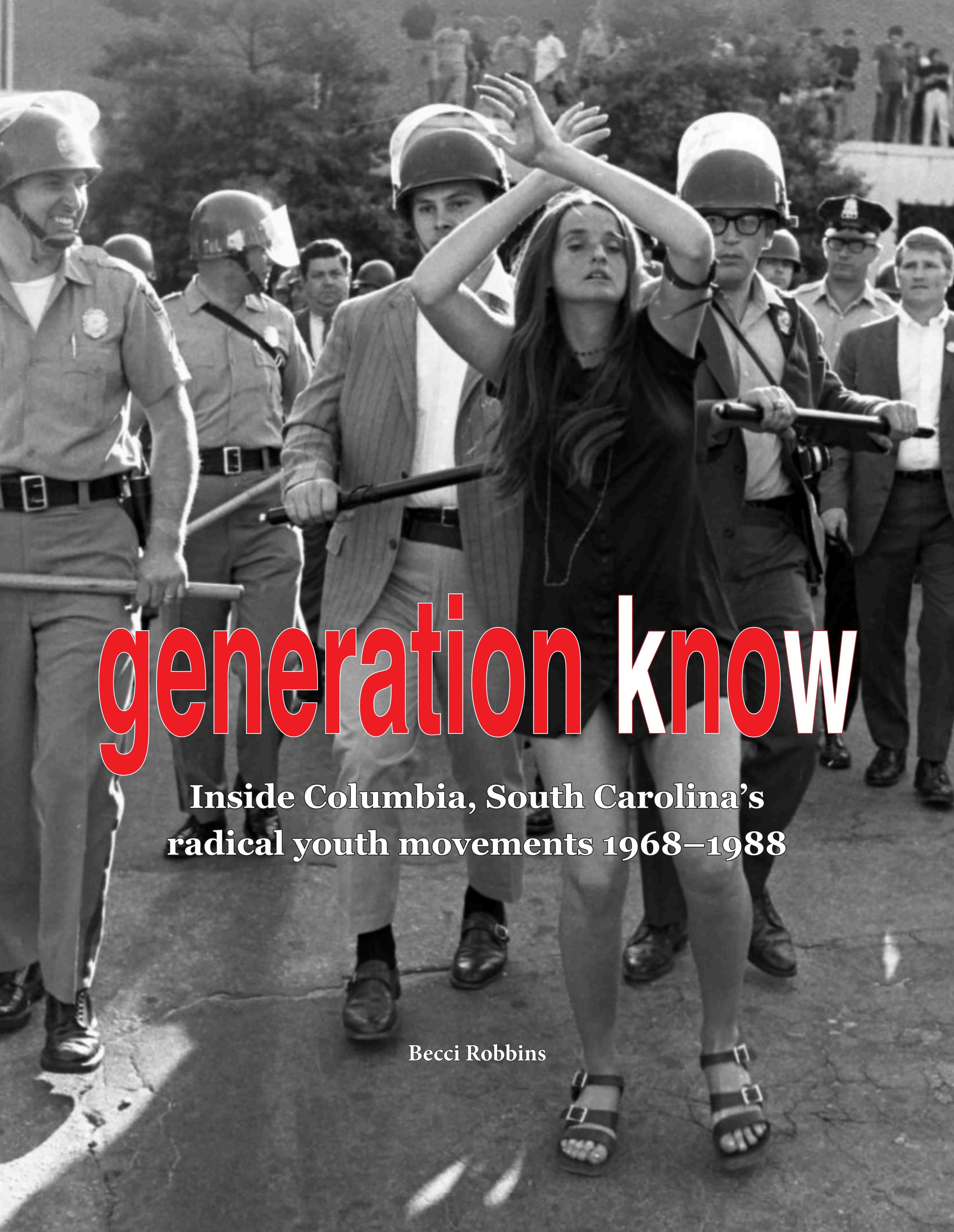

generation know

Inside Columbia, South Carolina's radical youth movements 1968–1988

Becci Robbins

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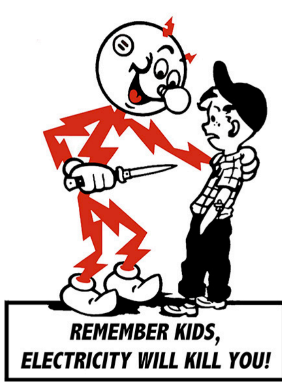
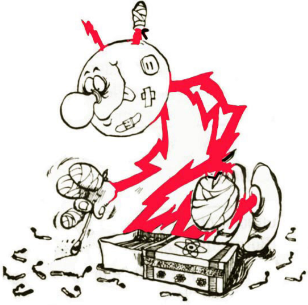
Photo: **Ed Tilley**
State Media Co.

