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THE NINETEEN SIXTIES by Bernard Barshay

“Fifty-Eight Hours
in a Southern Jail”

“The Television Set”

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BERNARD BARSHAY

Bernard Barshay wrote his first dramatic documentaries for The Hartford Times, combining theatrical and journalistic techniques. Later his treatises on Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and Harry Truman, using the same method, were published by North American Newspaper Alliance. He has since done the same with travel articles for NANA and the Long Island Press, using the personal approach in documenting important news events. In 1959 Mr. Barshay was in Cuba when Castro came to power, and later in Haiti at the time of the aborted invasion of that country by insurgents. Bullets narrowly missed him in 1975 during the Portuguese revolution while he was covering a demonstration at the Spanish embassy.

The academic world has also claimed Mr. Barshay. He has been associate professor of journalism at Long Island University, his outstanding student being Ike Pappas, Pentagon correspondent on Walter Cronkite's TV news show.

More recently Mr. Barshay has been documenting the 1930-70 period on television and radio, producing and narrating programs dealing with the depression, World War II years and the Vietnam war.

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THE NINETEEN SIXTIES **by Bernard Barshay**

**"Fifty-Eight Hours
in a Southern Jail"**

"The Television Set"

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET
COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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THE NINETEEN SIXTIES

by Bernard Barshay

Introduction

THE NINETEEN SIXTIES are two stories by Bernard Barshay of that turbulent period in American history when North and South experienced vast and fundamental changes in their social structure. In the latter region, civil rights activists were facing harsh challenges in their attempts to bring real freedom to the blacks. In the big cities of the North, Puerto Ricans and other Hispanic peoples were migrating to the promised land where the streets were supposedly paved with gold.

The first story, "Fifty-eight Hours in a Southern Jail," describes what happens to a white Northern professor in Louisiana while on a sabbatical to study conditions there. In the second story, "The Television Set," Pepe Torres learns that New York City can be a cruel place to an ignorant and trusting immigrant.

Fifty-Eight Hours in a Southern Jail

Fifty-eight hours in a Southern jail! Maybe you're thinking I'm going to tell you about being whipped or beaten. . . No, you don't have to do that to degrade a man, make him feel small. No, you simply stick him into a miserable cell with murderers, robbers and rapists. . . take away any semblance of dignity he may have. . . treat him like dirt. . . Have you ever been mugged? fingerprinted? By a burly, red-faced state police officer, who grabs your fingers with an iron grip and plants them down hard on an ink pad? That will make you feel like nothing, all right. . . But let's get to the beginning. . .

Tourists not wanted here! Work, Bud, and stay off the streets. Don't talk back to police or else! Else is jail, work camp or prison farm. Shut up if you know what's good for you. We get four dollars a day from the county for every prisoner and it costs forty-four cents a day to feed and house him. So why not?

But Joe wants to see the state capital. Joe thinks he's free, American citizen, \$182 in pocket. He's free all right--for just twelve and a half minutes. Just time enough to walk from the highway where he got off the car to the bus stop. Just time enough to ask where the "Y" is and what bus'll take him there. Then THEY come. THEY with the guns, handcuffs, sneers, asking stupid questions, with a number for you already written in their minds.

What's your name, where're you from, when'd you get here, where've you been, where's your identification, where's your auto driver's license, social security card, draft card, where do you work, what's your address, what'd you come here for, where, what, how, why, when???

Joe tries to answer, and to be polite, too. He's read books about the Deep South, thinks he knows what he's dealing with. Sure. Sure. I'll answer any question. Me? I'm just a tourist. Want to see the capital. But Joe senses something already. These two men, the THEY, they don't hear him. He speaks, but they hear nothing. He explains. He shows: rent receipts, library cards, bus check stubs, passport, dry cleaner's receipt, this, that, this, that, that, that, and still more.

