FILIBUSTERING ABOARD

THE THREE FRIENDS

by Samuel Proctor

An excerpt from:
"Mid America: An Historical Review," Loyola University;
April 1956; Volume 38;
New Series, Volume 27; Number 2, pp 84 - 100

Samuel Proctor is a distinguished professor of history at the University of Florida, Gainesville.

Early in the damp gray dawn of February 28, 1895, the newsboys in the United States shrilly announced that a revolution had broken out in Cuba and readers were apprised of the fact that still another revolt against the decaying authority of royal Spain had begun. Spanish officials hastily assured the world that the incident was unimportant, while Spain's minister in Washington proclaimed the collapse of the movement, announcing that the insurrectionists were mere bandits already put to flight. [1]

Cubans in communities along the Atlantic coast and in Florida interpreted the news differently. Hoarse shouts of joy and jubilant hosannas reverberated through the Cuban districts. There was wild rejoicing among the cigar workers in Tampa's Ybor City. Men and women poured into the streets, joyously singing nationalistic songs, amid cries of "Viva la Cuba" and the firing of pistols and rifles. That evening over seven thousand people held a mass meeting in Tampa, listened to martial speeches and generously contributed money and jewelry when a collection was made. [2]

News that the independence movement had not collapsed but was spreading came with dramatic suddenness. American newspapers filled their front pages with startling headlines and detailed stories of the fighting. William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer vied with each other in detailing the extent of atrocities and the horrors inflicted by the Spanish military upon the down-trodden Cuban peasants. A new chapter in the history of the American people was opening; these events presaged our war with Spain.

The last years of the nineteenth century revealed a new national self-consciousness stirring excitedly in the hearts of the American people. The western frontier had dissolved irretrievably into the past, at the same time that there was developing a mighty industrial economy, supplying vast power and wealth to the country. The nation found that in almost all directions its boundary lines had reached the oceans, but unfortunately, before its enormous land hunger had been satisfied. Politicians, newspaper editors, businessmen and plain citizens approached a new understanding of manifest destiny. That the American flag should wave over all the lands from the icy wastes of the Arctic to the green jungles of Panama and even beyond no longer seemed just a dream.

Lying almost within sight of the Florida Keys and occupying a strategic position among the West Indian islands, Cuba, for over a century, had been an object of peculiar interest and concern to the United States. Jefferson had coveted the island, and John Quincy Adams had predicted that the laws of political gravitation would inevitably draw it into the American Union. [3] Southern politicians before the Civil War looked longingly at Cuba in their desire to increase the number of slave states. Businessmen had steadily increased their investments in the island so that by the time of the insurrection Americans owned over $50,000,000 worth of property there, and commercial transactions totalled more than $100,000,000 annually. [4]

Political unrest at home and the excellent economic opportunities which the United States seemed to offer encouraged large numbers of Cubans to settle in this country during the nineteenth century.
Good sized Cuban communities grew up in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans, Jacksonville, Tampa and Key West. Under skilled political leadership these Cubans organized themselves into juntas, a kind of political club, and many agreed to contribute one-tenth or more of their yearly earnings toward the Cuban cause. In 1868 over one hundred forty juntas were in operation in the Western Hemisphere and in Europe. [5] During the 1890s sixty-one such clubs met regularly in Key West and fifteen in Tampa. [6]

Directed by a remarkable New York Cuban, Jose Julian Marti, the juntas had been forged into a Revolutionary Party in 1891 with headquarters in New York. The purpose of the Party was to evolve a single effective instrument for revolution; its major projects were to whip up American sympathy for the Cuban cause and to find funds and the means of transporting armaments, medical supplies and equipment, food, and patriots to the island. The New York junta operated almost like a foreign embassy. It received patriotic loans, bought ships, planned and began military expeditions to be used against Spain, issued bonds, and carried on official correspondence. [7] It had over a million dollars in its treasury in 1895. [8]

It is always difficult to sell a dream, and so it was with Cuban independence. When hostilities began the Revolutionary government forbade the natives to produce anything of value for Spain, upon penalty of having their crops burned and their property destroyed. [9] Some few sugar planters were exempt from these harsh decrees provided they agreed to pay in advance a tax of twenty to forty cents per sack of their estimated harvest. The junta treasury received nearly a half million dollars from this source. [10] Americans contributed varying sums of money, including Jose A. Huau of Jacksonville who donated $150,000 to the cause. [11] One lady in Paris made an anonymous gift of $120,000, [12] and the Cubans in that city raised another $100,000. [13] But the needs were great and the junta treasury was never able to meet all the demands that were made upon it.

