

# Twenty Years of Yawning

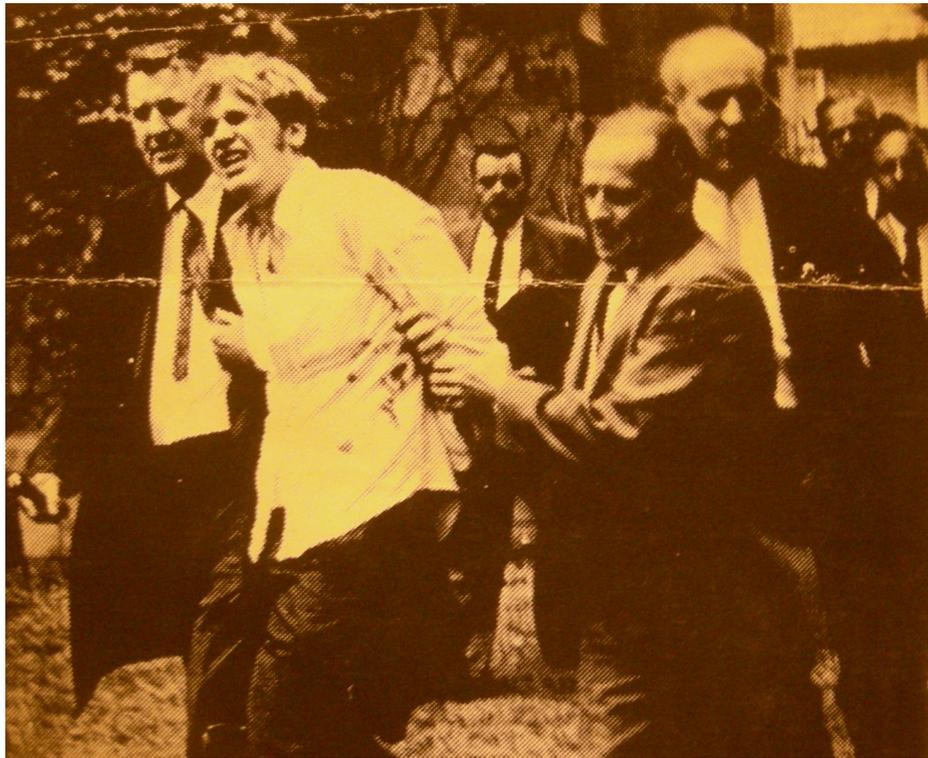
A Poem by Jerry Ross



A poem about the 1960s and 1970s years  
of protest, revolution, travels,  
and new awakenings.



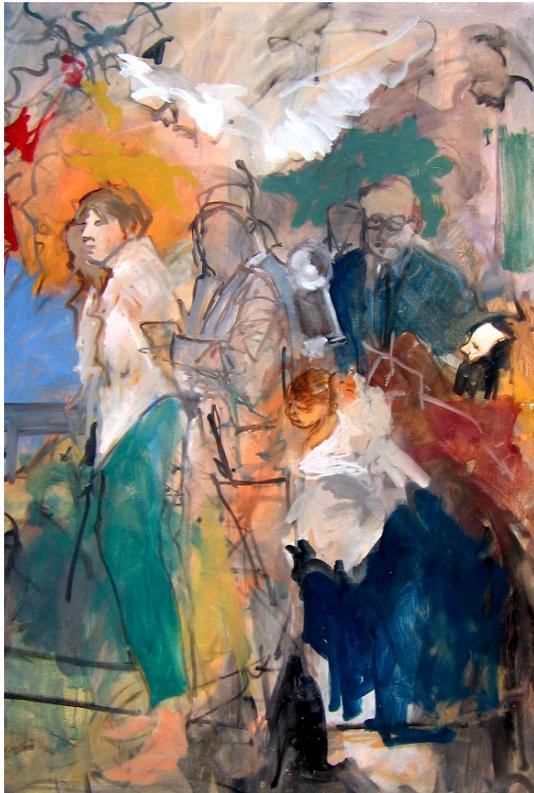
“Growing Up Absurd”....or so the title goes (of one of the photographs in this book) is an apt phrase to describe those days coming of age in the late 50s and early 60s. Here I am standing in the driveway of the home I grew up in at 226 W. Girard Blvd in the Town of Tonawanda (NY) standing behind “Candy” my long suffering cocker spaniel. She was hit three times by cars speeding past the house and never quite learned how to avoid such situations. Behind us, in the far distance, is the “ice house” where my brother Ron and I would hide out from the hebrew school bus that came around twice a week after school looking to take us for religious education into the city of Buffalo. We were suburban kids and had less interest in Judaism than in ice skating behind the house in a pond created by standing water in the backyard. The vacant field to the left was the site for many a baseball game and the occasional “home run” right through one of our windows. Football was played both in the backyard and out in the street in front of the house on Girard. Once, while stretching out to catch a long forward pass, I cut my chin on the cement and had to go for four or five stitches at the doctor’s office. The white picket fence was built by my father, Sidney, and was the only construction project on our property that he ever undertook and completed all by himself. Bonner’s Tavern was on the corner which afforded us the sights and smells of large beer barrels being off loaded weekly into that establishment. I never got to see the inside of the place until many years later while visiting back there for the Buffalo Nine 20-year reunion and actually went in there, sat down, and had a beer.



