

SPRING 2011

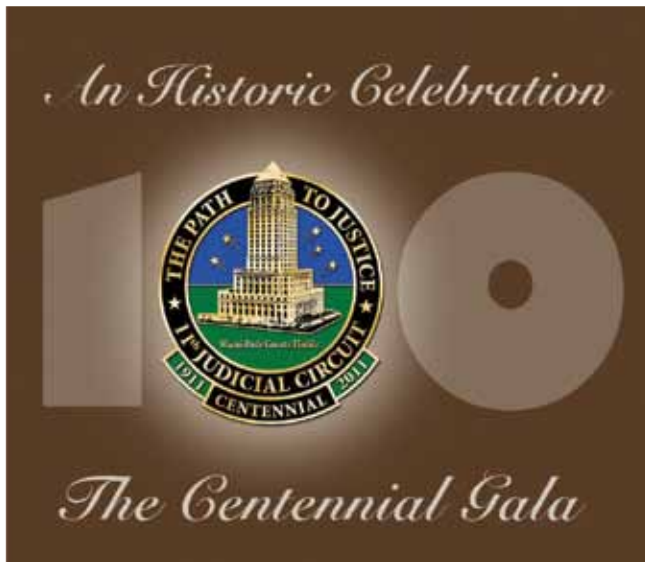


BRIGADE
2506
50TH Anniversary Tribute

BRIEFS

SPRING
into CABA

CABA 2011
INSTALLATION GALA



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HISTORYMIAMI





The Cuban American Bar Association
wishes to dedicate this issue to the
memory of the gallant men of the
2506 Assault Brigade
killed in action at the
Bay of Pigs invasion.

*Let no one ever forget the sacrifice
they made on those fateful April days,
and may those who live in freedom
treasure it, and understand the cost
to preserve it...*

freedom isn't free.

- Grayston L. and Karen A. Lynch



Victoria Mendez
President

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

SPRING 2011

It is hard to believe that this April 17, 2011 marks the 50th Anniversary of the Bay of Pigs Invasion. So many of our members remember those who lost their lives that fateful day, and we remember Brigade 2506, for their bravery and courage. Thus, in this edition of CABA Briefs, we honor the veterans of Brigade 2506. CABA salutes them for their suffering and sacrifice.

As I shared in my message in our last edition, one of our goals as an organization this year is to maintain CABA's presence as a leader in the transition to a free and democratic Cuba. We will continue to be a voice in that effort through our CABA on Cuba Committee.

I strongly believe in developing our leadership role in this regard and look to you in assisting CABA to maintain our prominence as one of the leading organizations in this community.

I hope this Bay of Pigs Commemorative Edition is indicative of the rich history that has shaped this organization and its members. It is a small token of the respect and reverence we have towards the men who served en la Brigada. These men are heroes in the Cuban community and as such, it is only right that we pay them a heroes' tribute.

On April 15, 2011, City of Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado and other distinguished leaders in this community will come together at an event hosted by CABA at the Bay of Pigs Museum, where we will present each Brigade member with a Proclamation from the City of Miami naming April 17, 2011, "Brigade 2506: Bay of Pigs Memorial Day" in the City of Miami. Through the Proclamation we honor their legacy of fighting for freedom. Through the veterans we have learned that we cannot stop fighting as a community until our beloved Cuba enjoys the same liberties that we do. CABA will stand strong in that fight. We hope you will share in this commemorative event and join us in honoring these men.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victoria Mendez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Victoria Mendez

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Akerman congratulates the 2011 CABA president and board of directors



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Yara Lorenzo
Editor-in-Chief

EDITOR'S NOTE

SPRING 2011

Dear Friends,

I am grateful to the CABA Board for affording me the opportunity to carry on, by serving as this year's Editor-in-Chief, the great tradition of CABA Briefs. With the experience I gained as Articles Editor in last year's Briefs committee, I hope to build on the accomplishments of past editors. I am especially thrilled to have this opportunity in a year where we are commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion. In this commemorative edition of CABA Briefs, we honor the patriots who fought as part of Brigade 2506. We hope we capture through words and pictures, their bravery and the honor with which they served.

In thinking about the year ahead and the direction I would like to take with CABA Briefs as its Editor, I reflected on the always wise words of my CABA mentor, and former CABA President, Cori Lopez-Castro. In her President's address in the Winter 2006 edition, Cori shared what being a member of the Cuban American Bar Association meant to her through three simple, but perfectly stated words: *ayer, hoy y siempre*; I, like her, aspire to honor the relentless effort of those before us, work daily to maintain our place on the agenda as an organization, and look forward to the advances yet to be achieved.

Without overlooking the importance of the daily work required to maintain our relevance, I look forward to dedicating my year as Editor focused on renewing our commitment to our roots and reaffirming our support to our brethren in Cuba. As José Martí once stated, "La patria es agonía, y deber." In that vein, one of our main goals as an organization is to be vocal on important issues affecting the Cuban community: this magazine should be a reflection of that commitment. As a Cuban immigrant myself-and with paternal grandparents, aunts, uncles and many cousins still on the island this is a calling that is heartfelt. Whether you are one, two, or three generations removed, I believe that duty is the same.

In closing, I would like to thank all those who contributed to the content and substance of this issue. Particularly Felix Rodriguez, President of the Bay Pigs Veterans Association and the men who support his work at the Bay of Pigs Museum. I would also like to thank the fantastic members of the Briefs committee, without whom this edition would not have been possible: Manuel L. Crespo; Raúl J. Chacón Jr.; Ariadna Hernandez; Maria Garcia; Vanessa Bertran; Diane Perez; and Augusto R. López. I hope that you enjoy this commemorative edition of CABA Briefs, and I encourage you to send comments—positive or negative to yara.lorenzo@gmail.com.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yara Lorenzo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being significantly larger and more stylized.

Yara Lorenzo



Brigade 2506 members awaiting their mass trial.

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CABA Briefs is published quarterly by the Cuban American Bar Association, Inc. ("CABA"). CABA is a non-profit organization established on August 29, 1974. For over 30 years, CABA's mission has been to promote equality amongst its members and those of other minority groups in the state of Florida. Reproduction in part of any text, photograph, or illustration without written permission of the publisher is strictly prohibited. To submit an article or ad to CABA Briefs, please contact Yara Lorenzo via e-mail at yara.lorenzo@gmail.com.



ON THE COVER

B26 Invader Bomber flown by Captain Joaquin "Jack" Varela.

Photograph provided by Jack & Viviana Varela, Jack's son and daughter-in-law.

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SPRING INTO CABA

By RAÚL J. CHACÓN JR.

Mission Statement

Cuban community. CABA's mission is to promote equality of our members; serve the public interest by increasing awareness to the study of jurisprudence; foster respect for the law; preserve high standards of integrity, honor, and professional courtesy among our peers; provide equal access to and adequate representation of minorities before the courts; facilitate the administration of justice; build close relationships among our members; support the Cuban-American indigent community; and increase diversity in the judiciary and legal community.

CABA is a non-profit voluntary bar association in the State of Florida. Founded in 1974, CABA's members include judges, lawyers and law students of Cuban, Cuban-American descent, as well as those who are not of Cuban descent, but are interested in issues affecting the



CABA kicked off the first quarter of this year with our Gala on January 29, 2011. As always, it was a well attended evening kicking off Vicky Méndez's presidency in 2011. Since then, CABA has co-hosted networking and informational events with the HNBA, NAWL, FAWL, SALAD, DCBA and the 11th Judicial Circuit Historical Society. CABA, through

its community liaison committee, raised money for Ronald McDonald House and was recognized in March at a ribbon cutting ceremony. Also in March, and as has become tradition, CABA defended its

softball title at the Annual DCBA Softball Tournament. CABA's Young Lawyers Happy Hour on March 31st was also a success thanks to our sponsor Northwestern. In April, CABA's Mentor Program Spring Luncheon showcased a panel of mentors and their mentees discussing valuable mentoring tips.

On April 15, 2011, CABA will host a commemorative event in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion. The second quarter of 2011 is also full of special events of interests. They include an Accountant/Attorney Networking Breakfast on April 21st and a concert at FIU with Miami's own Nestor Torres on April 23rd to round out April. In May, CABA's Mid-Year Membership Appreciation Happy Hour will be held, and on June 8th we will celebrate El Día de los Abogados.

For details on these and other events of interest, please look for notifications through our *Que Pasa CABA* Newsletter or visit our website at cabaonline.com. In short, Spring is a busy time for CABA—which means there are plenty of opportunities for you to get involved. On the next page you will find a directory of the various CABA Committees and their respective Chairs and Vice-Chairs. CABA is only as vibrant as its members and their contributions. Get involved today!

2011 is well under way and Spring is upon us. We sincerely hope that 2011 has brought and continues to bring health, happiness and success in every aspect of your life.



continued on next page...

SPRING into ACTION

CABA's committees are a key component in our success. Whether it is writing reports on current legislation, hosting CLE programs and events with major speakers or filing amicus briefs in ground-breaking legal cases, our committees shape policy and frame debate on the pressing legal issues of the day. Serving on a committee also offers the opportunity to build a network of valuable professional contacts and friendships. For more information about joining a committee, please contact the Committee Chairs or Co-Chairs directly.

Art in the Tropics Committee

Responsible for organizing every aspect of Art in the Tropics ("AIT"), which takes place annually. AIT is the chief fundraising event for CABA's Pro Bono Project. This Committee commences its meetings around April and continues until the event takes place, which is sometime in September or October.

Co-Chairs: Isabel Díaz - idiaz@broadandcassel.com
Jennifer J. Perez - jeperez@bupalatinamerica.com

Broward Liaison Committee

The Broward Liaison Committee is responsible for coordinating CABA's efforts with all voluntary bar associations in Broward County.
Chair: Ricardo Martínez-Cid - rmcid@podhurst.com

Business Development Committee

Business Development Committee is in charge of fostering business relationships to benefit CABA members. For example, getting discounted rates for our members on things such as translations services or service of process. In addition, this committee oversees development, programming and opportunities for our members to meet corporate counsel and other opportunities that would generate business for respective members.

Chair: Nelson C. Bellido - NBellido@cfclaw.com
Vice-Chair: Ricardo Martínez-Cid - rmcid@podhurst.com

CABA Briefs Committee

Responsible for the creation and approval of general policies relating to the content, advertising, budget, and production of our magazine, CABA Briefs. CABA Briefs is published quarterly and is distributed by mail to our membership and subscribers, including, attorneys, judges, civic leaders, and other professionals. Additionally, CABA Briefs is distributed at select events and is also posted to our website at www.cabaonline.com. Circulation is approximately 2,000, primarily in Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Chair: Manuel L. Crespo, Jr. - mcrespo@smgqlaw.com
Briefs Editor-in-Chief: Yara Lorenzo - yara.lorenzo@gmail.com

CABA on Cuba Committee

The purpose of the CABA on Cuba Committee is to recommend to the CABA Board what CABA's position and role, if any, would be when a political transition occurs in Cuba. It is CABA's belief that CABA not only has a right, but the obligation, as a not-for-profit organization whose members are primarily Cuban American lawyers, to promote a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba.

Chair: Manuel L. Garcia Linares - mlinares@richmangreer.com
Vice-Chairs: Raúl J. Chacón Jr. - rchacon@houckanderson.com
Nilda Pedrosa - nildapedrosa@gmail.com

CLE Committee

Responsible for creating and getting CLE credits approved at CABA events were substantive legal issues are discussed.

Chairs: Raúl J. Chacón Jr. - rchacon@houckanderson.com
Marie Mato - MarieMato@miamisao.com

Coalition of Hispanic Bars

Responsible for coordinating efforts with the Hispanic National Bar Association, and other Hispanic-focused voluntary bars.

Chair: Jorge Piedra - JPiedra@piedralaw.com
Vice-chair: N. Sacha Reyes

Community Liaison

Community Liaison Committee is intended to be outreach/grassroots-centered committee that develops projects, organizes activities and hosts events that are targeted at the neediest groups in our community: children, adolescents, young adults, students of all ages, low-income families, and the elderly.

Chair: Isabel Díaz - idiaz@broadandcassel.com
Vice-Chair: María García - mgarcia@houckanderson.com

Corporate Governance Committee

Responsible for preserving and addressing the practices, principles and values that guide CABA and its members every day, at all levels of the organization.

Chair: Javier A. López - jal@kttlaw.com
Vice-Chair: Nelson C. Bellido - NBellido@cfclaw.com

Cultural, Arts and Athletic Affairs Committee

Responsible for coordinating events for CABA members that touch the areas of arts or athletics.

Chair: Augusto Lopez - ALopez@smgqlaw.com
Vice-Chair: Javier A. López - jal@kttlaw.com

Ethics, Professionalism and Diversity Committee

Responsible for addressing ethical issues that arise within CABA.

Chair: Nelson C. Bellido - NBellido@cfclaw.com
Nicole Mestre - nem@mestrelaw.com
Vice-Chair: Vivian Reyes - vivian@vivianreyeslaw.com

Events Committee

The Events Committee's purpose is to develop events that bring our membership together for the exchange of information and ideas that relate to the practice of law and to issues that affect the Cuban-American community. In that regard, the Committee is responsible for planning and overseeing monthly events throughout the year that our general membership will have interest in for professional and/or social development. The Events Committee works closely with other CABA Committees, and often, other voluntary bar organizations, in developing programs, including luncheons with featured speakers, cocktails, seminars, and other special functions (such as our Annual Judicial Luncheon and Mentoring Program Receptions). For a list of upcoming events, please visit our calendar of events.

Chair: María García - mgarcia@houckanderson.com
Vice-Chair: Jennifer J. Perez - jeperez@bupalatinamerica.com

Judicial Committee

Responsible for interviewing candidates during election time, and working with aspiring members of the bench to make sure CABA members make an informed decision when its time to go to the polls.