But he's already in the car. Sure, sure, we'll give you a free ride to the "Y." But first you're coming with us. Never mind the bus. We'll drive you to the "Y." Joe sees the ^{building}Capitol all right. A fleeting glimpse of a tall building surrounded by trees and then it's a small one surrounded by cells. The police station.

Questions. More questions. Now it's the lieutenant. Joe is sore now. He hasn't eaten since eleven that morning and now it's seven-thirty. Two and a half hours of stupid questions. My God! He's got \$182 in his wallet, two suitcases, a shave, and wears a clean suit and shirt and tie. Look! You don't believe me? Call my wife, my brother, my boss. I'll pay for the calls. But already the steely-eyed, blonde, blue-eyed 100 percent American police officer is inking

the pad, getting the cameras ready. You're goin' to be mugged, Joe, mugged, and fingerprinted, and mugged again. Now this side, now that side. Stand straight. Take off your glasses; put 'em on. Keep your three fingers limp, now stiff. Now this hand. "What's the charge, Lieutenant? What have I done?"

"Charge? You're a damn Northerner, that's the charge. You're not workin', that's the charge. Whoinhell do you think you are to come here to see our capital? Now shut up or we'll give you thirty days. We've had enough from you. Call? Whoinhell do you want to call? Shall we let him call? Okay. We're democratic. One call and hurry up! We ain't got all day."

* * *

"Frisk him. Quick, you, off with your clothes. C'mon, snappy. Put everything in here. C'mon with us. Food? Whatinhell do you think this is, the Waldorf?"

Joe's back in the car now, off to jail. A Negro boy meets him, gives him a dirty, tattered work shirt, and ill-fitting blue jeans. Again Joe says he's hungry. But no answer. The Negro boy whispers to him. "Quick!" Joe has a dime. He gives it to him. The boy puts it in a machine near the corner of the dark hall. "Put it in your pocket, man!" Joe thrusts the small carton of milk in his side pocket, whispering thanks.

The jailer, his helpers all sneer at Joe, ask questions. But Joe has learned something. Answering them does no good. He keeps his mouth shut. They don't like it. They warn him. But Joe shuts up. The jailer, a giant of a man with short, cropped hair and red face, says, "Walk here." Joe walks. A door opens. It's jail.

Jail is dark, but he hears voices. "Grab a mattress." Joe stumbles in the dark, feels something. "Grab it and come this way." Joe grasps a dirty, moth-eaten brown mattress and pulls it into the cell. There is the sharp clang and rasp of the lock as it shuts. Joe pushes the mattress onto the dirty, bare cement floor. He sits down on it. But he's not alone. He hears voices in the dark. "What're you in for?" "What's your name?" "Hey, come over here." He stays silent. Then he hears the squish of water at about the same time he feels suddenly all wet. Someone has doused him with water. He says nothing. "Here, you!" the jailer says, and to Joe's surprise a sandwich is thrust at him. He takes it eagerly. Hungrily he wolfs it

down: a combination of spiced ham and American cheese. But halfway through, his appetite suddenly leaves him. He takes out his carton and drinks the milk slowly. "Hey, guys, how did he rate to get a sandwich?" "Food, at nine o'clock!" Joe doesn't know what to do with the rest of the sandwich. He looks for a wastepaper basket or garbage can. In the darkness of the cell there is none. But he spots bits of food lying on the floor, on stone benches. He places what's left of the sandwich on a bench.

Suddenly he becomes keenly aware of his surroundings. Men are sleeping on the floor on mattresses such as his. Others are on the benches. In the corner is a toilet bowl and next to it a faucet. The cell is about twenty feet long and about eight feet wide. He can count about a dozen figures.

There is a clang, for the jailer has come to lock the heavy iron door--the only door to the outside world. Joe now knows there is no escape--no escape at all for the rest of that night. The men in his cell start asking questions. Slowly but with almost incredulous disbelief he begins to realize that others in that cell--if they speak the truth--also are there for no real reason and, worse, some have been there for weeks without seeing a lawyer or even getting a hearing before a judge. Fear begins to grip Joe, real fear this time--fear that he'll never get out, fear that because he's a Northerner he'll be treated even worse than these men--some with Southern accents.