*The arrest of Bruce Beyer during the police attack on the Unitarian church*

Preface: This poem is about a period of time in the late sixties and early seventies when I was undergoing a personal transformation: a transition from political activism to a more spiritual and artistic mode of existence. In 1968 I was one of the "Buffalo Nine" draft resisters and was in two federal trials that ended, in my cases, in hung juries. Other defendants were not so lucky and ended up serving time in federal institutions or having to flee the country. At the same time I was Chairman of the Martin Sostre Defense Committee. Sostre's case and the B9 trials were interconnected. Sostre was owner of the Afro-Asian Bookstore and was arrested in 1987 for riot and subversion although the immediate charges were arson and drugs. Sensing a frame-up by state and local police, I started up a defense committee for Martin who was labeled "Martin X" in the newspapers. After my B9 trials I was expelled from WWP (Worker's World Party) an old left group that correctly found me too anarchistic for their tastes. I couldn't find steady work in Buffalo (the FBI had the curious habit of visiting my employers) and decided to travel to the West. I began drifting through the great southwest, first visiting the Grand Canyon. After various psychedelic experiences in Arizona, New Mexico, California, and Oregon, I ended up living and working for one year in Naco, Sonora on the American border where I taught in a grade school. The poem is about this period of time and afterwards, backpacking in Europe and various adventures there. The political life was never completely abandoned and I continued to work with Amnesty International on Martin's behalf which helped win his release.

# Twenty Years of Yawning

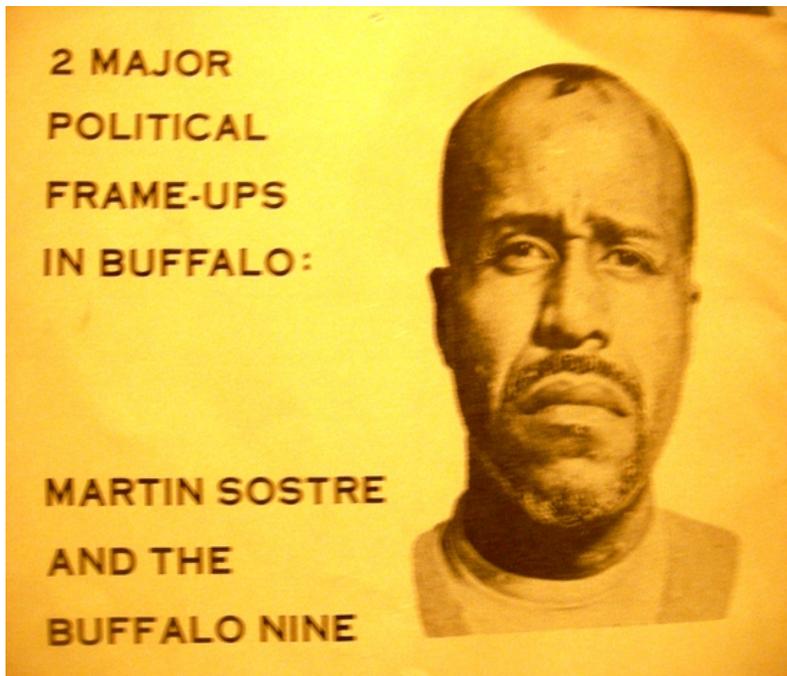


## TWENTY YEARS OF YAWNING

It has to be said  
For fear of silent cardboard images  
folded over wooden figurines  
Floating amidst ancient  
telecommunications devices,  
Unused, and thus the  
People unwarned

**Twenty years of yawning**





It has to be said for fear of the  
Republican  
Anti-communist  
marionette  
That would continue to erect  
Towers to Golgotha and  
Masturbate to Odin their  
G-d  
Almighty

**Twenty years of yawning**



It has to or should be said, that the corporate murderers of innocents  
Especially in 3rd World countries  
Are really very “nice” people over at the country club  
With good consumer instincts  
Their tennis elbow problems not  
Inconsiderable in the light of  
5 million Vietnamese killed or wounded

## **Twenty Years of Yawning**





It has to be said that  
Stalinoid Kremlin planners were seen wearing their  
Pro-Reagan-Bush buttons and have been  
known to take  
political positions just slightly to the right  
of Attilia the Hun  
While singing the Internationale  
and surrendering to Wal-Mart  
Thus causing the bugging of millions

**Twenty years of yawning**



And also, I feel like telling that when, after 27 years in Buffalo, I  
Decided to leave the soot encrusted and polluted  
Shanties of Lackawanna and travel to Arizona  
Trying to escape FBI surveillance  
Jumping onto the Interstate and not exiting until Flagstaff  
Where I followed the drumming sounds to the high school stadium  
And eye witnessed the Arizona State cops

Bashing in Navaho heads and the Indian woman shrieking and crying  
And running from the pow wow stadium  
Where their men folk had been drumming  
Later I heard there was ten thousand dollars  
bail on each of their heads  
At night at the bars,  
angry Navaho glarings.

**Twenty years of yawning**



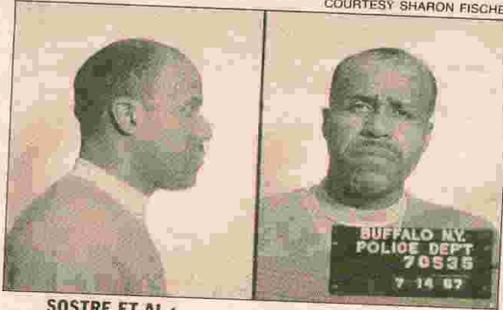
And FLASHing BACK I feel like telling that just  
before the big events of '71 and '72

When Nixon almost launched the Big Ones to fend  
Off the imaginary Vietnamese tidal invasions  
My first wife Pamela and I were tossed (expelled)  
from a Trotskyite group in Buffalo

But as it turned out it was  
The best thing, at that time,  
that ever happened in our lives  
To be free of the Jonestown-type servitude.