Chairs: Anna Marie Hernández - ahernandez@pathmanlewis.com
Victoria Méndez - victoriamedez@aol.com
Vice-Chair: Luis Suárez - lsuarez@bsflp.com

Legislative Committee

Responsible for monitoring legislation of interest that affects the legal profession and Cuban-American community. The Legislative Committee is responsible for advocacy before local and state governmental bodies on issues of interest to our membership. Special emphasis is given to the need to promote greater diversity in the judicial profession and state court judiciary. The Committee is also responsible for maintaining strong ties to local legislators and political leaders and keeping them informed of CABA's activities and viewpoints.

Chair: Vivian de las Cuevas-Díaz - vcuevas@broadandcassel.com
Vice-Chair: Jorge Piedra - JPiedra@piedralaw.com

Membership/Benefits Committee

The Membership Committee's primary goal is to organize and implement strategies that expand the membership by reaching out to non-members in new and creative ways. The Membership Committee also works to retain and cultivate the existing Association's membership. In furtherance of its goals, the Membership Committee is responsible for keeping accurate and updated member information, mail annual dues reminders, and hold receptions and social events for the purpose of sharing information on the benefits of being affiliated with CABA.

Chair: Anna Marie Hernández - ahernandez@pathmanlewis.com
Vice-Chair: Jorge Piedra - JPiedra@piedralaw.com

Mentoring and Scholarships Committee

The Mentor Program Committee is dedicated to serving as the liaison between CABA and local law students. The Committee reviews student applications for scholarships awarded by CABA at each of the local law schools. The Committee also coordinates the mentor program by pairing law students with experienced attorneys who introduce them to real-life experiences associated with working in the legal profession and who guide and encourage them through law school. Finally, the Committee is responsible for serving the needs of our student members by (i) promoting the value of cultural diversity; (ii) assisting students with the transition into practice; and (iii) providing networking opportunities in the legal profession. The Mentor Committee bi-annually sponsors a Mentor Reception for law students to interact with practicing attorneys and meet their mentors. The intent of the Mentor Program is to instill in law students the tradition, pride, and love of the law necessary to successfully practice law.

Chair: Raúl J. Chacón Jr. - rchacon@houckanderson.com
Vice-Chair: Vivian de las Cuevas-Díaz - vcuevas@broadandcassel.com

Past Presidents Committee

Responsible for coordinating efforts amongst past CABA Presidents and keeping them abreast of CABA affairs.

Chair: Manuel A. García-Linares - mlinares@richmangreer.com
Vice-chair: Vivian De Las Cuevas-Díaz - vcuevas@broadandcassel.com

Pro Bono Committee

One of CABA's stated missions is to give back to the community by providing legal assistance to the indigent Hispanic/Cuban American community. In furtherance of that mission, CABA established the CABA Pro Bono Project (the "Project"). The Pro Bono Committee supports the work of the Project in every facet, from budget issues to community outreach.

Chair: Sandra Ferrera - sferrera@melandrussin.com
Vice-chairs: Anna Marie Hernández - ahernandez@pathmanlewis.com
Nicole Mestre - nem@mestrelaw.com

Que Pasa CABA (QPC) Committee

The QPC Committee publishes a monthly e-newsletter called "Que Pasa CABA." Que Pasa CABA provides information to the CABA membership regarding recent developments affecting CABA's interests; CABA's work during the previous month; upcoming CABA events and "events of interest," which are those hosted by other voluntary bars and professional organizations. In short, the website committee is CABA's source of communication to the membership.

QPC Editors: Nicole Mestre - nem@mestrelaw.com
N. Sacha Reyes -

Rapid Response Committee

Responsible for responding on CABA's behalf on pressing issues demanding prompt attention.

Chair: Augusto López - ALopez@smgqlaw.com
Vice-Chair: Ricardo M. Martínez-Cid - rmcid@podhurst.com

Website Committee

Responsible for the look, contents and maintenance of CABA's website. The committee ensures that all topical information is uploaded on a frequent basis to keep CABA news, information, events and photographs current.

Chair: Manuel L. Crespo, Jr. - MCrespo@smgqlaw.com
Vice-Chair: Victoria Méndez - victoriamedez@aol.com

Young Lawyers Committee

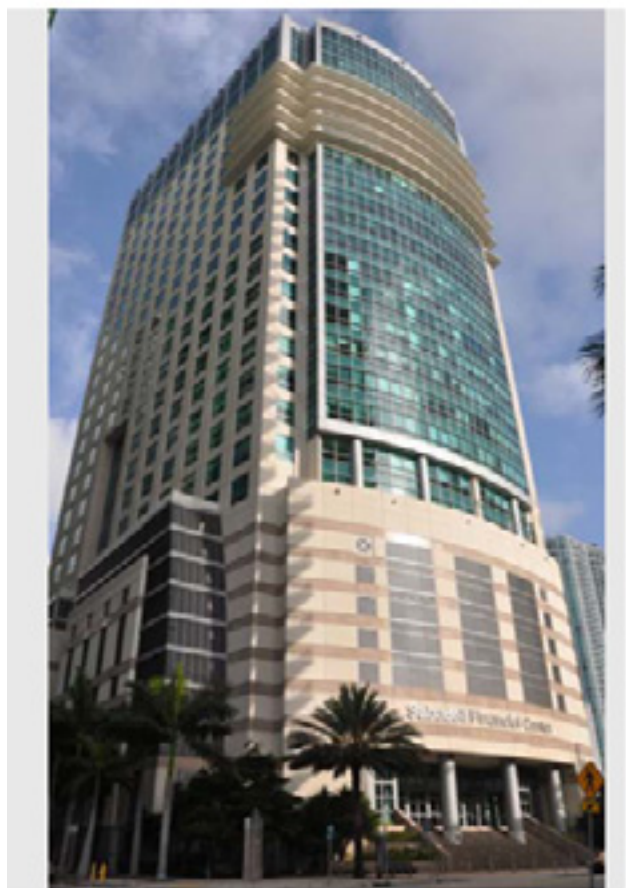
Responsible for coordinating events and programing geared towards the younger sector of CABA's membership. This includes substantive programs and social outings.

Chair: María García - mgarcia@houckanderson.com
Vice-Chairs: Carlos Lago - clago1@gmail.com
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Sabadell United Bank



Sabadell United Bank congratulates CABA's incoming President, **Victoria Méndez** and the 2011 Board of Directors. We have always valued our long-standing relationship with CABA, and are honored to be the Event Sponsor of the Annual Installation Gala.

Sabadell United Bank's unparalleled commitment to the legal profession goes beyond providing superior banking services. We also recognize the importance of supporting outstanding organizations like CABA that are dedicated to professional excellence.

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CABA 2011 INSTALLATION GALA

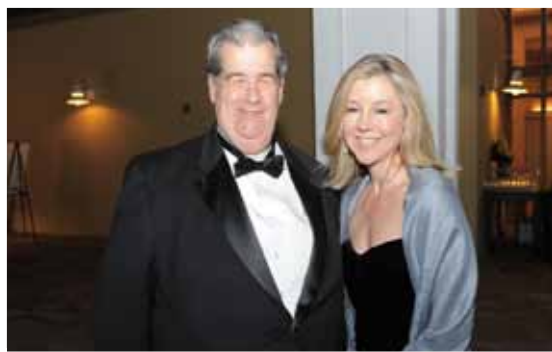
The Cuban American Bar Association held its Annual Installation Gala on January 30, 2011, at the Doral Golf Resort & Spa. Over 700 individuals attended including United States Congressman David Rivera, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Willy Ferrer, and State House Rep. Jose F. Diaz. There were also many federal and state judges present, all coming to celebrate another successful year, and the many achievements to come.





DORAL
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January 30, 2011









INSTALLATION GALA







THANKS! FOR A GREAT YEAR

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BAY OF PIGS

50TH ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE
HONORING BRIGADE 2506

BY YARA LORENZO



Captain Joaquin "Jack" Varela. Photograph provided by Jack & Viviana Varela, son and daughter-in-law of Brigade Veteran

Fifty years ago, in April of 1961, brave men from our community put their lives at risk in the hopes of liberating Cuba from Castro's early grip. In thinking of how best to honor them, we sought input from CABA's members, members of the Cuban American community, and our elected leaders. What follows in the next several pages are personal accounts of individuals who participated in the Bay of Pigs invasion; stories and pictures shared by loved ones of those veterans; letters from Florida's Senators; the South Florida Congressional delegation; and finally a powerful resolution passed by the Florida legislature and shared with us by CABA member and State Representative, Jose Felix Diaz.

To appreciate their stories fully, let a brief account remind us of the events that transpired. In January 1959, Castro's revolution triumphed over the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. Relations between the U.S. and Cuba soon began to deteriorate as it became evident that change in Cuba was not just a change from one administration to the next, but was in fact, a social revolution. On March 17, 1960, President Eisenhower approved a strategic plan of action against Cuba which included a propaganda campaign and the use of a paramilitary force of Cuban exiles. These paramilitary exiles were to invade the island with one mission: oust Castro and gain control of Cuba. The attack was to occur after the exiles were trained and ready.

In Miami men of honor enlisted—one of them, William D. Muir, shares his account, where at barely seventeen years of age, his parents had to sign his release in order to join the Brigade. He and many others were shipped to Guatemala, where they trained under the worst conditions, for months on end. Our very own beloved CABA member Osvaldo Soto shares with our readership his role in preparing the rules which would go into effect immediately after the takeover.



Today, on the 50th Anniversary of the invasion, we honor the men of Brigade 2506 not only for enlisting selflessly for the cause-for love of our madre patria, but also for the remarkable lives of service to this great country that they went on to lead.

President Kennedy, who took office in January of 1961, had different ideas as to how to carry out the attack. Enrique Ros, the foremost historian on the History of Cuba, recounts President Kennedy's change in strategy and the disastrous outcome of the invasion as a result. The attack carried out on April 17, 1961, lasted three days and the exile invasion was defeated. 1189 Cuban exiles were taken prisoner and many lost their lives in battle. The invasion was an embarrassment not only for the administration, but for all Americans. Our Cuban brothers were imprisoned for close to twenty months, after which what can only be called mass "mock" trials, lacking any semblance of due process and fairness, were conducted and ransom amounts determined. Ultimately, the survivors were released in exchange for \$53 million in food and medicine.

Today, on the 50th Anniversary of the invasion, we honor the men of Brigade 2506 not only for enlisting selflessly for the cause-for love of our madre patria, but also for the remarkable lives of service to this great country that they went on to lead. They worked countless hours to build a life as exiles, yet never forgot their fight to liberate Cuba. They laid the bedrock of this community: many of them opened doors to Cuban American attorneys who would one day follow in their footsteps. **CB**

Today, we
celebrate
these patriots.



After 20 months of cold macaroni and dried beans, a hot meal. Man reaching for a plate at the center of the photo is CABA member Vivian Diaz de las Cuevas's father-in-law, Jose "Pepe" Diaz. Photograph provided by Vivian Diaz de las Cuevas.



Bill Nelson

March 10, 2011

Cuban American Bar Association

Dear Friends:

I want to congratulate you on your efforts to honor the brave individuals who participated in the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. As we remember their sacrifices during the fiftieth anniversary, it is also important that we give thanks to those who continue the fight to restore democracy and individual and political freedoms in Cuba. The sacrifices of all these individuals keeps alive the hope that one day soon the Cuban people will be free from the repression brought upon them by the brutal regime there.

As we take a moment to reflect during this anniversary, I would like to thank the Cuban American Bar Association for its ongoing work in the community and taking a lead role in recognizing the men who fought in the Bay of Pigs invasion. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,
Bill Nelson



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0000

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

March 10, 2011

Cuban American Bar Association

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Sincerely,

Bill Nelson

April 15, 2011

Members of the Cuban American Bar Association,

I am proud to join you in commemoration the 50th anniversary of the Bay of Pigs Invasion. I applaud the members of the Cuban American Bar Association for their efforts to recognize the men who sacrificed so much to bring freedom to Cuba.

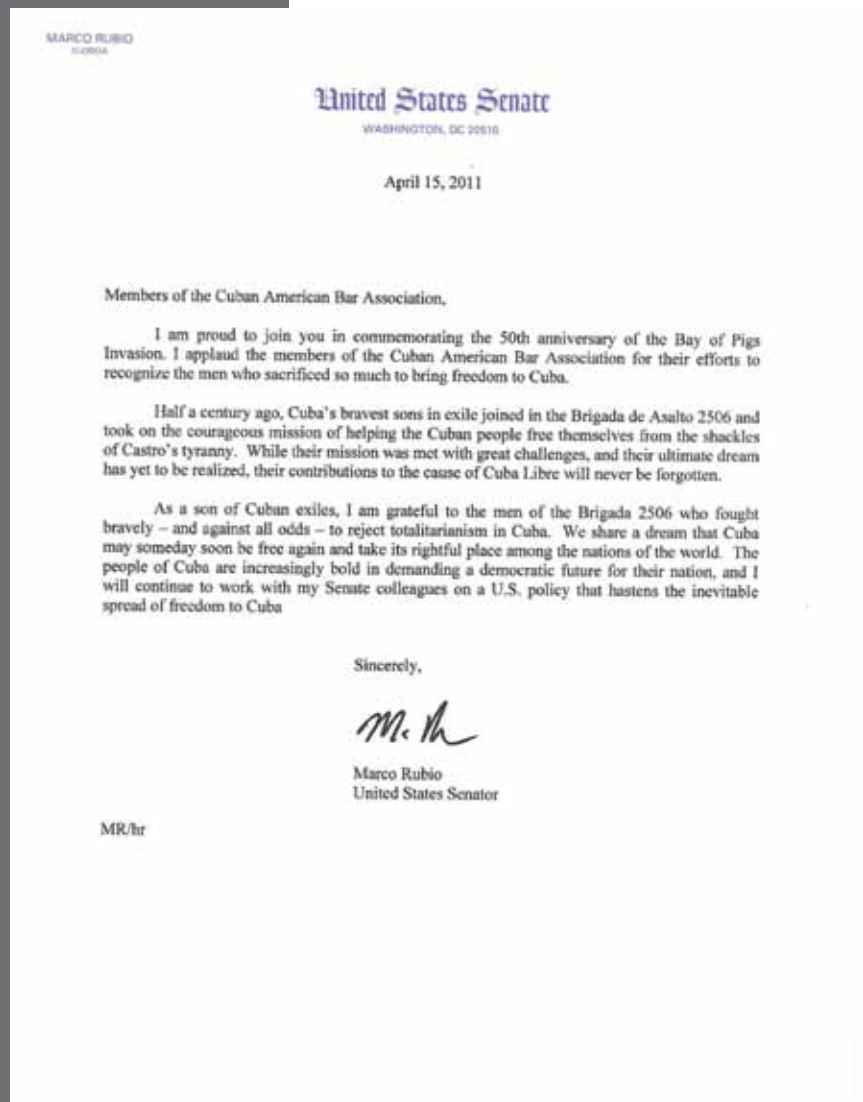
Half a century ago, Cuba's bravest sons in exile joined the Brigada de Asalto 2506 and took on the courageous mission of helping the Cuban people free themselves from the shackles of Castro's tyranny. While their mission was met with great challenges, and their ultimate dream has yet to be realized, their contributions to the cause of Cuba Libre will never be forgotten.

