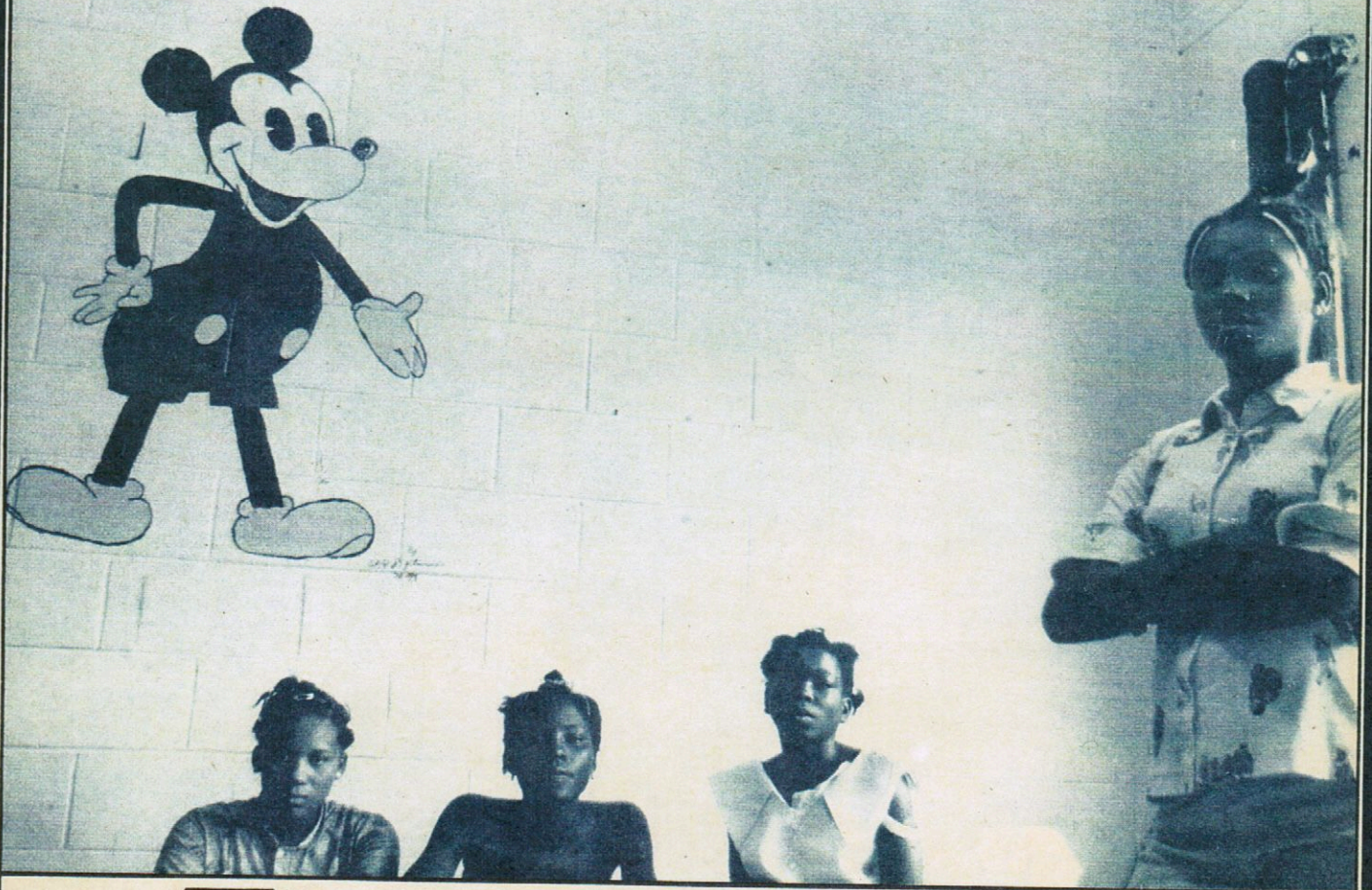


# TROPIC

THE MIAMI HERALD

JANUARY 10, 1982

## Welcome To Camp Krome



*The sad story of Florida's refugee prison,  
by the man you'd least expect to tell it.*

# Inside Krome

*"You will not have heard of many of these things. The press, you see, was not allowed free access to this compound. It was part of my job to keep it that way . . ."*

By **LARRY MAHONEY**

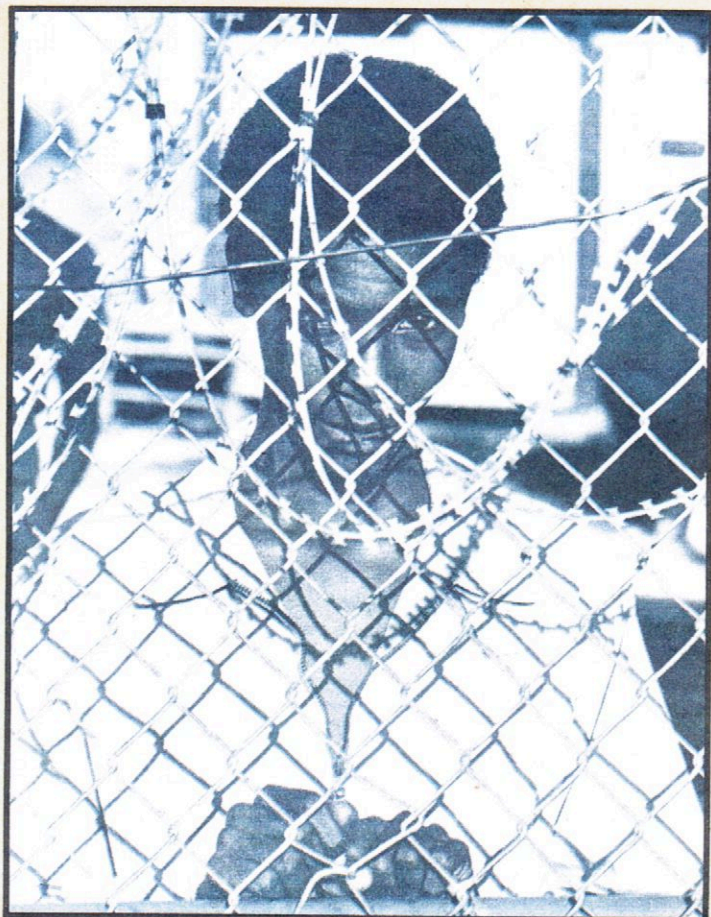
It was an absurdity: an abandoned Nike missile site replete with bunkers and hangars and barracks and military maps, still festooned with spraypainted Mickey Mouses and raunchy GI graffiti; but overrun with refugees, wretched and aimless, living in giant, flapping, blue-and-red striped circus tents.

