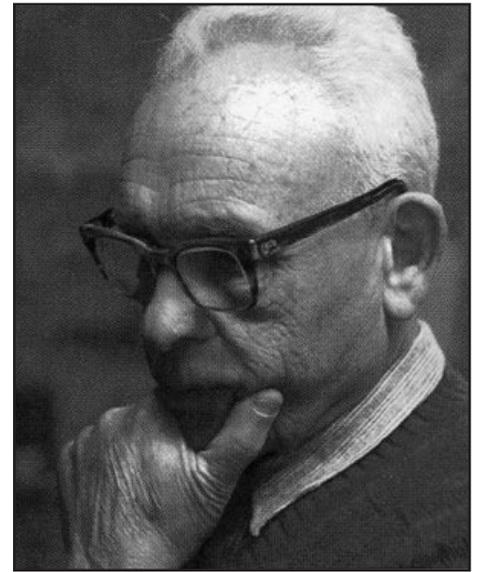
Abe Osheroff, a student activist at the City College of New York and labor organizer for the CIO, was aboard

the ship Ciudad de Barcelona when it was torpedoed in May 1937, and swam to the Spanish shore. He fought at Belchite, was wounded at Fuentes de Ebro, then returned to New York to work as a Party organizer. He went underground during the Red Scare and changed his identity every six months for years. A carpenter by trade, Osheroff moved to Los Angeles in the 1960s to do fundraising work for the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. He went to Mississippi in 1964 to build a cultural center, and to Nicaragua in the 1980s to build houses in remote areas and organize against the contras. In 1974 he made a movie called "Dreams and Nightmares," exploring Spain as someone who had fought there 35 years earlier, and in 2001, "Art in the Struggle for Freedom," about creative expression in the Spanish Civil War.

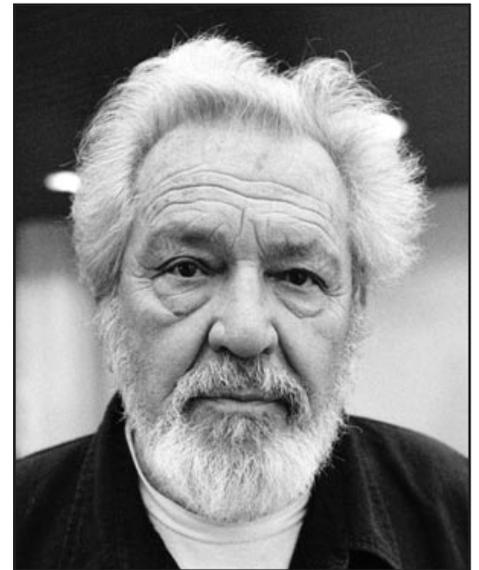
## MARK B. RAUSCHWALD

[New York City, 1908]

Mark Rauschwald studied painting and art at Cooper Union and the Art Students League, and served on the executive board of the Commercial Artists and Designers Union. He was a graphic artist with the WPA, drawing for the Daily Worker and making propaganda leaflets for election campaigns, before going to Spain. Rauschwald fought on the Jarama front and at Brunete, where he was wounded, then became the English-speaking delegate at the hospital in Villanueva de la Jara. He also worked in the English-language section of the International Brigade censorship office. Rauschwald continued drawing and painting his whole life, working with oil paints and watercolors, painting landscapes, cityscapes and portraits, and making drawings and lithographs.



Irving Norman



Abe Osheroff, photo by Richard Bermack



Drawing by Mark Rauschwald



Hank Rubin

## HANK RUBIN

[Portland, Oregon, 1916]

Hank Rubin was a pre-med student at UCLA when he was approached by a recruiter one day in April 1937 and agreed to enlist in the International Brigades. He served as a machine-gunner until he came down with jaundice. Once he recovered, Rubin's medical training allowed him to work as a medical aide at hospitals and on the front lines doing triage, blood transfusions, and lab technician work. During World War II, Rubin was a lieutenant in the Medical Administration Corps. He later earned two degrees in public health and worked as a professional food taster. He began writing about wine in 1965 with a weekly column called "The Winemaster," which ran in the San Francisco Chronicle for nearly 15 years. Rubin also became the owner and executive chef of three restaurants in Berkeley, wine editor for Bon Appetit and Restaurant magazines, and co-proprietor of a vineyard in Bordeaux, France. He published a memoir of Spain in 1997, and a book on cooking in 2002.



