# Charlie

by Gordon W Brown

Charlie stood about five feet six inches tall and carried a moderate one-hundred sixty pounds. His clothes hung on his body. They never fit. They were never new. It was not unusual to see a rope holding up Charlie's pants, which were never long enough. His shoes were worn, top and bottom. If he wore socks they were soiled and could often be seen through his shoes.

His hands were large. Whenever I shook his hand he gave a timid hand in return. I could feel the roughness. I could feel the labors of some sixty years.

When he walked his shoulders almost preceded him as if he were beginning to fall. He moved without haste, heavily, without grace. Every time he sat down it was as if it was his first rest after a difficult day.

Charlie kept his tightly curled hair cut short. Still, after his years of life and labor, only a few grey hairs were creeping in here and there. Charlie wore his billed cap toward the back of his head and always cocked to the right. His tiny ears made his head look large and his hat too small.

And his face — unforgettable! His eyes were a deep, rich brown surrounded by a maze of tiny redblood veins. Sometimes his eyes took on a jaundiced hue. His cheek bones were high and wide and a pink glow could be seen through his black skin. His nose was not prominent, but seemed to keep the rest of his features unified.

His smile was so automatic, so noticeable, that it stood out among his features. His teeth could be counted on one hand. One could see the two top front teeth whether his mouth was open or closed. The other three teeth were arranged randomly along the bottom gum-line. Though stained and damaged, those teeth almost glowed when he smiled. His smile charmed.

Charlie had a peculiar appeal. I never heard him say a nasty word to or about anyone. Whenever I saw him he would greet me with a loud, clear, and cheerful "Hey Buddy," in a voice that contained nothing but kindness. His eyes seemed to sparkle and his smile, that five toothed smile, I always returned. We would stop to chat and I would try to decipher his speedy mumble.

He didn't seem to care if I understood what he was saying, as long as I took a few minutes to listen.