We were put on show trial for "Abernism" and "Kautskyism"  
The (Marcyite) Trot's party line not grocking that the  
Sans Culottes would prefer the bongo drumming and eroticism  
That often accompanies political truth and art  
To that dull gray lockstep of their cadaverous minions

**Twenty years of yawning**



COURTESY SHARON FISCHER

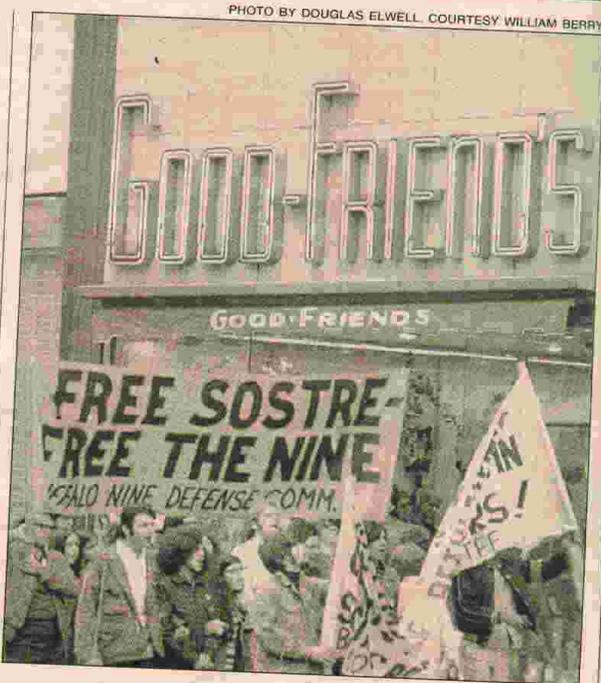


PHOTO BY DOUGLAS ELWELL COURTESY WILLIAM BERRY

**SOSTRE ET AL.:**

*Martin Sostre, arrested for inciting riot on the East Side in 1967, became one of the most famous prison inmates in American history. His case was embraced by anti-war groups as well as civil rights groups as seen at far right, during a march down Main Street.*

**Nine**

*Continued from Page 6*

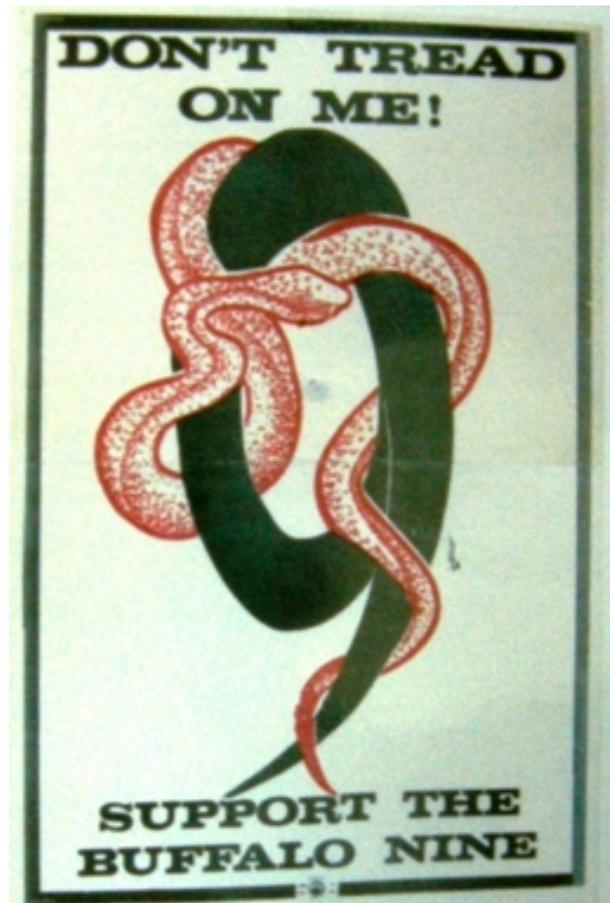
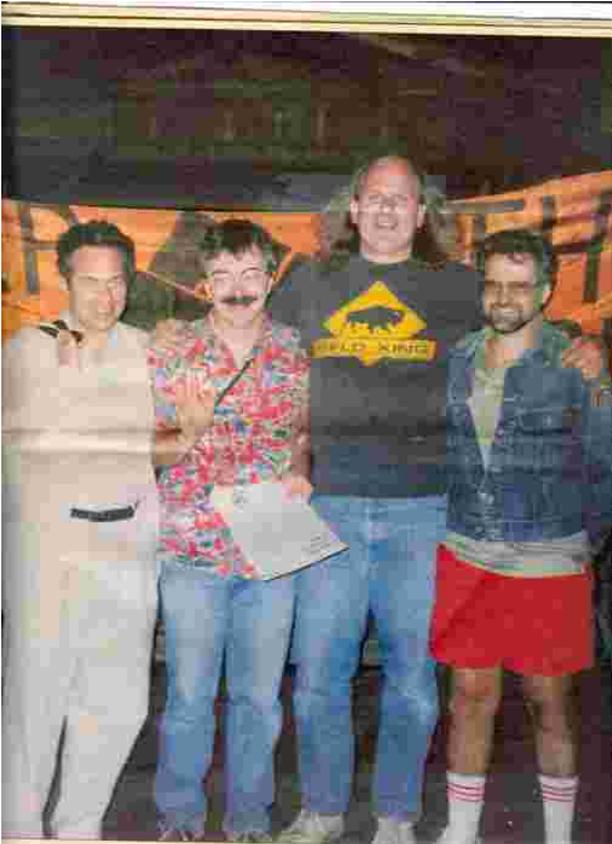
"Well, you learn a lot about what the FBI was up to when we were active in the movement," Fischer replied. "In fact, even though the FBI blots out the important names, we can figure out who the informants were by reading between the lines." The woman hurriedly got off the bus before her stop. "Then I knew," Fischer says. "I had suspected her for years, but now I knew."