With money it was a relatively simple matter to purchase the necessary military supplies in the United States. To transport such material, however, was a problem fraught with almost insurmountable difficulties and hardship, and, as later events proved, great danger. With Spain and the United States at peace it was impossible to use regular transport facilities. There was no other choice but to engage American ship captains who would be willing to risk filibustering expeditions, either aboard their own vessels or such vessels leased or purchased for that purpose by the junta.

Florida’s proximity to Cuba, her long seacoast, and the ease with which a vessel could slip out from any one of a thousand Florida inlets, bays, and rivers, afforded excellent facilities for filibustering. The Florida Keys - numerous small, wooded islands, sand bars, and rocks, extending finger-like into the Gulf of Mexico - lay about a hundred miles north across the open sea from the islands of Cuba. Their narrow, crooked channels running into innumerable sand bars and treacherous, jagged reefs would make it difficult for revenue cutters to catch the small, swift filibustering vessels carrying contraband.

Between 1895 and 1898 seventy-one filibustering expeditions prepared to use American ports as a base for their operations. Although Spain had available in Cuba sixty-seven ships and an army of some two hundred thousand men she was able to stop only five of these illegal voyages. [14] The American navy, coast guard, and revenue cutter service prevented another thirty-three from safely reaching the island. [15] The Spaniards, nonetheless, were bitterly unappreciative of these efforts, and repeatedly charged, with a considerable measure of truth, that the revolt had been carefully planned in the United States and that it was being kept alive largely with American aid. [16]

It was later revealed that Cuban hostilities had been timed to begin with the arrival of a filibustering expedition from Fernandina. [17] Two steam yachts, AMADIS and LAGONDA, and a small steamship, BARACOA, had been chartered and loaded with a huge quantity of military equipment. A number of patriots, including Marti, were scheduled to go aboard just before the vessels sailed. A Spanish spy in Fernandina, suspicious of loading activities, alerted his embassy who in turn notified the State Department. The suspected
SHERIFF X. B. BROWARD.

Among the officials of Duval county none are more respected or hold any higher position in the estimation of the people than Sheriff X. B. Broward. In the discharge of his duties he is fearless, quick to act in case of an emergency and prompt and efficient in all his business with the courts.

He was born in this county on the 18th of April, 1857. During his earlier years he followed the sea and steam-boating, and has been a sailor before-the-mast, deck hand, fireman, mate and master in numerous vessels.

THE FAMOUS "THREE FRIENDS."

On the 27th of February, 1888, Gov. Perry appointed him sheriff of Duval county to fill the unexpired term of Henry D. Holland. That same year the Democrats of this county nominated Capt. Broward for the position he held, but, owing to the fact that nearly all the white population in this county found it expedient to flee from the epidemic of fever, Sheriff Broward was defeated by the Republicans. By reason of informalities in the bond filed by the unsuccessful candidate he was unable to legally qualify. The office was declared vacant, and Governor Fleming appointed Captain Broward to that position.

In 1890 he was elected sheriff, and was again elected in 1892. In 1895 he was elected a member of the city council of this city, and in 1895 was again elected sheriff, which position he will fill for a term of four years beginning with January 14th, 1897.

THE "THREE FRIENDS."

Few tug boats have attained such world-wide reputation as the "Three Friends" and her daring commander, Captain X. B. Broward. She is one of the trimmest, staunchest little craft that ever crossed the St. John's bar. The "Three Friends" was built in Jacksonville three years ago, and her lines were drawn by Capt. Broward. The owners, who could not decide upon a name, put up the privilege of auction the purchaser paying $100 for the honor after an exciting struggle.

Her experiences as an alleged fire-buster, carrying munitions of war to the insurgent army in Cuba, have been heralded all over the land, and Captain Broward has been before the courts charged with violating neutrality laws, while the leading daily journals have freely spoken of his bravery in running the gauntlet of Spanish man-of-war and landing his cargo in the very teeth of the Spaniards; still the courts have never found a witness who could positively swear that the "Three Friends" or its brave commander had ever seen the Island of Cuba. The fact that this intrepid captain does not know what fear is, and that his rakish little craft can show a clean pair of heels to any government vessel sent out to watch them, has aroused a suspicion in the disturbed minds of the Spaniards who have filled Florida with detectives and caused a portion Uncle Sam's navy to spend a great deal of time in Florida waters. There is one thing certain—Capt. X. B. Broward is a very honest, upright, law-abiding citizen, who has been sheriff of Duval county for a number of terms, and there is no danger of his violating the laws of our country if he knows it, no matter how much his blood may boil at the breathed, barbarous manner in which Spanish soldiers are carrying on the war in that devastated island.