But what about his money? Won't his \$182 buy him his freedom, at least set him free on bail? The men guffaw. Forget about that \$182--that's gone, the police will take it. Others have had their money taken too, it seems. Then, then, how long can he expect to stay? How long? That's a good question. Some say a month, others more, none less than ten days.... Joe shudders--a month, even ten days. . . Can he take it that long? But one wizened old man grimaces fiendishly and adds, "And when the county police let you out, the city police'll get yah, then you'll be back in stir. . . They take turns. . . like playing potsey." But--but--how--why? The man grimaces again. "There's no reason, but they lay low for you, grab you soon's they can. . . You don't have any money when you get out, so they arrest's yah for vagrancy." Another remarks that it's possible the county boys will take a second crack at him when the city boys let him go after a few weeks or months. It's good business, he adds.

A sharp twinge of self-pity suffuses him. Then Joe becomes even more alert, realizes every scrap of information is vital, so asks questions most of the night, finds out about Phil, the go-between, the prisoner who acts as a contact man between those in jail and those who keep them in. He'll see Phil in the morning, he resolves, find out how he can see a lawyer, maybe go before a judge in a hurry. Yes, he'll see Phil. . . and the thought of him keeps him awake till morning, though sleep would have been impossible anyway.

At five the door of the jail again is opened with a sharp clang, and almost at once the entire place becomes one of hustle, and chatter. First, all the mattresses have to be taken out of the cells to be placed in a corridor as the cells become converted into mess halls--but without chairs or tables. Joe does his part lest he stir the anger of either the inmates or the jailers. But unknowingly he does too much, and finds himself at the very end of the line. When it's time for him there is little food in the plate. But he doesn't mind. It's only bread and jelly with black coffee--only he would have liked the coffee hot. His mind is agog. What will it be like in jail this day--Easter Sunday?

He learns that a committee of ministers is due that afternoon for their annual visit, that he's lucky to be in jail on such a day, as chicken--real chicken--will be served later. Yeah, he's lucky all right. Lucky, he finds out, to have a few dollar bills in his pocket and some change--maybe enough to buy a bed for that night, for he's heard about Jigger. Jigger's got a racket all right. He sells beds. Can you beat it? But he does. In the other cell, it seems, there are a few army cots with sheets and a blanket. But you gotta have dough to get it, they say, and Jigger wants it cash.

Joe sees Jigger. "How long you gonna stay here?" he wants to know. Joe doesn't know. Jigger figures at least a week, says he might have a bed later that day to sell, wants \$7 for it. But Joe only has about half of that with him. Jigger wants it in advance, suggests Joe make out a slip for the rest of the money from the \$182 being held for him. Joe's not entirely convinced he'll be in jail a whole week, but decides to make out a slip anyway to find out if the police will keep his \$182, as the other men say. If he gets \$5 from them, then maybe the men are wrong, and the police won't touch his money after all.

Meanwhile Joe looks for Phil, a character who's been in this jail for eight years and is looked upon as a sort of dean. He finds him, but Phil is noncommittal, won't promise to get him a lawyer. Hours go by and no word from Phil, though he's the only one allowed to leave the jail for the outside.

Now that breakfast is over, men begin to use the can--not as filthy as Joe had imagined it to be but only one in the whole place and no privacy at all, right smack in the middle of all the men (some still eating their bread). And there's no toilet paper, only a torn-up Bible which the men use instead. Joe's a sensitive guy, can't do it with all these men around. He decides to wait.

Some guys begin playing cards, others talk, still others start cleaning up the place with brooms. Joe volunteers to do that. He sees one room still completely barred--finds out it's the solitary ward for guys who can't keep out of trouble, even in jail. He notices dark splotches of blood on the walls, cracks here and there, and finds out there was a rumble a few days ago. The guys got restless, decided to have some fun. After a few cracked heads, and one guy thrown in solitary for three days, everybody quiets down.