I first walked into the Krome Avenue detention camp in June 1980; I walked away almost one year later. Not much had changed. True, the people had become darker in color, even more wretched, and spoke a gentler tongue. The Cubans from Mariel had been resettled and were supplanted by Haitians, runaways from the Duvalier regime. But it was still a prison out there on the edge of the Everglades, where older Miami-ans might remember U-Pic tomatoes and okra, sawgrass and dove-hunting. In their place were two compounds of concrete and concertina razor-wire, Krome North for the adults, Krome South for the children.

I worked for the State Department as the government's chief spokesman — more often apologist — for Krome. The job was difficult and not a little shameful. I saw women sleeping under blankets so soiled and threadbare I mistook them for the contents of vacuum-cleaner bags; guards so indifferent to suffering that they snickered at the helplessness; sanitary facilities so squalid they turned your stomach. Above all, there was the crippling boredom. The people just slept and ate, ate and slept.

As a military installation, Krome had

*LARRY MAHONEY is a freelance writer. He has worked as a journalist in Haiti.*



Photography by **MICHAEL CARLEBACH**

been little more than an arms warehouse; in 16 years it had never once loosed a missile. It's still a warehouse. By and large, it has been run by well-meaning and compassionate people. I believe they have done the best they can with limited resources. It is not enough.

In the end, I found I could no longer

cover for the indignities my government countenanced, and quit in frustration. It was mostly the small things that got to me, the dehumanizing day-to-day events. You will not have read of many of these things. The press was not allowed free access to these compounds. It was part of my job to keep it that way.

## Upon a Midnight Clear

On the first Noel at Krome Camp South, a radio station van pulled up to the guardhouse. Out stepped a WMBM Santa Claus. This Kris Kringle was not plump and pink; he was burly and black behind his polyester white beard. The guards, mostly Cubans, did not respond warmly to this Santa of Krome South who had come to distribute gifts to the kids inside. "No one sees the children," they said. There was some name-calling. One guard told Santa: "I'm gonna kick your ass."

No asses were kicked that Christmas Eve. Eventually Santa and his helpers were admitted into the compound. But they weren't allowed to see the kids in their dormitory. The kids had to come out into the chilly parking lot to collect their presents.

Santa, an amiable DJ named Hugh Ferguson, was amazed at two things. First, how well-behaved these scruffy Haitian children were: there was no squabbling over gifts. And second, how belligerent the guards were.

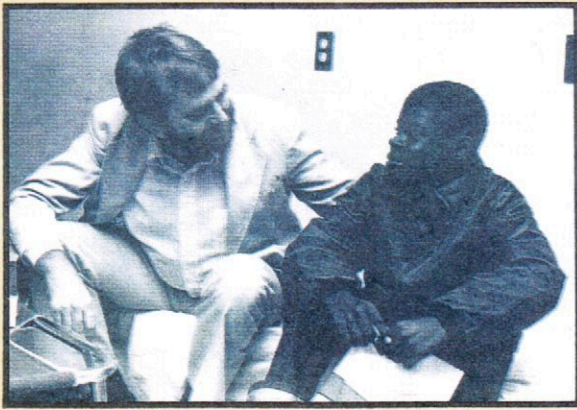
This is what Santa Claus found himself thinking: If they are treating us that way, imagine how they must be treating the Haitians.

## Selling Krome

Did you hear the one about the PR man's hell? It is having to represent tobacco companies or the Union of South Africa. At Krome, though I wasn't defending lung cancer or apartheid, it was not an easy job to explain how such an institution had come to exist in the United States.

My basic strategy was to start by apologizing for Krome, then to point out that if the refugees from such a backward country were turned loose in the streets, they would be victimized; in short, that the Kromes were set up for their own protection. This was the government line, and there was some truth in it. But when the subject of conditions at Krome came up, there wasn't much to say: again, an apology.

American journalists who were allowed at Krome on special tours seemed surprised at such candor, for press offi-



The author, left, and a young refugee.

cers aren't supposed to talk that way. Many of the foreign observers thought I was being unnecessarily harsh on my government.

"Ho ho, you think this is bad," boomed Dr. Gianlorenzo Fiore, a dignitary from Italy. "In Rome, I have 500,000 unregistered Algerians, Libyans and Tunisians lying around lucky to get a meal or sleep under a roof."

Hussein Bullaleh Mohamed, a diplomat from the Somali Democratic Republic, also told me not to knock Krome. "Oh no," he said, "Krome would really be something good for many Africans. In my country, we have one million more refugees than we have citizens." Instead of touring an American missile base crawling with poor beggars from the Caribbean, this gentleman from the Horn of Africa wanted to talk about Cuban helicopter pilots, a subject about which, alas, I was ignorant.

One journalist from Casablanca told me he would skip the Krome tour in favor of the Seaquarium.