BOTTOM: Jose Marti, national hero of Cuba, as he appeared in 1889. (Courtesy of Dr. Blanca Gonzalez)
filibusters were carefully watched and then on March 1, they were seized by American revenue agents. [18] Marti, who had been hiding in a Jacksonville hotel, was warned of the seizure in time and he returned to New York.

The leaders of the Cuban junta in Florida were Jose Dolores Poyo of Key West, Fernando Fiquerdo of Tampa and Jose A. Huau and his nephew, Alphonso Fritto of Jacksonville. [19] Huau was a cigar manufacturer and operated a drug and cigar store which served as a clearing house of most of the filibustering expeditions. Alphonso Fritto was the joint passenger and freight agent for all railroads running into Jacksonville. [20] He was able, therefore, to secure private railroad cars and even special trains which he used to aid the Cuban cause. On more than one occasion the private railroad car of J. R. Parrott, one of Henry M. Flagler's closest business associates, was used to haul Cuban revolutionists from one Florida port to another.

Of the several ships that were used for filibustering none was so famous as the THREE FRIENDS. The captain of the steamer was the colorful Napoleon Bonaparte Broward who became governor of Florida in 1905 and whose liberalism and progressivism helped to shape the course of twentieth century Florida politics. Napoleon Broward and two partners formed a tugging company in 1895 and drew up plans to build a powerful seagoing tug to be used principally for towing and wrecking along the Florida Keys and to carry freight between Jacksonville, Miami and Nassau. [21] Costing $40,000 and named THREE FRIENDS in honor of her triple ownership, [22] the vessel was dubbed the "fastest tug in the South." [23] Construction began February 2, 1895, just a few weeks before hostilities started in Cuba. It was this revolution which was to give the THREE FRIENDS and her captain a national reputation and a firm place in the hearts and history books of Cubans. And Broward's activities in turn were to provide still another important reason for the growing animosity between the United States and Spain.

Broward was a close personal friend of Jose Huau and during the summer and fall of 1895, while the THREE FRIENDS was under construction Huau approached him about the possibility of becoming a filibuster. [24] The junta was willing to pay Broward $10,000 plus all expenses, including the salary of the crew, to carry a cargo of munitions and other supplies and to transport some of the revolutionary leaders to Cuba. Broward and his associates realized that filibustering was extremely dangerous and without question they had read President Cleveland's proclamation which promised arrest and prosecution for anyone "accepting or exercising commissions for warlike service against Spain, by enlistment or procuring others to enlist for such service, or by augmenting the force of any ship of war engaged in such service in a port of the United States."

[25] However, with all these dangers, Broward also knew that filibustering was a lucrative business. He gave serious consideration to the junta's offers. The THREE FRIENDS, completed late in December, 1895, sailed January 14 on her maiden voyage to Nassau. She carried flour and fertilizer and was supposed to pick up additional cargo at Miami. For some reason the freight shipments at Miami were not ready and the vessel arrived at Nassau with only about half her capacity load. This first voyage was not financially successful. To make matters worse, when the vessel returned to Jacksonville certain expected towing and wrecking con-
tracts did not materialize. [26] Broward and his partners were understandably concerned over their heavy investment in the THREE FRIENDS.

Meanwhile the junta was finding it increasingly difficult to arrange filibuster expeditions without detection. American coast guard cutters had stopped a number of such voyages, and ship captains found themselves and their boats enmeshed in legal entanglements. Although American public opinion backed these efforts to aid the Cuban cause, filibustering risks were very great. Nonetheless, in February, 1896, Broward signed a contract to carry a group of patriots to the island and to tow war supplies loaded on the schooner STEPHEN R. MALLORY. [27] An armed expedition, according to the junta's interpretation of international law, consisted of both arms and men on the same boat. If Broward's boat carried the men, and if the military supplies were on board another vessel, neither, according to this interpretation, could be labelled "armed expeditions," even though one vessel was towing the other. As it later turned out American courts did not go along with this interpretation.

