

Cuba

The REALITY TOUR

I CAME TO CUBA ALMOST WITHOUT PRECONCEPTIONS. FOR MOST AMERICANS, IT IS THE BLACK HOLE OF THE CARIBBEAN. HAVANA IS A DELIRIOUSLY BEAUTIFUL, VITAL, SAD PLACE. IT IS SLOWLY FALLING INTO RUIN IN THE HOT TROPICAL SUN.



MCDONALD'S AND KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN ARE A GOOD IDEA. BUT THEY BRING BAD ARCHITECTURE WITH THEM. THEY ARE THE POINT OF THE SWORD. THEIR POSSIBLE ARRIVAL IS ONE OF MY GREATEST FEARS.

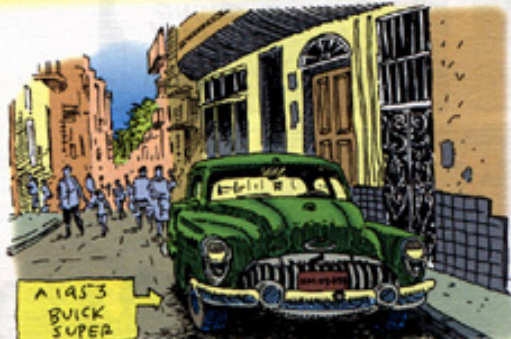
CUBAN ARCHITECT MIGUEL COYULA AND HIS GROUP FOR THE INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT OF HAVANA HAVE BUILT A ONE-TO-ONE-THOUSAND SCALE MODEL OF THE ENTIRE CITY.

DAVID IS A ROQUERO ("ROCKER"). HIS BAND IS CALLED COSA NOSTRA. THEY'RE UNABLE TO PERFORM THESE DAYS BECAUSE OF THE POWER SHORTAGES.

PEOPLE GET KIND OF DISTURBED SOMETIMES WHEN WE'RE HAVING A CONCERT AND WE RELEASE ALL THIS ANGER AND HATRED WE FEEL.



SIDEWALK ENTREPRENEUR REFILLING USED BIC LIGHTERS IN OLD HAVANA. NOT NECESSARILY LEGAL, BUT ALLOWED.



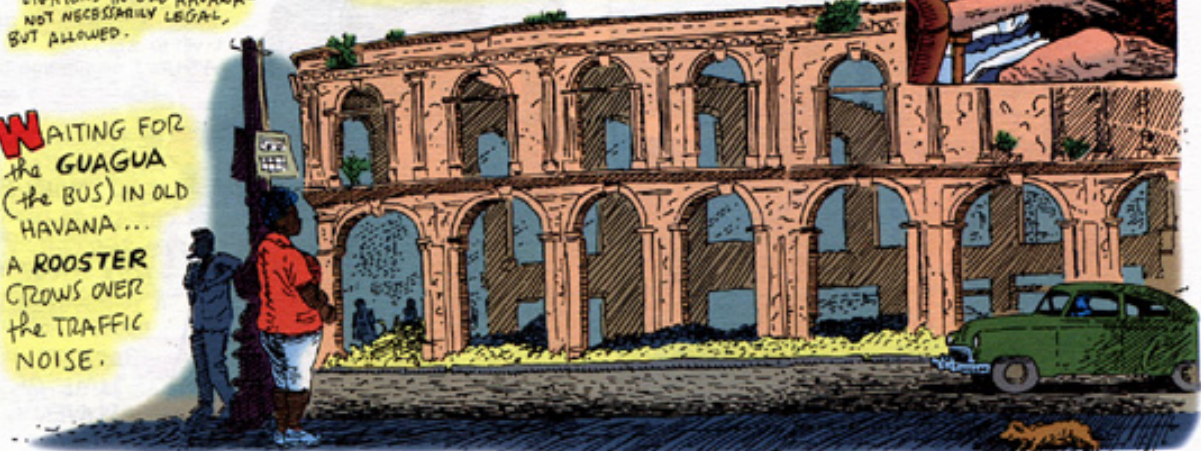
A 1953 BUICK SUPER

AMERICAN CARS FROM THE FIFTIES ABOUND IN HAVANA. THEY'RE USUALLY KEPT IN GOOD SHAPE, THOUGH QUITE A FEW APPEAR TO BE COVETED IN COATS OF HOUSE PAINT.

