

Amherst

What was I doing there? Trying to get some stability in my life. Trying to make some sense of my life. I remember taking a course in political theory, and a course in critical theories of politics, with the young turk of the department.

But by the middle of April, I knew I would not be able to make the May rent. I was asked to move out. I spent then next month on the couch of the hippie dorm, Project 10 it was called, writing papers on a borrowed typewriter.

The political science department said I could come back, if I wanted to, but there would be no money for me. I do not remember what I did that summer, or where I lived. I am drawing a complete blank. I may have hitchhiked back out to California.

But the next Fall, I was back at UMass. I found a place to stay with some other graduate students in a house in Hadley, and decided to decorate it with found objects, rusted springs, weathered doors, etc. When the landlord discovered it, he kicked us all out. With one of the guys, I got an apartment in Northampton, and commuted to UMass on the then nascent Five College bus system. As I recall, I made some money by selling pizzas in the towers of the Southwest Dormitory complex.

I was always impressed, if I did not like talking with a young woman, as we said hello, I would tell her that I was a student at U Mass. She was from Smith. The conversation ended. Or I would tell her that I was a graduate student at U Mass. She was from Smith, and where did I go undergraduate. Columbia, and the conversation would continue. With all the talk of worker-student coalitions in those days, I was getting my feet firmly placed in both camps.

In December, my roommate said he was moving into a house in North Leverett, just him, no room for me, and I was alone in Northampton. My holiday season that year was very difficult. Then, in January, an undergraduate I had met told me there was an empty room in his house in Belchertown. Well, not his house, but the house where he had a room.

I hitchhiked out there, in the night, to see the house, and meet the other people there. My last ride was to a house on the edge of one of the kettle ponds a short distance from the house, and my driver told me that I should just walk across the pond to get to

where I was going. Halfway across the pond, I was in slush, and realized I might have made a mistake. Go forward, go backward? I went forward, the ice did not crack, and I survived. I think I have had at least nine lives, but that night I spent one of them.

As I recall, there were seven people living there; I would have the smallest and cheapest room, fine with me, just off the main room which had a dining room table and a large fireplace. It was a colonial era house. A retired colonel from nearby Westover Air Base had bought them up, on the cheap, and rented them out, in this case, to vets returning from the War in Viet-nam. Neither Wally, my friend who told me about the house, nor I were vets, nor was Kathy, the lone woman of the house, nor Michael, who worked delivering milk for a local dairy, but the vets dominated the house, and they were certainly anti-war. They had been there.

Two of them who had grown up in Springfield had been arrested for something, probably drugs. The judge told them it was jail or the army. As they told it, they went into the army recruiter's office, but his quota was filled, so they went into the next office, the Marines. They got over to Vietnam just in time to be sent to [Khe Sanh](#), on the border with North Vietnam, the site of one of the great sieges of the war. As one of them, Danny, put it, being flown out belly button to asshole, with the KIA's in the back. Or, again, when Jeff mentioned the small forts the French had built in the forties, Danny remembered hiding in them.

Why not become a Conscientious Objector? Their families would have had none of it. Same thing for going to Canada, or, as I suspect Wendell did, another of the loosely associated crew, simply disappear into the world of long hair.

They told me that napalm was really beautiful, especially if you were tripping.

It was about that same time that I met Jane, my second long term relationship. There was a hang-out place near the Hatch cafeteria, and I was throwing a pot. My last year in New York I had taken a pottery class at the Riverside Church, and enjoyed the way the pots seemed to grow out of the wheel, organically. Anyway, we started to talk, and she suggested we go for a ride in her car to the Quabbin Reservoir, just outside of Belchertown. It was mid January, and the weather was almost Spring like. It is called the January thaw, in those parts. The weather Gods blessed our connection.

She was an undergraduate, majoring in Fine Arts, and had a generous father. I was introduced to the entire family, and spent a summer working for her father's business,

as a laborer, which was appropriate to my skill level. I learned a lot, and am sure I got much stronger. If you like getting really dirty, and frustrated, try tearing down plaster walls constructed on metal screen lathe. Filthy dust! And the metal lathe has to be torn from the studs, but then tears into your hands.