As a son of Cuban exiles, I am grateful to the men of Brigade 2506 who fought bravely – and against all odds – to reject totalitarianism in Cuba. We share a dream that Cuba may someday soon be free again and take its rightful place among nations of the world. The people of Cuba are increasingly bold in demanding a democratic future for their nation, and I will continue to work with my Senate colleagues on a U.S. policy that hastens the inevitable spread of freedom to Cuba.

Sincerely,
Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Marco Rubio





Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

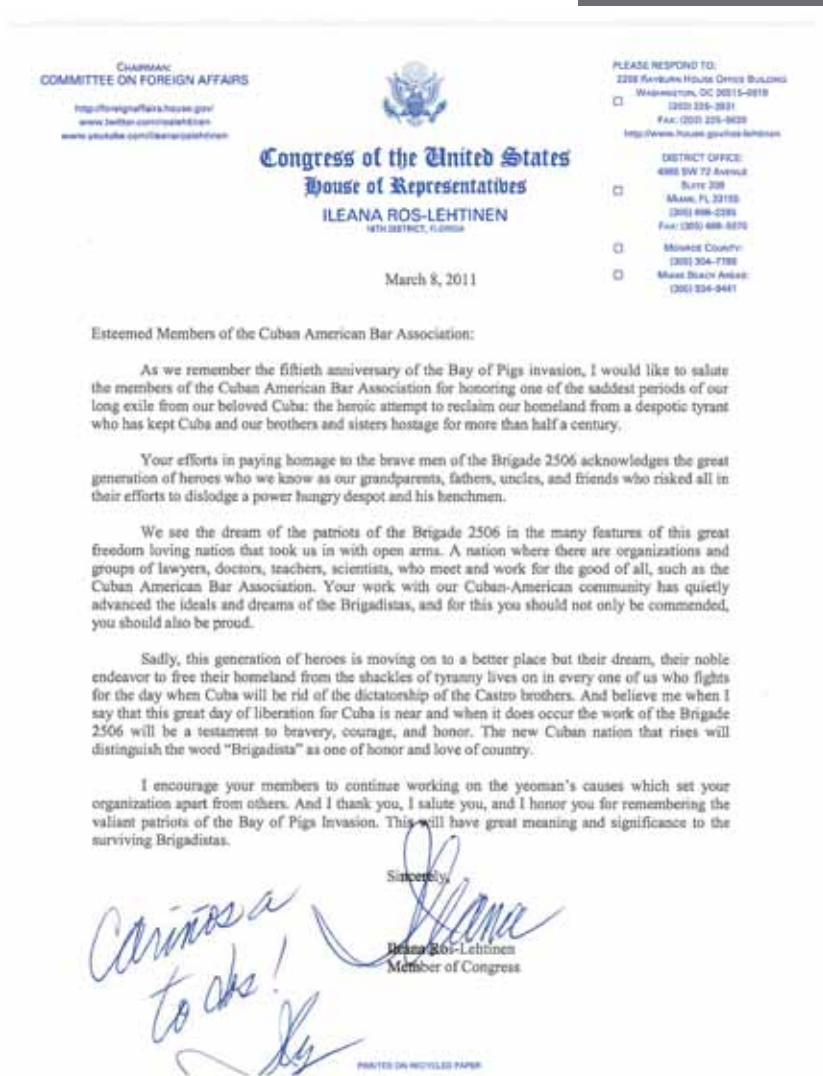
March 8, 2011

Esteemed Members of the Cuban American Bar Association:

As we remember the fiftieth anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion, I would like to salute the members of the Cuban American Bar Association for honoring one of the saddest periods of our long exile from our beloved Cuba: the heroic attempt to reclaim our homeland from a despotic tyrant who has kept Cuba and our brothers and sisters hostage for than half a century.

Your efforts in paying homage to the brave men of the Brigade 2506 acknowledges this great freedom loving nation that took us in with open arms. A nation where there are organizations and groups of lawyers, doctors, teachers, scientists, who meet and work for the good of all, such as the Cuban American Bar Association. Your work with out Cuban-American community has quietly advanced the ideals and dreams of the Brigadistas, and for this you should not only be commended, you should also be proud.

Sadly, this generation of heroes is moving on to a better place but their dream, their noble endeavor to free their homeland from the shackles of tyranny lives on in every one of us who fights for the day when Cuba will be rid of the dictatorship of the Castro brothers. And believe me when I say that this is a great day of liberation for Cuba is near and when it does occur the work of the Brigade 2506 will be a testament to bravery, courage, and honor. The new Cuban nation that rises will distinguish the word "Brigadista" as one of honor and love of country.



I encourage your members to continue working on the yeoman's cause which set your organization apart from others. And I thank you, I salute you, and I honor you for remembering the valiant patriots of the Bay of Pigs Invasion. This will have great meaning and significance to the surviving Brigadistas.

Sincerely,
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress

March 3, 2011

Dear Members of the Cuban American Bar Association,

I write to join the members of the Cuban American Bar Association in remembering the fiftieth anniversary of the Bay of Pigs Invasion. I humbly salute the patriots of Brigade 2506, along with the handful of American co-fighters, who attempted to liberate the Cuban people from tyranny fifty years ago.

The Bay of Pigs Invasion lasted three days. Although the Brigade was outnumbered and short on supplies, it inflicted heavy damage on Castro's well-equipped, Soviet-supported military. Those brave fighters of Brigade 2506 were a cross-section of Cuban society -- doctors, students, farmers, teenagers. They were supported by four brave Alabama pilots who ignored President Kennedy's spineless orders to abandon their co-fighters. Instead they chose to die next to their Cuban partners that day. Once the battle was over, the "lucky" survivors endured nearly two years of extreme torture at the hands of some of the most sadistic, expertly trained torturers the world has ever known.

I commend the Cuban American Bar Association for remembering a day of such importance to both Cuban and American history. CABA's devotion to strength the rule of law provides a stark contrast to the lawlessness of the Castro regime. CABA's mission of promoting democratic transition and human rights in Cuba, and its dedication to serving the Cuban American community, make it especially fitting venue for paying tribute to the heroism that occurred at Playa Girón fifty years ago.

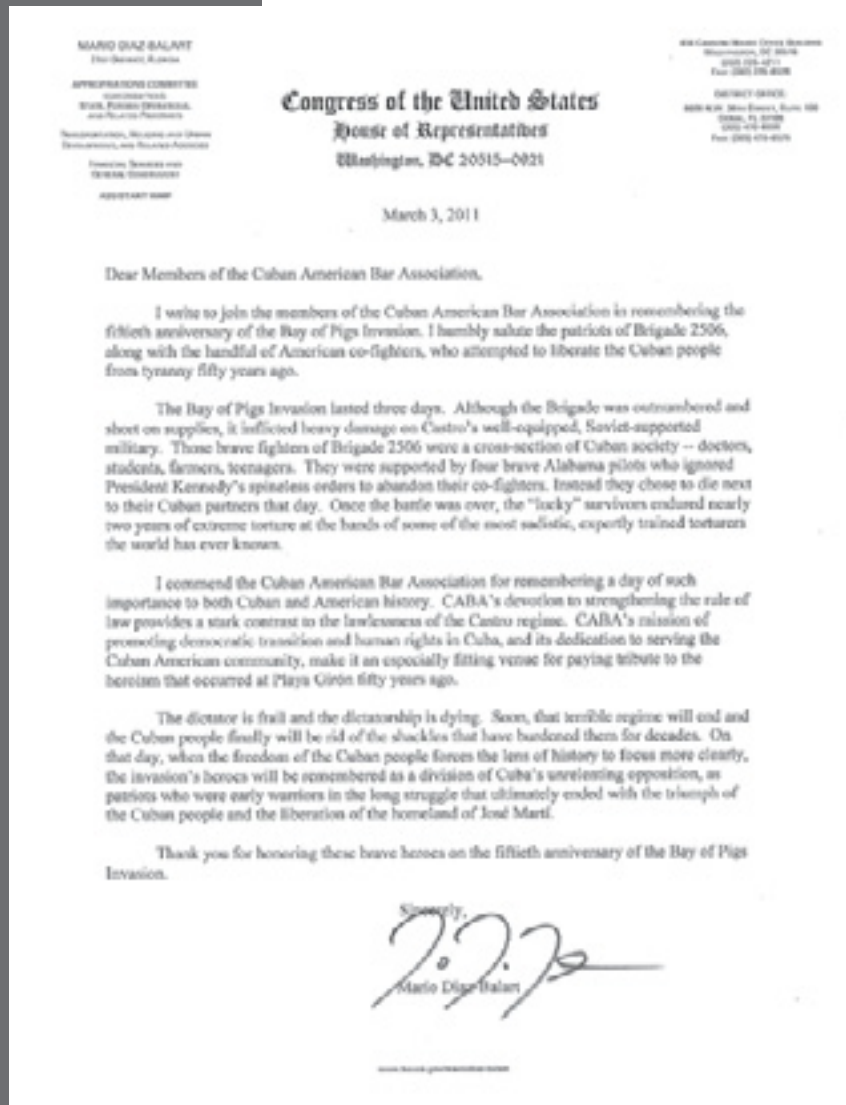
The dictator is frail and the dictatorship is dying. Soon, that terrible regime will end and the Cuban people finally will be rid of the shackles that have burdened them for decades. On that day, when freedom of the Cuban people forces the lens of history to focus more clearly, the invasion's heroes will be remembered as a division of Cuba's unrelenting opposition, as patriots who were early warriors in the long struggle that ultimately ended with the triumph of the Cuban people and the liberation of the homeland of José Martí.

Thank you for honoring these brave heroes on the fiftieth anniversary of the Bay of Pigs Invasion.

Sincerely,
Mario Diaz-Balart



Mario Diaz-Balart





David Rivera

March 3rd, 2011

The Cuban American Bar Association
1898 NW 7th Street
Miami, FL 33125

Greetings,

The Cuban American Bar Association has been an exemplary organization in our community for over 30 years. This non-profit, voluntary bar association has been a pillar of the legal community in South Florida. I commend the association for all its accomplishments.

In this year's spring edition, CABA has dedicated their quarterly magazine to the 50th anniversary of the invasion of the Bay of Pigs. In remembering those 1,400 Cuban exiles that fought so gallantly for freedom, we salute not only those men, but their families as well. It is particularly important to remember the Cuban exiles who forfeited their lives fighting for freedom.

I commend CABA for dedicating their magazine's spring edition to the veterans and heroes who fought in the invasion of the Bay of Pigs. These patriots fought with the inspiration of freeing their homeland. Their sacrifice will forever be remembered.

Sincerely,
David Rivera
Member of Congress

DAVID RIVERA
20th District, Florida
COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0920

March 3rd 2011

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Mr. David Rivera, Jr.

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Fax: (305) 234-1114

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Suite 1
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Phone: (305) 366-4433
Fax: (305) 366-0565

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Miami, FL 33125

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Sincerely,

David Rivera
Member of Congress

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Isabel Diaz
2011 Caba Director

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An excerpt from **PLAYA GIRON:** La Verdadera Historia

REPRINTED WITH THE PERMISSION OF AUTHOR AND FOREMOST CUBAN HISTORIAN, ENRIQUE ROS

Altos funcionarios relacionados con la política exterior de los Estados Unidos y con la seguridad nacional han sido convocados a la reunión que se está celebrando en la Casa Blanca en la mañana de este martes 4 de Abril de 1961.

El grupo que está juzgando los méritos y desméritos de un plan de invasión que ha venido cristalizándose durante 12 meses lo componen ese día 12 hombres: un militar, dos altos oficiales de la Agencia Central de Inteligencia, un político y ocho brillantes intelectuales con poca o ninguna experiencia militar. La diferencia con la composición del antiguo grupo asesor es notable. Las consecuencias serán desastrosas.

Era esta una de las muchas reuniones que, desde fines de enero de 1961 cuando tomó posesión, realizaba el Presidente John F. Kennedy para estudiar, modificar y aprobar los planes sobre Cuba que en la pasada Administración eran analizados por el Grupo Especial (Comité 5412) y el Grupo de Trabajo de la CIA.

Días después de jurar su cargo, el Presidente Kennedy asume la responsabilidad de aprobar esos planes. La responsabilidad, que no se había atrevido a tomar para sí el general de cinco estrellas que comandó las fuerzas aliadas en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, la toma, con despreocupada ligereza, el joven oficial de un pequeño barco patrullero. En febrero disuelve Kennedy dos importantes organismos del Consejo Nacional de Seguridad: La Junta de Planeación y la Junta Coordinadora de Operaciones, alegando que su control sobre actividades de la Guerra Fría representa indebida influencia militar. La medida debilita al aparato militar norteamericano.

Desde su toma de posesión el nuevo presidente ha introducido, también, apreciables y desconcertantes cambios en los planes paramilitares elaborados.

Los cubanos que se encontraban en los campamentos y ya marchaban hacia la isla nada conocían de estos fatídicos cambios que inevitablemente conducirían al fracaso. No importaba.