Elias "Dutch" Schultz

broadcast in the United States. He fled just before the city's fall in March 1939. Schmidt eventually reached Chicago and worked at the Communist newspaper Midwest Record, although he was an anarchist. He fought in the Phillipines and Luzon during World War II, became a captain and received the Bronze Star. After the war, Schmidt concentrated on writing pulp fiction and short stories, which were published in a range of periodicals like Colliers and The Saturday Evening Post. He later wrote more than a dozen books including Murder, Chop Chop and the autobiographical The Fell of Dark. Much of his work appeared under the name James Norman.

## ELIAS "DUTCH" SCHULTZ

[New York City, 1910]

Elias Schultz was an airplane mechanic and welder who went to Spain in February 1938 and served as a machine-gunner and scout with the Lincoln-Washington battalion. He fought in the Ebro offensive until he was wounded in the leg with shrapnel. After the war Schultz returned to New York to begin an apprenticeship with a furniture upholsterer, and soon took up sculpture. He studied all over Europe, including with Jacques Lipshitz and Everett Du Penn.

## JAMES NORMAN SCHMIDT

[Chicago, 1912 – Athens, Ohio, 1983]

In the early 1930s, James Norman Schmidt went to Paris to study art and wound up a reporter at the local bureau of the Chicago Tribune. He was soon witnessing the rise of fascism all over Europe, and events like the Asturian miners' uprising in 1934. Sent to cover the war in Spain in 1937, he decided instead to enlist in a French anti-aircraft battery. He fought at Teruel and in the Retreats, and when the International Brigades were disbanded, he stayed in Madrid writing English-language radio programs



Esther Silverstein Blanc

## ESTHER SILVERSTEIN BLANC

[Wyoming, 1913 – San Francisco, 1997]

Esther Silverstein Blanc, a nurse who grew up on a homestead in Wyoming, joined the 13th Division Sanidad and treated many wounded soldiers at Brunete, Quinto, Belchite and Teruel. In Spain she also trained local women and girls in the basics of

nursing and organized nighttime reading and writing classes. During World War II, Blanc served as a second lieutenant in the US Army Nurse Corps. After the war she continued working as a nurse and earned a masters degree in literature from the University of Rochester. Blanc published two successful children's books as well as a collection of plays and short stories titled *Wars I Have Seen*. She earned a PhD in the history of health sciences from the University of California, San Francisco, where she taught for many years.

## JOHN TISA

[New Jersey, 1914 – Florida, 1991]

John Tisa was one of the first American volunteers in Spain, and for a time he edited the English-language periodical *Volunteer for Liberty*. He served as a master sergeant and orientation teacher during World War II, and later organized Campbell's soup workers and cemetery workers in New Jersey, lettuce workers in California, meat-packing and cannery workers in Chicago, and cigar makers in North Carolina. During the Red Scare Tisa was called before the HUAC but wouldn't cooperate, so he lost his job. In 1979 he edited *The Palette and the Flame*, a book of Spanish Civil War posters, and in 1985 wrote a memoir of his experience in Spain called *Recalling the Good Fight*.

Author and historian Philip Foner wrote, "In a Madrid hotel room in the spring of 1937, Ernest Hemingway read parts of John Tisa's early account of the war. 'Not bad, but you need more detail,' was Hemingway's comment. That detail is abundantly present throughout Tisa's book. No other account of the war in Spain gives us such a sense of actually being there."

## ANTHONY TONEY

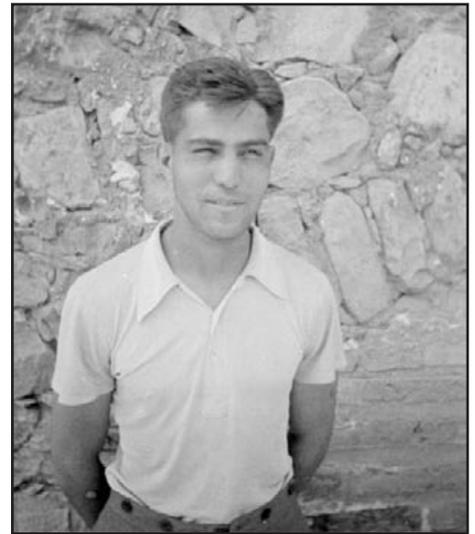
[Gloversville, New York, 1913 – Marin County, 2004]

