

Why PALO ALTO CAN'T GO BACK TO SLEEP

By JEANNE FRIEDMAN



What we really wanted was to find some way of together expressing the unhappiness and sense of futility we felt during this dismal election-for-nothing year. So several groups, including the Resistance and SDS, decided to sponsor a candlelight procession from Stanford to downtown Palo Alto, followed by a draft card turn in, some chanting, some hymns, and then to move to Lytton Plaza to hold a "wake" for the death of the electoral process in America. At the General Meeting of the Free U, we voted to support such activities, with the proviso that it be action engaged in by not less than 100 people.

It was clear very early in the discussions surrounding the activities that we were talking about large numbers of people. Chris Menchine of the United Student Movement and Bob Cullenbine made attempts to set up arrangements with the Palo Alto police. Chris asked for a permit; it was denied. Cully asked that Emerson Street be blocked off to traffic to handle the anticipated overflow from the Plaza; that was denied. And in spite of the fact that the name of the Free U did not appear on any formal announcements, in the mind of Palo Alto Lytton Plaza and the Free U go together.

So we came down Palm Drive, about 1000 of us. We carried candles, we sang, we were peaceful, and we blocked all traffic. We were from different styles of life, we ranged from babies to old people, we had varying political beliefs. The cops cleared the way for us, and when we were a block away from Lytton Plaza, we noted that it was already half full. At the Episcopal Church, draft cards were turned in, and we sang a little. It was not a time of "celebration"; the young men turning in their cards were engaged in an act that was meaningful for their own consciences--it appears that there are none left on the other side to listen to that kind of personal declaration of faith. After it was over, we left together and went to the Plaza. We approached it via University Avenue, and since we couldn't all fit on the Plaza, we "took" the street, eventually occupying about half a block of University Avenue, half a block of Emerson, and the intersection.

There were no uniformed cops around the Plaza--Chief Hyde and some of his men were there in civvies. We placed our candles along the dividing lines of the street, listened to the very dim sounds of the band in the Plaza, and mostly talked to each other. As time went by, we spread out to the intersections, and our mood changed. On the march and at the Resistance rally we had been serious, sad, and quiet. But we didn't really have the feeling of a "celebration" --certainly not one related to mourning the electoral process. Who could mourn the insanity that was taking place that night? What was worth mourning the death of? When had it been alive in our memories? And when you're done mourning the men, what do you say of the death of a system that was never meant to deal with rights, only power, and that was never yours? We did become belligerent--if by that you mean that we began to believe the street was really ours--and damn it, the fucking intersection too. For one or two hours, something was ours because we were many, and maybe we were angry because we knew it was only a matter of time, and it was only a matter of strength and power, not rights. Some said that we ought to get out of University Avenue because it was an ambulance route; we felt that all of us would move quickly out of the way for an ambulance--we couldn't believe that was the reason for the cops' opposition, and we thought that fast traffic would naturally go on the one-way loop streets.

Some thirty police appeared in riot gear, demanding that people move. We responded antagonistically, with anger, good-humored derision, or sullen withdrawal. A truck with a black flag moved into the intersection; we started banging trash can lids on the street; we chanted support of the NLF; somebody broke the rear window of a police car; we started a fire in the middle of the street with some newspapers. There was no danger of the fire spreading; how can fire consume asphalt? But fire freaks out the police; and if we were already freaked out by the election day crap,

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that wasn't as important. So a big fire truck came, and Chief Hydrie said that he'd better go get his men, and maybe it was then that he called for help from our neighboring communities. And Chief Hydrie went around the crowd in the street, somewhat diminished by now, and he spotted familiar faces and told them to disperse. The familiar faces mostly stayed, some took a walk around the block and came back, some did leave. Most of the people who left at that point were not old friends from the Plaza liberation festivals. Cully worries about scenes like that one, so he got up on the fire truck and asked us if we really needed that intersection; we shouted back that we did. He asked us if we could use Emerson Street, hoping that Chief Hydrie would let it go at that. We shouted no. It was a revisitation of the times when he had asked us if we would stay on the Plaza and defend our band, and we had shouted yes. So Cully got down off the truck, the fire was put out, and the truck went away. And we waited. While we waited Chief Hydrie was still



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issuing personal invitations to old friends to get the hell out of there. Did the people really need the piece of turf that was defined as a traffic route? We needed something that dismal night, so we took the only thing we could have taken--a miserable strip of asphalt, and that was important, although most of us prefer to plant our feet on earth.