Why was there such a procession of foreigners through Krome, which, after all, is hardly a tourist attraction? Foreign journalists were drawn here because it was a national election year, and Miami — with its refugee and racial upheavals — was the logical "hot spot" to gauge public unrest. The foreign officials, I think, were steered here by the Carter Administration to demonstrate that conditions weren't quite as deplorable as the press made them out to be.

My most interesting foreign visitor to Krome was a young official from Port-au-Prince. I was informed by State Department officials in Washington that he was probably a Tonton Macoute, one of the Duvaliers' feared enforcers. Macoutes are political thugs — extortionists and sometimes executioners. I knew this was no Macoute, as did the refugees, who spoke with him freely and without fear. With his suit and tie and interpreter, he looked like an officer on a hu-

manitarian visit to a prisoner-of-war-camp. He politely took names from those refugees who wished news of their arrival brought back; he inquired of conditions. The prisoners flocked around us, asking questions of home. Finally, the official from Haiti got a little angry at the sorry state of the camp, the patronizing attitude of the government. Oozing sarcasm, he wondered aloud why American cigaret companies weren't donating tobacco to the wretched.

Then there was the French magazine writer, Marie De Camps of *Le Matin de Paris*. She and I got to talking as we waited out a thunderstorm over Krome South, the Haitians huddling wet in their billowing tents. "Italy is completely botching its assistance to the earthquake refugees," the Frenchwoman said, raindrops dripping from her nose. She surveyed the camp and scowled.

"A hard, cold rain — you know what it means?" she asked me. This woman thought as she wrote, in metaphors. Yes, I told her. I knew what it meant.

### The Great Escape

Sometimes the best of intentions backfired. You could never let yourself forget that despite all the government's euphemisms, the Haitians were prisoners, not "detainees." They may have been docile, but like all prisoners, they thirsted for freedom.

Siro del Castillo, Krome's first camp commander, discovered this the hard way about a year ago. A man of warmth and decency, he would allow Miami's Haitians access to one of Krome's fences, so they could speak with the prisoners across the barbed wire. One day, Siro says, guards discovered that someone had sliced through the fence with wire cutters.

A hasty head count showed that some 200 Haitians had fled through the slit in the course of one week. It must have been highly organized: they had to have popped through, one at a



The women huddled on the ground, clutching their arms tightly to themselves.

time over a period of days, shielded by crowds of their countrymen.

I wasn't told about the Great Escape until very recently. The press never found out.

Siro discontinued the visiting program after the incident, though one gets the impression he wasn't overly upset by it. As I said, he was a decent man.

### Yes We Have a Nigerian

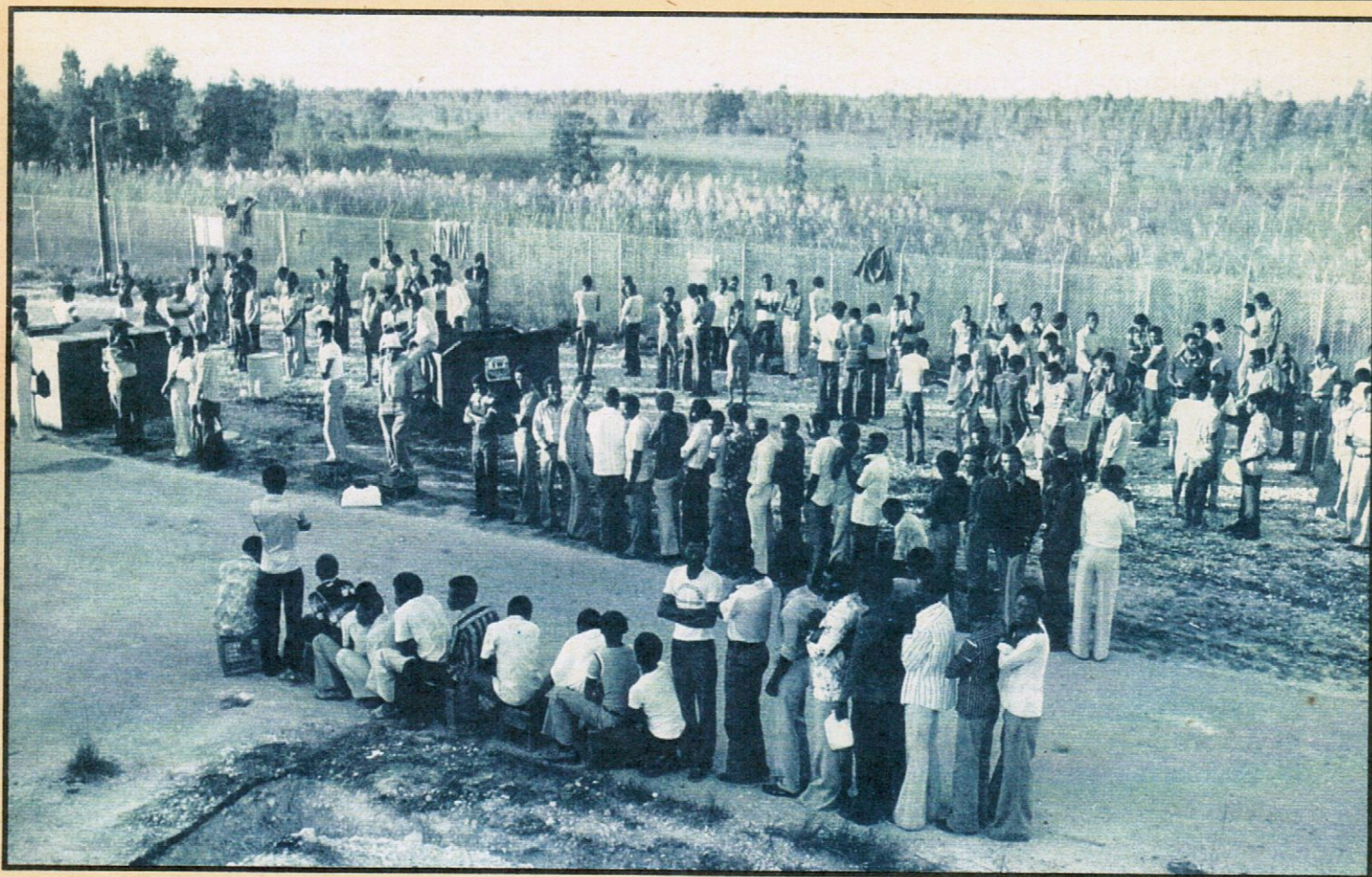
I have made two trips to the concentration camp at Dachau, which is about the same distance