Sharon Fischer is the unofficial archivist for the Buffalo Nine. Twenty years after Buffalo's most sensational anti-war demonstration and trial, Fischer not only has preserved all the left-wing leaflets and posters, Buffalo Nine press clips and trial exhibits, but she also has garnered several pounds of files from the Federal Bureau of Investigation under the Freedom of Information Act.

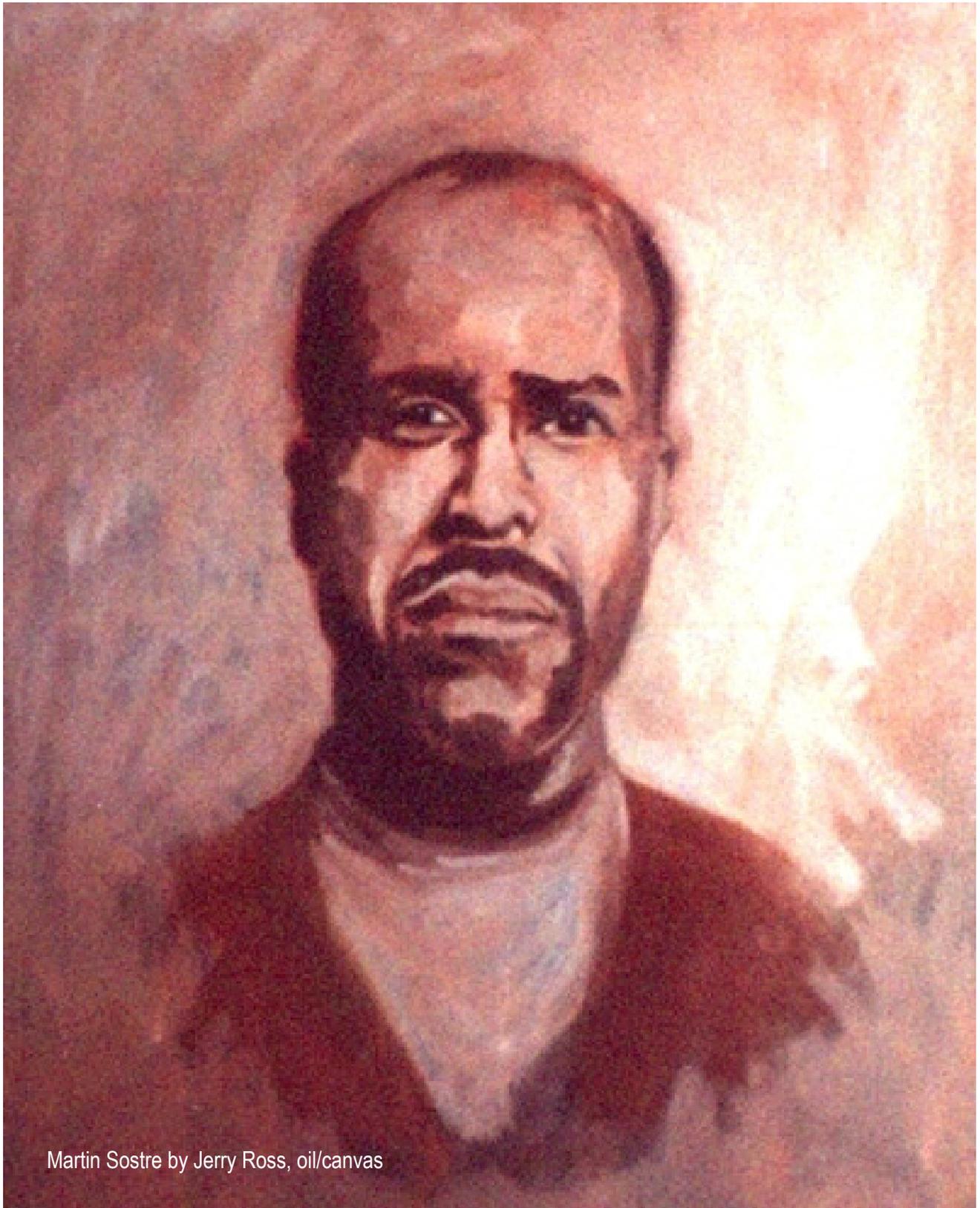
burning their draft notices on the steps of the Unitarian-Universalist Church on Elmwood Avenue and taking "symbolic sanctuary" there for 12 days with 200 supporters coming and going. It no longer centers on the arrival of three dozen federal, state and local lawmen at the church on Aug. 19, 1968, and the arrest of nine young men for impeding or assaulting the officers.

ety at UB, which he said was "attempting in a sincere way to study hard the thinking of Mao Tse-tung on philosophy so as to be better able to apply materialist dialectics to our struggle against the Johnson administration ruling clique and to expose the hypocrisy of religious leaders and organizations that back these murderers."





So I found myself “on the road” like Jack Kerouac  
And when I first got to flagstaff I walked around near campus  
Accepted some organic mescaline in capsule form  
From some very generous students  
And later that night  
Found myself with my arms wrapped around a  
Ponderosa Pine tree  
Up along the canyon’s river.  
Afterwards I made my way to the Grand Canyon  
Where I experienced a vertigo sensation or whatever it is  
When your insides get sucked out of you  
While sitting on the rim’s edge  
And you have the sensation of  
falling into the Canyon’s depths  
of ancient Indian chantings



Martin Sostre by Jerry Ross, oil/canvas

Martin Gonzales Sostre - Owner Afro-Asian Bookstore in Buffalo, N.Y. adopted as prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International, Hamburg, Germany. Exonerated by Gov Carey of NY.