The Palo Alto police then cleared the intersection--they formed a line and moved slowly first one way and then the other. On a broken bullhorn Chief Hydrie had announced that the gathering in the street was an "unlawful assembly," and after the intersection was cleared the street. We all got up on the sidewalk and stared at the line of cops staring back at us.

So traffic came.

Some of the cops lining the streets joked with us, some announced that they hated Nixon too, some wouldn't let us cross the street, some did let us, and smiled and looked like kids from Palo High, some looked scared, and some looked angry. But we knew they were men just like us, and after half an hour of this staring, chatting, frowning, and crapping around, we all felt absurd. Many more of us left; we could now all fit into the Plaza; our numbers were now vulnerable. The Plaza band had split; another band was taking 45 minutes to set up, and meanwhile a guy was rapping on the microphone, and he was angry, radical, and boring, and not where we were at. So finally the band got set up, and it was our old friends--Power.

We really were blasted in that Plaza. We danced and sweated, we warmed up and cooled down. We thought it was all over. While we were dancing, someone walked around saying that Chris Menchine was missing--he'd been arrested for inciting to riot. And then we saw a working wedge of cops--our neighbors from Sunnyvale,

San Jose, Santa Clara. They stopped near Lytton Savings, and Chief Hydrie, still with a broken bullhorn, and still not waiting for everyone to get quiet enough to hear him, announced that Lytton Plaza was also "unlawful assembly" and we were all to disperse, subject to arrest if we didn't. And then the wedge broke and started running, and we started running. We were worried about Power--so some of us took a few minutes to unhook that band that had taken 45 minutes to set up. I lied to a cop and said I was with the band, and he waved at me to keep disassembling them. Bruce Franklin and his wife were also helping, and he shouted at me to go home. I shouted the same to him, and we all stayed until the band was gone. And when I went around the block to Hamilton, I saw 4 or 5 cops beating up a guy in the middle of the street. I've never been beaten up, so I don't know what's really bad, but it looked bad. And a kid was wearing handcuffs.

We started walking and running, and somehow we were back on University Avenue, heading for the freeway. We weren't deciding where to walk, the cops behind us were deciding everything. Some of us turned over trash cans in the street. When someone picked up some rocks from a bonsai display, some others shouted no, and nobody threw rocks. Finally we turned off University, walked around Hamilton for awhile, and as our numbers petered out, made our way back to University and High. And the Sunnyvale and San Jose cops on that corner wouldn't let us cross the street to go to our cars, or to get our friends up in the McCarthy office. Finally the Palo Alto cops came back and let us cross the street.

Eight or nine people were arrested that night for "failure to disperse." Nixon won the election. The next day, at a campus rally, Sgt. Poso and some friends spent their lunch hour spotting people in the crowd and asking names. On Friday, Bruce Franklin was arrested at the Free U Store, and a warrant issued

invited chief hydrie to meet his most wanted man . . .



for Marc Sapir. In a Daily interview, Chief Hydrie said there would be more arrests. Over the weekend, three Free U people, including the ubiquitous Mr. Cullenbine, were arrested on highly spurious grass charges. An ad hoc committee from the medical school decided to invite Chief Hydrie to meet his most wanted man--Marc--at a med school rally on Wednesday at noon. And SDS decided to peacefully protest the whole mess by marching to the police station at 4:30, to present demands for freedom and ending political arrests, and for giving us back Lytton Plaza. At the end of the noon rally, they arrested Marc. Two hours later, Sgt. Poso marched into the Tresidder cafeteria and arrested Jimmy Johnson, a black radical who works with both black and white groups on campus, on the additional charge of disturbing the peace.

By 4:30 about 100 people had assembled at the campus end of Palm Drive. It's a felony to carry a red

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flag in the state of California: we carried dozens of them. We sang and marched down Palm Drive, echoing that nighttime march that had started the whole thing. We were joined along the way, and by the time we got to the police station, we were about 200. About 8 cops in riot gear were defending the front of the station. We sang songs--some militant, some patriotic, we chatted a little, we presented our demands, we collected bond money, we welcomed Marc and Jimmy back from jail, and we marched back to Stanford together. They stood up on their balcony taking our pictures and writing down our names as fast as they could.