from Munich — 23 miles — that Krome is from Miami. Inside Dachau, which is located in a small town once famed for its landscape painters, there is a large sign that lists the nationalities who suffered there. More than 50 nations were represented, and I will never forget that there were Bolivians, Guatemalans and Persians (we call them Iranians) along with the predominant Poles, Germans and Russians.

Krome, too, has an international flavor.

One day I met a blonde Ger-

man prostitute locked in women's wing with 500 Haitian women and children. Lili, wearing hot pants and a hat, all her worldly belongings wanted to go to the other side of the fence to California," she complained "and I wind up in a concentration camp for Africans." She entered Miami without a case or passport. After several days, an INS officer got some old dresses from his wife for her. She was a good person. I like to think that she made it back to the St. Pauli vice district in Hamburg.



*'The Haitians would line up for meals in tight, body-upon-body lines. They weren't ordered to do so. The discipline seemed to come naturally.'*



*'Her eyes showed no fear, but something worse: resignation.'*

Then there was the bovine woman, gaudily made up, from Poland. Elizabeth Sudomir was an activist with Solidarity who had arrived at Key Biscayne by boat from the Bahamas after fleeing Gdansk. She was bailed out by Polish-American groups in Chicago, the second largest Polish city in the world.

There were many other nationalities at Krome, including dozens of Colombians and Mexicans, people fleeing the war in El Salvador, Argentinians, a Brazilian, a Belizian, a Malaysian, many Jamaicans and a poor wretch identified only as being from "the British West Indies," which no longer exists.

Then there were the Haitian airplane people, middle-class types whose bogus passports got them caught by the INS net at Miami International Airport. Unlike the boat people, these folks had some money, and so they were natural prey for the unscrupulous.

Petty corruption seemed to be all around us.

I know of one government worker who was discharged under

accusations that he stole immigration forms to sell to the Haitians. I have heard of people getting smuggled out of the camp in car trunks, for a price, and of officials selling phone calls at \$20 a shot. (It was impossible, especially during the early days, for a Haitian to get to a telephone.)

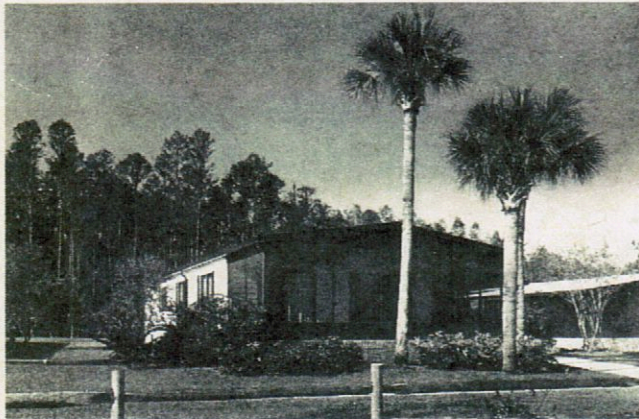
Siro del Castillo likes to tell of the time a Haitian airplane person came to his office to ask a favor. The man had \$6,000 in cash with him, and wanted Siro to hold it for him in a safe before he entered the Krome compound. "We don't have a safe," Siro said. As the man turned to go, Siro stopped him. "I can't let you in. Either you'll be killed or you'll bribe your way out."

He eventually turned the man and his money over to the INS detention center, which had facilities for holding property. Only then was the man released to Krome.

#### Playing for Time

I had been informed that part of my duties at Krome were as a morale officer. Find happy sto-

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ries to put out to the press. Look for ways of cheering up the residents.

This came at a time when Vanessa Redgrave was "Playing for Time" in a television Auschwitz and when, in real life, salsa bands played at Fort McCoy, Wisc., and Fort Chaffee, Ark. for the Mariel Cubans. But despite everything that was coming out of Washington about equal treatment, the Haitian boat people seemed to be getting the short end of everything. When Christmas came I took the liberty, on my own initiative, to send them a Haitian band.

The Odyssey One Brothers drove to Krome in my old VW bus. The Brothers wore Arab multi on Christmas day. They performed and were magnificent; the Haitians enjoyed them so much that I signed them up again for New Year's Day. Again they played, and again they were just fine.

That evening a huge, angry Haitian named Jean Max Ciceron confronted me. He was the leader of the band, and was