Anthony Toney was valedictorian of his high school and, after earning a fine arts degree from Syracuse University, returned as a WPA artist to paint a mural for both the high school and junior high school in his hometown. He studied in Paris, then traveled to Spain to join the Lincoln battalion as a machine-gunner. He was grazed by a bullet at Gandesa during the Ebro offensive and returned to the US in 1939. In 1941 he had his first one-man art show. After serving as an Air Force flight engineer with a troop carrier squadron in the South Pacific during World War II, Toney married and settled in Katonah, New York, where he set up a large studio in a converted barn. He taught painting at the New School for Social Research for decades while he kept up his own artistic career. Most of Toney's paintings dealt with political subjects, like the US Civil Rights movement and the Anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa. He experimented with a variety of styles and techniques, and his work was regularly exhibited. His pieces are in the collections of a number of museums and universities, notably at Syracuse University, where Toney painted two murals.

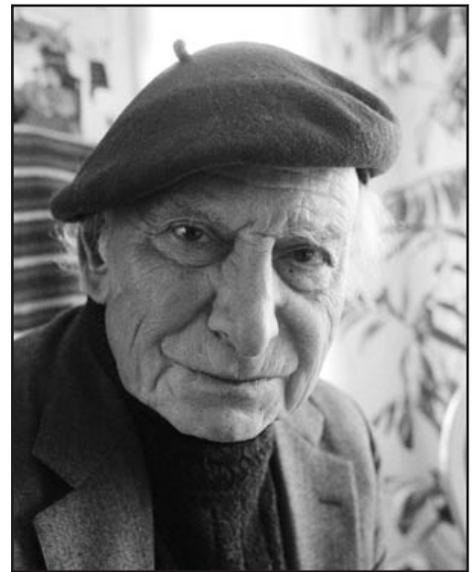
## GEORGE WATT

[New York City, 1913 – New York City, 1994]

George Watt was a leader in the Young Communist League, and New York State executive secretary of the National Student League, before he left for Spain. He joined the Mackenzie-Papineau battalion as a rifleman in July 1937, and after being



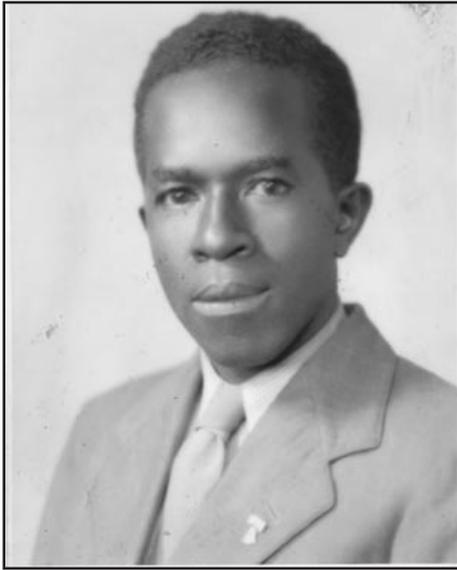
John Tisa



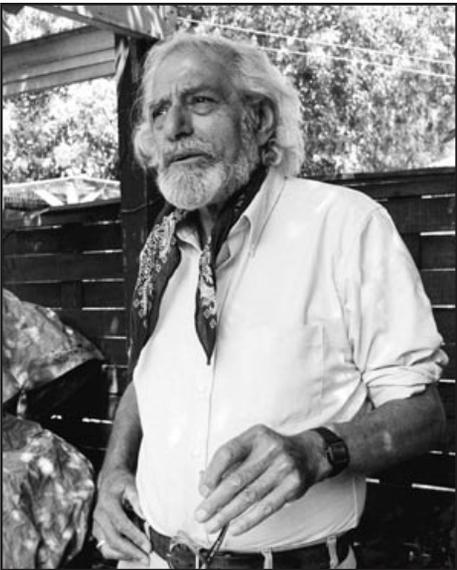
Anthony Toney, photo by Richard Bermack



George Watt



wounded, attended Officers' Training School. Watt eventually became the last commissar of the Lincoln-Washington battalion. He left Spain just before the fall of Barcelona in January 1939. He was a flight engineer and waist gunner in the Army Air Corps during World War II; on his thirtieth birthday, he parachuted from a stricken B-17 plane over the Low Countries, where he made contact with the Belgian underground and escaped over the Pyrenees into Spain. Watt later became a Party and labor organizer, and around 1950 helped create a Communist underground to offset the pressures of the Red Scare. He was arrested, prosecuted and convicted of sedition in 1953 under the Smith Act, but the verdict was overturned in an appeals court. Following the Khrushchev revelations and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, he broke from the Party completely. After earning a Master of Social Work degree, Watt ran the Community Mental Health Center at Maimonides Hospital in Brooklyn. He published an autobiography called *The Comet Connection: Escape from Hitler's Europe*, in 1990.