Es evidente que ya el Presidente ha tomado su decisión cuando expresa fríamente a los ahí reunidos en esa mañana de Abril: «tenemos que salir de estos hombres. Es mucho mejor botarlos en Cuba (dump them in Cuba) que en los Estados Unidos. Especialmente si es allá donde ellos quieren ir.» El Presidente le ha dado solución -su solución- al «disposal problem» (el que hacer con la Brigada) que le habían planteado en la reunión de Marzo 11.

Las reuniones de Marzo 11 y Abril 4 de 1961 y las subsiguientes decisiones -claudicantes, entreguistas- del joven mandatario le darán un ignominioso fin a los planes elaborados por el Presidente Eisenhower en Marzo 17 de 1960. **CB**

“

Es mucho mejor dejarlos botados en Cuba.

” J.F.K

An excerpt from: Playa Girón: La Verdadera Historia Reprinted with the permission of author and foremost Cuban historian, Enrique Ros . Translated by: Yara Lorenzo

High ranking government officials, involved with United States foreign policy and national security were summoned to a meeting which took place at the White House, on the morning of Tuesday, April 4, 1961.

The group—which came together to discuss the pros and cons of the plan to invade formulated during the last twelve months—was composed of twelve men: a member of the military, two senior members of the Central Intelligence Agency, one politician, and eight brilliant intellectuals with little or no military experience. The difference in the make-up of the old advisory group and this one is noteworthy. The consequences will prove to be disastrous.

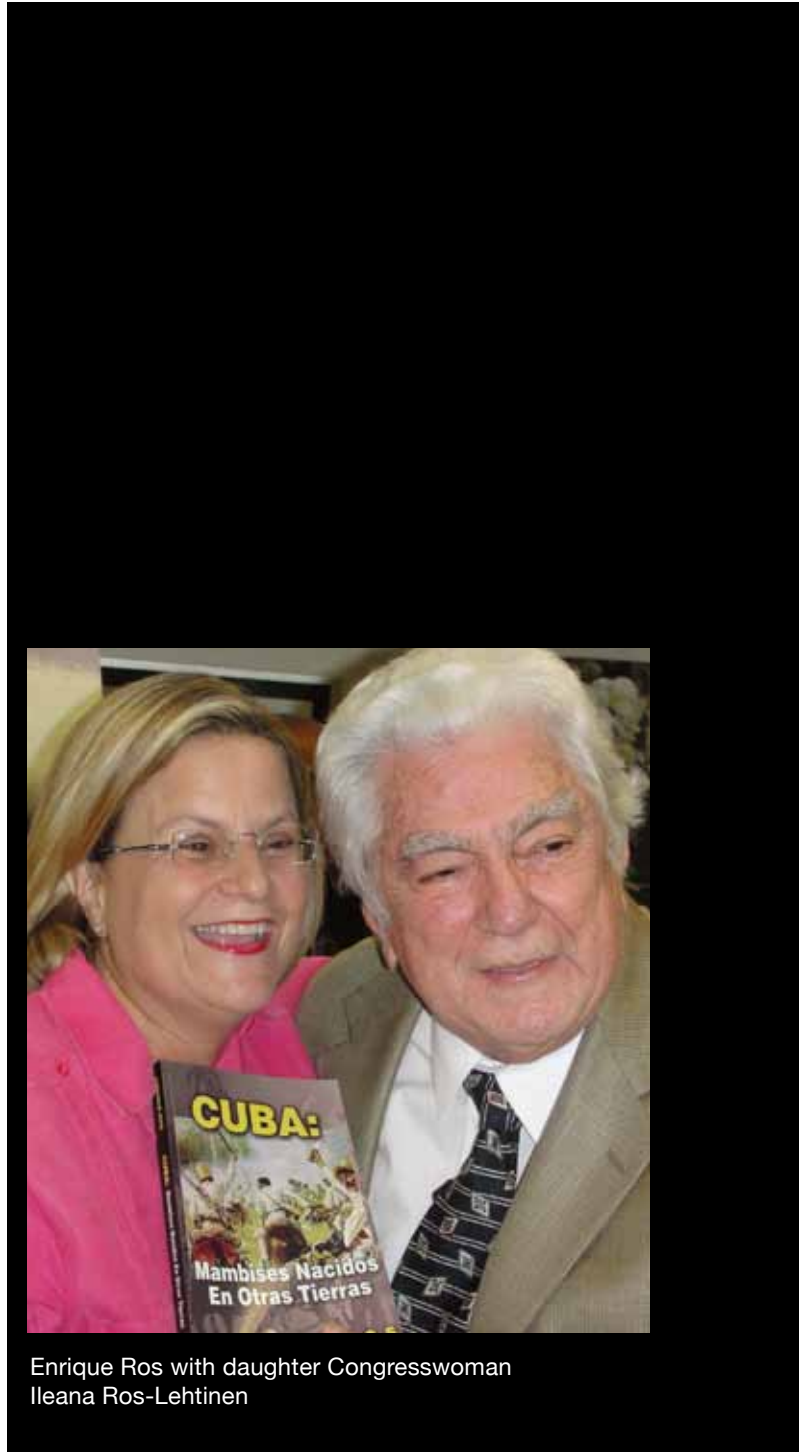
This was one of many meetings, since he took office in January of 1961, carried out by President John F. Kennedy in order to study, modify and approve plans regarding Cuba, which during the previous administration were analyzed by the Special Group (Committee 5412), and the Central Intelligence Agency's working group.

Days after taking office, President Kennedy assumed responsibility to approve those plans. That responsibility, which the five-star general who was commander of the allied forces during World War Two had not been willing to take, was taken, with a carefree attitude, by a young officer of a small navy patrol vessel. In February (of 1961) President Kennedy dissolved two important components of the National Security Council: the Planning Committee and the Operations Coordinating Committee, alleging that their control over Cold War activities represented undue military influence. That measure weakened the North American military apparatus. Since taking the oath of office the new President introduced significant and disconcerting changes in paramilitary plans.

The Cubans at the camp grounds and those already enroute towards the island had no idea about those fateful changes that inevitably would lead to failure. This didn't matter.

It is evident that the President had already made a decision when he expressed coldly to the men sitting at that morning meeting at the White House in April: "We have to get rid of these men. It is much better to dump them in Cuba, than in the Untied States, especially if its there that they want to be." The President has given a solution- his solution- to the disposal problem (that of what to do with the Brigade) which had been presented to him at the March 11th meeting.

*The meetings of March 11 and April 4, 1961, and the subsequent halting and submissive decisions of the young leader, provide for a humiliating end to the plans developed by President Eisenhower on March 17, 1960. **CB***



Enrique Ros with daughter Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen



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- Community Liaison Vice-Chair 2008
 - Events Vice-Chair 2006

Oswaldo Soto, Brigade 2506 Member, CABA Founder

BY LORENZO COBIELLA AND DENISE MORENO

Oswaldo N. Soto, Esq., better known as “Soto” or as “The Godfather of CABA,” was born in Havana, Cuba on September 8, 1929. He is the son of Antonio Soto and Maria Teresa Polo, descended from a prominent Cuban family. Soto graduated from La Universidad de la Havana as a licensed attorney at the young age of twenty-one. He worked both in the family business and as an attorney. One of his first legal positions was that of public defender. Soto established his career and family in Havana. And he remained in Havana until Fidel Castro’s regime confiscated all his family’s businesses, his law practice, and their personal and real property in 1960. On the 50th anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion, Soto gives us his perspective of what transpired in April of 1961.

Like many Cubans at the time, Soto and his young family fled to the United States seeking freedom and refuge from the ongoing political crisis in Cuba. With his wife, Bertila Areces, and his three sons, Oswaldo, Eduardo and Rigoberto, he moved to Miami, Florida. It was a difficult time for everyone. His middle son, Eduardo, had become very ill, and his wife and family struggled in a new country. Nonetheless, Soto wanted to work closely with the American government to free Cuba. He refers to the United States government agency that masterminds covert operations abroad as “the Company” or “our friends.” When asked to join them in the fight for Cuba’s independence from Castro’s dictatorship and communism, he accepted, along with many other Cuban men that wanted Cuba to be free.

In the beginning, Soto recalls that many Cuban nationals were training under the direction of “our friends” in Nicaragua. Many of these men we know today as the “Brigada 2506.” However, on March 15, 1961, he was not sent to Nicaragua to train as he thought. He was sent to an established American army training camp in New Orleans, Louisiana. It was there where Soto joined “La Brigada Especial” or the Special Brigade under the command of Eugenio “Nino” Diaz.

On or about April 10, 1961, Commander Diaz asked him to write a “Codigo de Ocupacion” or Code of Occupation. Positive that we would succeed with the help of “our friends,” it was intended to be a body of laws for the areas that the Brigade would begin to occupy after the invasion. Soto asked Rogelio de la Torre, a member of the brigade, who was an attorney and professor of Criminal Procedure at la Universidad de la Havana, to help him with the difficult task. In

this and many matters, “Rogelito” was a great help during his time with the Special Brigade.

There were an estimated 180 men at the camp. The men would begin their day as early as 5:00 a.m. to run and otherwise train for battle. One of Soto’s most vivid memories at the camp is learning how to use firearms and explosives. Soto recalls that he had never shot a pistol before, nor has he shot one since that time. He remembers the first time he threw a grenade - he almost lost his arm because he “wanted to throw it like a baseball!” According to Soto, “our friends” taught him his military skills, but these new skills did not come easy to him. He was not a fighter, but a believer. He was a man with a cause and the will, if not the skill, to go forward. Like so many other revolutionaries before me.”

Soto explains that during training, some of them knew that the attack was scheduled for late April. But, Soto recalls, that in the early morning hours of April 12th or 13th, Commander Diaz, in the company of “our friends,” woke him up at 3 a.m. to inform him



Denise Moreno & Lorenzo Cobiella with their boss, mentor, CABA founder and Brigade 2506 Veteran, Oswaldo Soto

that they were leaving that night because plans had changed. The leaders of the underground movement in Cuba had been arrested and later murdered by a firing squad.

According to Soto, “I was not ready; the men were not ready; the Code of Occupation was not ready. We all needed more time. They needed the clandestine movement to be ready - neither were ready, but we trusted ‘our Friends’. 180 Cuban laborers, businessmen,

students, attorneys and lay people, with the dream of liberating their country, were being thrown into battle unprepared. We left New Orleans on April 12th or 13th, to 'rendezvous' with the ship that would take us to Cuba, The Santa Ana, docked in Key West, Florida. That same night, The Santa Ana, took us close to the coast of Haiti, where we waited for further instructions from 'our friends.' Plans were quickly being unraveled throughout the island because Castro's regime was receiving intelligence on our preparations. Although we tried to disembark on two different occasions, it was never safe – we were greatly outnumbered and 'our friends' were not there in support, as promised. It was rumored that as many as 2,000 of Castro's military were waiting and ready to attack us near Guantanamo City."

Soto does not recall whether their second futile attempt to disembark in Guantanamo was on the 14th or the 15th of April, but knows that on the 17th or 18th of April, "our friends' instructed the Special Brigade to move to the coast of 'Playa Giron.'" Upon arriving off the coast of Giron, one of the smoldering ships from the 2506 Brigade could be seen. "American destroyers were nearby, and we waited for further instructions from 'our friends.' After what seemed to be several days, food became scarce and the majority of the men wanted to return to Key West. We were being told to go to Viequez, Puerto Rico. There was a dispute amongst the men concerning where they should return. Not everyone wanted to follow the orders given.

"We felt immense pressure to follow 'our friends' demands. It was clear they wanted American involvement and the air support promised, but never received, to be kept a secret. Our desire to go to Key West was not honored. Finally, we were removed from our vessel on to the USS Putnam and other American warships to go to

“
He remembers the first time he threw a grenade - he almost lost his arm because he “wanted to throw it like a baseball!”
”

Viequez, Puerto Rico around April 22, 1961. There, leaders of the exile community, such as Dr. Miro Cardona, Mr. Tony Varona, and the grandson of the great mambi, Dr. Antonio Maceo, came to meet with us. These leaders regrouped with 'our friends' in the hope of reorganizing another invasion that never took place.

"I know Viequez like the back of my hand. I walked around the beach going over all the events that had just transpired. Prior to training in New Orleans, I had asked Dr. Miro Cardona whether he thought we would win and he responded 'the U.S. has never lost a war, and this will not be the first.' When I saw him in Viequez, I asked him what had happened, and his only response was 'I don't know, they did not keep their promise.' Upon my own reflection, I know that the United States government had the best intentions, but they did not come through." Several weeks later Soto returned to Miami unrecognizable to his family - sunburned and 40 pounds skinnier. He returned to his family unrecognizable not only due to weight, but due to a feeling of betrayal and disillusionment. It was hard to grasp how the strongest and fiercest of countries could abandon them.

Later that year, on October 19, 1961, Soto was invited to the White House to discuss the Bay of Pigs and how to restore a free Cuba. "Unfortunately, 'Giron' could not be fixed, and the lives lost could not be replaced. The feeling of loss and duplicity could not be erased."

Soto reasserts that "fifty years later it continues to be one of the biggest mistakes in the history of this great country."

After the Bay of Pigs, Soto moved on to work in Riverton, Wyoming. He later moved to Longwood College in Virginia, where he and his wife welcomed their daughter, Bertila Soto – now the Chief Administrative Judge of the Criminal Division for the 11th Judicial Circuit Court of Miami-Dade County, Florida. After a short time, Soto began teaching first as an assistant, then as an associate and finally as a full professor at Iowa State University, where he published various books. In 1975, Soto sat for the Florida Bar and since then has worked as an attorney and served in various social interest organizations. Although he has only returned to Cuba once, when he went to Guantanamo City with CABA to assist exiles in the naval base, he has returned to Cuba many times in his hopes and dreams of restoring Cuba to a free and democratic country. He is proud of the compatriots that he trained and attempted to fight with. He is sorry for the lives that were lost. He is proud to be an American citizen and member of this beautiful community. He has championed not only the liberty of Cuba, but also the liberty of his community in the United States. He loves the United States and has lived here far more years than he lived in Cuba, but his heart remains with the land he one day hopes to see again. **CB**

Lorenzo Cobiella and Denise Moreno are both associates at the Law Office of Osvaldo N. Soto and specialize in probate, guardianship and estate planning.