Post Vietnam Reality Dateline Bagdad – photo from Internet, source

And while in Flag I met Bob Wilson

Crazed sage-man before his time

Bob once professorred at University of Maryland

Thrown out after leading sit-in demo on Route One in '68

Bob was fired from his job and his wife walked out on him that same day

He arrived back in Flag where he grew up with Eldridge Cleaver

Or so he said

After the rib-crushing blast of the fire hoses cut him down in Maryland

Bob had returned to his home town to become a town drunk but still sage-like

He took me to sacred Indian burial grounds

Where we chewed Ponderosa pine needles like Navaho

And, as the dark came over us,

Waited for the ghosts.

**Twenty years of yawning.**



That hot summer, traveling to Oregon and then back down to Tucson  
I made my way down to Naco, Arizona.

A little village on Arizona-Sonora, Mexico border  
Hired on as a 6<sup>th</sup> grade general science teacher  
Mostly Mexican kids whose saucer sized eyes  
Were like brown oceans in which  
Purple turtles swam alongside  
blue and green sea horses  
Their mouths kissed by the sunset

### **Twenty years of yawning**

And although the local Chicano school principal and others  
Frowned upon the gringo schoolteacher  
living on the Mexican side of the border  
The national border being the school fence  
running alongside the playground  
I preferred living over there  
, especially after the school janitor  
Introduced me to Poncho Im,  
the proprietor of the Poncho Villa Hotel  
Located as it was on the main drag of Naco, Sonora  
Inside was a small Poncho Villa Museum  
with photos of Mexican planes  
Dropping small bombs  
onto the American side of the border  
There I lived amidst the Cucarachas and the Federalis,  
Teachers, Engineers, Ranchers,  
and come and go travelers.

### **Twenty years of yawning**

“ Poncho, your rheumatism is killing you and “the barber” got into another  
Fist fight at the cabaret where he plays the trumpet  
Doctor Romo has come in to play dominos and  
School teacher Arevelo is pining for his girlfriend  
“The Bista” (customs agent)  
and El Capitan (Head officer of the Federalis)  
are going rabbit hunting with flashlights  
Reciting memorized Spanish verse  
Punctuated by pistol shots  
while driving down a dirt road towards Agua Prieta.

### **Twenty years of yawning**





One day Poncho, Dr. Romo, the Bista,  
the trumpet playing Barber, and I  
piled into my small Toyota Corolla  
And we traveled down to Hermosillo  
Stopping at the town brothel just on the outskirts of Naco  
As the custom dictated  
Then continuing until morning  
only stopping once for Menugo (tripe) soup,  
and still me, the only gringo

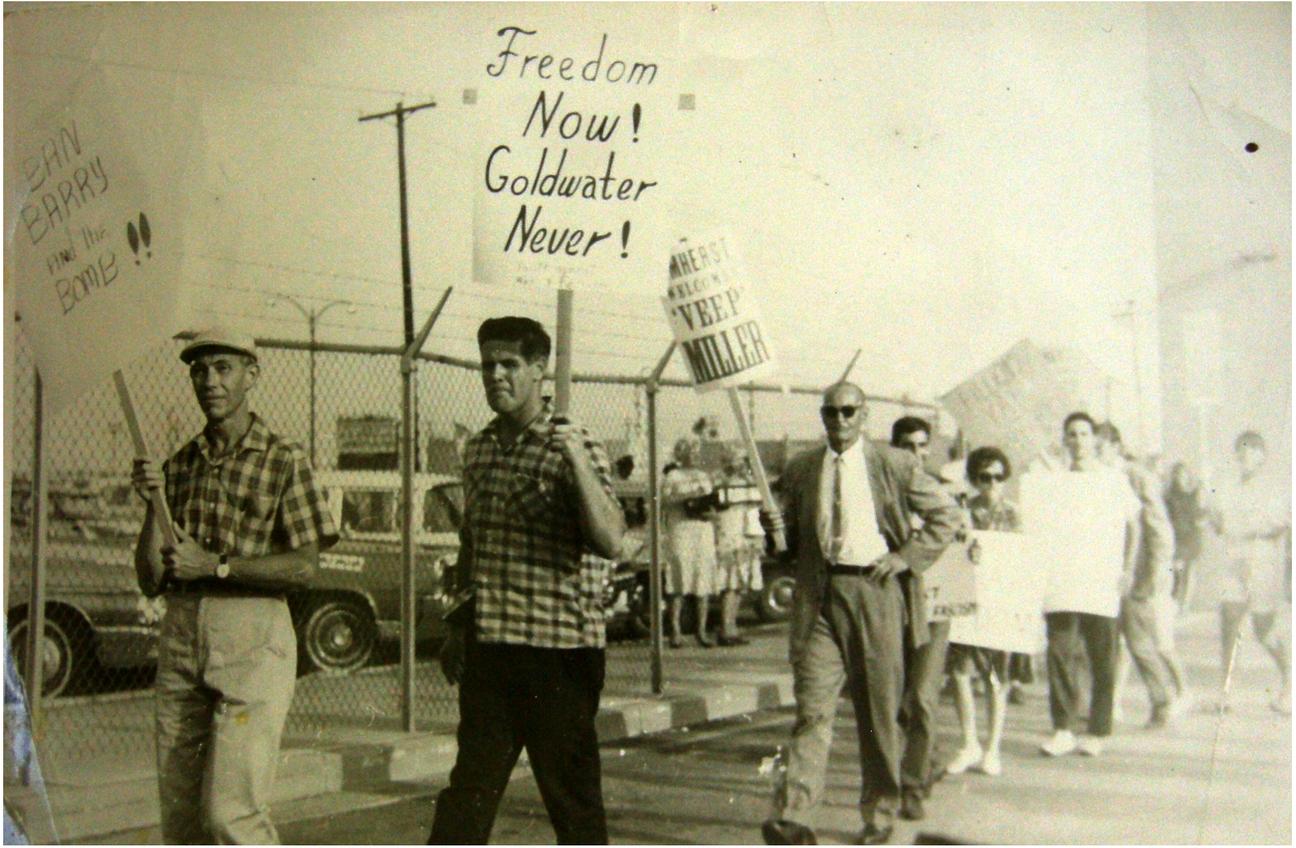
### **Twenty years of yawning**

I looked out from our vantage point on the terrazzo  
of a second story Chinese restaurant  
Below a huge sea of white clad camposinos  
waving their machetes towards the sky  
Like a rock concert only just listening to unending  
political speeches all afternoon  
until towards the evening  
a big black limo arrived  
Parting the masses like Yaweh  
splitting open the red sea