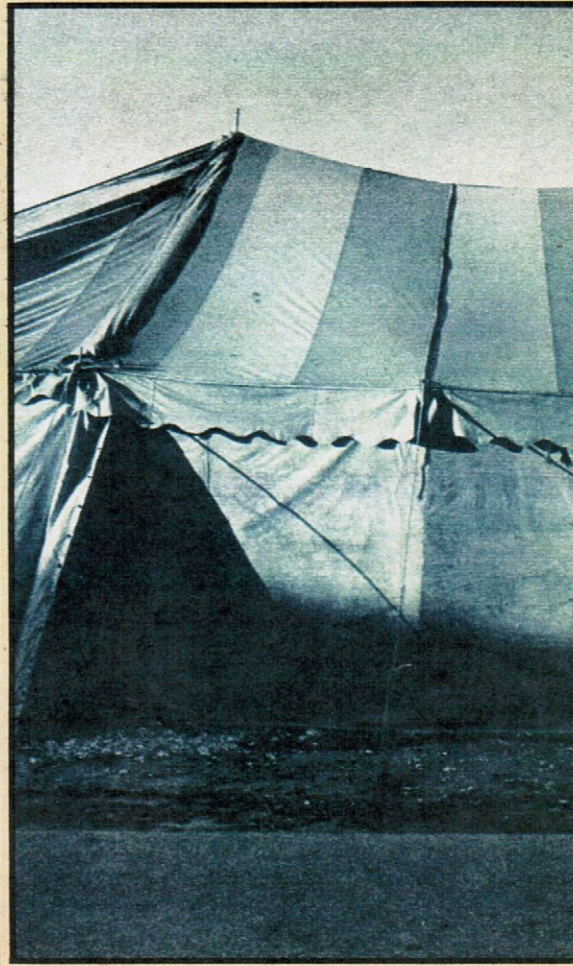
dressed in the Brothers' costume of the day: tapered military camouflage fatigues and red suspenders. He bitterly complained of INS harassment of the band. A cordon of guards had taunted them and kept them from talking to the people, Jean Max told me.

I submitted the bill for the band, \$350 per performance, at least six times. I do not believe it was ever paid. The Reagan Administration, it was clear, would not mollycoddle the Haitian boat people with music.

### Of Tongues and Turtles

At one point, the U.S. Government supplied language instructors so those of us on the Cuban-Haitian Task Force who were not Haitian-Americans could learn the language of the refugees. The Haitian language is a mystery to Americans. This goes back a long way. In 1913, shortly before U.S. Marines and warships occupied Haiti, the U.S. Secretary of State was William Jennings Bryan.

Secretary Bryan called in a banker who had been to Haiti, a nation the United States seemed to regard as a public nuisance on



its doorstep. "We are very much interested in Haiti," Bryan said. "Tell me about the country and who the people are." Then he paused and asked abruptly, "Where is Haiti?"

At the end of a two-hour briefing, Bryan shook his bald head and exclaimed: "Dear me, think of it! Niggers speaking French."

Wrong. Haiti's people speak Creole. French is the official language. The language of diplomats will not get you far with a Haitian peasant, whose Creole is a mixture of African dialects, French, English, Spanish and Arawak.

Unfortunately, I did not learn much Creole as an officer of the United States dealing with the boat people who were flooding Florida shores.

*Cootie*, I learned, means listen. Also, you point your finger at your ear when you say it. *Fig* means banana and *bo* is an expressive way of saying kiss.

The most important thing I learned from my Creole lessons came from a single word: *tortue*, or turtle. "The upper class and most of those in the middle call the kind of Haitians who are reaching Miami in boats 'the

turtles,'" my teacher said. "This is for the area of Haiti from which they come, the buccaneer island of Tortue and the Northwest, where there is famine. If you are a 'turtle' — and millions of Haitians are considered such — then you are not considered a human being."

And we wonder what has brought these people to Miami, to Krome, where life seems a living hell. *Cootie*, Miami.

### Sending the Children Away

The children were going away. They were awakened at 4:30 a.m. in the barracks. They had come as boat people from the tropics to the near tropics and now they were going to upstate New York.

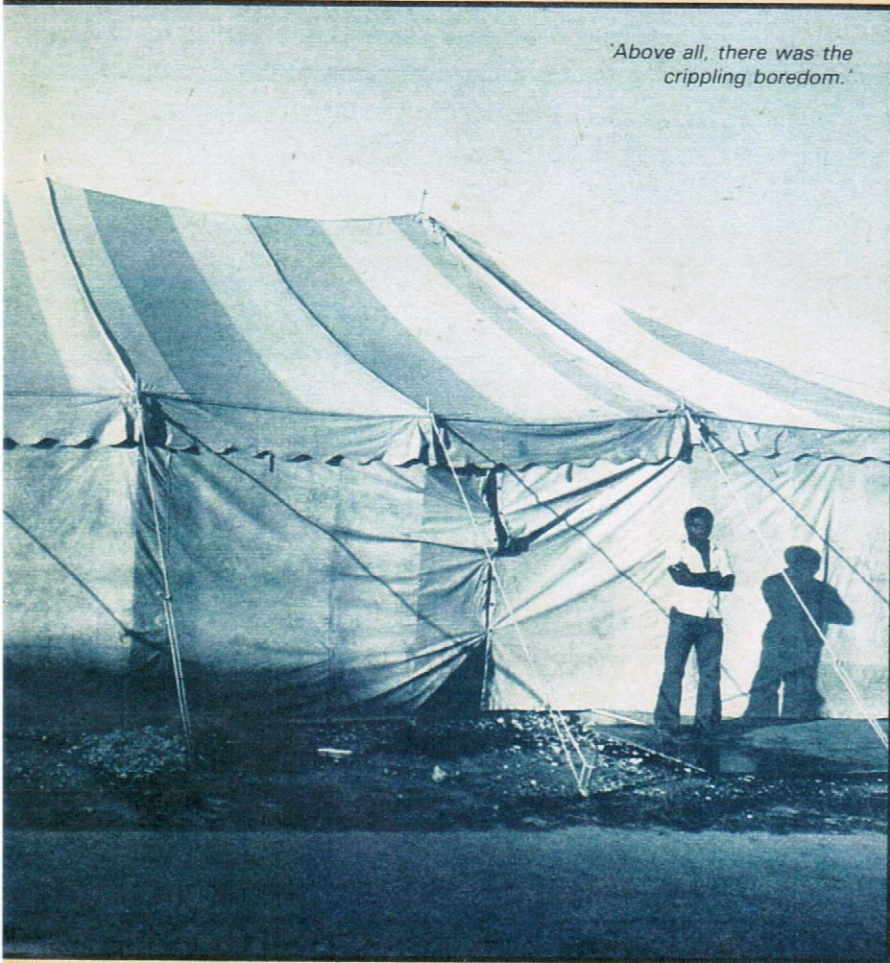
These were Krome South's so-called "unaccompanied minors," kids between 10 and 18 who had arrived without blood relatives. Many didn't consider themselves "unaccompanied," having made the trip with older neighbors whom they'd always looked on as kin and now looked to for protection; no matter. Some had relatives in Florida willing to care for them; no

matter. Some of the older teenagers with beards and work-hardened muscles didn't consider themselves "minors" at all, wanted to stay with the adults; no matter. All got government-issue gloves, quilted jackets, tennis shoes and striped orange ski caps. None had ever flown on an airplane, but they would today.