Jigger sees him about eleven o'clock, has a bed for him, wants cash in advance; but Joe hasn't got his \$5 back yet. Joe wants that bed bad, so he gives Jigger \$2--guaranteeing him the bed for that night until the rest of his money gets to him--he hopes.

Phil sees him at eleven-thirty, has no news of bondsmen or lawyers or anything else. Only Phil's heard that Jigger got \$2 out of Joe and is peeved. "You shouldn't a done it," he says. "Nobody has to pay for a bed here."

"But I couldn't sleep at all last night," says Joe, "and I can't wait around for a bed indefinitely."

Phil nods his head, understands how Joe feels. Still he's got it in for Jigger, who takes advantage of every newcomer, runs the jail as though it's his hotel.

Joe thinks about that after Phil's gone, notices men coming to Jigger all day: some to buy cigarettes, though officially they're barred from jail because of the fire hazard; some to borrow money, though how they ever would pay him back Joe doesn't know; some even to buy food or cups of coffee. Jigger's got a kind of small stove in

his cell, and manages to heat the water and enough instant to make a tolerable cup, Joe's told.

Noon at last, and dinner--and it's real chicken all right, only not much of it, only a wing and a neck and some vegetables, but to Joe it's his first decent meal in twenty-four hours. This time he wasn't last on line--he'd learned to watch for the signals that showed food was on the way.

One man begins complaining, "Now we'll have to hear the ministers. You've always got to pay for anything that's good. I think I'd rather have the soup slop for dinner than the chicken AND the ministers." No one seems anxious to have a service or a sermon or even a visit. Hours go by and still no ministers. Finally word gets around that because the men were too sarcastic last time they came, the ministers have decided to pass them by this year. A loud cheer is heard. Hurrah! "This'll do more to convert me than anything else," says one man.

Joe is awfully tired and sleepy by now and reluctantly, but resignedly, he does what others have been doing since dinner--lies down on the bare cement floor and tries to sleep. To his amazement, when he stretches out, it doesn't seem too uncomfortable--and soon he's in a kind of half'sleep, aware of his surroundings but also aware of a pleasant sensation, of complete relaxation. He's getting used to jail!

* * * 8

After supper--a slice of cheese with bread and black coffee-- Joe listens to the men as they spin yarns of their adventures with the law: some thieves, a few rapists, and one murderer. What surprises him is how nice the murderer looks and how mild-mannered. As a matter of fact, if he hadn't met them all in jail, he would have thought them all the most respectable of citizens.

But what's even more amazing is the way many have been picked up for vagrancy, loitering, and being "without visible means of support." One man says he was on a trip to New Orleans, had been robbed there, left without money. He had hitchhiked back to town, but had been picked up by police as soon as he left the car. He's a government employee, has proof of it in documents he carries; yet here he is in jail. He hasn't been allowed to see a lawyer or even had a hearing, though he's been in jail for two weeks.

Another says he's a student at the state university, ran out of money while on vacation, wired his parents to send him some. The money actually came, he says, but on the way to claim it he'd been picked up by police, thrown into jail because he was broke--and the police hadn't even allowed him to get his money waiting for him at the telegraph office, or even bothered to check up on his story.

A third man says he stepped out of his car, and was hustled off to jail. Why? Perhaps he looked suspicious to them. Perhaps because he was traveling alone. He didn't know why. Evidently anyone who appears to be in a weak position, especially if he's alone, is easy bait for the police.

