

To, Louis Ivon
From Harold Weisberg
La Casa

7/12.68

I spent a large part of last night with Frank Valdez, brother of owner Felix, at La Casa, introduced by David Robinson, who had tended bar there several years ago. Frank Valdez strikes me as a level-headed, well-informed Cuban without illusions who may, from time to time, be helpful to you.

He came to this country in October 1960 after a career in government service. He is anti-Batista, served Prio Soccarres and Grau SanMartin in responsible government positions, and knows the Cuban community well. He refused to make any contributions to any of the collections on the grounds that they were futile and saved his charities to help Cubans who had come here and were in need.

He says that Bringuier's brother-in-law, Pelaez, is an honest man who as defense secretary under Batista took no graft. He says Bringuier's father was a "Batistianista" and assumes Carlos was. To him Carlos is ridiculous, a nut. He tells the story of Carlos's visit to say he would "report" Frank if Frank did not get rid of an anti-Batista record. Frank did not get rid of it.

He says Arcacha, who he knew well, hung out at the Habana and American bars, was at La Casa but a couple of times.

He knows Shaw was there but knows nothing else. Mario Bermudez's face is familiar but he thinks he may have seen it in the papers.

I showed him some of the Dallas arrest pictures (and all the others I have). He immediately said the face of the man in the raincoat is familiar. I showed him the pictures I got from Larry Howard and he said the similar-looking man in the fatigue hat is the same familiar man. He also thinks this man is Mexican, with Indian blood. For some reason, the picture reminds him of baseball.

In the No Name arrest picture, the man toward the center, in the Eisenhower jacket and glasses is familiar to him.

Bob Lavendar also looks familiar to him. He said the same about Bill Dalzell. Two Lavendar boys lived with Marge Kirkpatrick.

Of James Wade he said, "He came around with some fruits. He used to live with a fruit." He also called him a "bully".

He immediately recognized Godfrey Kirkpatrick and gave me a run-down beginning with identification of his wife and ending with the statement she had transferred her business to the Acropolis, which is correct. When Godfrey got out of Jackson about six months ago he was there also.

Frank Valdez is not fond of Carlos Bringuier, who he holds in low esteem. He regards Bringuier's activities as not helpful to Cubans.

He heard stories of the camp(s), is willing to believe the men came there, but has no knowledge of the camp(s) or them. He once worked in Miami for the customs service. When I left he said he had found the visit "interesting" and expressed the hope I'd be back.