THE ONLY MUSIC THE GOVERNMENT CAN'T MANIPULATE IS ROCK AND ROLL. OUR LYRICS ADDRESS THE FRUSTRATION AND "STUCK-NESS" WE FEEL. A LOT OF CUBANS ARE NOT READY TO HEAR SUCH DECEDENCE!



WAITING FOR THE GUAGUA (THE BUS) IN OLD HAVANA... A ROOSTER CROWS OVER THE TRAFFIC NOISE.



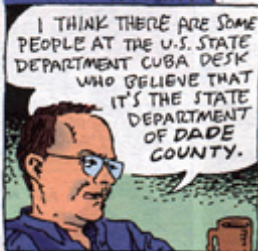
JUAN ANTONIO BLANCO

IS THE DIRECTOR OF THE FÉLIX VARELA CENTER IN HAVANA. IT'S A THINK TANK CONCERNED WITH TRANSITION AND REFORM.



WE BELIEVE THE MOST IMPORTANT REVOLUTION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY IS AN ETHICAL REVOLUTION.

IN REDESIGNING SOCIETY, FORGET ABOUT THE "ISMS" AT THE END. REDESIGNING SOCIETY REQUIRES A CERTAIN KIND OF AUDACITY. WE PREPARE ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PARTY.



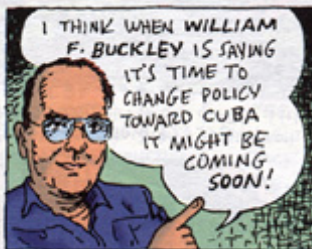
I THINK THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE AT THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT CUBA DESK WHO BELIEVE THAT IT'S THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF DADE COUNTY.



IT'S NOT TRUE THAT CLINTON HAS BEEN MORE FLEXIBLE IN GRANTING VISAS FOR HUMANITARIAN AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES. IT HAS BEEN EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE.



HE MUST GET A LIBRA. LIBRAS DO NOT MAKE GOOD PRESIDENTS.



I THINK WHEN WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY IS SAYING IT'S TIME TO CHANGE POLICY TOWARD CUBA IT MIGHT BE COMING SOON!

IN THE PARK OF LAMENTATIONS, BEHIND THE U.S. INTEREST SECTION, HUNDREDS OF HOPEFUL IMMIGRANTS GATHER EACH DAY TO TRY AND ADVANCE THEIR NAMES ON THE LISTS. THEY TALK POLITICS AND TRADE RUMORS WHILE THEY WAIT.

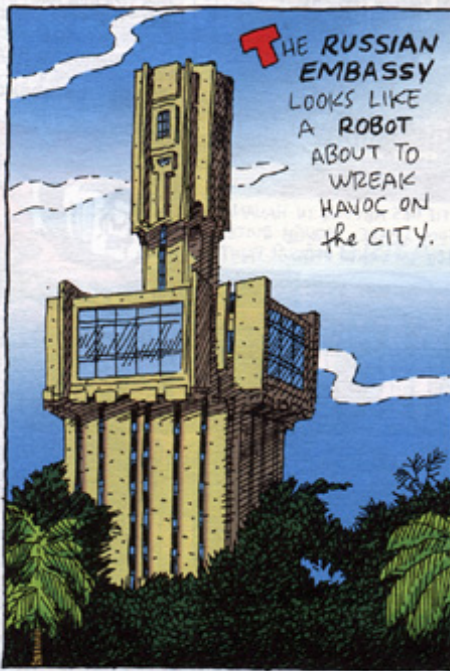


ERNESTO GARCIA SAYS HIS WIFE IS ON THE SECOND LIST AFTER THE FIRST SIX THOUSAND.

WE ALL HOPE FIDEL WILL CHANGE. I THINK HE'S ABLE TO CHANGE. WE HOPE FOR A TOTAL CHANGE OF POLITICS.



I WANT TO SEE SUPERMARKETS, MCDONALD'S, EVERYTHING! I WANT TO BE ABLE TO GO PLACES AND HAVE FUN! I WANT TO BE ABLE TO EAT!