* * *

Night has come and Joe has lost all hope of getting a bondsman or a lawyer. Now all that interests him is his bed, and Jigger is very cooperative on that score. He shows him where he'll sleep that night and it looks so clean, so comfortable, that Joe can hardly wait until it's time to lock up the jail for the night. But when this is finally done, he finds the other three occupants of the room will be Jigger, who keeps running his coffee business and loan shark office much of the night until their own cell is finally locked up and no one can enter or leave; and two sex maniacs whose language is so repulsive to Joe it leaves a sour smell with him long after the two men have stopped talking. Such depravity he had heard of, but listening to it spoken of so openly, in the coarsest, foulest tones is so revolting, he almost wishes he were back with the men he had slept with last night,

Finally the lights are turned off, and Joe prepares to sleep. Just then he notices one of the men smoking. He's horrified. In the small cell in which they are escape is impossible, and if a fire starts they don't have a chance. No one would hear them, as the jailer and his helpers have all left the premises. Joe knows that mentioning it will bring recrimination, so he does his best to be tactful. "You know," he says, "it's kind of dangerous smoking here with the cell locked." The smoker snickers, but continues to smoke. Joe waits for hours until the cigarette smoker finally douses his ashes, then relaxes. Now he can sleep.

But before he does so, he at last relieves himself as the cell has a toilet of its own and he can do so in privacy. And miracle of miracles, Jigger has even contrived to get some toilet paper-- everything but a bathtub, as Joe recalls the group shower he had taken a few hours earlier, the only shower in the entire jail.

* * *

The next morning word gets around that the judge will hear a few cases, but no one expects Joe's name to be called. To everyone's amazement, his is the first on the list. He lines up quickly, and with the others whose names are called follows the jailer to the courtroom. Just in case his name would be called, he had borrowed Jigger's razor and shaved himself to look as presentable as he could. Everyone had laughed at his brazen optimism, but now he's glad he had done so.

On the way to court, Joe meets the district attorney and tells him he ~~hadn't~~ seen a lawyer. The d.a. promises him he'll get him one before his name is called, but none has yet appeared. Joe is the third to be called to the docket, and before then he's studied the manner of the man who will soon decide whether he will be freed, placed on bond, or have to remain in jail indefinitely. It seems to him that the straightforward approach is the best. The judge appears to be in a good mood, perhaps because of the Easter recess.

Phil and others had advised him to plead guilty, take the ten days or so in jail, and perhaps pay a small fine. But he isn't guilty of anything, so why do so? However, if he pleads innocent, they might have it in for him, he'd been told, and he'd be hustled back to jail to await trial. But Joe thinks that bail might be set meanwhile, and that he'll have enough money to pay for it. Then at least he'll be free awaiting trial, and if the date for it is ^{set} weeks away he'll go home--perhaps not even bother coming back, and lose his bail money. They couldn't be holding him for more than a misdemeanor, and it wasn't a terrible thing to jump bail for a minor offense. But what were the charges against him? He still doesn't know. Hitchhiking? But no officer had caught him. Someone had merely reported seeing him leave the road on foot.

Now as he faces the judge, he hears the charges for the first time: loitering and being without visible means of support. Joe breathes a deep sigh of relief. Now he knows what to say.

"Your Honor," he begins in a soft yet firm voice, "I had \$182 with me when I was arrested, so how can it be said that I was without visible means of support? As for loitering, I was waiting at the bus stop in order to go to a hotel. I'm a teacher on sabbatical leave, traveling through the South, gathering notes for a report. My suitcase is full of notepaper which you can inspect for yourself. In all my forty-four years I have never been arrested on any charge, large or small," and then his voice breaks.

The judge interrupts with a smile. "It has been quite an experience for you, then. . . Forty-eight hours," and dismisses him.

Joe is overwhelmed with joy.

He had been arrested on a Saturday night at six p.m., put into jail at eight-thirty p.m. If Saturday counts as one day, then today being Monday, he's free. He begins to walk toward the exit--and now a guard hustles after him. He motions him back to the bench, and Joe knows he has to stay with the other prisoners until their cases are heard.