It is difficult for one person, even one who was there all the time, to talk about any activity that involves as many people as the election day wake did. I saw only bits and snatches of what went on; other people saw different actions. It is equally difficult to be sure of the sequence of events, particularly when the night is made up of dozens of disjointed, discrete acts. There are a few things that one can be sure of, however. First, the mood of the crowd was considerably altered when the first group of police in riot gear approached the Plaza, prior to clearing the intersection and street. One becomes very conscious of dress at times like that, and meeting pea jackets and candles with helmets and mace is disjointed. Secondly, there was no "riot" when the police cleared the intersection; we wound up on the Plaza, we had our music, and our mood was again one of celebration. There was no riot when the new cops started to clear the Plaza: as soon as they started running in formation across the Plaza, we ran back and most of the people started leaving the area. But there were so many cops that wherever you ran, a cop was there to head you off. There was no riot when Lytton Plaza was cleared. But the cops kept running, and the riot occurred on the streets of Palo Alto. It occurred because some of us ran, and cops seeing running people themselves freak out and start chasing. Eventually, they catch up, and although they don't know why they want to catch someone, they have to arrest him when they've caught him, otherwise why

These in the first place?

To arrest someone 2 or 3 or 4 blocks from where he was ordered to disperse is to confront the fact that he had already dispersed. Similarly, to arrest someone 3 or 4 or 5 days after the event, is to miss the point about dispersal laws. More importantly, the issue of our being in the streets, of our being perceived as a threat by the Palo Alto power structure for the past several weeks, is at the heart of the issue. We want a certain kind of town to live in, a place where we all decide who uses what parts of the town, from the streets to the parks to the buildings. But we have no right to be part of that decision; neither does Chief Hyde, but he doesn't know it. So when we "take" a street, we are facing the issue of who decides if we can do it, not whether or not we in fact do it. That's why the Free U is dangerous to Palo Alto. Freeing consciousness is politically threatening when you come to believe that your consciousness ought to be free.

This week should have been a happy one for the Free U. It looks like we'll get our community center. Instead, we are worrying about setting up the largest possible bail fund, so that we lose no more money on bond fees. We're worried about arrests on narcotics charges--if they can't get us one way, another will do. The level of our paranoia has gone way up, it will be very difficult to reduce it. The police are creating stereotypes and choosing up sides faster

FROM A STANFORD ALUMNUS

(The following letter appeared in Vol. 7, No. 1 of the Stanford Alumni Almanac:)

Editor:

I shall try to tell you why I have not and will not contribute to Stanford (or MIT or Northwestern either for that matter).

Unlike a lot of people, I believe strongly that the so-called student riots at UC Berkeley in 1964 were the best thing which has happened to higher education in this country in this century...The collective administration are so mind-bound, so resistant to change, unable to predict that a change is coming. But worse still, when it comes they look the other way and give all sorts of excuses--Communist started, dissident minority, et cetera, that there is no health in them....

Instead, they should encourage students to think, long and deeply about many things, and then discuss their ideas with them--and they might find much of value. The universities are supposed to have the best minds on their faculties, and the students have been carefully selected to be probably among the top 10 percent of the youth of their generation. If they don't have ideas their education has not been good....

I am a chemist. I got excellent training in chemistry at Stanford and for this I am grateful... but I got essentially no education at Stanford. It is perfectly obvious that no school can educate a student in four or even eight years. What I am complaining about is that I was so uneducated, I didn't know it. I didn't know that there were other, possibly more important, things to know than chemistry. This is one of the troubles, and a very important one, with education today...there is a great confusion between education and training. There is a tendency to equate the two, and there is essentially nothing which they have in common....I believe very strongly in education, and for as wide a number of people to the limits of their ability. But its got to be an education, not training.

Does it not strike you as significant that the Mid-Peninsula Free University was started in Stanford's backyard, and that hundreds of Stanford students take these courses. I am not sure this is the answer. But I do think it points the way. At least it points to the fact that many thoughtful people know that something needs drastic change.

I, for one, refuse to support the status quo.

Dr. H. Courtney Benedict, '23, AM '24
Chico

progress

Baren the hills of their green and creatures
Build housing tracts in rows
with gravel
driveways &
clipped hed
ges;

Underneath the concrete
a planet waits

by margie

than we can calm them down. They are getting used to wearing riot gear in the streets of our town; they are getting used to regarding young people suspiciously. We are getting tactically smarter, we are getting sadder because we have to think of tactics. Palo Alto has chosen up sides--we're not the small town we were, it's hard to see how we will become One again.