I seem to be having trouble with my chronology, especially what I did during the summers. Of one summer, 1972, I am sure. It was the summer of political conventions. Richard, my boss from Los Angeles was then in graduate school at UC San Diego, and invited me to stay at his house. Richard and his wife were living in Del Mar, just north of San Diego. He offered me a place to stay. The Republican convention was scheduled to be in San Diego. I wanted to join, or help organize, or do whatever was necessary, to demonstrate the depth of depravity of what had become Nixon's war in Vietnam. To me, it had been a huge mistake to demonstrate so forcefully in Chicago at the Democratic convention in 1968. It had helped elect Nixon.

I somehow got in touch with a couple moving out to the West Coast, driving their Land Rover and a trailer. There were the two of them, a dog, a cat, me, and another rider. Somewhere in Iowa, a tire blew on the car, and we crashed into the embankment. None of us were seriously hurt, but the trailer had torn the axle of the car. The couple presumed they could get it easily repaired, which I doubted. At that time, Land Rovers used a British Whitworth system, not the American inch based one, or the metric system. In the middle of Iowa, it would have been hard enough to find a garage with a set of metric sockets back in 1972, but the only ones who would have Whitworth's would be specialty shops.

So my new best friend, the other rider and I, decided to continue on hitchhiking out to the West Coast. To locals picked us up, talked with us for a while as we drove, as they drove off the main road into the country. I got a very bad feeling, like I was in a movie that was just being released, Deliverance. So I told them I had some close friends just back from Vietnam who knew where I was going, and if I disappeared they were sure to practice some of the skills they had learned in the jungle. We were driven back to the main road.

When I got to Del Mar, I learned two things. First of all, the convention had been moved to Miami. I had not gotten the memo. Second, the offer of the place to stay was rescinded. Richard's wife was not too keen about me staying there. She was born and raised in Russia, and I was a hippie communitarian. At least that is what I think was the reason. Richard and I remained friends, and I found a room in an apartment in the next

town up, Cardiff by the Sea with two age appropriate people.

Richard suggested I work at the local Dennys, where I got a job as a dishwasher , then got a job pumping gas at a gas station. . Somehow, I made contact with a local contractor, Graham, who hired me as a laborer on a house addition he was constructing me, as he tried to convert me to evangelical Christianity and conservative politics., and then got a job with a local contractor, as a laborer. At the end of that summer, I hitched back to Belchertown, and entered my next year as a graduate student.

Living in the house in Belchertown was a formative experience in my life. Most of all, because I lived there for three years, as I remember, and finally had some stability in where I was living, and some stable, but meager income. I had a job as the helper for the morning baker at the Hatch cafeteria, and was later promoted to run the submarine line, the grinder lunch line, just outside of the manager's office. I had enough to live on.

As important, I got to know the kind of people I had never met before. I had never gotten to know working class Massachusetts Irish hard drinkers before, but that is what the house was. They called me two beer Wally, because I would quit after two beers. After two beers, I had had enough. Four or five of them could alone drink a case in an afternoon. In fact, they did that, the summer I was working for Jane's father. The afternoon before, I had bought a case of Rolling Rock, the beer of choice, and, since it was a very hot day, and I was really dirty, I looked forward on my way home, to having a beer or two. None left. I was pissed.

A girlfriend of one of the guys had a Rambler which was pretty much dead. It needed new ball joints, a repair more expensive than what the car was worth. I was given the car. Michael, the dairy driver said he would tell me how to install them. He had been an auto mechanic. Now, in a shop, with air tools, you can pretty quickly chisel the rivets off, and then drill them out, but we did not have air tools. I think it took me at least a month to hand chisel them off. I think the other guys in the house were surprised that it actually got done. Persistence pays off, even if you don't know what you are doing.

The driveway went up around the house, and then back around the other side to the road, and we parked our cars just after the house, diagonal, in a wide space in the driveway. Keys were always left in the cars, in case someone really needed a car, like, to go to the package store to get a couple more cases. I presumed it was an ethic that came in large part from their experiences in Vietnam, where each member of a platoon

was willing to die for the other members. Joel Mabus has a very moving song about this kind of brotherly love, entitled [Touch a Name on the Wall](#).

Billy was just sort of hanging out, got drafted into the army, and spent his time in Vietnam fixing radios that had been busted in the field, and mention flicking the dried blood off some of them. Glenn was an excellent hockey player, but had flunked out of college, and so was caught up in the draft. Things were pretty good until his picture appeared in Life, or Look, or some magazine like that, smoking a joint, and he was transferred to an engineering battalion. I asked what the problem was with that, and he told me that it was really a death sentence, because you had to have a shovel, rather than a rifle, in your hand, and you were out in the front lines. Frank spent the two years playing the trumpet in Switzerland. Joe was a tunnel rat, and he was good at it.

