

Posted on Thursday, 12.20.12

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THE READERS' FORUM

My father helped free the Bay of Pigs prisoners

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This letter is about Miami's Cuban history. Teaching younger generations about the impact of what occurred and what was sacrificed before their birth is critical. It will create respect for events and people who gave them the world they

have today in America. They need to know.

My father is James B. Donovan. He was one man with many achievements. He was associate prosecutor at The Nuremberg Trials, responsible for the visual evidence. He made the Rudolf Abel-Francis Gary Powers exchange by traveling in the trunk of a car at night through Checkpoint Charlie in East Berlin. He was president of the Board of Education in New York City during the integration busing issues, he ran for the United States Senate and was president of Pratt Institute.

I will tell you that his singular trips into Cuba in 1962 to arrange the release of so many Bay of Pigs prisoners gave him such a remarkable sense of personal pride. The parents of these brave men called him and he worked with the hardworking Brigade Committee before he went into Cuba by himself to find a meeting ground with Fidel Castro to get the job done.

My father's funeral in 1970 was filled with Jewish Holocaust survivors, Irish family, African-American good friends, and many well-dressed dignitaries.

Yet, as a bereft 20-year-old daughter, what I still remember is the solace I felt from the Cuban families and Brigade members. I always believed my father would agree that a most poignant part of this was when a young Cuban man, dressed in blue jeans with construction shirt and shoes, came through this distinguished gathering and asked me if he could pay his respects. He went up to the front, put down his lunch pail, bowed his head and said heartfelt prayers. This, I knew, would be what would touch my father most. He stood up, came back to me and said he knew he was now safe and had a future and would not feel right if he did not honor this gift.

So, almost 43 years later, I will come and honor the Brigade and their families. At 11 a.m. on Dec. 22, the Bay of Pigs Museum and Library will offer to Miami a 50th Anniversary Day. This celebration needs to be marked because the men and women I've known in this Cuban community are remarkable. They have experienced harrowing difficulties that need to be recognized and due to their old-world customs, they have strived to keep honor as the right path for all of us. If you are Cuban, bring your children, since this is the moment to teach them.

Mary Ellen Donovan Fuller, Alcolu, SC