But when this is done and all are taken back to jail, there is no sign he will be released. The hours go by, and then he learns it will be another day, at least, before he'll be allowed to leave--for the jailer always adds a day to the one the judge signifies for release. Then he'll have to stay in jail another night. Now that he knows he will be out of there, every moment's delay is intolerable. Yet all the other men think he's very lucky, that it's rare for a judge to be so lenient. Yet, why not? thinks Joe. He hadn't done anything.

Now Jigger appears--and he's in an ugly mood. He'd counted on getting more money from Joe for the rest of that week, at least, and now his client will be leaving. He insists on more money for another night. But Joe refuses. Who is Jigger to have proprietary rights over a prison bed? And what can Jigger do if he refuses to hand him any more money?

Joe finds out later that afternoon.

After supper Joe notices how Jigger has been talking secretively and furtively with other men, decides to go to his bed as soon as the cell is opened. He's glad he's at the gate and dashes to his bed at once, for in a moment a man approaches him. "Jigger wants me to have that bed tonight," he says. But Joe is adamant, says it's his, that he slept in it the previous night, and that's that. The man makes a threatening gesture but leaves. Within five minutes another appears, only this

time more threatening; but again Joe refuses to budge--now lying astride of his bed, determined not to leave it until the next morning.

Jigger appears later, his mouth distended into a cruel line, but says nothing. Then one of Jigger's buddies comes in to say Joe is wanted by someone, but his ruse is so obvious ~~Joe doesn't even bother replying.~~ When his remark is repeated, Joe tells him if this is true, he can be seen right here.

Nine o'clock comes and the cell is bolted. Joe is alone in the room with Jigger and the two depraved men of the night before. He has heard of murders being committed in jail, of heads being bashed in, and so on. But somehow he knows Jigger will try nothing. The very fact that he has sent others to scare Joe makes him confident Jigger is a coward and will try nothing violent. Nevertheless Joe remains awake all night just in case.

Promptly at seven the next morning the list of those to leave the jail is read and Joe's name is called. Jigger, who all of the previous day tried to convince Joe that he owed him money, now is all smiles and tries to wheedle some money in a soft sell approach; but Joe ignores him.

Soon he's back at the police station, gathering up his clothes, and discovering to his happy surprise that all the money in the wallet is being returned to him. Fearful though of what the men had told him of being picked up now by the city police, he walks rapidly, now that he's free, to the bus station and buys a ticket north. He has to wait almost an hour for the bus and, fearful ~~that~~ being alone he might be picked up again, and seeing a middle-aged woman asks if he can sit next to her (to make it appear he is her companion). She voices no objection, so he sidles slowly over to her side. Just then he sees a police car go by, wonders if anyone saw him walk on the grass on the way to the bus station, and that this will be sufficient excuse to arrest him. But the car goes by.

The bus comes at last and two hours later it crosses the state line. When Joe steps off the bus in Natchez, he feels a strong inclination to kiss the ground of the Magnolia State. Thank God he's in Mississippi!

The Television Set

Bernard Barshay

Pepe Torres leaned wearily against the straight-backed wooden chair and spoke softly, the way Spanish-Americans do. I forgot the smell of the stale beer, forgot the sordid surroundings of the dark tavern on upper Madison Avenue as he reminisced.

"Yes, Juan, Maria--she gone, back to Puerto Rico," he said, more in resignation than in sadness. "I no blame her."

"Why didn't you join them, Pepe?"

"Soon I make 'nough money, t'en I go too."

"But why? Just when you were getting a hold in New York."

"Eet long story, Juan. No want to. . . how you say? . . . bore you."

The television set over the bar blared out a strident commercial. Pepe winced. I looked at him quizzically. It was not the old Pepe I had known, not the Pepe who had stepped off the boat eyes shining with hope and face set with determination.

The waiter returned to our table, hovered there a moment, then left. I had had enough of the foul stuff they called beer and didn't mind the dirty look he had given me. After all, my only purpose in coming here was to have a chance to talk with Pepe. It had been years since we had seen each other.