Congratulations

To our attorneys Raúl J. Chacón Jr. and Maria D. Garcia
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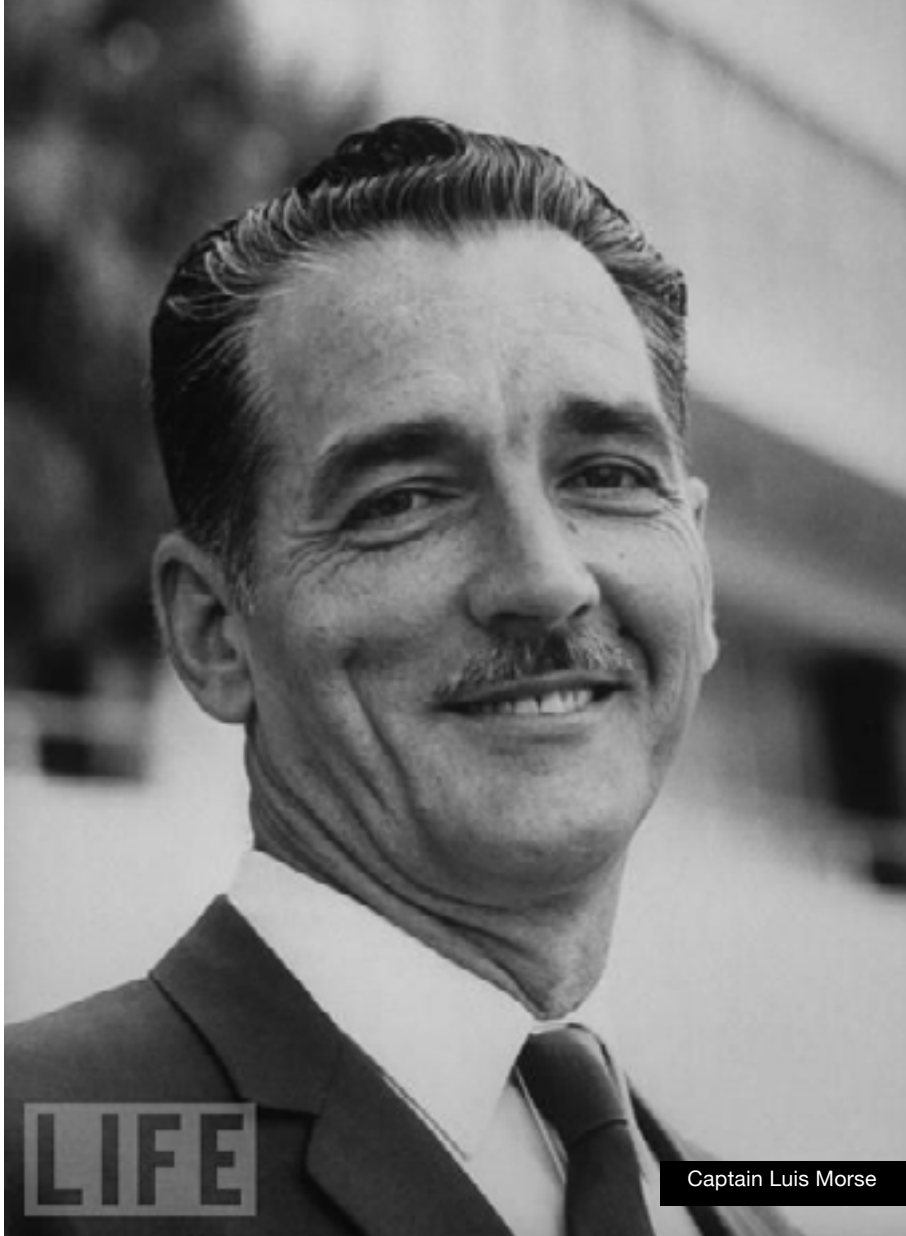
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Captain Luis Morse

THE HONORABLE LUIS C. MORSE & HIS PERSPECTIVE ON THE BAY OF PIGS

BY YARA LORENZO

Unbeknownst to Luis, while he was in Guatemala training for the invasion, his mother learned of his enrollment and told his father. Luis's father, a math teacher by training, sailed with the Cuban Navy during the summers out of love for the water. Interestingly enough, what began as a hobby led him to serve as captain on one of the vessels (the Houston) in the invasion. After learning of his son's enrollment, his father left Cuba and signed up for the Brigade himself. Luisito only learned of his father's involvement when Luis Sr. arrived in port, in Guatemala, gathering men and returning to Cuba. He was stunned to see his father worlds away from Cuba, and captaining a vessel no less. As fate would have it, Luisito's unit (Battalion #2) was assigned to his father's vessel, the Houston.

After the failure of the invasion was evident, Luisito spent seven days in a swamp. He and his battalion survived on sweet and condensed milk, *dulce de guayaba* that they found, and a chicken, which they ate raw (he stopped eating chicken for years after that). They were eventually found and in the ensuing gun battle he was shot and wounded on his left shoulder. In light of the fact that he thought he witnessed his father's death a few days prior as the Houston sank, he was ready for a fight. And fight they did. "There was no way I was going to die in front of a firing squad," remarked Luis. The bullet that struck him hit a nerve and permanently paralyzed his left hand. His wound was closed without any anesthesia, and the process was captured on national television so Cubans could witness the agony of an exile suffering.

Unlike most men, when Luis and his Battalion were captured they were wearing civilian attire which they had found in an abandoned hut.

It is not every day that you have the opportunity to sit down with a living part of history. Fortunately for me, I had the occasion to have coffee with the Honorable Luis ("Luisito") C. Morse, member of Brigade 2506. Sitting at Versailles one Thursday afternoon, Luis shared his account of the events that transpired in April of 1961.

While this interview was not conducted by a high-profile journalist, and while it also may not be the most detailed account of his experiences, I hope my words do justice to the sense of humility and warmth with which he conveyed them.

Luisito, and his father, Luis Sr., were a handful of father/son duos who served as a part of the Brigade. When he enlisted, Luis was twenty-years-old. I asked him why he enrolled, at age twenty, with his whole life ahead. His answer was simple, "It was either enroll, or seek hiding in the mountains." Luis was already engaged in substantial anti-Castro activities during college and there was an order out for his arrest. When he heard that they were looking for men to sign up for the Brigade, he left Cuba for Miami, and enlisted. Shortly thereafter, he was shipped to the mountains of Guatemala for training.

Because the act of wearing civilian clothes in conflict is considered a violation of international humanitarian law, they were charged with war crimes, and excluded from the list of men who were eligible for ransom from the United States. As fate would have it (again), his father (who he thought had died when the Houston caught fire) was alive, and was subsequently chosen as one of the Brigade leaders who would be sent the United States to negotiate the release of all those eligible. Luis Sr. refused this undertaking unless his son and his company were removed from the list of the excluded POW's. Castro obliged. The rest is documented history. The U.S. paid \$52 million in food and medicine for their

release. Luis and his brothers in arms received a heroes' welcome at a packed Orange Bowl from over 25,000 Cuban Americans joined by President Kennedy and First Lady Jackie.

Luis's story does not end there. His time in the Brigade was only the genesis to a distinguished career of public service. I asked him what drove him to serve his community through elected office, to which he answered that he wanted to do something to give back. He felt this country had done great things for him, and he wanted to honor that in some way.

In 1984, Luis was elected to the Florida House of Representatives for District 113, where he eventually became the chairman of the Dade County legislative delegation. He also served as chairman of the Cuban-American Caucus from 1989 to 1990. From 1996 to 1998, he served as the first Republican ever elected by a body of his peers to the position of speaker pro tempore and from 1994 to 1996 as Republican leader pro tempore. In 1999, he was appointed by Governor Bush to serve as his Deputy Secretary for Elder Affairs.

“
*It was either enroll, or seek
hiding in the mountains.*
”



HOUSTON Captain Luis Morse, arriving at Miami International Airport.



Captain Luis Morse and son Luisito, who fought at Playa Largo.

If there is one thing I regret, it is that in the time that I served with Luis as a Republican Executive Committee member, I never sought him out to hear this remarkable story. While the Bay of Pigs was a tragic military failure for Luis and his generation of Cubans and Cuban Americans, it planted a seed of activism in their hearts that flourished into the community that we enjoy today. We are stronger and better off because of their efforts. I feel a deep sense of gratitude towards Luis and the men and women of his generation – men and women who were moved by the events of the 1960's, who bound together, sacrificed and founded the Cuban American Bar Association. As we pay tribute to the veterans of Brigade 2506, let us remember that we stand on their shoulders. Had it not been for their selfless service and devotion to the causes that unite us, we would not be here today. **CB**

Yara Lorenzo is a law clerk to United States District Court Judge James Lawrence King. You may email your comments to yara.lorenzo@gmail.com.

50TH ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE TO BRIGADE

BY PEDRO A. FREYRE

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The wrecks of war are strewn on the shoreline, underwater and inland. Many are still recognizable despite the 50-odd years of exposure and battering by winds, rain and waves. As you get near them, the extent of deterioration becomes evident. What were believed to be solid hulls are actually as fragile as lace, rusted through so that the daylight can be seen from one side of a wreck to the other. Tanks, once imposing and invincible, lay rusting and bleaching in the tropical sun – their once mighty guns pointing downward as if in a final act of surrender. Sleek war planes show missing panels

and their once gleaming flanks are now dented and warped. The impression at the end is that the relics - reminders of a long ago battle - are disintegrating and in the not too distant future will disappear altogether and be absorbed into the surrounding sea and brush as jumbles of aluminum, rust and twisted steel.

The wrecks are an appropriate symbol for a sad episode - lonely, forlorn, disintegrating, and forgotten to most of the world. But the episode itself and the key players in that drama - the men of Brigade 2506, who landed in that out-of-the-way place named the “Bay of Pigs” on that muggy morning long ago - must not be forgotten.

They were a varied lot, these combatants dressed in camouflaged uniforms left over from WWII. There were laborers, writers, priests, lawyers, policemen, engineers and accountants. There were saints and there were sinners. They represented all segments of Cuban society - black, white and mixed race; the poor, the middle class and the children of the wealthy. Many had fought alongside Castro to overthrow the Batista government. Others, though not the majority by any means, were former members of Batista’s armed forces. Most were young and idealistic. Some had set political agendas. None were in it for the money. From April 15, 1961, when the first air raid took place, through April 19, 1961 when the last organized fighting ceased, approximately 1,300 young men faced more than 40,000 adversaries.

The original plan had been for this small fighting force to hold a beachhead until the full support of the United States and the Organization of American States (OAS) could be brought to bear. Internal dissenters - urban and countryside underground fighters - were to join in a concerted effort to overthrow the Castro government, which by then had clearly tipped its hand as a communist dictatorship.

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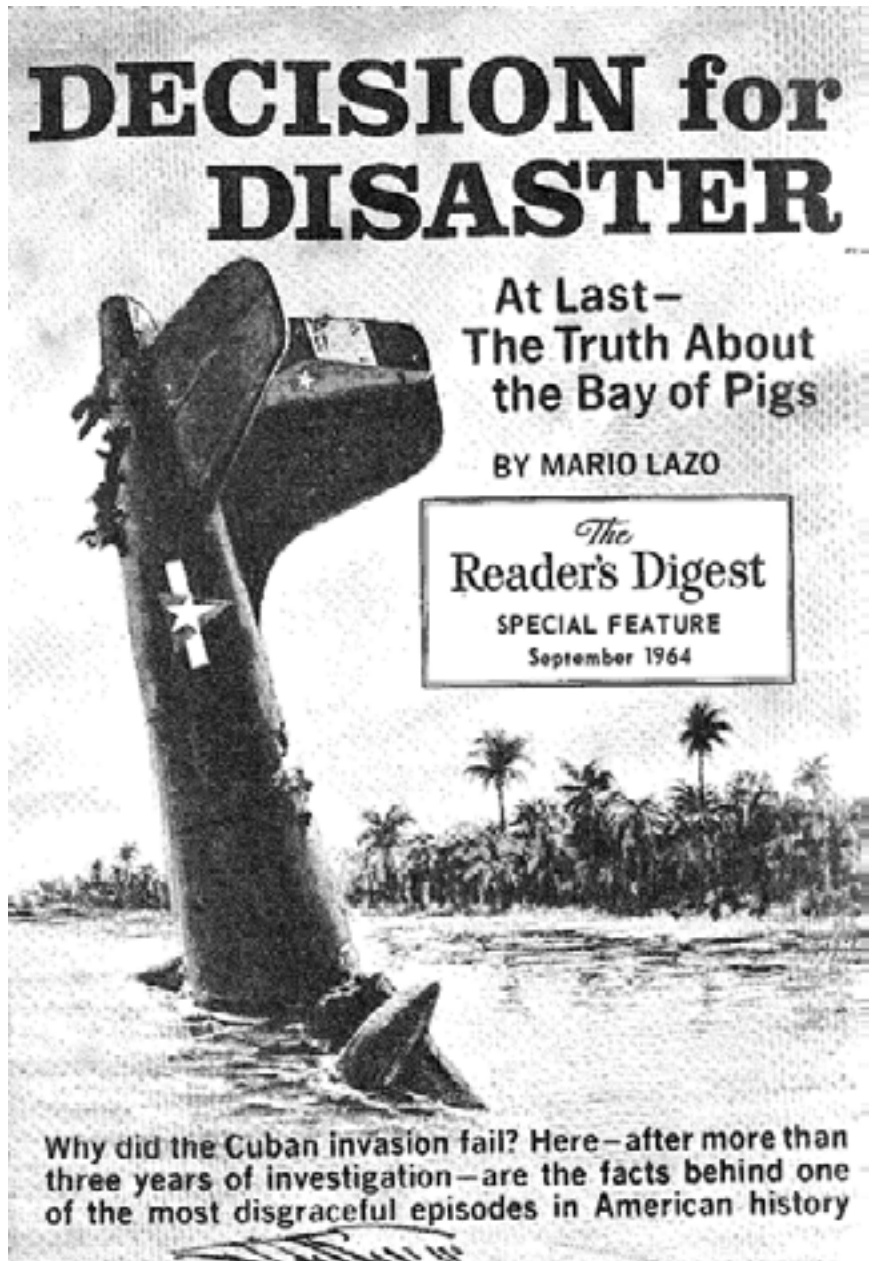
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The Brigade had been trained and equipped by the United States. However, the training was brief for most, and the equipment - 16 WWII B-26 bombers, 5 M-41 light tanks, 4.2 inch mortars, and 75 MM recoilless rifles - were not by any means the state of the art equipment in the United States' arsenal for that time. Facing them would be a standing military force of over 40,000 people, possessing 155 and 105 mm artillery, soviet SU-100 assault guns, 12.7MM quadruple AA guns, and most telling, a handful of United States-built T-33 jets and British Hawker Sea Fury fighters, both of which hopelessly outclassed the invader's B-26 bombers.