ON THE COVER: Becky Hardee is hustled away from the University of South Carolina's student union during the sit-in on May 7, 1970. She wasn't arrested then, but she was detained in 1977 for dressing as Reddy Kilowatt while protesting SCE&G's rate hikes the company levied to build a nuclear reactor. Her costume violated an anti-KKK law prohibiting adults from wearing masks. Charges were dropped.

Hardee was a co-founder of the environmental organization Palmetto Alliance, and served on the Board of Directors of Musicians United for Safe Energy. She helped organize a concert series and a rally opposing nuclear power that was the largest public gathering in New York City history. She died of cancer in 1996.



For decades, Reddy Kilowatt was the aggressive ambassador for America's power companies.



Reddy as he appeared in a 1981 issue of GROW's magazine, Harbinger.

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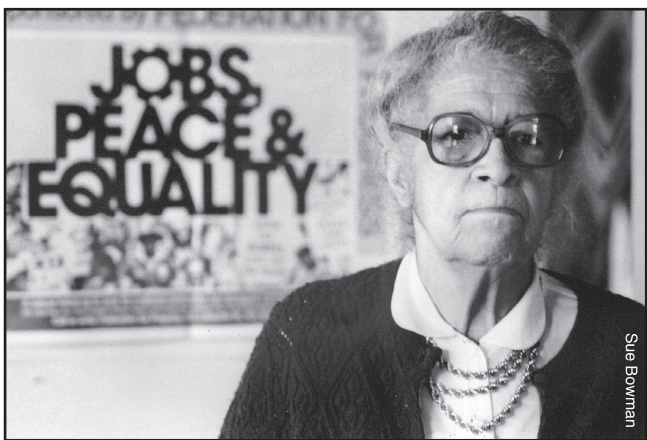
This booklet was made possible through a grant from the Richland County Conservation Commission.
It is a project of the SC Progressive Network Education Fund and the Modjeska Simkins School for Human Rights.
Written and designed by Becci Robbins. Printed August 2022 in Columbia, SC.



Columbia human rights activist Modjeska Simkins at GROW in 1982.

Like the youth movements it documents, this project builds upon what came before. In 2018, I wrote *History Denied, Recovering South Carolina's Stolen Past*, a cautionary tale about how history is made and then rewritten by the people in power. Its central example was the Southern Negro Youth Congress (SNYC), a radical, student-led organization that for a decade thrived against all odds in the Jim Crow South.

Modjeska Simkins played a key role in bringing SNYC's 1946 conference to Columbia. The week's program of workshops and strategy sessions concluded with a show at the Township, where a racially mixed crowd saw Paul Robeson perform and heard a searing address by W.E.B. DuBois which is now considered his finest. The gathering was unprecedented yet was all but erased from public memory — as was SNYC itself.

That changed in 2012 with the publication of Erik Gellman's book *Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights*. Since then, SNYC has begun getting due credit for blazing a trail for the domesticated civil rights movement that would follow.

SNYC was driven by young people, many of them women, in collaboration with farm workers and labor organizers. All that race, gender, and class mingling threatened the old social order and the benefactors of the status quo. After relentless red-baiting, SNYC eventually folded, in 1949. One can only wonder what might have been had larger imaginations prevailed.

Simkins said, "I think if the Southern Negro Youth Congress could have gone on, there would have been great change in the South because younger people would have worked together better. But the power structure doesn't want that. They don't want poor whites and Negroes getting along."

The smear tactics used to silence SNYC were used again a decade later to ice Simkins from the NAACP — where she had long played a key role — when its leaders deemed her agenda and associations too politically dangerous. She had come out early and forcefully against the war in Vietnam, putting her at odds with the Black establishment banking on the promise of upward mobility and currying favor with the white elite.