THE RUSSIAN EMBASSY LOOKS LIKE A ROBOT ABOUT TO WREAK HAVOC ON THE CITY.



LEOPOLDINA SANDRINO, 91, LIVES IN HAVANA'S ATARES NEIGHBORHOOD.

SHE PRACTICES THE AFRO-CUBAN RELIGION YORUBA. SHE SINGLE-HANDEDLY RESCUED THE BOX RHUMBA, A YORUBAN RITUAL DANCE DATING BACK TO THE TIME OF SLAVERY.



CUBISM! ONLY 90 MILES FROM U.S. SHORES!



JOSÉ FUSTER SAYS HE'S THE PICASSO OF THE CARIBBEAN, ELABORATING. "IN MY VERSION OF THE SEÑORITAS D'AVIGNON, I USED THE PROSTITUTES OF LITTLE HAVANA."

A AMERICAN ACTIVIST KATHERINE MURPHY TELLS A CURRENT FOOD SHORTAGE JOKE.



A BUNCH OF CUBANS SPOT A STEAK AND AN EGG IN THE ROAD AS THEY GET CLOSER. THE EGG STARTS TO PANIC. "WE BETTER RUN, STEAK!" HE SAYS. THE STEAK LOOKS AT THE EGG AND SAYS, "WHAT DO YOU MEAN, 'WE'? YOU RUN, NO ONE KNOWS WHAT I LOOK LIKE ANYMORE!"

EVELIO ARANGO
IS THE DIRECTOR OF THE HUMOR MUSEUM IN SAN ANTONIO DE LOS BAÑOS.



A MAJORITY OF THE HUMORISTS OF CUBA COME FROM THIS TOWN.

WHY THIS TOWN?

SAN ANTONIO DE LOS BAÑOS IS THE CENTER WHERE HUMORISTS IN CUBA GROW UP!



SO THIS IS JUST A FUNNY TOWN? A TOWN THAT PRODUCES CARTOONISTS?

YES, IN EVERY BLOCK, YOU CAN FIND AN ARTIST!




IT'S JUST AN "ACCIDENT OF NATURE"?

IT'S JUST THE HUMAN RICHNESS THAT THE PEOPLE OF THIS TOWN HAVE DEVELOPED!



MOST PEOPLE HERE ARE TOBACCO WORKERS. AS THEY ROLL CIGARS, SOMEONE WILL OFTEN READ LITERATURE TO THEM. THEY ARE INTELLECTUALLY AND CULTURALLY DEVELOPED!



MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE WE HAVE THIS RIVER THAT RUNS THROUGH TOWN...

I KNEW IT-- IT'S THE WATER!




GLADYS GONZALES LIVES IN HAVANA AND MAKES LEAF COLLAGES TO SELL AT "THE BIG FAIR ON SATURDAYS".



I BOIL THE LEAVES TO GIVE THEM A SPECIFIC COLOR. I CHARGE ONE, THREE, FIVE, TEN DOLLARS EACH. FOR BEETHOVEN, YOU'D HAVE TO GIVE ME YOUR CAPITOL AT WASHINGTON!

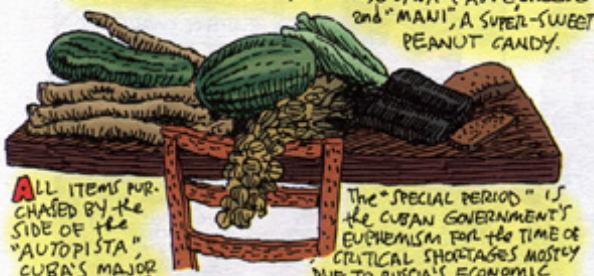
INTREPID GUIDE AND TRANSLATOR CATHERINE MURPHY, AT THE WHEEL ON OUR TOUR OF THE CUBAN COUNTRYSIDE...



LET'S PICK UP FORTY OR FIFTY HITCHHIKERS!!*

* AND WE DID.


"SPECIAL PERIOD" STILL LIFE
YUCCA, SQUASH, CORN, GARLIC, GUAVA PASTE, CHEESE and "MANI", A SUPER-SWEET PEANUT CANDY.



ALL ITEMS ARE CHASED BY THE SIDE OF THE "AUTOPISTA", CUBA'S MAJOR EAST-WEST HIGHWAY (NOT TOO CROWDED THESE DAYS...)