Milt Wolff, photo by Richard Bermack

## MILT WOLFF

[Brooklyn, 1915]

Milt Wolff studied painting for a semester at the New York School of Commercial Art in 1932. In 1934, at age 18, he joined the Civilian Conservation Corps, where he developed a sense of organized protest, but he left the following year. He began working in the garment industry and in 1936 became actively involved in the Young Communist League. He was among the first American volunteers to cross the Pyrenees into Spain in March 1937; he intended to serve as a first-aid worker but wound up joining a machine-gun company in the George

Washington battalion. After fighting at Brunete in July 1937, Wolff became commander of his machine-gun company. He became a sergeant in August 1937 and fought in the Aragon offensive. In November 1937 he was promoted to captain. He also fought at Teruel in January 1938. After the Great Retreats, he became the ninth and last commander of the Lincoln-Washington battalion until the withdrawal of the International Brigades in late 1938. All told, MW spent several months in frontline combat, including in the Aragon offensive, Teruel, the Ebro offensive and the Sierra Pandols. He is the author of, among several other works, an autobiographical novel titled *Another Hill*, which was published in 1994 by the University of Illinois Press.

## JAMES YATES

[Quitman, Mississippi, 1906 – New York City 1994]

Yates grew up in Mississippi and moved to Chicago as a teenager, where he helped found the Dining Car Waiters Union, a milestone in the black labor movement. He served as an ambulance driver with the Thaelmann battalion in Spain for nearly a year, until his truck was bombed and he spent three months recovering in a hospital. After World War II, Yates earned a degree in electronics from the New York Trade School and was active in the International Brotherhood of Railroad Workers. As leader of the Greenwich Village-Chelsea branch of the NAACP during the 1960s, he supported food and clothing drives for people in Mississippi, and actively took part in the national Civil Rights movement. Yates lived in Greenwich Village the rest of his life. In 1986, he self-published the memoir *Mississippi to Madrid* and sold it on the street and in the park.



The facists had the guns, but we had the better songs.

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# Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA) is an independent, nonprofit educational organization devoted to enlightening the American people about our country's progressive traditions and democratic political values. Over the past twenty-five years ALBA has created the largest U.S. collection of historical sources relating to the Spanish Civil War, including letters, diaries, public documents, photographs, posters, newspapers, videos, and assorted memorabilia. This unique archive is permanently housed at New York University's Tamiment Library, where students, scholars, and researchers may learn about the struggle against fascism.

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# THE CULTURAL LEGACY OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE

The exhibition will be in the main atrium of NYU's King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center (53 Washington Square South, between Thompson and Sullivan Sts.) and will run from 17 September to 16 December. The following special activities will complement the exhibition throughout the Fall semester and will be held in the Center's auditorium.

NYU's King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center promotes research, teaching and dialogue about Spain and the Spanish-speaking world.

**Admission is free and open to the public.**

## **Saturday, September 17**

4:30 pm Illustrated talk and roundtable: "The Cultural Legacy of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade" with Elizabeth Compa, James D. Fernández and Peter Carroll. Inauguration of the exhibition.

## **Friday, October 7, 6 p.m.**

Lecture by Mike Wallace, author of *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*, will speak on "Gotham and the Spanish Civil War"

## **Friday, October 28**

2 pm Screening of "A Fallen Sparrow"

4 pm Screening of "Blockade"

6 pm Roundtable on Hollywood, the Spanish Civil War, and the Lincoln Brigade.

With Peter Carroll, author of *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*, and Art Simon, English and Film Studies, Montclair State University.

## **Friday, November 11, 6 pm**

Lecture by Peter Glazer, Performance Studies, Berkeley  
"The Skin of the World: Spanish Civil War, Image/Music/Text"

## **Friday, November 18, 6 pm**

Lecture by Paul S. D'Ambrosio, author of *Ralph Fasanella's America*

## **Friday, December 16**

Closing event: "The Archive Comes to Life"

An evening with veterans, artists, writers and performers.



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