

WILLIAM'S BROTHERS

by Aran Shetterly

EDITOR'S NOTE: In *TheAmericano*, Aran Shetterly explores the life and death of William Morgan, an American who left behind his life in Toledo, Ohio, to fight in the Cuban Revolution. In this photograph, Morgan (back row, second from the right) poses



Aran Shetterly,
author of
TheAmericano

with his fellow Rebels, who'd become his new, Cuban family. Researching the book, Shetterly found and interviewed these same Rebels, hoping to finally learn whether, in the end, the controversial Morgan was a hero or a traitor.

This is a victory photo (see page 25). It's January 1959, the Cuban Rebels have won their battle against the dictator Fulgencio Batista, and members of the Second National Front of the Escambray (SNFE) have gathered around the coffee table in the living room of their commander's parents' Havana home. All of them, apart from William Morgan, are still alive today. Only one lives in Cuba now.

Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo

In the center of the photograph, the young founder of the SNFE holds the nub of a cigar between his thumb and forefinger. Today he is seventy-two. After serving twenty-two years in a Cuban prison for preparing a counterrevolution against Fidel Castro, he was released in 1987. When I met him in 2001, Eloy invited me to his house in Miami to sit at his kitchen table and talk. Chain smoking cigarettes, he told me about his friend William Mor-

gan. Exiled Cubans dropped in and out of the kitchen. At the time, Eloy's home was the epicenter of the little-talked-about moderate exile movement in Miami. These moderates hope to prepare for change in Cuba through dialogue with the Cuban government and without any aid or assistance from the U.S. government. Today, Eloy lives in Havana and could play a critical role in a post-Castro reorganization of the government.

Eloy had lost brothers in the Spanish civil war and in the Cuban Revolution. He told me, "I don't care what William Morgan did before he came to Cuba. He was one of the top Rebel soldiers. William Morgan is my brother."

Roger Redondo

Down on his haunches, staring out the right frame of the photo, Redondo wears a leather aviator's jacket and a cap that looks too big for his narrow face. Redondo

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was always the epitome of Rebel cool. Today, Redondo lives in the scrub jungle of Costa Rica, far from Cuba and far from Miami's politicized Cuban-exile community. I met him at a McDonald's playground in Miami. He had returned to visit his mother and for appointments with his doctor. "Weeliam," he tells me, "was like a big kid, always laughing, always playing practical jokes. He wasn't particularly cultured, but he was astute, even brilliant when it came to battle strategy. He knew how to shoot a gun. He was the best marksman we had."

Ramiro Lorenzo

Ramirito walks slowly around his home in Miami. He is, as my grandfather would have said, a little wobbly on his pegs. The wear and tear of his seventy years, thirteen of which were spent in a Cuban prison, has taken its toll on his slight frame. Most days he reads books about Cuban and military history, rising from his chair only for a shot of sweet Cuban coffee or to tend to the dogs, cats, and birds who keep him company.

In the photograph, his calm, handsome face is edged by a neat beard, his elbows rest on his knees, helping balance the weight of the submachine gun in his hands.

Ramirito told me that William Morgan saved his life. When he said this, his eyes welled with tears and the color rose in his neck and face. "Weeliam was as brave a man as I have ever met. But he didn't know how to conspire [against Castro]."

Olga Morgan

William Morgan's Cuban wife stands second from the left in the photo. She, too, was a guerrilla in the mountains, where she met her Americano.

She remembers, "He joked with me from the start. I had short hair, and I was wearing fatigues, and he'd pull the cap over my head, and say, 'Hey *muchacho*—Hey boy.' I could see that he knew about our problems and felt for my people. I know that he had many troubles in his life, but he had a big heart."

Everyone in the photo loved William Morgan. Among all the Cuban Rebels, Morgan's name conjures images of Rebel courage. However, in Cuba and Miami, his motivations and affiliations are still debated today, over rum and sweet coffee. ■