Simkins played a long game, advocating for systemic change rather than accepting the piecemeal offerings being promoted as racial progress. She bridled when called an activist for civil rights, since they were granted and, therefore, could be revoked. She was about human rights, she said, the rights one is born with that cannot be taken away.

In South Carolina, there was scant evidence that the movement for racial justice was gaining more than

RADICAL

From the Latin "root," a person who advocates reforming political and social systems by addressing the root causes of their corruption or dysfunction.

the grudging tokens of equality mandated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The state's elected leadership remained all-white until 1970, when the United Citizens Party's threat of running a slate of Black candidates forced the Democratic Party to offer I.S. Leevy Johnson, James Felder, and Herbert Fielding on its ticket. They won, becoming the first Black men since Reconstruction elected to the SC House of Representatives.

Becci Robbins (right) at GROW in 1991 interviewing Jack Herer (left), author of The Emperor Wears No Clothes, *for a story in* POINT. His crew stopped in Columbia on their national Hemp Tour, and were arrested on their way out of town. The next day, GROW staff was dispatched to Winnsboro to bail them out of jail.

In the 1970s, veterans of South Carolina's human rights and anti-war movements explored a period of multi-issue, multiracial collaboration. It was a return to the coalition strategy used to great effect by SNYC in the 1930s and '40s. But, once again, the state's most powerful operatives pursued the activists with full fury, tracking and threatening them, labeling them un-American, and running some of the best and brightest out of the state.

After mainstream civil rights leaders rejected her, Simkins created new vehicles for her work and found new allies. They included the young anti-racist and anti-nuclear activists at GROW, the Grass Roots Organizing Workshop, the hub of leftist organizing in Columbia in the 1970s, '80s and '90s.

For 22 years, GROW rattled the cages of the state's power elite, and challenged the crusty institutions of the old South. I worked there for nearly a decade when I managed the alternative newspaper *POINT*. It was a place unto its own. The walls were covered with past calls to action: strikes, boycotts, marches, protests. Every surface was stacked with books and newspapers. It was loud, with people talking and phones ringing in the offices upstairs, music on the boom box downstairs cranked loud enough to be heard above the din of the printing press.

It felt like the building had always been there, that it had seen some things. It was always dark downstairs, the heavy wooden shutters closed to the Carolina sun. The stairs leading to the second floor were so harrowing that Ms. Simkins refused to use them. The place felt vaguely dangerous, so much so that GROW granted the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) permission to stage a training video there about best practices in executing a drug bust.

I had been wanting to write about GROW for a long time, but it took the death in 2019 of Merll Truesdale to finally make good on that intention. Merll lived in the room across from my office. It was packed floor to ceiling with the counter-culture artifacts he had collected and files tracking 30 years of radical activism in South Carolina. When he died, his friends were left to sort through his belongings. It was like an archaeological dig, and the treasures unearthed were the incentive I needed to finally write about GROW, a true worker collective that, like SNYC generations earlier, offered young people a more just way of being in the world.

Wanting to put GROW in place and time, I looked into what was happening before its founding in 1977 and was surprised to find that staid Columbia was the site of several modern rebellions. GIs at Fort Jackson were among the first and most visible Americans in uniform to organize against the war in Vietnam. In 1968, anti-war activists opened the UFO Coffeehouse, which became a model for GI organizing across the country and overseas. When it was shut down and its staff arrested, the case stoked the student unrest already simmering on campus at the University of South Carolina. They were extraordinary times.

The term "generation gap" was born in the '60s. Misunderstanding ran so deep that when young people flashed the peace sign, their elders often read it as a single-finger salute. Parents were baffled by their kids' new music, long hair, wild clothes, and surly attitudes. Those kids, in turn, began to suspect that their parents not only didn't know everything, but that some of them were willfully ignorant.

I used 1968 and 1988 to bookend this project but of course history isn't so neatly ordered; one era bleeds into the next, one generation into another. But those 20 years were transformative, especially for the young men facing the draft, going to war, and coming home — if they were lucky — questioning the wisdom of their elders and the institutions they were told to trust.