Accompanying them was Maria Rodriguez, a dark, attractive, uncommonly able Public Health Service officer. She had been a refugee herself (Havana to Key West, 1961). Her mother is still in Cuba and Maria would ask me to look for her on my trips down to Key West to catalogue the incoming tide as Mariel was emptying. But her mother never came.

Maria loved the children. And this morning, in high heels, a business suit and some sort of fur, she summoned 29 Haitian children to the prison buses for the trip to Miami International. They were to fly to New York City, and then take a bus up along the Hudson to Millbrook, a small town in a snowy valley near Poughkeepsie. The federal government had signed a \$1.5 million contract with the Greer-Woodycrest Home there, a chil-

'Above all, there was the crippling boredom.'



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# Krome

children's facility.

As the buses pulled out of Krome South, a group of Haitian girls — friends of the departing children, later to be resettled as well — threw themselves to the concrete with high piercing wails. It was a wrenching scene: Lisa Daily, a social worker from Kentucky, hugged herself so hard to avoid crying that she pinched her arms white.

The children thrilled to the flight. But when they arrived at Woodycrest, they fell silent as they stared at the winter landscape.

"Maria!" they wailed. "You've brought us to a dead place." They had never before seen a live leafless tree.

There was one burly Haitian boy, Pepe, who'd been a real behavior problem until Maria figured him out. She'd appointed him her "bodyguard" and paid him a dollar a week for his services. End of behavior problem.

The morning after turning the children over to the Woodycrest staff, Maria and her small entourage quietly packed their bags to leave; they'd hoped to avoid a scene with the children. But Pepe, ever vigilant, was

awake and ran to their car. "Amway! Ammmway, Maria!" he cried. Amway is Creole for "Help me! This is the end of the world!" Maria, biting her lip, left him crying.

Maria was one of the great people at Krome. She once adopted a dog who'd been kicked lame at the Orange Bowl's Tent City, Miami's one-time canvas flophouse for Marielitos. She named the dog "Escurio," or "Scum," Fidel Castro's term for the people his government banished afloat. The dog died within days.

Maria once sponsored a man and his pregnant wife out of Fort Chaffee long after all remaining Cuban prisoners had been classified as anti-social criminals. She paid for their food and lodging until they began earning enough to repay her. Months later they asked her to be godmother to their daughter.

She once tiptoed around regulations to arrange for surgery on a Haitian to correct a harelip so ghastly that not one of the nine members of his family in Miami would agree to sponsor him; they called him a "monster." The gentle man was on the verge of committing suicide when Maria sent him to New Orleans for the operation.

He's fine now — at least I think so. You lose track of people after they're resettled. No time for followup; new Haitians to process.

The 24 boys and five girls at Woodycrest? They're fine, too, I hear.

## This Has All Happened Before

Let me tell you two stories involving American military men and Haitian foot soldiers.

In my neighborhood, until his recent death, there lived a distinguished old gentleman, Major James C. Foster. As a raw Marine rifleman he had served in the American Occupation Forces in Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1917. Major Foster would relate tales of cannibalism by the Cacos, the Haitian resistance. He showed me a newspaper clipping of a sergeant and two privates eaten after their combat deaths. He remembered Navy pilots in flying boats, trained in Coconut Grove at Dinner Key, and the terror they brought to backcountry hamlets.

Jim Foster was a wonderful marine. Instead of Belleau Wood in France, his war was in Haiti and most Americans never heard of it.

At Krome, the Haitians would line up for meals in tight, body-

upon-body lines. They weren't ordered to do so; the discipline seemed to come naturally. Once at lunch I stood between Colonel Tom Griffin Jr., an Army infantry officer who had served in Vietnam, and Jerry J. Ferrentino, a senior Central Intelligence Agency officer who had served in the Dominican Republic and in Vietnam. The two men surveyed the quiet, orderly lines, contemplating the difficulty of maintaining order among GIs.

"Jerry," said the colonel to the CIA chief, "We ought to trade ours in for some of these."

## The Miscarriage

I am writing this section on the night of the day that 35 Haitian bodies washed ashore in Broward County. Death so dramatic did not exist at Krome. But a subtler death was always a threat.

It was 5 a.m. of a cold Sunday morning in late October, South Florida's first bite of winter, when photographer Michael Carlebach and I were summoned to Krome North. In three days, crude boats from the Bahamas and Haiti and Cuba had deposited more than 1,000 refugees on the shores from Cape Canaveral to Key West. My superiors wanted a public affairs officer on hand to keep things as cool as

possible, and to be Washington's eyes and ears. They wanted a photographer to back up my observations with unarguable evidence. The Department of State suspected the kind of chaos we would find, and no doubt wanted to use photographs to petition for more funds for Krome.

When we arrived, the missile bunkers, the hangars, the coral rock roadways and the swales along the barbed wire were swarming with Haitians. The women huddled on the ground, clutching their arms tightly to themselves and watching the red dawn.

Suddenly, near a row of 24 portable toilets, a weeping woman grabbed me by the arm, and tried to push me inside one of the foul-smelling cubicles. Inside was a bent-double young woman, a bloody mess showing on the floor.