General Enrique Collaze and his staff were hiding out in Tampa. They had to find a way to get into Jacksonville and aboard the THREE FRIENDS without being detected. That was going to be difficult since there were approximately twenty Spanish detectives with orders to prevent such a move from taking place. Meanwhile there were also sixty-five Cubans on board the ARDELL, a small schooner anchored in the Florida Keys, waiting near Hawk Channel to rendezvous with the THREE FRIENDS. [28]

One evening General Collaze and members of his staff went for a drive into the Tampa suburbs. Sometime during the drive, and under cover of darkness, Collaze was able to leave his carriage, while someone disguised to look like the General took his place. Later that night, Collaze's stand-in boarded a vessel bound for Key West. The detectives also came aboard and it was not until the vessel docked two days later that they realized that they had been outwitted. Collaze himself had boarded a train at Plant City and with Alphonse Fritot's cooperation had got off in the railroad yards a few miles outside of Jacksonville.

Driven into town in a closed carriage he was hidden in the attic of the home of Cuban sympathizers.

The STEPHEN R. MALLORY, meanwhile, on February 29, had loaded its military supplies at Cedar Key and in the teeth of a Gulf storm sailed for the Keys. Unfortunately another filibustering vessel carrying other military supplies headed for the same rendezvous was overhauled by the revenue cutter McLANE, on patrol duty in the Gulf, and was forced into Tampa harbor. A cursory inspection revealed a large number of wooden packing cases and boxes marked "groceries," addressed to a well-known Jacksonville wholesale firm. No attempt was made to find out why these "groceries" were on a boat in the Gulf of Mexico and luckily none of the boxes was pried open. [29] Without any additional delay they were shipped by rail to Jacksonville and stored in a dockside warehouse. On the night of March 11th, the THREE FRIENDS tied up near the warehouse at the foot of Newman Street and the "groceries" were brought aboard. These "groceries" included nothing so prosaic as baked beans, sardines, canned beef or ham but, rather, two medium-size rapid-firing field cannons, thirty-five hundred rifles, five hundred machetes, three hundred thousand rounds of Winchester and Remington cartridges, one million priming caps, 500 pounds of dynamite, plus a large quantity of clothing and medicines. [30] There were so many "grocery" cases hauled aboard the THREE FRIENDS that Captain Broward wondered if there would be room to carry his "passenger."

In order to divert suspicion, Broward had told everyone at the Jacksonville port that he had gotten a salvage and towing job at West Palm Beach and that the equipment that he had put aboard was for that purpose. Luck was with Broward that evening. Not only was the BOUTWELL, the only revenue cutter in the area, in drydock for repairs, but it was a dark and stormy night. Still Broward did not take any chances. After he had the goods aboard the THREE FRIENDS he quietly moved down river and by midnight had his "passengers" aboard. Then the engineer ordered full speed ahead, and the THREE FRIENDS sailed across the river bar and into the Atlantic, on her first
These models of a dredge (TOP) and a three-masted schooner (BOTTOM) were hand-carved by Florida Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward. These gifts from the Broward family are displayed in the Historical Commission office, located in the Historical Commission Building.
filibustering adventure. A fisherman near the bar at the time reported that the wash from the ship was so violent that it threw a half dozen small fishing boats up on the bank. When the captain of the revenue cutter later questioned another fisherman he was told: "Some damned boat passed here, throwing my boat up on the platform; and if she kept on at the same rate of speed she will now have reached a place too -- -- hot for you to catch her in."[31]

In the late afternoon of the second day out of Jacksonville the THREE FRIENDS entered Hawk Channel off Cape Florida and sighted the STEPHEN R. MALLORY anchored near Elliot's Key. The ARDELL, out of Jacksonville the THREE FRIENDS and sighted the STEPHEN R. MALLORY entered Hawk Channel off Cape Florida out. Broward knew that the coast guard day and most of the following day. Then on the bank. When the captain of the carrier sixty-five Cubans had not yet hove into sight. Presumably it was en route. On the chance that it was hidden behind a reef, small boats from the THREE FRIENDS and STEPHEN R. MALLORY searched for the ARDELL throughout the day and most of the following day. Then just before sunset the lookout on the THREE FRIENDS spotted the ARDELL approaching from the starboard side.