The story of President Kennedy's cancellation of repeated air strikes to destroy those jets and fighters and of his refusal to allow the United States Navy A-4 fighter bombers to assist the Brigade has been told before. What has not been told often enough, however, is the gallantry of the Brigade members, even though they knew their cause was lost. It is the story of the valiant B-26 pilots and their American advisors from the Alabama National Guard, who, flying at extreme range and knowing that the T. 33s and Sea Furies were waiting for them, went back again and again, in ever diminishing numbers and continued to press home their attacks to relieve the troops at the beach. It is the story of 80 men from the Second Battalion and the Armored Battalion of the Brigade in their small M-41s at Playa Larga, who, with bazookas and recoilless rifles, held off the assault of T-34 tanks in a night-long battle at a crossroads the night of April 17, 1961. It is the story of the Brigade's paratroopers, who fought a rearguard action on a road leading to Playa Giron and allowed their beleaguered commanders to withdraw.

Today these valiant men are a very ordinary looking group. If you met with one of them on the street you would see a man in the autumn of his life, perhaps showing the scars of advancing years. It is likely that he will speak English well but with a noticeable Cuban accent. The group consists of all types of men - business men, pilots, workers, contractors, accountants, ordinary men and notables. Their numbers are dwindling. By now only approximately 700 of the original 1,300 plus men remain. They are conscious of their mortality. Some are or have been ill. They are grandfathers and great-grandfathers. They hear the ticking of the clock. But there is something very special about these men,, something which sets them apart from their peers. There is steel in their gaze - undiminished by the passing years. There is pride in their stance - straight and unbending. There is a spring in their step - a spring born out of strength and valor.



These few - these lucky few - shed blood together. They conquered their personal fears, cinched their belts and landed on that dark, remote beach on a dim dawn fifty years ago. They braved enemy fire and bombing. They endured artillery barrages and withering infantry attacks by a more numerous enemy. Most importantly, they fought courageously. For three long days, like the Spartans at Thermopylae, they held like a rock, until the betrayal of their ally delivered them to the enemy. They lost that battle - not for lack of courage and skill but for the lack of water, food, medicines and bullets. They were captured and had to endure a humiliating public trial followed by almost two years of cruel imprisonment. Then, they came home, still unbowed, still convinced of the righteousness of their cause. For these fifty years they put away their camouflage uniforms, their rifles, mortars and cannons. Their few remaining B-26s were grounded and eventually sold for scrap. They took up the tools of everyday living and the task of civilian lives. They raised children, built businesses, faced difficulties and relished daily triumphs.

Now they are reaching the end of their well-lived lives. It is up to us now to give them the recognition they deserve. In America, when our brave men and women come home from war, we give them a ticker tape parade. We applaud them when we see them in a airport. When they are buried they get a color guard and a twenty-one gun salute. Some get a "missing man flyby" with thundering jets. These heroes - our heroes - deserve this and more.

In time, the wreckage will disappear, just like the once mighty walls of Troy were reabsorbed into the surrounding hills. But like the 300 men at Thermopylae, the U.S. 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne, and the defenders of the Alamo the gallantry and heroism of Brigade 2506 in the face of overwhelming odds must not be forgotten.

On the 50th anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion, all of us born on that beautiful island and those of us that trace our lineage there, whether we still live there or have become citizens of this great nation, will remember the actions of Brigade 2506. We will pass their stories on to our children and grandchildren. We will tell them that there once was a gallant fighting force, abandoned by its ally on a hostile shore, which faced a mighty foe and stood and fought with courage. But most importantly, we will tell them that though the battle was lost, they won our everlasting gratitude and admiration. To the glory of Cuba and the United States that gallant unit is called Brigade 2506. **CB**



Pedro A. Freyre is a shareholder and Chair of the International Practice Group in the law firm of Akerman Senterfitt. His father, a lawyer in Cuba, negotiated the exchange of the Bay of Pigs prisoners for medicine in 1962. He is currently teaching a course on Cuba at Columbia Law School. Email your comments to pedro.freyre@akerman.com.

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Captain Joaquin "Jack" Varela. Photograph provided by Jack & Viviana Varela, Jack's son and daughter-in-law.



these pilots. In January 17, 1961, Lumumba was brutally murdered by a rival Congolese faction. One week later, under cover of darkness, a much-relieved Devlin drove to the edge of town and tossed the poison into the rapids of the Congo River. But neither Lumumba's death nor the intervening four years had done anything to stabilize the Congo. Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson had all secretly deployed the CIA in a desperate effort to fight the Congolese government, as the nation was on the brink of anarchy. So it was when Varela arrived in Leopoldville on July 17, 1964. A two-month-old revolt in the eastern province of Katanga once again threatened the country. But Varela's spirits were high, the weather cooler than he expected, and the Congolese ivory and wood carvings caught his eye. His assignment as one of several Cuban pilots that were commissioned by the CIA was to help prevent a breakup of the Congo and to suppress the revolt in Katanga. Varela spent less than two weeks in Leopoldville before he headed the CIA's air operations and the Cuban pilots that worked under cover of the Congo Air Force.

On July 20, 1964, Cuban pilot veterans of the Bay of Pigs Invasion- Varela, Rene Garcia, and his friend, Gus Ponzoa, ferried three T-28s to Kamina Air Base in Katanga. As Varela approached Kamina flying the lead plane, he was dumbstruck at the enormity of the base rising up in the middle of nowhere. Composed of hundreds of barracks, depots, and hangars, it was the largest air base south of the Sahara. But for a skeletal crew of mechanics and engineers from the Belgian Air Force, and the few Cuban pilots, Kamina was deserted—a ghostly expanse of runways and empty buildings stretching as far as the eye could see.

Sadly, Varela passed away on January 21, 1992. He is Viviana Pedroso Varela's father-in-law. Over the following years, people that knew him and flew with him raved about how good of a pilot he was. Varela has two daughters, a son and numerous grandchildren. **CB**

JOAQUIN "JACK" VARELA

BY VIVIANA VARELA

Joaquin "Jack" Varela, a slight, 28-year-old former Cuban Air Force pilot, was a top-pilot, who had later trained in Pensacola, Florida with the U.S. Naval Academy. Varela was one of the best pilots around. Varela led the relays of B-26 Invaders over the beaches of Cuba during the invasion. With Castro's air force still in action, the bombers were flying straight to disaster. Eight exile pilots died that April morning.

Many of the Cuban pilots were later commissioned by the CIA to fly counter revolutionary assignments. A few had gone to a small town called Leopoldville in Congo, Africa. Captain Varela was one of

Shared by: CABA Member Viviana Varela. Viviana is an attorney with the law firm of Abadin Cook. Her father-in-law is Captain Joaquin "Jack" Varela, a top pilot trained by the U.S. Naval Academy and commissioned by the CIA, who led numerous bombing missions over the beaches of Cuba during the Bay of Pigs Invasion. Varela was further commissioned by the CIA to lead missions against the Belgian uprising in Congo, Africa.

JOSE "PEPE" DIAZ

José "Pepe" Díaz, served as part of Brigade 2506. Though he was living a comfortable life, at 21 years of age he enlisted, along with so many other men, to help liberate Cuba. To him it was a no brainer – a decision which to this day he is glad he made. Even though he thought he would never make it back, to him it was a no brainer-a decision which to this day he is glad that he made. He told his girlfriend at the time, and now wife of over 45 years, Aurora Diaz, not to wait for him. After two years of imprisonment though, he was released. After the Brigade, he has lived a life distinguished by service to his community and has always instilled in his four children and extended family love for his beloved Cuba. **CB**

Shared by: Caba Member Vivian Diaz de la Cuevas



Poem written by Jose "Pepe" Diaz to his mother, during his time as a prisoner of war in Cuba.



Aurora Diaz anxiously awaiting the arrival of Jose "Pepe" Diaz. Photograph provided by Jose's daughter-in-law, Vivian Diaz de las Cuevas.



MY EXPERIENCES IN THE BAY OF PIGS INVASION & AS A PRISONER OF WAR IN CASTRO'S CUBA

BY WILLIAM D. MUIR



In 1958, I lived with my family in Calzada de Columbia, in a home on the way to Columbia - the main barracks of the Cuban Military. I lived with my father, mother, five sisters, and two brothers. My father owned Specialty Business College in Havana and my mother was a housewife. It was January 9, 1959, when I saw a caravan of tanks drive past my home in Reparto Kohly. The people were cheering for Fidel Castro's triumphant entry into Havana. Though at the time, Cuba was the country with largest middle class and the third highest standard of living in the Western Hemisphere, Cuba had problems. Castro, a charismatic young lawyer from a very well-to-do family, who was educated at Belen Jesuit, made all of the right promises. Because he dismissed all of the accusations made against him with public denials, we blindly believed.

Over the next year, it became clear that even though Castro had vowed he was not a communist, he was. Even though Castro had promised to hold free elections in eighteen months, he was in fact establishing a totalitarian system. My family began to make plans to leave the country. They had seen enough. But unbeknownst to my parents, I had joined MMR, a group of young people fighting Castro's regime. We secretly wrote articles decrying Castro's policies and actions - handing out pamphlets and scribbling counter-revolutionary graffiti. It was a dangerous time in Cuba. Those who dared to disagree with the new regime were branded traitors. Many were executed by firing squads.

Our survival instincts took over.

The institutions of Cuba were being systematically destroyed - the Judiciary, the Armed Forces, the Press, and the Church. Private property rights were being nationalized without compensation. Only open rebellion could change the system.

In early September 1960, a member of the MMR was caught by the Revolutionaries. All of us were now in terrible danger, and I had no choice but to flee Cuba immediately. Because my great-grandfather was British, I was able to go to Jamaica, which at the time was still a British colony. I had no property to disclaim and needed no visa to go to Jamaica, so on September 5, 1960, I boarded a plane and left Cuba. Later that month, my parents left

for Miami with my brothers and sisters. It took two months for me to obtain the proper documentation to join them there.

While living with my family in Miami, I worked as a bellboy at the Seville Hotel in Miami Beach. Because there was no work to be found in Miami, my father went to Chicago to find work. There, instead of teaching, he cleaned tractors in the snow. On February 15, 1961 - my 17th birthday- I waited for my father to return so that both of my parents could sign the consent form for me to join Brigade 2506. The Brigade was training in Guatemala to retake Cuba from Castro. On March 31, 1961, a friend and I went to the recruiting house, which was called El Frente and was located at SW 27th Avenue and 1th Street. There we signed the necessary papers. I was assigned number 4004. From the recruiting house, we went to the Induction Center, located at the end of 27th Avenue in Coconut Grove. At the Induction Center, we were given uniforms and loaded on buses with blacked-out windows. The buses took us to Opa-locka Airport, where we boarded planes to Guatemala for training.

High in the Guatemalan mountains was the military base, code-named "Trax," where the CIA was training its new recruits. From April 1 until April 12, 1961, we learned to assemble, shoot and clean our M1 rifles; to throw hand grenades, and to conduct basic infantry combat maneuvers. When we completed our almost two weeks of training, we were filled with excitement and anticipation. We boarded planes headed for Puerto Cabezas in Nicaragua, where ships were waiting to take us to Cuba so that we could liberate our country.

At Puerto Cabezas, I climbed aboard The Houston, a banana transport boat refitted to act as a warship. In its hold was ammunition for the two infantry battalions on board - the Second and Fifth. I belonged to Company P of the Fifth Battalion. The deck of the Houston was stacked with 55-gallon drums of airplane fuel. On top of the drums, wooden planks had been laid down. We walked and lived on this makeshift deck supported by fuel drums for the entire three-day trip. Only three .50 caliber machine guns on the deck of the boat made it look like a warship.

On the second day of the trip, we saw two B26 Bombers waving their wings at us on their way back from bombing their targets earlier that morning. On the horizon, we could see Task Force Alpha, a United States Navy convoy with the Essex aircraft carrier accompanied by other destroyers, frigates, and other vessels. We knew we could not lose this fight.

Late in the afternoon of April 16, 1961, the day before the invasion, we had Mass. The mood was very somber. We knew that the next day we would be on Cuban soil and our mission would begin. At the time, we did not know that the plans had changed. Instead of sixteen B26 bombers flying in on the morning of April 15, 1961, only eight would go. The three subsequent waves of bombing had been cancelled. When dawn broke on April 17, we realized something was terribly wrong.

The frogmen were the first to land shortly after midnight on the

morning of April 17, 1961. They marked the landing spot for the Second Battalion with lights. Both battalions were supposed to land before dawn, as part of President Kennedy's "plausible deniability" strategy. But our landing crafts ran aground on coral reefs that had been mistakenly identified as clouds in the CIA photos. We saw a C-46 fly by after dropping our paratroopers. Then zz The air was not ours, contrary to plan – the result of changes and cancellations. The Houston was disabled when another of Castro's planes - a Sea Fury - hit us with a rocket. To prevent the boat from sinking and our soldiers from drowning, Captain Luis Morse ran the Houston aground about a mile from the Western shore. However, we were supposed to be on the Eastern shore at Playa Larga, about four miles away, to join the Second Battalion in the fight at the time.

shoot us when two United States Navy planes -blue, but without markings - flew over us, only a hundred feet off the ground, making the milicianos run for cover. But still, we were captured.