THE "SPECIAL PERIOD" IS THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT'S EUPHEMISM FOR THE TIME OF CRITICAL SHORTAGES MOSTLY DUE TO RUSSIA'S ECONOMIC WITHDRAWAL. WITH THE RE-OPENING OF HAVANA'S FARMER'S MARKET, FOOD IS SOMEWHAT EASIER TO COME BY.

A "HOMAGE" TO THE BICYCLE IN CARDENAS, NEAR VARADERO. THERE ARE OVER 900,000 BIKES IN HAVANA ALONE.



"LA CASA DE AL"

FORMER HOME OF GANGSTER AL CAPONE, NOW A TOURIST RESTAURANT IN VARADERO. IT SITS OPPOSITE A WALLED COMPOUND ONCE OWNED BY DICTATOR FULGENCIO BATISTA.



BIG AL RAN TUM FROM THIS BEACHFRONT LOCATION IN THE 1920'S.

RABBI JOSEPH A. EISENBACH IS IN HAVANA TO DISTRIBUTE KOSHER FOOD TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HERE.



NO, UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE NO JEWISH DELIS IN HAVANA.

HE LIVES IN WEST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT. HE HOPES TO MEET FIDEL CASTRO NEXT WEEK & PRESENT HIM WITH A MENORAH.

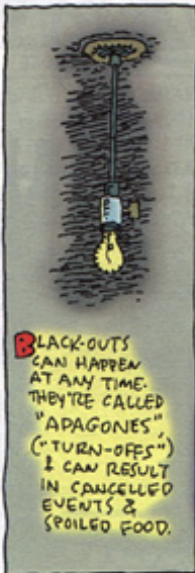
TRADITIONAL YORUBAN DRESS (THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE EXTREMELY TOLERANT OF RELIGION.)



THESE WOMEN ARE WEARING CERTAIN COLORS PRESCRIBED BY A YORUBAN "GOD-FATHER".

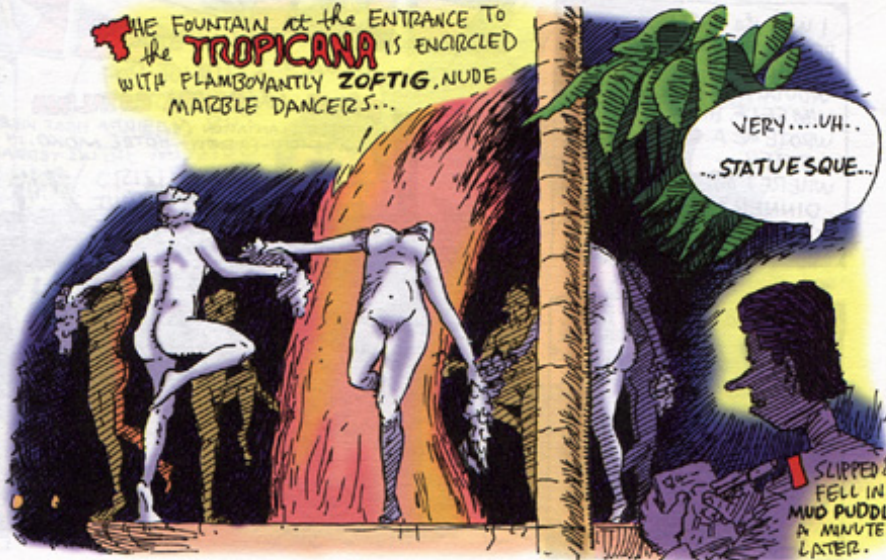


NOT ALL FIFTIES CARS IN HAVANA ARE IN WORKING CONDITION. THIS HEAR WAS A 1959 PONTIAC BONNEVILLE.



BLACK-OUTS CAN HAPPEN AT ANY TIME. THEY'RE CALLED "ADAGONES" ("TURN-OFFS") & CAN RESULT IN CANCELLED EVENTS & SPOILED FOOD.

THE FOUNTAIN AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE TROPICANA IS ENCRICLED WITH FLAMBOYANTLY ZOFTIG, NUDE MARBLE DANCERS...



VERY...UH...
...STATUESQUE...