I asked them why they did not become conscientious objectors, and they said that if they had gone that route, they would have been kicked out of their home. Many of their fathers had served in World War II. My father had not. He had been in ROTC at Cornell, graduating in 1932, so when the draft got serious ten years later, he was too old, and he was a farmer, and which was a protected occupation, and an only child, which also protected him from the draft. He did not agree with me, or my brother, about pacifism, but he did tell my brother that if Steve, my brother, had to go to jail, my father would be there for him, but if he went to Canada, that would have been the end of the relationship. As it happened, my brother spent two years teaching in a school for disturbed teenagers, and made a very successful career out of working with that very difficult age group.

Sorry for the diversion. We were like a platoon, in the house. We would all go shopping at the Big Y in Palmer, and we would all pocket cold cuts. We all had to pocket cold cuts. I was not comfortable with it, but I think it was a bonding ritual, basically, and I also think that the staff at the grocery store saw us either as a bunch of hippies, too many to try to corral, or knew that a lot of us were just back from Vietnam, and had enough troubles in our lives.

At that time, UMass guaranteed admission, and the state gave out a stipend for all vets who had greater than dis-honorable discharge. Studying was not something most of these guys enjoyed doing. Several of them had full time jobs, in addition to school, and they were more interested in the jobs, as bullshit as they were, than school. One drove a large refrigerated box truck for Sexton Food, another worked the graveyard shift in a local plant that made drainage ditch pipe, and several of them were bus drivers for the

just established Pioneer Valley Transit Authority. Bob, the guy running that, was himself a vet, and had run the supply logistics element of the war, up the main highway in Vietnam. He had, without college, made Captain, which was impressive. He also played hockey, and he spent a lot of time at the house, drinking beer with guys.

Glen had gone to college on a hockey scholarship, and I would go along with them when they got rink time, usually in the middle of the night. I remember one night, crammed into a car, driving at least half an hour to Easthampton, and skating. I was terrible. I was barely able to skate, and could not skate backward, nor catch a puck passed to me, but once, an opposing player was playing cat and mouse with me, daring me to try to take the puck away from him, and, in my frustration, I cross checked him and flattened him. My team bench erupted. They thought it was great, that this brain, who was a terrible athlete, would show some spit. It must have been after the summer I worked for Jane's father, because Glenn mentioned that I certainly got good at knocking down walls. I recently learned that he had moved to Wellfleet, on the Cape, where he became the harbormaster, and had an oyster bed, but, unfortunately, had died before I learned of this.

Wally and I were the serious students of the house. Wally had gone to a community college in the Merrimack Valley, and was tearing up the Umass sociology department. He had a huge library of Frankfort School sociology books, and it was he who told me of the most interesting seminar I have ever taken at any school. A recent faculty hire, from Germany, wanted to lead a discussion of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. We read a chapter a week. Joining as members of the seminar were Robert Paul Wolff, an eminent philosopher, and Jules Chametsky, a star in the English department. Every week I would read the words of the chapter for that week, with no comprehension, and then, suddenly, I understood how the dialectic worked. After that, it was not only easy to understand, but, in fact, a little boring, because Hegel's thinking was like a sewing machine, stitching together two pieces of cloth in an endless pattern, or, this just came to me, how DNA and RNA work, so simply, but yielding such complex edifices. Thank you again, Wally.

When he graduated, he gave me all his books. He told me that he wanted to play golf, and that he had a job with RiteAid, the pharmacy company. "Time to be an adult," he said, "and put away childish things." I discovered several years ago that he had risen in the ranks of Acushnet Industries, makers of Titleist Golf balls, to become CEO, and is credited with making golf, when I knew him distinctly upper class, into an activity enjoyed by working class people. I still have one of the books, "Labor's Untold Story,"

about the red baiting of the UE, and its replacement with the IBEW.

We would also play baseball, as a team, and I would hang out in left field. Growing up, I was always terrible at all sports, no matter how much I played. I could ride my bike, I could skate in the winter, I played three man basketball in the barn of neighbor when I was in my early teens, but I was a truly terrible athlete. But it did not matter, because, living in the house, I was part of the team. With all the education I had gotten, I was finally getting some common sense.