### **Twenty years of yawning**

And after living in Mexico for one year I took my last paycheck  
And drove back across the country  
Bought a ticket to London to see my sister  
And I ended up studying T'ai Chi at the London YMCA  
with Master Liu.

### **Twenty years of yawning**



Who one day was telling the class that we had better see into our true self-natures  
Or, if we don't, we will be condemned to live out our lives in ignore-ance  
And as he said these words I saw his legs disappear, his torso  
Suspended in mid-air while blindfolded he was laughing  
His hands tied behind his back as if waiting for his executioner  
I felt like I was floating one inch above the floor no fooling  
The room was filled with smoke or vapor  
Just like Herman Hesse said it would be

## Twenty years of yawning

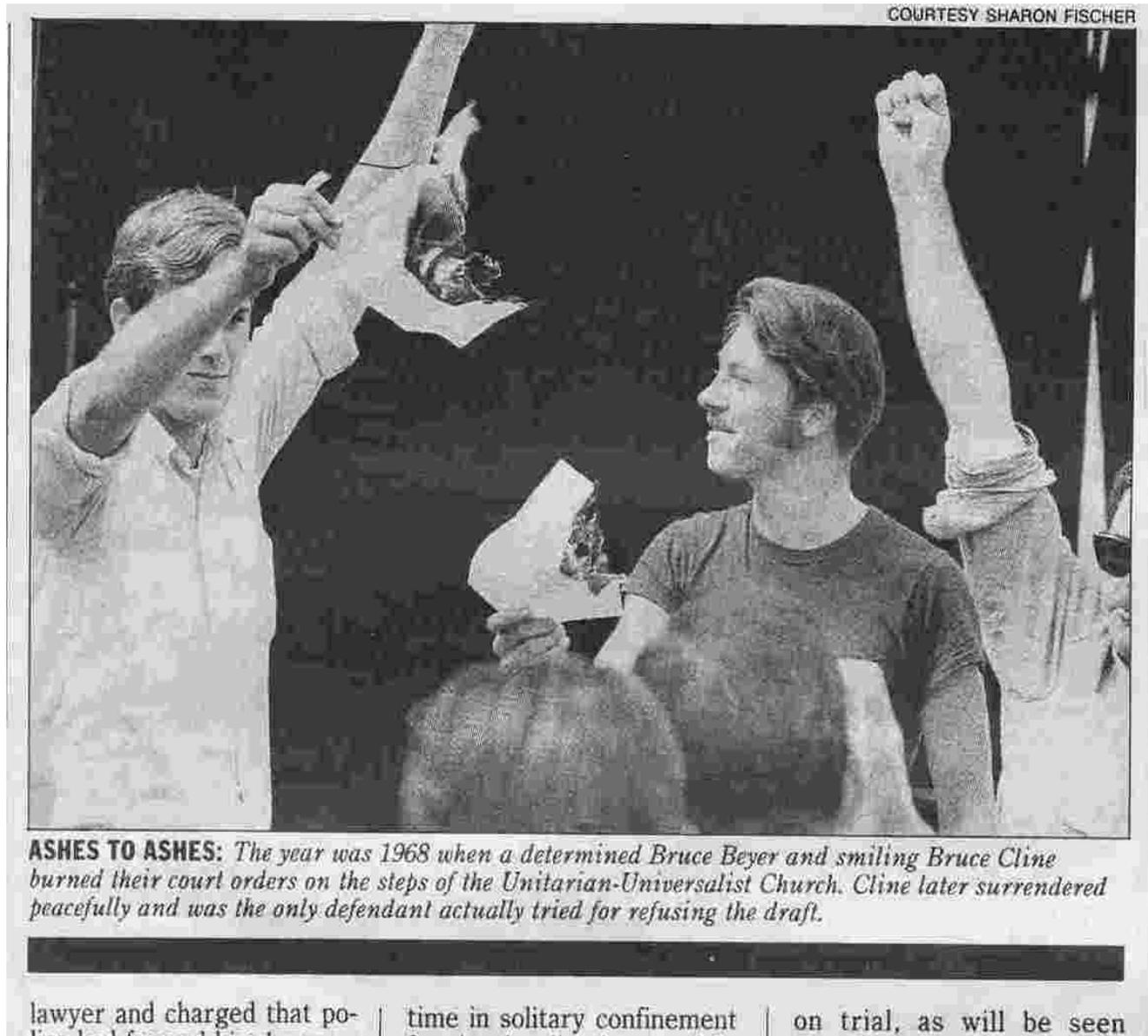


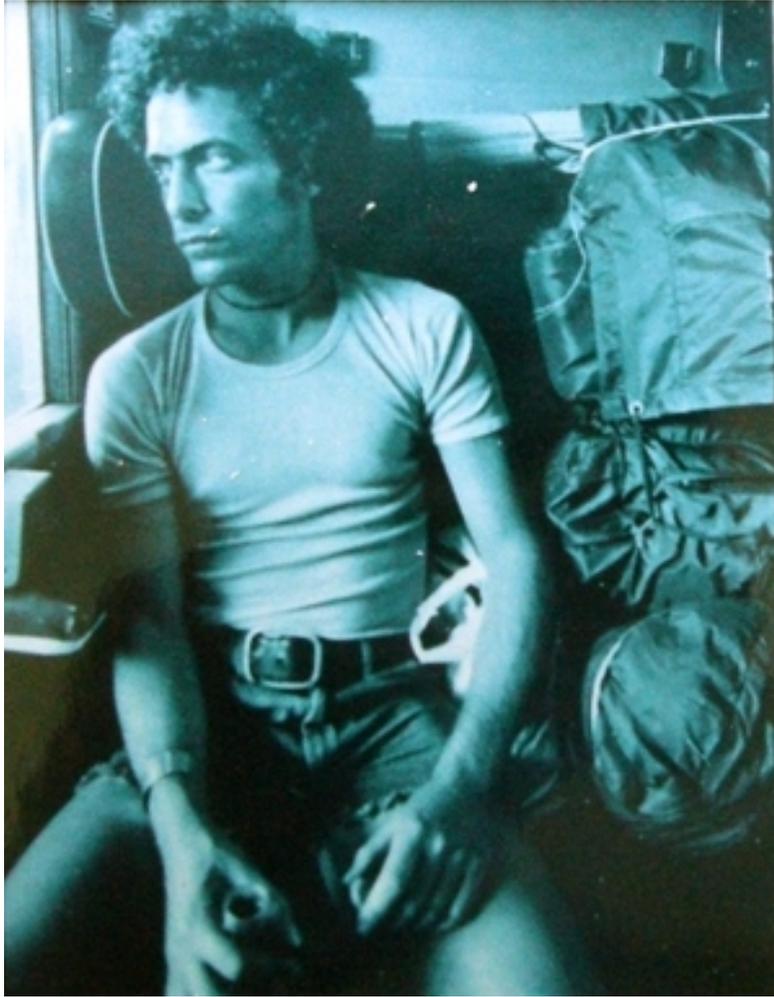
I took the train from London down to  
Hove, Sussex  
Found a digs (apartment) and a job  
at Clark's Bakery  
Where I worked turning out cheese  
cakes made from quark  
And Pork Pies and other tasties  
The Peter Sellers look alike supervisor  
in a white lab coat  
Told us to leave the frozen  
sheep kidneys  
out in the midday sun  
Until long forgotten  
and stinky,  
we were told to return  
Them to the refrigerator  
for later  
processing.  
Needless to say  
I don't eat kidney pies anymore  
with my Guinness!

**Twenty years of yawning**

And back to London my sister and I decided to travel to Spain for her vacation  
On the train to Paris a Russian gave me what must have been a mickey  
And then just as I was necking with the Spanish girl from Madrid  
I blacked out and was found sleep walking for the next eight hours  
The Russian agent and the Spanish girl disappeared into the night  
Along with his bottle of so-called Vodka