Captain Broward had planned to load the Cubans aboard his vessel, grapple the STEPHEN R. MALLORY and move toward the Cuban coast that very night. A rising wind and a rough sea, however, interfered with his plans. During the night the weather got worse, and by morning a gale threatened. Meanwhile time was running out. Broward knew that the coast guard had likely sounded a general alarm and that Spanish gunboats and American navy and coast guard cruisers were combing the area. It was probable also that the Cuban lookouts on the island might think that plans had miscarried and for security reasons could have moved back into the interior. To complicate matters even more, Broward was apprised of the fact that the captain of the STEPHEN R. MALLORY was critically ill and was urgently in need of medical aid. Broward instructed the engineer of the vessel to proceed to Indian Key, and there, protected somewhat from the rough weather, he ordered her cargo aboard his own vessel. Cubans and Americans worked side by side all night to complete this perilous job. Just before dawn the last packing case was brought alongside and the STEPHEN R. MALLORY departed for Key West.[32]

The THREE FRIENDS, heavily overloaded, was already five days out of Jacksonville. Broward, without further delay, steamed a course due south, heading past Alligator Reef into the open ocean. At eleven o'clock that morning sighting Double-Headed Shot Key he knew that Cuba was only a few hours away. A heavy fog and rain helped obscure the small tug as it plied its way through the mountainous waves. Broward was fearful, however, that this same cover might enable an American patrol boat to come upon him without warning, and he ordered the Cubans to hide as well as they could between the packing cases.

Unable to find the small schooner near Salt Key which usually escorted filibusters to shore, Broward set his course for the coast of Cuba near Varadero on the Peninsula de Icacos. According to a prearranged agreement, Santos, the Cuban pilot, was to take over at this point and steer the vessel to its landing place. Rain had cut visibility almost to zero. Once the THREE FRIENDS accidentally moved so close into shore that her bow was in the shallow breakers where the lead registered only "twenty-four feet." Luckily for them the vessel was not grounded and before there was any damage the pilot maneuvered her back into deep water.[33]

Broward sent a reconnaissance party, including General Vasques, Charles Silva, and five other Cubans, ashore to locate their position definitely. His orders were not properly understood, and before the scout boat had returned, a half dozen smaller surf boats, life boats and rafts had been loaded with packing cases and ten Cubans each had been put over the side. Most of these were already in the surf close to shore when the lookouts reported that the THREE FRIENDS was anchored only a few hundred yards from a Spanish fort; moreover, there was a small gunboat in the area. The pilot obviously had miscalculated his position and was over two miles from the proper landing place.

Two of the small boats coming into shore were swamped with water while a raft was wrecked on a coral reef. Fearing an attack from the fort, the Cubans already ashore tried to bury the munitions in the soft beach sand. Those still aboard wondered whether they should go ashore, but Broward knew that it would be impos-
sible to land them anywhere else without being detected. He convinced the Cubans that even though they might be outnumbered they had sufficient military equipment to capture the fort. A few of the Cubans jumping overboard swam ashore, but the remainder were ferried to land by the crew members. Just as the crew began rowing back to the THREE FRIENDS searchlights from the Spanish gunboat beamed out over the white beach, silhouetting the whole scene. Immediately Spanish bullets ricocheted along the ground; guns from the fort started firing at the THREE FRIENDS. Exploding shells overturned two of the rafts and one landed close enough to the ship to threaten to capsize it. Whining bullets strafed the Cubans on the beach, as they in turn fired on both the gunboat and the fort. Broward, meanwhile, had noticed the lights from another Spanish gunboat off his port bow.

Determined to get all of his own men back on board, he hoisted up the last two boats, just as the guns from the second Spanish vessel opened fire. The anchor cables were quickly cut and the THREE FRIENDS moved out. The race was on. Every crew member knew the story of Captain Fry and his men on the ill-fated filibuster VIRGINIUS. They recalled how her men had been executed in Santiago, and they knew that a similar fate threatened if they should fall into the hands of Weyler or his forces.[34]

The THREE FRIENDS, traveling in a northeasterly direction, ran parallel to the coast line, holding her course on the inside rim of the bay. The Spanish vessel, firing wildly, moved down upon the filibuster, obviously planning to ram her. Broward knew that if that happened his boat would sink, and what the loss of life would be he dared not predict.