I had warned him then to be cautious, not to take everything in this country for granted. But he had laughed at me. He, Pepe, was going to get some of the gold that was waiting for hard-working immigrants like him. Then he would send for Maria and the kids.

Kids? It was strange that Pepe hadn't mentioned them.

"The children. . . are they all right?"

Pepe averted my gaze. After a long silence he said, "I talk already too much."

Again the noise of the television set rose to a sudden crescendo as the bartender turned the dial violently. My eyes were on Pepe's face when it happened and to see him cringe, as though the TV were a monster, made me wonder.

"Pepe," I said as kindly as I could, "what's happened to you? Why, you act as though you're afraid of that television set."

It was the word, "television," that made his face turn as white as a marshmallow. His head slumped forward involuntarily. "Television bad," he muttered, "baddest t'ing I ever know."

For a moment I wondered whether his recent troubles, whatever they were, had affected his mind. "Why do you say that, Pepe?"

"I once have television. . .but eet bring me trouble, not'ing but trouble. T'at ees why I lose my leetle Josefina--oh, my sweet leetle Josefina."

"Lose her?" I asked in bewilderment. "You mean--"

"Juan," he interrupted. "You want to hear? I tell you. . . I come here from La Isla Encantada four year ago. My cousin, Pedro, he say, 'Pepe, plenty work in Nueva York. Come here. Why stay in Puerto Rico weet no job?' So I come. But alone. First, I weesh to see for myself tees golden land."

"Well, I live in dark, dirty furnished room t'at my landlady take twelve dollar a week for. For two year I stare up at ceiling dreaming of my Maria and Josefina and Tomas. Two year. . . tassa too long."

"But every mont' I sen' twenty dollar, tell Maria to save up for to come here. T'en I get 'way from docks, get better job--porter in beeg building. Now I take room wit' 'nother man. . . to hurry up time when my family come. Sen' t'irty dollar every mont'. T'en Maria say she ready to come. I look for, soon fin' nice 'partment. You see, I make seexty dollar week now, 'nough for Maria and keeds and me."

"Day t'ey come happiest in my life.... No, second happiest. Happiest week later when new furniture come. . . furniture I never see in my Isla Encantada. Maria seet in beeg easy chair and say, 'Pepe, you good man! Make me glad you're my hosban'.' We t'anka Dios for good luck."

"Only one trouble. Street we live on have too many cars, no room for keeds to play. I say to Maria, 'If we onah could afford a television, maybe keeds come offa street.' But Maria say, 'Pepe, no talk foolish. You knowa good TV--nineteen inch or so--costa hundreds dollar.'"

"So we no buy television. But next week man come. He sell TV sets. He tell me he sell RCA, beeg console. First, I say no, costa

too much. But he say, 'Not'ing down, only twenty dollar a mont'. I no wanta keeds in street. I want t'em home, so I sign beeg paper. "Set come and she no RCA but bad television t'at no works a right. Bill come an' I hava to pay t'irty-five dollar a mont', not twenty."

Pepe's eyes flashed with remembered anger as he continued:

"I say, 'I no pay.* But my cousin, Pedro, he tell me, 'Go to Legal Aid Society. T'ey help poor people like you.'"

"I go, but lawyer he say, 'Salesman got contract you sign, an' you mussa pay.' So I pay."

"I no buy shoes and Maria she no buy dress. T'en she get sick. I call doctor, buy med'cine an' she get better. But not much money left. It all go to pay rent. None for television. T'ey sen' garnishee to boss, he fire me. We lose television."

"For eight weeks I get 'ployment 'surance, but no have 'nough money for kerosene. Winter cold. . . Josefina," and Pepe's voice broke, "she. . . she get sick. I go^{back}/to boss. Say, 'Give me job back. My leetle girl cold. Needsa heat."

"He say, 'Money for TV you got, eh?' and t'row me out."

"Josefina's cold getta worse. Pedro he lend me money for doctor. He come. . . but too late. Eet pneumo-ni-a an'. . . she die."