## Twenty years of yawning





Arriving in Barcelona, her ancient causeways and wide boulevards,  
each building an ancient poem

Her beach totally empty in the early morning

My companions were asleep so I went off with the Guard Civil

Up into his police tower on the beach

And then to a local bar to drink cognac, his treat.

We walked the beach and he showed me his peepholes

Where he watched the French ladies undress

This fascist voyeur explained that although he was married

With four kids, he is still macho enough

to make love with his girlfriend under the bridge

**Twenty years of yawning**

As we leave Spain  
In the railway station  
A rail worker starts up a conversation about Vietnam  
And, after glancing around, remarks  
“Viva La Revolucion Social!” and quickly disappears

### **Twenty years of yawning**

And I want to tell you that  
I went to Germany after Diane, my sister, returned to London  
A German girl on the train saw that I was reading  
Timothy Leary’s “Politics of Ecstasy”  
And after de-training in Munich she led me  
to a German hashish speak-easy where we danced.

### **Twenty years of yawning**

That night the girl, her boy friend Phepps, an ex-junky, and I  
Shared their bed and apartment.  
The next morning Phepps and I became traveling companions  
The two of us looked for stage hand jobs  
in the Munich opera houses  
We survived by eating in yoga “premi houses”  
As guests of the “boy god”, Sat guru something?

### **Twenty years of yawning**



**SANCTUARY:** One defendant wasn't accused of violence at the church — Bruce Cline, pictured at left with cigarette. Bruce Beyer, on the other hand, is shown above in a blood-stained shirt with Deputy U.S. Marshal Thomas W. Hassell.





But I need to add one note for my last

“It has to be said”

That while in Munich I did contact Amnesty International  
(German Branch)