The next day we were packed into "La Rastra," a cargo truck used for transporting tobacco. The cargo area of the truck was a box made of steel that was almost completely sealed when shut. One of our own - a man who had formerly owned the truck line - told Commandant Osmany Cienfuegos that people would die if the door was closed. Cienfuegos responded, "Well then we will save some bullets." They closed the door. When the doors opened nine hours later in Havana, nine bodies lay on the floor, dead from asphyxiation. A tenth died in the hospital the next morning.



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B26 Invader Bomber flown by Captain Joaquin "Jack" Varela. Photograph provided by Jack & Viviana Varela, Jack's son and daughter-in-law.

Four of us volunteered to swim a rope to shore in order to make sure that those who could not swim could use the rope for support. It took us until noon to tie the rope to a tree on shore. The complete Fifth Battalion had finished coming ashore by late afternoon, but more than half had lost their weapons as they swam. That night, we saw the sky light up with explosions at Playa Larga. We started our trek through the swamps early the next morning hoping we could quickly reach the Second battalion. But we never made it.

On Wednesday, April 19, 1961, orders came over the radio directing us to break into small groups to try to make it to the Escambray Mountains. The news threw us into a state of complete confusion. What had happened? How could we have failed? Where were the Americans? What was going to happen to us now? Our survival instincts took over. We had already spent two and a half days without food, without water, and without sleep. We had no choice but to spend another two and half days wandering in the swamp without food, without water, and without sleep. It was at that time that we wandered into a milicianos patrol. They were about to

After we were released from the cargo truck, we were taken to El Palacio de los Deportes, a large sports arena. Castro's government used us to humiliate the United States, parading his prisoners on television for the world to see. After some time, we were moved to El Hospital Naval, a hospital that was under construction at the time. Fifteen to twenty of us were held in rooms intended for two to four people. There, we waited, talking and playing chess or cards.

Eventually, we were taken to El Castillo del Principe, a Spanish castle. The conditions there were much worse than at the hospital. We had nothing to do. We had no idea what would become of us. We were kept in cells that were thirty or forty feet long and twenty feet wide with as many as 200 people. Sometimes we would hear that we would soon be released and other times we would hear nothing.

After a year of imprisonment, Castro's government decided to hold a big trial at El Castillo del Principe. We were accused of treason. The guards opened all of the cells and ordered us to make our way down two narrow stairways into the courtyard. The courtyard had



prisoners to sit and microphones for a panel of judges to try us in a court martial fashion. As the guards hustled us down the stairs in a crowd, one guard struck a prisoner Juan Torres Mena. The prisoner turned and began to fight the guard, disarming him and starting a brawl. Realizing that many people could be hurt in a riot, the prison warden rushed to ask the brigade commanders to calm the prisoners. One of the commanders hurried to the microphones and called the brigade to attention. The fighting instantly ceased, and - the disciplined soldiers snapped to attention and sang the Cuban National Anthem.

We were tried for treason as a huge group, and we were collectively sentenced to thirty years in prison. We knew that this was only a political tactic to force the United States to take action in the ransom negotiations. Castro's government divided us into categories and assigned us values for ransom. The three leaders of the brigade were valued at \$500,000. The rest of us were valued at \$100,000, \$50,000 or \$25,000. The total ransom for our return added up to \$53 million. After 20 months of negotiations, the generous taxpayers of the United States paid the \$53 million ransom. In December 1962, we were returned to Miami and to our families. Upon returning to freedom, I celebrated my 18th birthday as a senior at Daytona Beach Senior High, where I continued my education. **CB**

William D. Muir-Celorio



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Lived the American dream for 25 years, building Muir & Associates, a software development business specializing in logistics, distribution and premium finance. In 2005, he sold his business to follow his passion and develop a world class museum to commemorate Cuban exile history, including the events that have defined the last 52 years of exile, such as the Bay of Pigs, Pedro Pan, October Missile Crisis, Freedom Flights, the Mariel Boatlift, Guantanamo 1994, Elian Gonzalez, and the many milestones Cubans have achieved thanks to the freedom and opportunities this great nation has afforded them. You can reach Bill at (305) 342-8323 or billmuir@att.net.



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HONORING OUR FATHERS

BY GIANCARLO SOPO



Edgar Sopo with a young Giancarlo Sopo

“Edgar Sopo was a dear friend of mine and a fine patriot who spent his life serving the cause of Cuban freedom. His memory and legacy are well-served by his family and the work of his children.” CABA Member, Joe Garcia

Two years after his father died at the dawn of the Cuban revolution, my father, Edgar Sopo, at the time a 21 year-old

Georgetown-educated student living in Miami, put down his books, picked up a rifle and joined his friends on a mission to liberate their beloved country. He returned to Cuba not as a visitor but as an intelligence reconnaissance officer. In the spring of 1961, Author Peter Wyden wrote that my father “moved into a young couple’s apartment on the north side of [Havana], where he kept five submachine guns, a case of hand grenades, and the script of the speech he would make after he seized the radio stations.”

As fate would have it, my father never made that speech. The invasion failed and the soldiers that returned to their families

Our generation will be judged not by the value of our possessions but by the value of our ideas.

came back scarred both emotionally and physically. Like most members of Brigade 2506, my father carried on about his life in America marked by the indelible marks war leaves on a man. He was unwilling to accept that Cuba’s best days were behind her. He never returned to Georgetown. Instead, he spent most of his life fighting for Cuba’s freedom as a faithful and dedicated member of the Cuban-American National Foundation and giving back to his community. At the age of 60, he died from cirrhosis to the liver after years of depression that resulted in years of alcoholism. A Cuban flag draped over his coffin at his funeral, which was held at St. Brendan Church.

My father died a poor man, but he left his children with the most beautiful legacy one could hope for from a parent. I could not have asked for a more loving father. His friends remember him as a man of unimpeachable integrity. Being the son of a member of Brigade 2506 is the honor of a lifetime. It means living up to a heritage of courage and sacrifice. It means that I am

overwhelmed with pride every time I meet someone whose life was touched by his. Most importantly, it means I have assumed a set of responsibilities that all Cuban-Americans share.

Too many of our parents and grandparents have died in exile. Today, as the torch of freedom is passed to a new generation, we inherit with it an obligation to ensure that their hopes and dreams are realized in a manner consistent with the time-honored principles that marked their lives. The means toward achieving those ends may sometimes change, but the values guiding us along the way should always remain the same. That generation believed that you can compromise without compromising your values; that the absolute freedom of the Cuban people is non-negotiable; and that financial or political gain should never come at the expense of Cuba’s liberty. Those values still hold true today.

Our generation will be judged not by the value of our possessions but by the value of our ideals. There is no more noble cause in the 21st century than the pursuit of freedom for all who find themselves trapped by the iron grip of dictators – be they in Pyongyang, Tripoli, Caracas or Havana. Brutal regimes and dictatorships have no place in a world where the instruments of fear and isolation are no match for the instruments of freedom and information.

We must also safeguard the memory of the members of Brigade 2506 and their generation - commonly referred to as “el exilio historico.” Far too often, the very same people – the mechanics, nurses, teachers, lawyers, doctors, business men and leaders – who built our community are the subject of ridicule and caricatures. We may not always agree with our parents and grandparents (few younger generations agree with their elders) and these disagreements are desirable in a free society, but we should respect them and recognize that our success was built on their shoulders. We should also understand them and their experiences. Their generation had dreams too - big ones - that were robbed from them. And they sacrificed everything – their lives, careers, education – to start a new life and give us even better lives than the ones they dreamed of for themselves.

As we honor Brigade 2506 and all who have died in exile and continue to live in it, I find it fitting to quote this beautiful poem about another formerly beleaguered island across our shores:



Edgar Sopo with President Reagan



Edgar Sopo's intelligence reconnaissance team standing outside of his home in Miami, Florida. Edgar Sopo is 3rd from the right.

*'Tis it is the Shannon's brightly
glancing stream,
Brightly gleaming, silent in the
morning beam,
Oh, the sight entrancing,
Thus returns from travels long,
Years of exile, years of pain,
To see old Shannon's face again,
O'er the waters dancing.*

Those words should remind us that while at times the future may seem bleak, exile is never permanent. No nation can remain oppressed indefinitely. I believe the Cuban people are nearing the end of their long and twilight struggle.

As we near the day when Cuba is truly free, I think about the speech my father would have delivered had he and his brothers in arms succeeded in their endeavor. While we can't change the past, we have the power to reach into the future, build it every day as we see fit and deliver our own remarks in a free and democratic Cuba. As Thomas Paine wrote, we have it in our power to begin the world over again. Let's move forward then, charting our own course guided by



Edgar Sopo training in Guatemala, in preparation for the invasion.

our fathers' examples of courage, strength and sacrifice. There is no better way to honor their memory or greater legacy to leave behind for our children. **CB**

Giancarlo Sopo is a communications consultant living in Coral Gables. He was recently recognized by CNN en Espanol as one of America's leading Hispanic leaders under 30.

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

House Resolution

A resolution designating April 17, 2011, as "Bay of Pigs Memorial Day" in Florida.

WHEREAS, on January 1, 1959, a Communist dictator seized the government of the Republic of Cuba, occasioning a massive exodus of Cuban nationals, most of whom immigrated to the United States, and

WHEREAS, men and women of both American and Cuban origin determined that only an armed invasion could overthrow the Communist dictatorship subjugating the people of Cuba, and, on 11 April 17, 1961, almost 1,500 men, trained, directed, armed, and equipped by the United States, landed on the southern coast of Cuba in an area known as "Bahia de Cochinos," or "Bay of Pigs," and

WHEREAS, during the next few days, in the course of a battle against an army immensely superior in manpower, firepower, and supplies, nearly 100 men lost their lives, including several who were captured and immediately assassinated, and

WHEREAS, the greater part of the remaining forces was captured, and, after being imprisoned for close to months, these men were ransomed by President John F. Kennedy and returned to the United States, where they became productive members of this nation's society, never, however, forgetting their beloved native land, and

WHEREAS, April 17, 2011, marks the 50th anniversary of the Bay of Pigs Invasion, an event held in the hearts of all who long for the liberation of the Republic of Cuba, NOW, THEREFORE,

Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of Florida:

That the Florida House of Representatives designates April 17, 2011, as "Bay of Pigs Memorial Day" in Florida and expresses its great respect for and admiration of all members of Brigada de Asalto 2506 (Assault Brigade 2506), both living and deceased, and joins them in their fervent desire for the liberation from Communist dictatorship of the Republic of Cuba and its oppressed people.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be presented to Brigada de Asalto 2506 as a tangible token of the sentiments expressed herein.



FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE

BAY OF PIGS RESOLUTION

BY JOSE FELIX DIAZ

This year, the Florida House of Representatives is honoring the memory of the Brigada de Asalto 2506 by declaring April 17, 2011 as Bay of Pigs Memorial Day in Florida.

Over a dozen legislators have already co-sponsored the Bay of Pigs resolution, including several members of the Dade Delegation, such as Representatives Frank Artilles, Michael Bileca, Esteban Bovo, Erik Fresen, Eddy Gonzalez, Ana Rivas Logan, and Carlos Trujillo.

We are especially proud that this resolution is the first Memorial approved by the Chairman of the Rules & Calendar Committee for the 2011 Legislative Session. Since these memorials are only reserved for items of statewide impact, its approval goes to show that the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dean Cannon, and his leadership team, understand just how important the heroic acts of the veterans of the Bay of Pigs Invasion were, and are, to the history of Cuba and the United State of America.

Similar resolutions have been previously approved by the Florida Legislature to help commemorate the major anniversaries of the Bay of Pigs invasion. The fact that this is the 50th Anniversary of the Bay of Pigs Invasion has created some major buzz in the State's Capitol and we are excited that several members of the Association of Veterans of the Bay of Pigs will be coming up to Tallahassee to receive this token of solidarity and appreciation. If you or a love one would like additional information about when we are going to be honoring this amazing group of individuals, please contact me at jose.diaz@myfloridahouse.gov and we will provide that information to you once it is available.

**Jose Felix Diaz is a zoning and land use attorney with the law firm of Akerman Senterfitt. He is a former member of the Cuban American Bar Association's Board of Directors. Jose was recently elected to the Florida House of Representatives, and will be serving in the Community Affairs Subcommittee, the Health Care Appropriations Committee, the Health and Human Services Quality Subcommittee, the Federal Affairs Subcommittee, and the Tax & Finance Committee.*

CABA MEMBERS

THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY
HONOR THE BRAVERY OF
BRIGADE 2506 AND THE BAY
OF PIGS INVASION

My uncle, Federico Goudie y Monteverde, was one of the creators of the Frente Democratico Cubano and the Bay of Pig force. In 1960, he leased the Yussepa Island in the West Coast of Florida, where the first group of Cuban-Americans received training before moving their operations to Central America. Today, they have a small museum in that island about the Cuban fighters and the Bay of Pigs Invasion.

Federico was a very successful businessman in Cuba and was the founder of a company named Concretera Nacional. He later went on to be the majority owner of two other companies - Concreto Caribe and Central de Mezclas de la Habana. The company supplied all the concrete for the Havana tunnel in 1956 and for several other big projects in the democratic era of our great country. In his younger age, he was a graduate from the Cuban Army Military Academy and was an officer with many other officers in 1933, for fighting against Batista in the Hotel Nacional.

My uncle Federico was not the only one in my family involved in some way in the invasion. Two other uncles were also involved in the Bay of Pigs Invasion. One uncle, named Juan Goudie, was an officer in the air force. Another uncle, named Cecil Goudie y Monteverde was in the Navy. Cecil's house, located in Coral Gables, was the main place for meetings relating to the future of Cuba. The ship that was meant to carry the invaders to the Bay of Pig was also leased by my uncle. In early 1961, he went with the Coronel Martin Helena in Washington to talk to the CIA and discuss the plans for the invasion. The CIA, however, never took their suggestions regarding the planned invasion, despite their experience with the Cuban army. At the end of the meeting, both were disappointed. In my humble opinion, if they would have listened to them, we might have won the invasion and Cuba, Central America and South America could be free from communism today.