Only a few hundred yards separated the two boats when Broward remembered the huge pile of fat pine-wood knots and the large barrel of greasy bacon rinds on deck. He ordered some of the crew to jam as many of the logs into the wood-burning furnaces as possible, while the others set the bacon rinds afire. Within seconds black clouds of smoke bloomed out around the vessel. Aware of the favorable wind conditions, Broward put his wheel hard a starboard, changed his course sharply, and headed west. The wind blew heavy smoke back into the bay. The Spaniard sailed into the bay, he steamed out and set a course for the open sea. In another moment, the THREE FRIENDS was swallowed up in darkness, rain and bacon smoke. The following morning her crew berthed her safely in Key West harbor.[35]

Detailed accounts of the daring voyage filled newspapers throughout the country. The Spanish supplied most of the information, inadvertently admitting their own
ineptness. When questioned Broward jovially denied knowing anything about any filibustering voyage, asserting that he had been busy in south Florida all the time on a towing and salvage contract. All his crew backed up this story. Many a newspaper editor, tongue in cheek, printed this explanation as factual. [36]

Notwithstanding the Spanish protests and the vigilance of the American Navy and Coast Guard, the THREE FRIENDS made a total of eight successful filibustering trips to Cuba. In an effort to stop such activities President Cleveland, in July, 1896, issued a second and even more determined proclamation, pointing out that this country was neutral and warning that filibusters would be severely dealt with.

In Cuba, General Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau bitterly protested the filibustering voyages and charged again that without American aid, Cuba's insurrection would be easily crushed. He announced that he was offering a reward of twenty-five thousand dollars for the capture of any filibustering vessel. [37] Captain Broward and others like him now had a price on their heads.

The THREE FRIENDS incurred her greatest risk on her last voyage. Because of business reasons Broward could not command his tug, and Captain "Dynamite" Johnny O'Brien was placed in charge. O'Brien had earned his colorful nickname after he had transported some sixty tons of dynamite from New York to Central America. For some reason the cargo had not been packed tightly nor had its wooden cases been tied. Rough weather was experienced throughout the voyage, and the dynamite boxes kept shifting from one part of the hold to the other. To climax the danger, "Dynamite" sailed through a severe electrical storm in the Caribbean without mishap.

Port officials in Jacksonville and the Spanish detectives were constantly suspicious of the THREE FRIENDS' activities. Almost every time her engines were steamed up they suspected preparations for another filibustering voyage. Broward, however, worked out a clever plan to divert suspicion from his steamer. Late on a rainy afternoon, December 13, 1896, a watchman ceremoniously placed a large sign reading "Positively No Admittance" near the gangplank of the COMMODORE, another well-known filibustering vessel. There seemed to be a buzz of activity on board the COMMODORE, as though something were about to happen. Earlier in the day, two freight cars, loaded with wooden cases, which the Spanish spies were certain contained guns, had been moved to the railroad tracks near the COMMODORE'S dock. The fact that a Philadelphia newspaper a few days before had reported the rumor that a new arms shipment was en route to Jacksonville gave credence to the suspicions of the Spanish.

That evening when the regular train from Tampa arrived, seventy-two Cubans got off. They said that they were cigar workers, en route to Thomasville, Georgia, but they made a point of asking the whereabouts of the COMMODORE before dispersing into the bars along the waterfront. Suspicion was now completely diverted from the THREE FRIENDS while the watch on the COMMODORE was redoubled. The THREE FRIENDS, under the command of O'Brien; quite loudly cleared port and sailed up the coast to Fernandina.

Broward was already in Fernandina; in fact, he was playing poker with George L. Baltzell, the collector of the port, when the THREE FRIENDS came into harbor. Baltzell often had boasted that no filibustering expedition had sailed from Fernandina since he was appointed collector; he was determined to ferret out any plans for such illegal operations. Knowing about the activities that were going on at that very moment, Broward undoubtedly had to keep a very good "poker face." [39]

In Jacksonville, meanwhile, the Cuban "cigar workers" had quietly assembled at a prearranged spot, purportedly to board the train for Georgia. The car in which they were riding, however, was switched under Fritot's orders to Yulee, Florida, just north of Jacksonville. There on a siding were two freight cars loaded with a thousand rifles, a Hotchkiss gun, five hundred thousand cartridges, and a large store of dynamite and small arms. [40]

After the telegraph wires to Jacksonville were cut, the two cars were hitched to the special train that moved on to Fernandina. It was parked on a trestle to which the THREE FRIENDS was moored and, without further delay the cargo of "condensed milk," "codfish," "breakfast bacon," and "prime lard," was transferred to the tug.
Ralph D. Paine, the newspaper correspondent who was covering the Cuban revolt for the NEW YORK AMERICAN came aboard with the other "passengers." The THREE FRIENDS promptly put out to sea. Paine, at the time, was carrying the gem encrusted, two thousand dollar sword that William Randolph Hearst was sending to General Maximo Gomez on behalf of the American people.