Who had adopted Martin Sostre  
as their political prisoner of conscience

And they helped contact

the Russian writer, Sakarov

Who, in turn, wrote

Governor Cary of New York

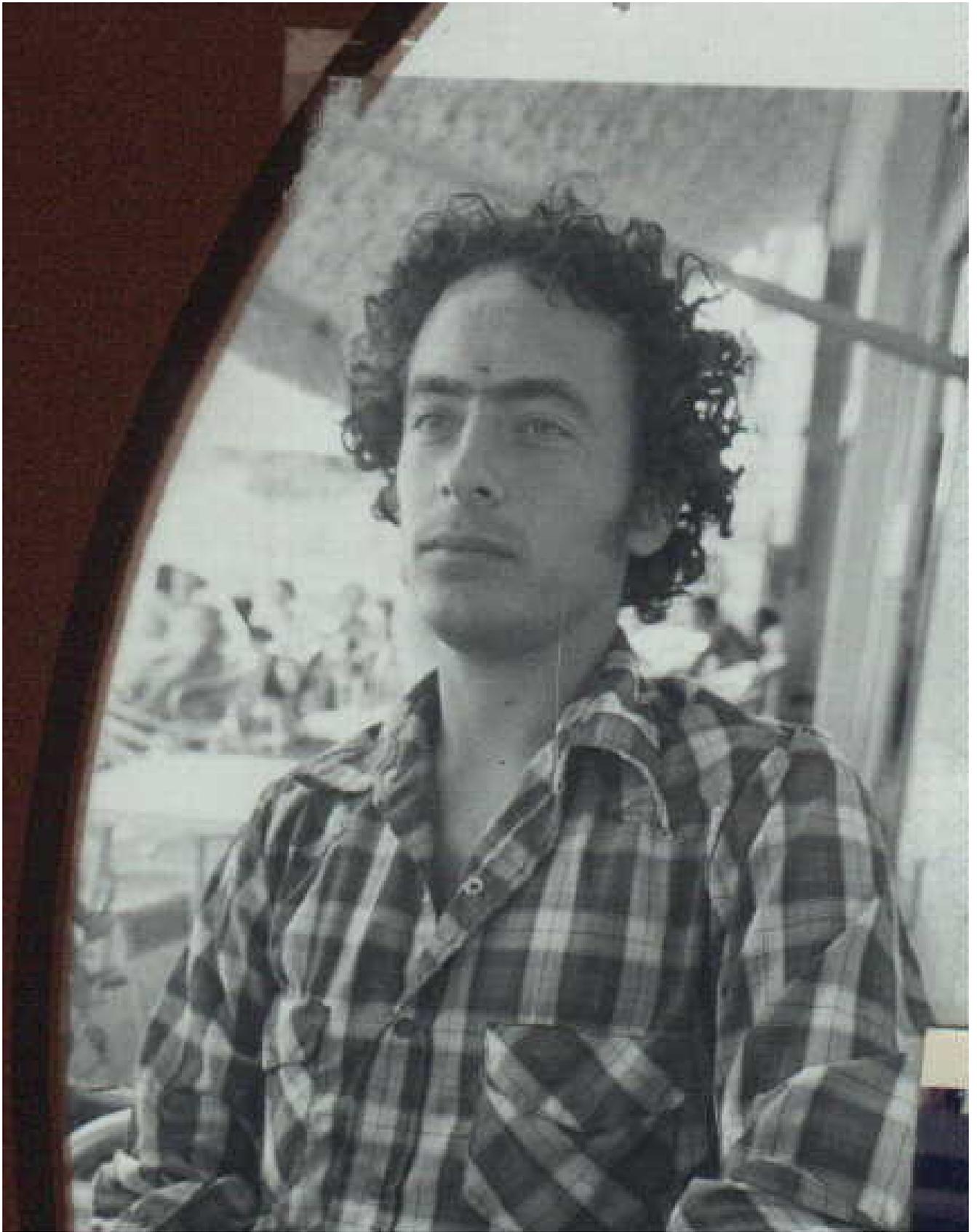
Who eventually pardoned Martin.

**Twenty years of yawning**

But I wasn't into the boy-god worship thing like Phepps was  
So one cold Munich night I fled to the machine-gun infested Munich airport  
And flew via New York City all the way to Tucson  
Arriving with 25 cents in my pocket

### **Twenty years of yawning**









PHOTOS:

- 1 Cover image: Jerry Ross (left) in Spain with unknown Cafe owner (by Diane Bush)
- 2 Jerry with Candy (cocker spaniel)
- 3 The arrest of Bruce Beyer (press photo)
- 4 Jerry Ross painting "The Arrest of Bruce Beyer" c. 1991
- 5 The Buffalo Nine (image from B9 Defense Committee)
- 6 Martin Sostre (press photo)
- 7 Police Invasion of UB Campus
- 8 Jerry Gross (aka Ross), Ray Malek, Carl Kroneberg, Bruce Beyer
- 9 Jerry in confrontation with police and FBI
- 10 Buffalo Nine anti-draft sanctuary at Unitarian Church
- 11 Youth Against War and Fascism picket line
- 12 Newspaper article on Buffalo Nine Reunion
- 13 Jerry with first wife, Pamela Tyree
- 14 Buffalo Nine 20-year reunion: Jerry Ross, Bill Berry, Bruce Beyer, Carl Kroneberg
- 15 Buffalo Nine Poster
- 16 Portrait of Martin Sostre by Jerry Ross
- 17 Internet photo of Iraq prisoners at Abu Ghraib
- 18 Internet photo of Poncho Villa
- 19 The Buffalo Nine
- 20 Buffalo Nine support picket line
- 21 Workers World picket line in Buffalo circa 1960s
- 22 Jerry Ross verismo sketch (Madrid train bombing aftermath)
- 23 "Arrivo a Bologna" painting of Angela by Jerry Ross
- 24 Ashes to Ashes -- press photo of Buffalo "Nne sactuary
- 25 Jerry riding the train in Spain (by Diane Bush)
- 26 Jerry Ross, Ronnie Gross, Ron Ford, Hariett Ford at jazz bar in Buffalo
- 27 Bruce Beyer under arrest
- 28 Jerry Ross in London
- 29 Angela Ross at anti-war rally
- 30 Jerry Gross aka Ross expounding on Marxism
- 31 Jerry Ross in Spain , "Growing Up Absurd" (by Diane Bush)
- 32 Angela Ross
- 33 Angela and Jerry in Italy
- 34 Geraldine Robinson, Martin Sostre co-defendant
- 35 Diane Bush photographer, Jerry's sister
- 36 Jerry Lefcourt and Michael Kennedy, Buffalo Nine defense attorneys