



Who was Cano Graham?

It was 1997 and I was eating lunch in a cafeteria, not the usual cafeteria but the chow hall at the Federal Correctional Institution Bastrop in Bastrop, Texas. As the result of a very stupid decision I had made several years earlier, I was enjoying an extended vacation with the Federal Bureau of Prisons. This particular day was routine: the lunch was typical prison fair (not bad really in the federal system) and I was enjoying it. Then, an inmate sitting across from me caught my attention. He was working, furiously jotting notes in a yellow legal pad. I watched him for some time, and it became clear that he was going to sit there writing for the entire lunch period! Finally, out of curiosity, I asked him what he was writing about, and he said he was writing notes for a book about clay.

That was my introduction to Cano Graham. I was forty-seven at the time and he was sixty-five. He gave the immediate impression of vitality and intelligence and, as I was quick to learn, he possessed a matter-of-fact disposition that got right to the point. I asked him, "Are you writing about clay as an academic exposition on the subject, or do you have actual experience with clay?" He looked at me askance and answered, "I don't write about something I haven't experienced. I spent five years using clay therapeutically in a resort I owned in Death Valley."

How do you respond to a statement like that? For me it was easy: I had to know more. I had already studied a good deal about natural health systems, including naturopathy, fasting, Feldenkrais and the Indian system of Ayurveda, but I had never heard about healing clay. I told Cano that I could see he was busy but if he had time later would he tell me more about the clay? He said he'd be glad to. And so I learned the defining characteristic of Cano Graham: when it came to healing clay he was bursting with knowledge and he was eager to share it with anyone with a genuine interest.

A couple of days later, I was sitting in Cano's cell as he told me about the clay and showed me the pages of notes he had on it, which filled his foot locker to overflowing. His history of discovering the clay is recounted in his book *The Clay Disciples*, but for me it was all new. I remember in particular how, almost by

accident, he'd been introduced to the clay after he bought an old, run-down spa in Tecopa Hot Springs, California. He said that one day he woke up and realized that he had seen the clay work in four different cases, and he decided he had to put it to the test. He proceeded to try it on sixteen different ailments – some quite serious – and it worked on every one! It was at that point he knew his life had taken a new direction.

Cano said that he wasn't much of a writer, and he'd heard I was, and would I take a look at some of the stories he was writing about the clay? I ended up doing some early editing on the stories and also taught him a few general rules about writing. In retrospect, what surprises me is that the stories didn't make much of an impression on me, and yet they were actually remarkable. I mean if this clay had done what he'd seen it do, then it had to be one of the most powerful healing substances on earth.

My ambivalence about the clay changed because of a pimple! One day, I noticed there was some sort of deep knot in my forehead. Perhaps it was the beginning of a boil, but it was so hard and deep, it was going to take some time before it came to a head. Cano apparently had also noticed my subterranean bulge, and he walked into my cell and gave me some gelled clay. Yes, of all things, he had managed to have the clay smuggled into the prison! I am not at liberty to say how this was done, but a big amount was stored away for use by inmates with different ailments. Cano covered the bulge with a light coat of the gel and then put a piece of tissue paper over it. He told me to leave it there overnight (and also wear a monkey cap covering it so the prison guards wouldn't notice and question me). The next morning I woke up, washed off the clay and went and looked in the mirror. Lo and behold, the deep hard bulge had been replaced by a huge soft pimple (which I proceeded to "handle" just as countless adolescents going through puberty have also done).

So, now I remembered the stories Cano had written with renewed interest. I was also privy to seeing the clay work with some of the prisoners' ailments. Pretty soon I was a Clay Disciple, and I resolved to get the clay as soon as I was released, which I did, and I have always had it with me for the last 23 years.



Prison "contraband"

Through our discussions about clay Cano and I became good friends. He and I were also active participants in the Prison Toastmasters club, which he was president of. Cano had been an actor before he owned his clay resort, and he loved a well-told story. He effused praise for a good Toastmasters speech, and he was always available to hear a "rehearsal" and help another inmate prepare. I remember the time we spent together as I prepared a speech for a special contest at the club, which would even include speeches from a couple of the outside sponsors. My speech was eight-and-a-half minutes long, which was right at the time limit, and every word had to count. He timed me and helped me get the phrasing just right. I won that contest, and the hundred-plus inmates in the audience gave me a huge round of applause. And then I saw Cano standing there beaming at his "pupil."

Cano had other notable traits. For one, he was completely without prejudice. It didn't matter if you were white or black, young or old, or Mexican, Columbian or Chinese, he took you as you came. If you were human to him, then he was that to you too. This is not to say that he was naïve or lived completely disarmed. On the contrary, he had excellent radar and knew which inmates to avoid. I think a good deal of this came from his experience in the military. He had been a paratrooper and fought in the Korean War. He told me just enough about his experience there to let me know he had seen terrible human suffering and loss of life, that war tolerates no fools.