SLIPPED & FELL IN A MUD PUDDLE A MINUTE LATER.

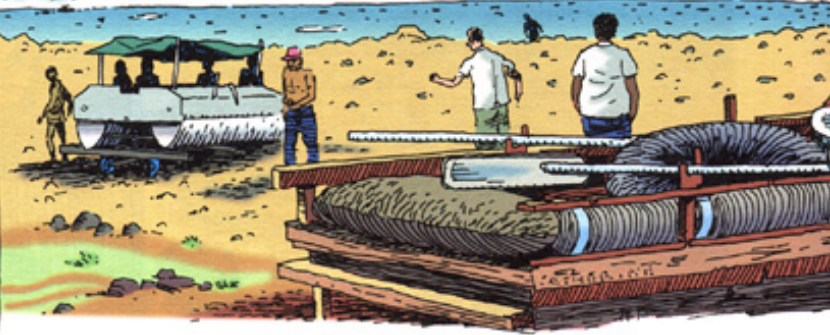
BALSEROS ("RAFTERS")
ON THE BEACH AT **GOJIMAR**, JUST EAST OF HAVANA. I WATCH AS THE LAST ONES LEAVE...

ALBERTO MARTINEZ SAYS HIS BOAT COST \$95 TO MAKE (SEVERAL YEARS' SALARY). WE WATCH A RAFT WITH FIVE PEOPLE ON BOARD DRIFT TOWARD **FLORIDA**. "IF THE U.S. COAST GUARD WOULD COME CLOSER," HE ADDS, "WE WOULDN'T LOSE SO MANY LIVES."

GREGORIO FUENTES

WAS THE CAPTAIN OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S FISHING BOAT, THE **PILAR**.

I FIRST MET HEMINGWAY IN THE DRY TORTUGAS IN 1928. HE WAS OUT OF GASOLINE. I HELPED HIM AND HE SAID, "SEE YOU IN CUBA!"

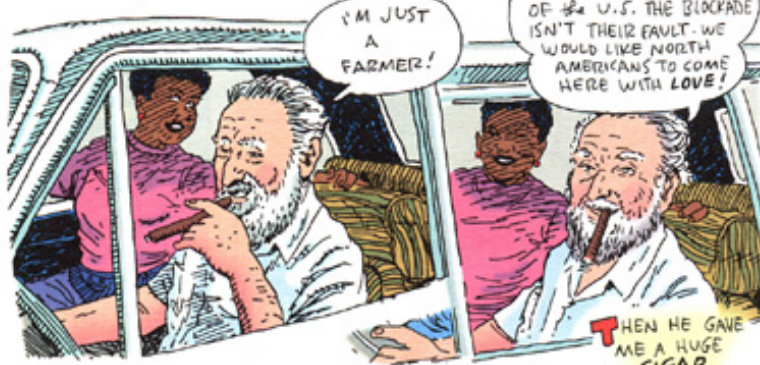


I BUMP INTO FIDEL'S BROTHER, **RAMON**, AT THE MARINA GAVIOTA IN VARADERO. HE'S A DEAD RINGER FOR THE CUBAN LEADER (JUST TWO YEARS OLDER).

I SEE **MARIEL HEMINGWAY** EVERY YEAR. I'VE SEEN ALL HER MOVIES. HOW COULD I GET AWAY WITH NOT SEEING THEM?



HE'S 97.

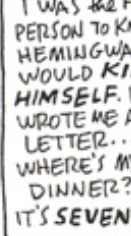


I'M JUST A FARMER!

I LOVE THE PEOPLE OF THE U.S. THE BLOCKADE ISN'T THEIR FAULT. WE WOULD LIKE NORTH AMERICANS TO COME HERE WITH LOVE!

THEN HE GAVE ME A HUGE CIGAR.

