

BILL DEMPSEY

THE SPECTATOR
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(no date)

The silent soldier of fortune

A group of Cubans gave Dempsey a detailed account of their version of the Bay of Pigs fiasco which had happened only two or three months earlier — in April.

They told him how the United States had recruited, supplied and trained a legion of Cuban exiles — hot blooded Latin-Americans — for an invasion of the island.

They told him how 1,113 Cuban freedom-fighters were rounded up and taken prisoner by Castro forces. How the U.S. backed out at the last moment. How there was no air support. And it was all President Kennedy's fault, they said.

Dempsey stayed in Florida.

He joined the soldiers of fortune and Cuban patriots who train in the Florida Everglades and lived in rough shelters in clearings hacked from the dense brush.

Their leader was a giant of a man, Gerald Patrick Hemming, a six-foot five-inch, 231-pounder with a neat goatee and moustache, long sideburns and who wore an Australian bush hat tilted rakishly up on the left side.

Jerry Patrick, as he is known, is gone now. He is home in Los Angeles where he earns his living as an iron worker.

"Jerry double-crossed too many people, stole too much and lied too

much. He had to blow Miami but fast," according to one of his former friends.

Dempsey couldn't match Jerry Patrick's brutal appearance. But he tried.

He, too, sported a beard and wore an Australian bush hat tilted rakishly up on the left side in the fighting-Aussie style. But where Hemming made enemies Dempsey made friends.

Fred Andersen, a reporter on the Miami Herald, says Cuban exile groups in Miami like Dempsey and value his sincerity and his courage as a dedicated believer.

In July, 1967, says Andersen, Dempsey led four Americans and four Cubans in one of the most daring exploits in the U.S.-Cuba conflict.

They plotted to free four Cuban saboteurs being held in prison by Castro.

Their idea was simple: seize a Cuban fishing boat and hold it and the crew hostage until Castro released the four prisoners.

Dempsey and his men got a motor boat, food, weapons and ammunition. Under the noses of the U.S. coastguard they slipped out of the Miami River.

They got almost to the Cuban coastline when their generator blew and they were forced to paddle the craft back to Miami. The event made the newspapers.

In the incident, Dempsey was not mentioned again publicly until late in the year when one of his men was arrested.

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Arrow spots the guerilla training camp site