The Jacksonville port officials began to wonder if they had been hoodwinked when morning revealed that the COMMODORE had not moved. A quick check on the whereabouts of the THREE FRIENDS confirmed their suspicions that another filibustering voyage had started. The news was telegraphed to Washington, after the wires had been repaired, and orders were transmitted to the NEWARK, RALEIGH, McLANE, WINONA, and FORWARD and all other cruisers and patrol boats in southern waters to be on the lookout for the THREE FRIENDS.

The filibustering steamer experienced rough weather en route to Cuba. A thick, gray fog blanketed the sea, which was fortunate for the adventurers since it helped hide them from the NEWARK and RALEIGH which they had sighted near the Keys. Two Coast Guard patrol boats were eluded just east of Key West. On the morning of December 19th, the THREE FRIENDS was some fifteen miles off the coast of Cienfuegos, Cuba, where it lay offshore until early evening. When it was dark enough Captain O'Brien maneuvered the tug closer to the island so that he could detect the signal that he was watching for. When a light on shore winked off and on twice, O'Brien maneuvered closer to the beach where the supplies were to be unloaded. The fog had lifted somewhat, which increased the dangers of detection, but since the rain was falling O'Brien counted on that to help muffle the sounds of unloading. Just then a Spanish patrol boat was sighted, showing no lights, about two miles from shore. O'Brien promptly reversed his course and headed for open water. The patrol boat gained considerably on the THREE FRIENDS, until only a mile of water separated the two vessels. Then the Spaniards began firing one pound shells. The first shots fell short but the Spaniards' aim threatened to improve momentarily. At the same time two other Spanish boats were sighted, east and west, moving into position to head off the little tug.

There was a twelve pound Hotchkiss gun on the bow of the THREE FRIENDS and O'Brien ordered it loaded and fired. In order to bring the gun to bear upon the Spanish gunboat, the THREE FRIENDS had to swing around three or four points, exposing her broadside and thus giving the Spaniards a better target. The first shot fizzled, the next landed in the water, but the third shot hit the Spanish boat with a loud explosion. A direct hit! The pilot house was torn away and the boat's steering gear was badly damaged. In the excitement an old army sergeant aboard rammed the mouthpiece of a bugle into the muzzle of his Springfield and blew "Boots and Saddles" through the breech. This bugle call probably startled...
the Spanish on the damaged gunboat almost as much as the shells from the Hotchkiss. The disabled vessel sent up flares, and the other two Spanish vessels came to her aid, which gave the filibuster her chance to make a dash for the safety of the Florida reefs.[45]

This adventure caused a sensation in the newspapers. A point was made of the exchange of shells between the two vessels, in view of which this incident has sometimes been called "Cuba's first naval battle."[46] From a filibustering point of view, however, it was a failure since the munitions and Cubans were still aboard the THREE FRIENDS. With five United States cutters and the Spanish fleet patrolling the waters it would be impossible to return immediately to Cuba and it was extremely hazardous to keep such a cargo aboard.

"Dynamite" O'Brien decided to land his cargo without further delay on a deserted reef, appropriately called No Name Key. The THREE FRIENDS then went on to Key West, traveling by a circuitous route, returned to Jacksonville within a few days, where he took command of the DAUNTLESS, another filibustering tug owned by the Cuban junta.[47] He sailed it out of the St. Johns River, announcing that he was going south to Biscayne Bay on a salvage contract. Since the DAUNTLESS carried no cargo, suspicions were not aroused. O'Brien proceeded directly to No Name Key to take aboard the Cubans and the munitions.

Loading began New Year's morning, but was suddenly interrupted by the approach of a vessel that closely resembled an American torpedo boat. The small boats that had been used to carry the cargo to the DAUNTLESS quickly put back to shore. The Cubans hid in the underbrush as best they could. As it turned out this was no government vessel, but a small dispatch boat, the VAMOOSE, owned by William Randolph Hearst. Aboard was Ralph Paine, still carrying the sword, and a Cuban named Carbo. Loading resumed late that afternoon, and by the following morning the DAUNTLESS was en route to Cuba. On the afternoon of January 3, O'Brien steamed his vessel into Corrientes Bay, at the extreme west end of Cuba. [48] Then the excitement started all over again.