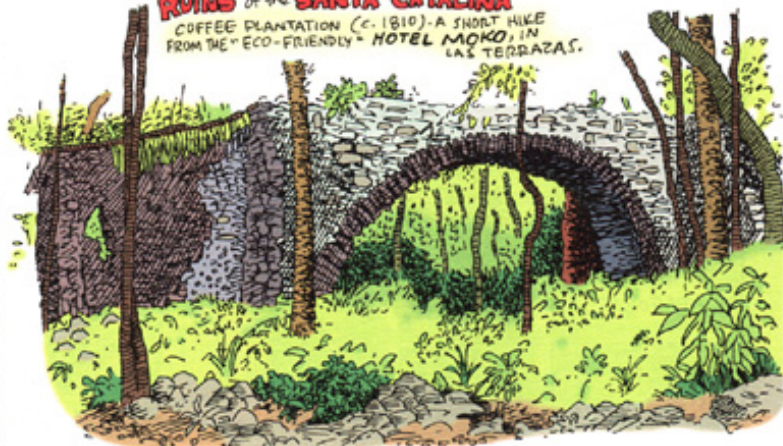
I WAS THE FIRST PERSON TO KNOW HEMINGWAY WOULD KILL HIMSELF. HE WROTE ME A LETTER... WHERE'S MY DINNER? IT'S SEVEN!



YOU KNOW, THERE ARE NOT MANY OTHER THINGS IN LIFE YOU CAN MEASURE LIKE A FISH.



RUINS OF THE SANTA CATALINA
COFFEE PLANTATION (C. 1810) - A SHORT HIKE FROM THE "ECO-FRIENDLY" HOTEL MOKO, IN LAS TERRAZAS.





RICE AND BEANS ARE CALLED "MOROS Y CRISTIANOS" ("MOORS AND CHRISTIANS").

TANIA IS A "JINETERA," A PROSTITUTE (LITERALLY "JOCKEY") ON THE STREETS OF VARADERO.

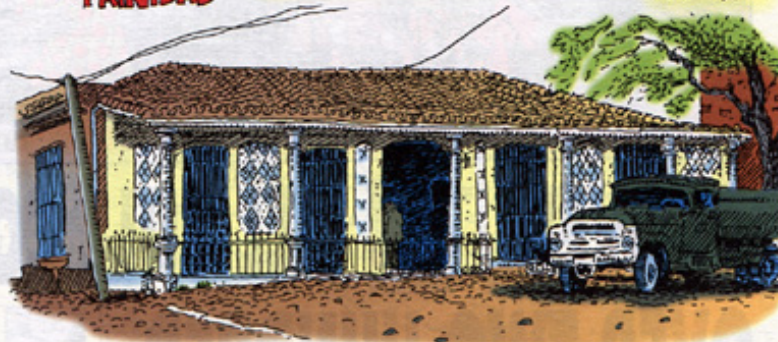
I'VE BEEN WITH THREE TOURISTS. A SPANISH GUY AND TWO ITALIAN GUYS. I'M RESPECTED AS A WORKER HERE.



RESTAURANTE JIGUE, TRINIDAD

FOUNDED IN 1574, TRINIDAD IS ONE OF CUBA'S OLDEST CITIES. SPANISH TILE WORK PROLIFERATES. A NUMBER OF CUBANS TOLD ME NOT TO GO THERE. "IT'S TOO SERIOUS," ONE SAID.

FRANCISCO BLANCO IS A CARTOONIST. HIS STRIP WAS CALLED "NEIGHBORS." IT USED TO BE A WEEKLY, THEN BECAME A MONTHLY, OWING TO THE PAPER CRISIS. A LOT OF PUBLICATIONS HAVE DISAPPEARED. WE USED TO SELL ABOUT 100,000 COPIES OF OUR COMIC MAGAZINE, PABLO.



CHARLEY SARGENT AND HIS GIRLFRIEND, SHARON, RELAX ON THE BEACH AT VARADERO. CHARLEY'S A MILKMAN FROM ESSEX, ENGLAND. SHARON WORKS IN WOOLWORTH'S.

NOW WE HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH OTHER WORK. THESE DAYS, I MAKE EXTRA INCOME AS A TOURIST CARICATURIST. BUT, BEFORE I START MY DRAWING, I ALWAYS INFORM THEM WHO I AM AND WHAT I'VE DONE FOR ALMOST THIRTY YEARS.

THE EMBARGO'S GOOD FOR TOURISTS 'CAUSE EVERYTHING'S CHEAP. BUT THE MISSILE CRISIS WAS IN THE SIXTIES. I MEAN, WHAT'S THE POINT?

CHARLEY LOVES FISHING.

Bill Griffith