Of course, those were the days of pot and acid, and I was still taking acid, and it was still affecting the way I perceived the world – a combination of fictional reality, and magical thinking. Not that this dominated my life, but I was far more attuned to the psychedelic consciousness than I would have been, had I not been taking acid. Pot, just so you know, does not have the effect, but acid, if you don't know, completely distorts your reality for four to eight hours.

For me, there was also another downside, anxiety and paranoia. Acid promised bliss, but always there was a subtext of anxiety. Rather than stop taking it, I wanted to get through it, and finally, one night, at a friend's house in Northampton, I experienced the great peace that I had been told about, with light streaming down over me. That was my last trip, probably in 1973.

Now, anyone with common sense would have gone to a professor they had a good relationship with, and ask, what should I write my thesis on. And the professor would have assigned a topic in line with his/her own research. Not me. I wanted to test theories of social dislocation, in particular, anomie, Emile Durkheim's theory of what happens in cities, and alienation, Marx's theory of how people become separated from their productive lives in modern capitalism. I wanted to operationalize these theories, test them with such statistics as voting participation, that would become a marker for anomie, and bombings, which were then going on, which seemed like a good marker for alienation. I gathered the statistics, such as a could, for the fifty states. Brandeis had a center which was studying the bombings, and I went to talk to its director. He said no way, unless he got lead credit on the by-line, and approved of what I had written. Getting the voting statistics was much easier. I spent a lot of time learning SPSS, punching cards and running them through the main frame computer at UMass. I must mention Albert Chavin's course in introduction to statistics for the social sciences was extremely helpful to me. I have continued to use what he taught me, most recently in a paper I wrote about the 2010 Congressional elections, the one that started

my blog, that you can find [here](#).

But I needed a sponsor, and they steered me towards Professor Edward Feit, who agreed to sponsor me. He asked that I write a short draft. I did. He excoriated me, and wrote a paragraph to show me how to write. I think I wrote a total of five drafts of the thesis. I am persistent. In the last one, I inserted the paragraph he had written. He told me that, first of all, it was not very well written, and second of all, it had no business in the thesis. I pointed out that it was the paragraph he had written for me. That worked, and he agreed to sign off, as long as another professor went over my methodology.

The statistics test I was using, Kendall's tau for the correlation between two variables, is non-parametric. I discovered a formula that would yield a second derivative. Confused? Don't worry about it. The department's guru of quantitative political science had never heard of it, so told me to take it out. Long story short, I took it out. He signed off. I was glad to be done with it. But, I must say, as I write this, that the Open Source software program R has a routine which calculates this second derivative.

In the summer of 1972, the president of the graduate student council had asked me if I would serve on the just created student Board of Governors of the just completed Campus Center. U Mass had a student union, which housed student organization offices and the cafeteria, the Hatch it was called, where I worked. The campus center housed the book store, the Blue Wall bar, administrative offices, the Hospitality department, now part of the business school, a hotel, and one of the fancier restaurants in Amherst.

I agreed to serve. At the first meeting, the director of the Campus Center, into which the student union had been folded, gave his report, which had to do mainly with the finances. Their fiscal year was July to June. He had simply divided last years totals by 12, for expected revenues, and then reported actual revenues. Of course, since the campus was basically deserted, no books were being sold, nor were many meals being served, and his report showed a substantial under performance of expected. In fact, it showed substantial losses. Of course, the academic year is financially uneven. His report did not make sense to me. He agreed it did not make any sense. I then asked for the break out by the various elements of the Campus Cente/ Student Union complex. He said he did not have them. That was not how the books were kept. "Really", I said, dumbfounded. He got the point. I think was actually relieved that a student asked intelligent questions.

At UMass Amherst, every student had to pay a campus center fee, to subsidize the operations of the complex. As I remember, at \$50 a piece, a year, that totaled about a million dollars, or about a tenth of the total operating budget of the facility. I saw our duty on the Board of Governors as being sure that money went to the operations that the students used. But, lacking an accounting system, there was no way to tell how that money was being spent. Welcome to Massachusetts State politics.

I was immediately appointed chair of the Finance Committee, and spent the year creating a Point of Sale accounting system that could tell us this information. I learned the term, point of sale, from a graduate student, who showed up, or maybe was asked to show up, to help me through the process. I learned a lot.

Then, Arthur D. Little, the Cambridge consulting company, then regarded as highly as McKinsey Associates is today, offered, for a fee, to examine the operations of the facility. I never met with them, they never met with me, but they were forcing the operation to look at some of its management issues. Looking back now, it may have been that the University, and the State, was worried that a shit storm might develop, because I had by then most likely a national reputation. Who knows? Back then, I was just interested in surviving after the collapse of the New Left, and the Civil Rights movement, with as much honor as I could muster.