"Day after fun'ral Maria pack up and go. Money for trip waiting for her at ship. Sent by her fat'er. She go back with Tomas. Back to La Isla Encantada, where sun warm your bones, where water on clean beaches. . . how you say? . . . caress you, where no crowds step on you when lie in sun."

"But I. . . I in one room like before. I no lika one room, but gotta live t'ere."

Pepe's story had moved me deeply, but not as much as the change wrought in him. "Pepe," I said, "you've had hard luck, but don't let it beat you. New York is really a good town, especially for immigrants."

"Not for Puerto Ricans. . . No, I getta job soon, t'en go back to La Isla Encantada."

"All right, Pepe, go back to where Maria and Tomas are. But the same reasons that made you leave in the first place will make you leave a second time. And if you had the courage to come here once, you'll come again. Only this time you'll be wiser. You won't tell

yourself there's gold in the streets and you won't fall for the smart talk of some glib salesman."

The television set blared once again as the dial was moved rapidly from one channel to another. Pepe fairly winced as the noise muffled my last few words.

"Don't cower like that, Pepe!" I yelled at him above the din. "Those fools over at the bar, they don't know how to handle a sensitive machine like that. They let it bark, scream, shout, explode--instead of learning to control it."

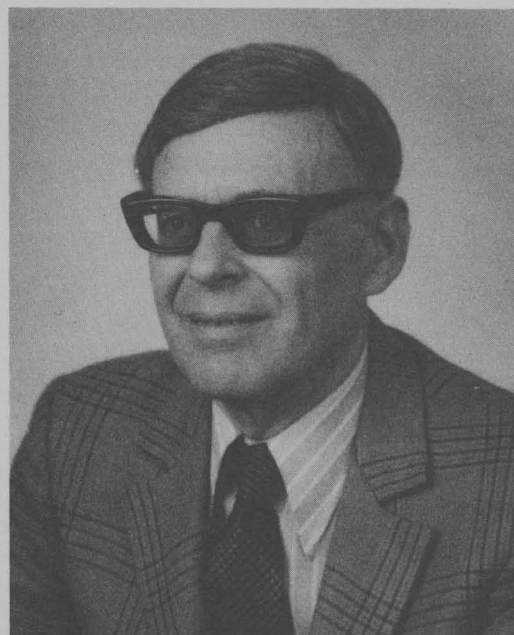
I walked rapidly to the bar. "Tune it down low, fellows," I ordered. "Can't even have a decent conversation with all that racket."

"Sure, chief," said the bartender, and in a moment the languid music of an orchestra floated softly through the tavern.

I returned to Pepe. "Don't let a lousy TV set upset your whole life," I said, "just as it now drowned out our voices."

Pepe's face had brightened. "Sure, Juan, sure. No television tune me out!

"No, I come back to Nueva York some day, get good job, nice 'partment and beegest, best color television I can buy--and eet be RCA, too--and I pay cash!"



BERNARD BARSHAY BIOGRAPHY

Bernard Barshay wrote his first dramatic documentaries for The Hartford Times, combining theatrical and journalistic techniques. Later his treatises on Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and Harry Truman, using the same method, were published by North American Newspaper Alliance. He has since done the same with travel articles for NANA and the Long Island Press, using the personal approach in documenting important news events. In 1959 Mr. Barshay was in Cuba when Castro came to power, and later in Haiti at the time of the aborted invasion of that country by insurgents. Bullets narrowly missed him in 1975 during the Portuguese revolution while he was covering a demonstration at the Spanish embassy.

The academic world has also claimed Mr. Barshay. He has been associate professor of journalism at Long Island University, his outstanding student being Ike Pappas, Pentagon correspondent on Walter Cronkite's TV news show.

More recently Mr. Barshay has been documenting the 1930-70 period on television and radio, producing and narrating programs dealing with the depression, World War II years and the Vietnam war.

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