This is not an academic history. Several of the people included in these pages are friends I've known for decades, making an impassive account impossible. The best of those friends is my husband, Brett Bursey, who figures prominently in these pages. My proximity has liabilities, to be sure, but it also affords me access to material that I hope lends this booklet an intimacy and authenticity that comes from being on the inside.

Finally, thank you to the Richland County Conservation Commission for the grant that made this project possible. I am grateful for their continued commitment to telling the lesser-known histories of resisters and reformers in the Midlands. Thanks to *The State* for permission to use its photographs, and to Kyle Criminger and Cecil Cahoon for their invaluable help with the manuscript. Thanks to the FBI and SLED for keeping such extensive notes. Even heavily redacted, they came in handy. And deepest regards to everyone who shared their personal histories, stories that deserve to be preserved and celebrated.

Becci Robbins
Communications Director, SC Progressive Network

Merll Truesdale (foreground) and Richard Schwintek flash peace signs as they march past the SC State House in a 1968 protest.

It is 1968.

Three Americans orbit the moon and return safely home. Star Trek stages TV's first interracial kiss. The Beatles release *The White Album*. Richard Nixon wins the White House. America's children get their first Hot Wheels. Their older brothers and sisters pin up black light posters and groove on lava lamps, among other things. Aretha Franklin wins her first Grammy. Virginia Slims sells women cigarettes by telling them "You've come a long way, baby!"

Tommie Smith and John Carlos raise their fists in a Black Power salute at the Olympics. Feminists crash the Miss America Pageant and throw make-up, bras and other tools of the patriarchy into a Freedom Trash Can. Shirley Chisholm becomes the first Black woman elected to US Congress.

An army of 23,000 cops in riot gear beat anti-war activists outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The Tet Offensive and US atrocities at My Lai shake the nation's belief that America can win the war in Vietnam. CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite says it out loud on the evening news. Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., are assassinated.

In South Carolina, state police fire on unarmed students demonstrating against segregation in Orangeburg, injuring 27 and killing Samuel Hammond, Henry Smith, and Delano Middleton.

Some of the world's richest corporations — Gulf Oil, Allied Chemical, and Royal Dutch Shell — form Allied General Nuclear Services, and buy land in Barnwell County to build a plant they say will transform energy production and reap giant profits for South Carolina.

In Columbia, the UFO Coffeehouse opens on Main Street. It soon becomes a vibrant haven for the city's emerging anti-war movement — and a thorn in the side of the city elders.

On Fort Jackson, 35 soldiers gather at the chapel across from Army headquarters to hold a "pray-in for peace." Defying orders to get off their knees, two GIs are hauled off to face courts-martial. Before the year is out, Black and Latino soldiers on the Fort launch GIs United Against the War in Vietnam. With civilian allies, they begin publishing *The Short Times*, a subversive GI newspaper that tests the edges of free speech in the military.

The power elite in South Carolina are rattled by the growing resistance to the standard order, and begin collaborating with law enforcement to install informants at the UFO, in the barracks at Fort Jackson, and on Columbia's college campuses. The surveillance is deep, wide, and chilling.

What the old guard doesn't predict is the resistance they meet. The harder they crack down on dissent, the wider and stronger it grows. They would have been wise to listen to Columbia human rights activist Modjeska Simkins, who once warned, "The movement rises up when the pressure comes down."

She was right. It did. ❋

Fort Jackson soldiers fire first shots in GI resistance to Vietnam War

When Capt. Howard Levy landed in Columbia in 1965 to head up the dermatology clinic at Fort Jackson, he had strong opinions about the Vietnam War. He believed it was a moral and political failure, a tragic mistake.

Facing the military draft, Levy had opted for the Berry Plan, which let students defer two years of military service until they finished medical school. Now it was time for him to make good on that arrangement. Trouble was, his views had evolved, and he was forced to reconcile his obligation to the Army with his core beliefs — which soon proved impossible.

The Brooklyn native and graduate of New York University completed his residency work at Bellevue and Manhattan Veterans Hospital, where he saw the price of poverty in a tiered health-care system that favors the haves over the have-nots.

His years treating New York's poor cultivated in Levy a keen awareness of race and class that would color his world view — including in Southeast Asia. Especially Southeast Asia.