The wailing spread among the women, some throwing themselves against the Nike hangars and bunkers. Guards came running.

They dragged Mauricette Merci, A24704458, from the port-o-john and laid her on a flimsy cot. Her fetus, still attached, hung between her legs. Her eyes showed no fear, but something worse: resignation. The guards pitched the 27-year-old woman into the rear of a

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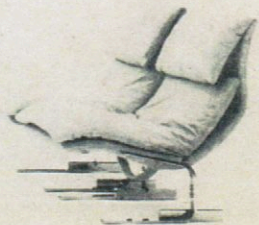
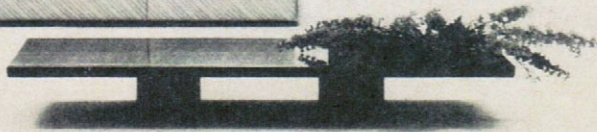
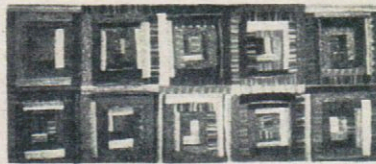
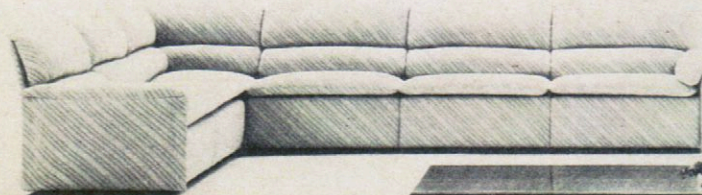
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# Krome

small Japanese car, their ambulance, and shoved aside the howling refugee women who tried to join their friend. The car took Mauricette to the medical trailer.

One of the guards, wiping blood and membrane from his hands, told Michael and me with a sneer: "All of these Haitian women are pregnant. She just gave herself an abortion — just reached in and pulled it out." We offered no response to this preposterous diagnosis. You do not argue with the guards at Krome.

Later, Mauricette Merci was transferred to a hospital for removal of the afterbirth and treatment of a vaginal infection. As so often seemed to happen with the Haitian refugees, something got fouled up. She was diagnosed as having tuberculosis.

From the medical report: "Class A Tuberculosis pulmonary. The disease was discovered Oct. 1980. She is in treatment by Public Health Department."

Seven days later, a correction: "I think this has been a misunderstanding when patient was labeled as TB patient by some employees not related to the medical field ... the translator apparently misinformed Dr ...

----- Mrs. Mauricette (sic) does not have any clinical evidence of TB."

Mistakes in translation occurred all the time; Haitians are more than a little confused by English terms. One refugee before an INS deportation hearing told the judge that he thought political asylum was a place you put crazy people. Father Gerard Jean-Juste, the leading Haitian activist in Miami, confided in me recently that there were wounded children at Krome. I figured he meant sick children, of which there were many.

Mauricette Merci, by the way, was resettled into Little Haiti by Church World Services slightly under a month after her miscarriage.

Sometime later, INS authorities announced that a woman prisoner at Krome South had suffered a minor bullet wound from an unknown source. They surmised it must have come from a stray shot fired by a hunter outside the Krome compound.

Is this really a world in which, as the Germans say, it is every man for himself and God against all?

## The Russians Are Coming

In the spring, a Haitian sailboat landed at Lummus Park on

South Beach. A boat with 47 people aboard was no big deal, but this one was. It carried typhoid. The five sick Haitians were taken to a hospital. The other passengers were segregated.

My friend and fellow Georgian, INS officer Fred Alexander, called to tell us that he had proof the boat came from Cuba. Two cans of Russian pork had been found in the hold.

"Give me one," I begged Fred. "I want to send it to General Haig." Fred refused. He used the godawful stuff as bookends in his camp commander's office, chiefly to hold up a large loose-leaf INS manual. This was THE book for Krome, the one that spelled out how the prisoners were to be treated.

The typhoid people got well. And I admit it — I really had wanted the Russian pork can for my bookshelf.

## Sex and Segregation

Sex at Krome was like sex at a military camp: you could almost sniff it in the wind. This alarmed the INS, which wanted order, order and more order. Thus it moved to segregate the Haitians by sex. This had not been done with the Mariel Cubans. Haitian husbands and wives, not to mention boyfriends and girlfriends, were locked

*'I'd seen inhumane treatment of innocents, frightened children, chilling indifference. But none of that affected me the way I was affected by one old man's loss of dignity. I turned away and wept.'*

away from each other.

From the perspective of us folks at the Cuban-Haitian Task Force, this was an intolerable indignity. Our agency battled unsuccessfully against what seemed to us almost a slave-ship mentality. Fred Alexander of the INS and I aired our disagreement in the newspapers, which quoted us thusly:

CHTF: "Haitian families have been segregated by sex by the INS because its officials decided that Haitians do not have families in the sense of American families."

INS, curtly: "We don't have facilities for families. We would appreciate donations of mob homes or any facilities to host Haitian families."

CHTF, tartly: "Cuban families were allowed to stay together at Krome North. INS analysis of the Haitian family structure is shallow. The family, especially in the extended family sense, is very close and Haitians have a conservative view of marriage."