An aside: For example, after I had knocked down the walls for Jane's father, I would load the rubble into large trash barrels, and take them to the dump. But one day, he told me the dump was closed. He said that happens sometimes. He knew me as a crunchy granola kind of guy (in fact, we made our own granola in Belchertown), and I think this was a test. What to do? I drove down a disused track through the woods, and saw where someone else had dumped their construction debris, and added to the pile, and snuck back to his showroom. I felt bad about it. He was pleased; I got the job done, but, from my perspective, with a stain on my moral character.

Anyway, toward the end of Spring we had the accounting system set up and operating. A. D. Little mentioned that they found the Campus Center was already making the kinds of improvements it recommended. I looked at the numbers. Students used the book store, the Hatch, and the Blue Wall. "Adults" used the other profit centers. Guess which operated at a profit, and which at a loss. The students, by their patronage, were supporting functional businesses, and by their fees, were subsidizing the rest of the complex.

I wrote this up, and the campus newspaper published it - "The Cost of the Awful Waffle".

It was very clear to every one that running a sandwich line was a pretty low level job for someone with my skill set. They needed someone to manage the parking garage, attached to the Campus Center, but everyone told me to avoid that job. It was a political minefield. I met with a representative of the Chancellor, and the Director of Food Services of the Campus Center. They offered me the job of managing the Hatch cafeteria, but on one condition: That I sell out.

What words, you may ask, did they use to communicate this to me? "Sell out." I have yet to meet anyone to whom this was so baldly put. I turned them down.

I approached Arthur D. Little, but they were not interested. There was a newly funded student initiative, to empower students, and I applied to work on that. I was turned down. I thought about transferring over the School of Education, which then had a Dean known as an innovator, and I thought I be more suited to that, but I did not see exactly why I would be there. Looking back, I am just a little surprised that the business school did not dangle some bait in front of me, but probably did not, because my hair was far too long.

The Director of Continuing Education (Adult Education) did take note of me, and offered me a graduate fellowship if I organized a class having to do with the upcoming US Bicentennial. I did. I read, and read, and read, and developed a packet of materials about Colonial Life in the Pioneer Valley, where Amherst was located. I recruited faculty members to lead discussions about the various topics. Among them were the geology of the region, which, if you have been there, is quite interesting – Amherst is located at what was the bottom of glacial Lake Hitchcock - the architecture of colonial houses, what Danial Shay's rebellion was all about, he was from the area, literature of the time, the Great Awakening – Jonathan Edwards served a church in Northampton, and how to brew beer, a craft that was wide spread back then.

I advertised it, and waited for people to sign up, in the Fall.

Zero. I talked to my boss. He said, "Don't worry, we will try again in the Spring." We did. It was a rousing success.

But, the previous December, for the bicentennial of the Boston Tea Party, I was sent to represent U Mass at the celebration. I made up a sign, and joined the rag tag “People's Bicentennial” counter demonstration. The sign said, “Dump Nixon, Smoke Tea”. I understand it made the papers. A State Representative from the area had seen it, and, outraged, called the University. The following Spring I was told my fellowship was not going to be renewed, thank you very much, and for someone who studied politics, I had a lot to learn. It was that following summer that I worked for Jane's father, because I remember listening to the Watergate hearings on the radio while we worked.

University Year for Action was looking for a staff member. I interviewed for the job. I seemed to have gotten it – I know they flew me out to East Lansing for a conference, but the job evaporated. Just disappeared. Maybe the campus director of UYA got the word from the university administration that I should not be hired. However, I did meet someone there, who had graduated from UMass a year or two before, had been in the Army before UMass, was working in Washington and getting his law degree at Antioch School of Law. He said, “Come to Washington. Sleep on my couch.” There is room, I live with a woman and her two kids, and you are welcome to stay there. Jane and I were done, I knew, I had a tearful conversation on her steps, I had hoped to have children with her, have a stable life, but this was not to happen, and I moved to Washington.

Maybe I drove the car there. I don't know. I do know that it was my intention to return to the area, and I even had a plan, some of my friends thought was a good idea, of starting a small restaurant/folk music venue in the center of town. Several years ago, driving through Amherst, I found that exactly the place of my dreams had been established, but by someone else. Good for them.