Cano died before he could write his second book, which he was going to call *The Silent Disciples*. It was to comprise stories of the clay and its use in prison. He did tell me one of those stories, and I will recount it here as I remember it.

Before Cano was an inmate at FCI Bastrop, he had been an inmate at FCI Sheridan. That was where he began serving his sentence, and it is a higher security institution than FCI Bastrop. There was an inmate there doing a 25-year sentence for murdering his wife. The man was big and strong and loved to lift weights. But, in attempting a very heavy lift, the strain gave him a haemorrhoid. He knew about the clay. (Oh yes, Cano got the clay smuggled into that prison too!) Cano made him a clay suppository, and it cured the problem. Whenever this inmate would introduce Cano to another inmate, he would say, "This is Cano Graham and he saved my ass!"

The United States has a prisoner exchange program with a number of other countries. This is where a country can exchange one of their citizens incarcerated in the United States for a United States citizen incarcerated in their country. One such prisoner arrived at FCI Sheridan from Chile. He was about six foot three inches tall, but he weighed only 155 pounds and he looked terrible. His story was unusual. While in Chile he had fallen in love with a local woman who happened to be the ex-mistress of the local sheriff. The sheriff engineered the murder of the woman and tried to pin it on her American lover. He did not succeed, but he managed to frame the American as a drug dealer and get him incarcerated in a Chilean prison.

In the prison the sheriff paid several times to have this American killed by other inmates. It got so bad that the prison took the extraordinary step of having him welded into his cell! This was the only way they felt they could guarantee his safety. He was welded into that cell for six years. In that time, the lack of exercise and sunlight, as well as the prison diet, made him increasingly weak and sick. By the time he arrived at Sheridan he looked as if he had come out of a concentration camp.

The Bureau of Prisons quickly had him transferred to FCI Rochester, which is the big medical facility for the BOP. While there, they tried to treat his condition but unsuccessfully. They even had him taken to one of the city's big hospitals and looked at by specialists, but again without success. When he returned to Sheridan, he was in the same shape as when he had first arrived from Chile. The diagnosis was that he had contracted some sort of mysterious version of Montezuma's revenge.

Luckily, this man was assigned to share the cell with the wife murderer, and he quickly told him about Cano and the clay. The next day he met Cano. He said his gut was a mess, and that he really couldn't eat much without stomach pains and sometimes bouts of diarrhoea. He also told him that he was taking some meds prescribed at Rochester but they weren't helping. Cano told him to stop taking the meds and drink a cup of water mixed with a tablespoon of clay three or four times a day.

The man did as Cano told him, and Cano met him on the rec yard two days later. He was smiling and eager to tell Cano that all of his symptoms had disappeared. You have to be a Clay Disciple to know what this feels like – to hear someone tell you the wonderful effect the clay is having. When the man left the prison ninety days later, released to the streets, he weighed 210

pounds and was the picture of good health. Later, Cano received a letter from him: that all was well and he was still “using the lady regularly.” If you have read *The Clay Disciples*, you know that this is what Cano called the clay: “The Lady.”

I was released from prison three years earlier than Cano, and I never got to communicate with him again. But after he died, I heard from another inmate who told me a story about Cano after I had been released. It is short and humorous. Cano used to do regular clay-water fasts. About twice a year he would drink only clay water several times a day for two weeks. I actually gave him the idea when one day I was talking about books I had read about fasting and the occasional water fast I had tried in my life. Apparently, Cano too had read about fasting, but had forgotten all about it. Now, with the clay he wanted to try fasting.

The effect of fasting was remarkable. Cano would lose a good deal of weight, but he said he felt a beautiful calm in his body and mind. When he did resume eating, he quickly gained back the weight but now he looked ten years younger.

The thing I didn't know was that Cano had also somehow put together an enema for his fasts. One day, the inmate who told me this story came into the Unit and the officer quickly called him into his office. There on the table was a pile of clay powder and Cano's homemade enema. And boy was the officer excited! He eagerly proclaimed that he had finally caught Cano – just look at the pile of cocaine and the big tube that he'd been snorting it with. The guard actually acted this out and put the enema tube up his nose! My inmate friend had to tell him about the clay and the enema. The guard jumped out of his seat and ran to the bathroom to wash himself.

So, how shall I end this brief biography of my friend Cano Graham? I think it is the dream. You see, when I learned that CANO'S CLAY had been formed and registered with the Indian Government, and that the first shipment of the clay had arrived in Tiruvannamalai, I was overjoyed – finally the clay was ready to help others in this wonderful country literally on the other side of the earth from where the clay comes from. I went to sleep that night and I had a dream. It was Cano. He was walking in a beautiful land and, as I looked closer, he glanced at me with a smile and opened his hand, and there was the clay. And he was eating the clay, just like you would eat a sweet or a biscuit. He walked on and glanced back one more time. Then he was gone.

With love and gratitude to Cano.

Anonymous