INS, testily: "The sexes were

## THE AMBASSADORS PARTY TOUCH.

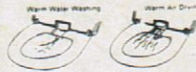
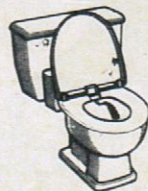
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## SCRABBLE® GRAMS SOLUTION BY JUD

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H <sub>4</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	F <sub>4</sub>	T <sub>1</sub>	Y <sub>4</sub>				RACK 1 = 42
O <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	L <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>			RACK 2 = 6
T <sub>1</sub>	H <sub>4</sub>	Y <sub>4</sub>	M <sub>3</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>				RACK 3 = 17
A <sub>1</sub>	D <sub>2</sub>	H <sub>4</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>		RACK 4 = 57
G <sub>2</sub>	U <sub>1</sub>	P <sub>3</sub>	P <sub>3</sub>	Y <sub>4</sub>				RACK 5 = 9

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1-10-82  
JUD'S TOTAL 131

THOMAS PAINE: LUDICROUS "The sublime and the ridiculous are so nearly related that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime." A-Toots B-Helena C-Offensive D-Measles E-Attitudes F-Shoulders G-Pollard H-Amusements I-Ichthyoid J-Nutritious K-Elevated L-leathery M-Uppercut N-Desolate O-Immiscible P-Chatelaine Q-Rated R-Outbreak S-Umbilicus T-Shish Kebab



segregated because some people decided to marry different people on a nightly basis, and we didn't think it was at all appropriate for this type of facility."

And so forth. One afternoon, I was following Father Gerard Jean-Juste through the green corridors of Krome South. My orders were not to let him talk to the children. Very difficult, but I did it. Later, outside the squat barracks of the Army air artillery, he asked me if I had noticed the endless graffiti on the walls and doors. Of course I had. But I couldn't read Creole.

"It's all sexual," Jean-Juste said wearily.

### One Day's Briefing

Date: Thursday, 22 January, 1981

From: Larry Mahoney, public information officer.

Subject: Daily media report and clippings.

To: Silvia Gonzalez, director, CHTF.

"On page one of this morning's Miami Herald local report, banner headline, 'Haitian Flood Begins Anew.' Below it a full color photograph from Krome North of emaciated Haitian men who came into Key West with 244 on largest Haitian vessel ever to land on the island..."

"In crime watch pages of the suburban tabloid (Neighbors), the arrests of three Mariel Cubans was reported in detail to Herald readers. It seems that the three stole \$1,000 worth of designer jeans.

"Colombians in Miami stage a machinegun firefight. One bullet wounds a 30-year resident who is watching the quiz show 'Family Feud.' Two Colombians are also wounded.

"Fidel and Raul Castro reported in Miami papers to be addressing newly formed militia on dangers posed to Cuba by the new administration."

End of briefing.

### In the End

Krome was and is a horribly sad place, even more so for some of us Americans there than for the Haitians. The Haitians believe the Promised Land is just beyond the gate. We know otherwise.

It has been eight months since I was employed as the Krome spokesman. I've been back as a visitor several times since. Things are a little different now: the government has spent several million dollars improving the place. The sanitary facilities are a little better, buildings have replaced the circus tents.

Oddly, I preferred the tents; the cinder-block walls merely solidify the image of a prison.

Overall, Krome hasn't changed very much.

I managed to get through a year there more or less emotionally intact. I broke down only once, over a trivial matter.

It involved a Haitian refugee with the improbable name of Daniel Morse, A24677816. Dan-

iel was unusual in that he was an old man — unlike the Marielitos, very few of the Haitian refugees were elderly. Daniel always carried a clean paint brush in his belt, and always wore a brown fedora. He even slept in that hat. He spoke English beautifully, a relic of his days as a conga drum player in Palm Beach in the early 1950s. He was a man of quiet dignity.

"I'm a chef, a musician and a painter," he would say with some pride. "All I need is a good place." But Daniel had no friends or relatives in Miami, nowhere to go. He stayed at Krome for months.

One day a French television crew, in Krome on a visit, came over to shoot Daniel eating lunch. My quiet friend just stared down at the plastic tray that held his food, at the carton of Jungle Juice. He was deeply embarrassed.

I had seen inhumane treatment of innocents, frightened children, chilling indifference — and occasional brutality — by

guards. But nothing quite affected me the way I was affected by one proud old man's loss of dignity. I turned away and wept.

It was some time later that my boss, Silvia Gonzales, instructed me to write a speech to be given at a United Nations function. No big deal, I had done dozens of them, describing the immigration situation as our burden and our blessing, gently smoothing over the realities of what Krome was. This time, I couldn't perform. I think I had written one too many of them. I had stayed on too long, in hopes of changing things.

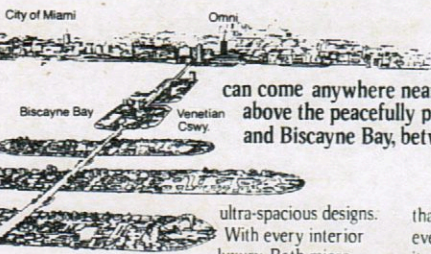
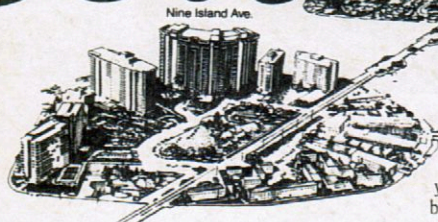
I went to see Silvia, and resigned. My job was probably going to be terminated soon by the government, and I was no longer very effective at it anyway.

Silvia is a compassionate person. She knew I was distraught.

"Larry," she asked, "Are you having marital problems?"

No, I told her. That wasn't it.

# The Best



No residence on Brickell, in Turnberry or Quayside can come anywhere near Nine Island Avenue's splendid scenic location, rising above the peacefully private islands of the Venetian Causeway and Biscayne Bay, between Miami and Miami Beach.

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# Nine Island Avenue

The best.

Permanent financing arranged. Interior public spaces by Bleemer, Levine & Associates. Design Center by Fine Decorators at Nine Island Avenue. Architecture by Isaac Sklar & Associates. This is not a complete statement as to Nine Island Avenue. Complete details are available in condominium documents to be furnished by the developer to a buyer. Prices and specifications subject to change without notice. BROKER PARTICIPATION INVITED.