According to O'Brien's own description, the unloading was

more like a Fourth of July celebration than the secretive landing of a filibustering expedition. As we came to an anchor, I intended to give one short blast of the whistle to summon some of Maceo's troops, who we thought were waiting for us near the cape; but something went wrong with the siren, and it boomed its loudest for a full five minutes before we could shut it off. The DAUNTLESS had a siren that would have done credit to an ocean liner, and if there were any Spanish troops or a gunboat within ten miles of us they ought to have heard it. Our nerves had hardly recovered from this shock when a careless Cuban dropped a box of dynamite on a coral reef and it exploded with a roar that started the echoes to going again. Fortunately, the man with the slippery fingers was far enough away from the rest of the party so that no one else was killed.[49]

Filibustering vessels like the THREE FRIENDS and the DAUNTLESS were constantly in trouble with the United States government. There were frequent attempts to libel and confiscate the vessels by proving that their owners and captains had violated American law. It was difficult to secure a conviction, however, because witnesses were reluctant to testify. For instance in September, 1896, the THREE FRIENDS was libeled in the United States Court, Southern District of Florida. At the hearing crew members were asked if the boat had ever been to sea. To a man they testified that it had not "while they were awake, and they could not account for the boat's actions while they slept." When one sailor was asked why he thought the THREE FRIENDS needed such a large crew, he suggested that a good-sized crew "was needed to match the resonant strength of the ship's horn."

At another hearing a crew member was asked if any passengers had been taken aboard the THREE FRIENDS. He said that he did not know, but that he "might have been asleep." He did not know who had employed him, that he "just went aboard when he heard the steamer was going to
Miami to raise a wreck," and that the three friends sailed before he could get off. He further testified that he did not see any wreck, and did not know of any effort to raise a wreck, although he could have been asleep. Furthermore, he did not know of any passengers coming aboard at Miami, but he might have been sleeping, and the same was true if passengers came aboard anywhere else. He admitted that he liked to sleep, but slumber seemed a predilection of all the crew members, including the captain.[50]

The highly colorful career of the three friends as a filibustering steamer ended in January, 1897. The surveillance of the United States navy and coast guard, and the watchful eye of the port officials prevented her from making any further voyages. Captain Broward received a great deal of publicity from his filibustering, nor did he fail to capitalize on this fame (or notoriety) during his successful campaign for the governorship of Florida in 1904.[51]

During the Spanish-American War the three friends was used as a dispatch boat by the NEW YORK HERALD and the Associated Press. Ralph Paine, Stephen Crane, Edward MacCready, Sylvester Scovil, Harold Brown, and other noted newspaper correspondents sailed aboard the steamer as they covered the fighting. Long after the Spanish War, until she was destroyed in a hurricane during the latter part of the 1940's, the three friends was actively engaged in towing out of the port of Jacksonville and in salvaging wrecks along the Florida coast.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[12] Ibid., 282. The donor's name was later revealed as Martin Abreu.
[22] Napoleon B. Broward, "Filibustering in Florida," THE FLORIDA LIFE (November, 1897).
[23] FLORIDA TIMES-UNION, February 3, 1895.
[27] AUTOBIOGRAPHY, 28.
[28] Ibid., 30. A slightly different account of this incident was reported by the DAILY FLORIDA CITIZEN (Jacksonville), March 18, 1896.
[29] Ibid., 29-30.
[32] Ibid., 33-35.
[33] Ibid., 36.
[34] Rickenback, "History of Filibustering," 11-12; Chadwick, UNITED STATES AND SPAIN, 316; John H. Latane, "Intervention of the United States in Cuba," THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, LXVII (March, 1898), 355.
[37] Proctor, BROWARD, 122.
[38] Smith, A CAPTAIN UNAFRAID, 47-56.
[40] Smith, A CAPTAIN UNAFRAID, 141-143.
[41] Ralph D. Paine, ROADS OF ADVENTURE, Boston, 1925, 78; FLORIDA TIMES-UNION, December 14, 1896.
[42] Paine, ROADS OF ADVENTURE, 63.
[46] Ibid., 188-189.
[47] Smith, A CAPTAIN UNAFRAID, 152.
[48] Ibid., 144.
[50] FLORIDA TIMES-UNION, January 1, 1897.
[53] Smith, A CAPTAIN UNAFRAID, 152.
[54] Ibid., 152.
[55] Ibid., 152.
[56] Ibid., 152.
[57] Ibid., 152.
[58] Ibid., 152.