Marili Cancio alongside her father, J. Pepe Cancio Sr.

Never giving up hope, my uncle, along with other wealthy Cubans, acquired two boats, The Polo and The Barbero and founded the Grupo Transporte y Comandos, in hopes of assisting the Cuban fighters and in delivering arms to the North side of the island, before, and after the invasion. I was one of the crew members of The Barbero during its first trip to Cuba after the invasion. We had gone to Cuba to pick up some Cuban fighters hidden in Cayo Pajonal, in Las Villas province. The first trip was unsuccessful. However, during the second trip, we picked up four men and a woman. My uncle Cecil was the captain of the boat. We also had the great honor to have Mente Inclan and Alfonso Gomez Mena, both well-known Cubans, onboard. Some of the others on the boat during that trip later joined the U.S. Army as volunteers in the Cuban Missile Crisis in October of 1962. Some are still fighting the Castro regime 50 years later. Others have unfortunately passed away. **CB**

Shared by:

J. Pepe Cancio Sr., father of CABA member Marili Cancio

My name is Maria Eugenia Martinez. When the prisoners from the Bay of Pigs Invasion returned to the states, there was a ceremony at the Orange Bowl in Miami, Florida. The prisoners marched into the stadium and President Kennedy and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy rode into the stadium in a pink Cadillac. My mother took my sisters and me to this historical event. I was fourteen at the time. Because my father was exiled in the American Naval Base in Guantanamo, Cuba we were at the event with only our mother. The Bay of Pigs prisoners presented President Kennedy with the Cuban flag. As part of his speech, President Kennedy said he would return the flag to a free Cuba.

As fate had it, many, many years later, one of those veterans became the love of my life, and we married. He was only 21 when he participated in the invasion. At the time, his parents and two older sisters were in Cuba. When his mother heard of the invasion, she kept telling her family that she knew her son had participated in it. Although she was very ill at the time, and the family had kept news of his involvement in the invasion from her, she somehow knew it. She kept saying that things were going to change with the invasion. She died while her son was in jail. He had to endure the pain of losing his mother and was unable to go to her funeral. He also had to endure the pain of being imprisoned while contemplating a failed invasion.

My husband passed away almost two years ago of pancreatic cancer. He never failed to attend the ceremony and mass held every April 17th. I attend by myself now. I thank you for this wonderful dedication to those brave men. It is truly a shame the invasion failed. **CB**



Justo Esteban Gomez

Shared by:
Maria Eugenia Martinez, conveying the story of her husband,
Justo Esteban Gomez

Dos o tres del pequeño grupo inicial nos hicimos amigos del capitán y acompañados por el médico Armstrong (muy amigo de mi padre), dormíamos en un pasillo adyacente a su cabina y oficina. El resto del grupo dormían bajo unas tiendas en la cubierta no ocupada por las gruas. Por esa circunstancia teníamos acceso al radio de onda corta y a las comunicaciones de la brigada con la escolta de EEUU. Nuestra euforia inicial fue cambiando al oír la noticia de los aviones castristas (que suponíamos no existentes) y el hundimiento de buques y huida de otros. Vimos nuestros aviones ser perseguidos por jets de fidel.

Tuvimos gran suerte de no ser atacados porque hubiéramos estallado. Paramos a unas millas de la costa cubana a esperar ordenes. Oí en el radio los llamados urgentes de San Roman y las excusas llorosas de los americanos. Recuerdo “we feel for you, we want and are ready to help but await orders from big chief, please try to hang on, etc”. Era obvio la frustración del militar americano con rabia y llanto en su voz.

Una pequeña embarcación con brigadistas se nos unió y aunque no tan cerca como para vernos se dijo que era el grupo de Nino Diaz. En fin vino una orden que “big chief has told us to speak with the strongest language possible”, por el radio y recibimos ordenes de acompañar a los barcos que habían huido y desembarcar las municiones y reforzar con nuestras tropas (no se como, con las gruas!). Oímos ordenes de los americanos diciendo a los pilotos “strafe the coast and some attack inland”, vimos a barcos de guerra pasarnos a gran velocidad hacia la costa, una comunicación que

decía “you are shooting at us, we have the white handkerchiefs”, la jefatura de la 2506 (y nosotros) teníamos pañuelos blancos en el cuello para identificación.

Otra comunicación vino de los pilotos “there is nothing to do, the brigade is gone, only Castro on the beach”, y ordenes “to abort attack and start rescue”. A nosotros nos ordenaron alejarnos y esperar ordenes. Primero nos mandaron a Vieques, después a esperar de nuevo y finalmente nos regresaron a P Cabezas. No sabían que hacer con nosotros y por miedo a una rebelión, nos ordenaron a un grupo a desarmar a toda la tropa del barco y solo nos dejaron al pequeño grupo con las 45, pero sin balas (solo para asustar). Llegamos a Nicaragua y después de varios días nos llevaron a Miami. Cuando montaba el avión me despojaron de mi arma y pasaporte y mi último recuerdo fue cuando a un amigo paracaidista que conversaba conmigo se le abrazó uno de sus entrenadores americanos y le dijo llorando (físicamente), “it was not our fault, we as you have been betrayed, believe me we will take care of that”. **CB**

Heartfelt words Shared by:
Fernando J. Milanés, M.D., (2506 # 3610), 2nd cousin of
CABA Board Member, Annie Hernández

My uncle is Enrique G. Casuso. He is a psychiatrist in Miami. Thankfully he is alive and well at 72. In his early twenties, he was one of those who risked their lives to free Cuba from Castro's dictatorship.

When Castro took over in 1959, my uncle was a medical student. My grandfather was an orthopedic surgeon, and the family had a medical facility in Havana known as Clinica Casuso. The Castro government, however, nationalized the clinic.

Soon my uncle joined a small opposition group that a university professor helped organize. These young Cuban men were some of the first that arrived in the United States to be trained for what is now known as the Bay of Pigs Invasion. The men were divided into teams that would take different roles in the effort to free Cuba from Castro. My uncle was the military commander of a team in the Cuban province of Oriente - located on the eastern end of the island. Alberto Muller was the political/civilian leader of my uncle's team. My uncle had been able to re-enter Cuba several months before

the invasion in January 1961. His military group was secreted in the mountains of Oriente. They planned to lead an insurrection (alzamiento) in this eastern province simultaneous with the invasion at Playa Giron (the Bay of Pigs), which was in the South of Matanzas - a province located at the center of the island. Like the men landing at the Bay of Pigs on April 17, 1961, the men in Oriente expected more help - weapons my uncle expected but never came.



Enrique G. Casuso

My uncle was a political prisoner for 15 and half years. He was released in September of 1976 at 38 years old. During Carter's presidency, with the help of Florida's senators, among others, my mom was able to make arrangements for my uncle and other former political prisoners to leave Cuba with their families. My mom chartered a plane. They all arrived in Fort Lauderdale in January of 1979. **CB**

CABA Member Ani Martinez, sharing the story of her uncle,
Enrique G. Casuso



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ANTONIO AMARO DIAZ
ROBERTO AMORIN SOTELO
CARLOS ARIZA GARCIA
LEO FRANCIS BAKER
BENITO BLANCO CRUZ
MANUEL A. BLANCO NAVARRO
JOSE BORRAS GUTIERREZ
JULIO CABALLERO GONZALEZ
RAMON CALVIÑO INSUA
OVIDIO CAMEJO LOPEZ
RAFAEL CAMPO GUTIERREZ
ARMANDO CAÑIZARES GAMBOA
MARCELO B CARMENATES CEBRIAN
FERNANDO CASANOVA GOMEZ
JOSE CATA CORDOVES
ALFREDO JC CERVANTES LAGO
JOSE CRESPO GRASSO
CLEMENTE I CRUZ DE LA TORRE
GUSTAVO CUERVO FERNANDEZ
EDUARDO DE LAS CASAS ESCOBEDO
ALEJANDRO DEL VALLE MARTI
OSVALDO DIAZ MILIAN
ANTONINO DIAZ POU
JOSE V FEIJOO FABREGAT
FRANCISCO I FERNANDEZ CABRERA
DANIEL FERNANDEZ MON
JOSE A FERNANDEZ ROVIROSA
JOSE FRANCO MIRA
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MARCOS T GARCIA TURIÑO
RAUL GARCIA-MENOCAL FOWLER
JOSE GARCIA-MONTES ANGULO
JORGE GARCIA-VILLALTA ESPINOSA
RAMON GINORIO MULGADO
VICTOR I GONZALEZ LEON
EDUARDO GONZALEZ RAMIREZ
ALBERTO GONZALEZ RECIO
JUAN M DE MATA GONZALEZ ROMERO (NABEL)
WADE CARROLL GRAY
CARLOS GUAS DECALL
OMAR GUERRA GUTIERREZ
GUILLERMO GUIN GUTIERREZ
ERNESTO I HERNANDEZ COSSIO
GILBERTO HERNANDEZ RAMIREZ
JORGE JONES CASTRO
CARLOS JULIEN PADRON

JORGE KIM YUN
HERMAN KOCH GENE
VICENTE LEON LEON
JOSE I MACIA DEL MONTE
JOSE SANTOS MILLAN VELAZCO
JUSTO MONTES DE OCA CEBALLOS
RAMON MOREJON HERNANDEZ
MARCELO J NAPOLES VIQUEIRA
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JESUS VILARCHAO QUINTANA
JOSE DANIEL VILARELLO TABARES

CABA & SALAD

NETWORKING RECEPTION

BY LORENZO COBIELLA, ESQ.

On February 22, 2011, CABA and the Spanish American League Against Discrimination (SALAD) celebrated a joint gathering. Community leaders, judges and lawyers, socialized and reminisced on a common past, celebrated a common present, and discussed the respective futures of both organizations. Both organizations were founded in 1974, during a period of civil unrest in Miami. Both organizations had humble beginnings, common causes and common leaders. CABA mobilized and promoted a young, growing, Cuban- American Bar, while SALAD advocated for diversity in the courts, law enforcement agencies and local government. Both organizations were blessed with great leaders that today hold positions such as distinguished statesmen, mayors, judges, lawyers and community advocates and one even serves as the President of Miami-Dade College.

Among these leaders is Osvaldo N. Soto, a man who served as CABA's president and as SALAD's chairman, and Judge Antonio Marin, who also served as CABA's president and as Vice Chair of SALAD. Their efforts paved the way for the promotion of Hispanics to corporate and public posts. Most importantly, their efforts paved the way toward the eradication of English only ordinances and practices. Thirty-five years later, these pioneers serve as an inspiration for all of and as a model of success throughout the nation. There is much work left to be done - discrimination still exists in our schools, labor force, housing and government. It is vital that we continue to use our collective voices as a bar, as an inclusive organization advocating for Cuban-American and Hispanic issues throughout the state. Together, both organizations can shine and forge a stronger community for all to enjoy. **CB**





Lorenzo Cobiella is an associate at the Law Office of Osvaldo N. Soto and specializes in probate, guardianship and estate planning.

LOOKING FOWARD

BY WILLIAM C. DIAZ

Honoring the past is important, but what next? Where can you learn more about the heroic actions of the men of Brigade 2506? Members of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Miami Class of 2010-2011 had a vision of community service: they wanted to find a meaningful way to connect this community's storied past with its future. The team, Momentum Miami, did so by connecting the veterans of Brigade 2506, an extraordinary class of individuals uniquely tied to the development of Miami, with a diverse group of high school and middle school students. Their idea went beyond giving the veterans a plaque; they sought to facilitate a recorded oral history of these men and their experiences during the Bay of Pigs Invasion, while at the same time enabling the students to create films about the lessons learned.

Momentum Miami worked with students from all over Miami-Dade County, including Bay Point Schools, Miami Senior High School, Miami Coral Park Senior High School, Hialeah Gardens Senior High School, as well as JFK Middle School and with home-schooled students. With their partners, Miami World Cinema Center (the first non-profit film production studio), Dr. Greg Bush and Dr. Paul George, Momentum Miami hosted seminars on the history of Cuba and the Bay of Pigs invasion, oral history technique, oral history ethics, filming, interviewing and editing. The goal: to provide these students with the skills to not only engage with historical figures, but to also to treat the veterans with the proper balance of objectivity and respect. Momentum Miami received backing from several local businesses and not-for profit groups, such as the Florida Humanities Council, Miami Dade College, Continental National Bank, Citibank, Wells Fargo, South Motors Automotive Group, Baptist Health South Florida and Yoss, LLP.

The students prepared for and filmed interviews with twenty-eight participants in the Bay of Pigs Invasion. They captured not only military history of the invasion, but the unique personal stories of men. Momentum Miami and the students heard and felt first hand how these men overcame injury, exile, imprisonment, and, in many cases, torture, to become senators, commissioners, bankers, media personalities, federal agents, military leaders and surgeons. Though the Bay of Pigs was not a military victory, the end result was that the underpinnings of today's Miami were formed. And, fifty years after the Invasion, these men continue to impact Miami.

With the help of Miami World Cinema Center, the students are creating five minute mini-documentaries, centered on themes such as strength, courage, and duty. They are also producing a twenty minute documentary chronicling the impact of this project on them. These films will premiere at Little Havana's Tower Theater on Thursday, March 31st, 2011. The event will honor the veterans, celebrate the work and dedication of the students, and, ideally, cement a relationship between generations. With the assistance of the students of Hialeah Garden, Momentum Miami will submit



Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Miami Class of 2010-2011, Team Momentum Miami

the full-length interviews to the Library of Congress, as part of the Veteran's History Project.

Working on this project has been a reward for all involved. The students developed new skills, and formed relationships with each other, with the veterans, with film professionals, and with the Momentum Miami team members. The veterans were able to impart their histories and their wisdom to a younger generation. As for the members of Momentum Miami, they were able to facilitate a unique educational experience through service learning that will not only preserve a history that is unique to Miami, but that will, in the end, begin a new legacy of service learning in this City. In closing, we will disseminate information on how to access the documentaries with CABA members, once they have been archived in an online database. **CB**



William C. Diaz is Legal Counsel at South Motors Automotive Group & Co-Chair of Momentum Miami. He can be reached at: wcdr43@gmail.com.

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