He read widely, and began connecting the dots between monied interests and American foreign policy. Horrified by the picture that emerged, he began going to antiwar rallies, picketing with striking workers, listening to lectures by leading activists, and sharpening his political arguments. The more he learned, the more outspoken he became.

Small wonder that the Army was a bad fit from the beginning. The young captain chafed at the stratified military culture and rejected the privilege his rank afforded. He declined to join the Officers Club because he "didn't like swimming, tennis, golf — or officers." The feeling was mutual. They didn't like the way he kept his hair and maintained his uniform, found his salute sloppy and his politics problematic.

Levy chose to live off post in a Black neighborhood rather than in officers quarters. He spent his weekends volunteering with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference doing voter registration in rural Newberry County. He also started "Carolina Contrast," a bimonthly newsletter for the Voter Education Project.

Levy's habits and associations raised eyebrows on post as well as the suspicion of the Army's Counter-Intelligence Corps, which began keeping tabs on the young doctor. For such a slight fellow, he threw a long shadow. The brass wasn't sure what to make of him.

"Levy incorporated three original and indissoluble sins," Andrew Kopkind wrote in the GI newspaper *Hard Times*. "He was a Jew, a liberal, and a New Yorker." It didn't help that Levy, chatty by nature, expressed himself openly and often, on and off post.

Things came to a head when Levy decided to stop training Green Berets in his clinic on the grounds that it violated medical ethics. He argued that what he taught them would be used as a tool to win the confidence of civilians in Vietnam, what he called "prostituting medicine." He had heard stories about American troops dispensing medication to villagers during the day and blowing up their hamlet at night. He refused to be a party to it.

At first, Levy followed the rules, albeit with a certain unease. Eventually, though, his conscience got the best of him and he simply refused to train the Special Forces troops headed for Vietnam.

When the hospital's commanding officer, Col. Henry Fancy, got wind of it, he called Levy in and issued an ultimatum: follow orders or face "consequences." Levy chose the latter.

The colonel had planned to issue a mild reprimand, but after reading a dossier provided by military intelligence officers, he labeled Levy a communist "pinko" and upped the charges against him to court martial level.

Levy held firm. And so began a legal battle that would drag through the courts for seven years.

Levy case puts Columbia in international spotlight

Levy was formally charged on Dec. 28, 1966 with making statements "designed to promote disloyalty and disaffection among the troops and publicly uttered disloyal statements to Army personnel." Among the examples offered, were that Levy had said Black soldiers should refuse to fight in Vietnam because they were discriminated against in their own country and were being given hazardous duty and suffering a disproportionate level of casualties in Vietnam.

Levy didn't dispute the charges about Vietnam, but said he never intended to promote disaffection in the ranks. "The implication is that I am a captain and my statements carry weight," he said. "They were my own personal observations."

He told the Associated Press that he refused to train the soldiers because medicine "should be performed without strings attached; that the aidmen go out in Vietnam and elsewhere and offer concrete medical help, but behind it all is politics. They are doing it to bribe peasants to a certain political allegiance and using medicine as a bribe."

Levy's case was the first to cite the Nuremberg Principles, which were guidelines adopted after WWII to determine what constitutes a war crime. The document was created by the United Nations to codify the legal principles of a "just war" underlying the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi party members.

The story generated intense media interest. Coverage was a mixed bag, depending on geography and the news outlet. The local press largely maintained its long habit of military boosterism, deferring to Fort Jackson's economic and political influence in the city and state.

The State's editorial board called Levy an "unsavory character who has sullied the proud record of Fort Jackson as the home and training ground for American fighting men" and accused him of "shaming the uniform of the United States Army. Levy's stay in Columbia has been marked by considerable involvement in Negro civil rights activities, but his advice to Negro soldiers at Fort Jackson makes him unfit to associate with patriotic Negroes. Negro Americans have acquitted themselves with valor and dedication in their nation's service in other wars, but never more notably than in the fight against Communism in South Vietnam."

The editorial concluded that, whatever the verdict in court, Levy "already stands guilty of dishonoring those Americans of his generation who, black and white alike, have given the last full measure of devotion to their country."

To reporters like Kopkind, just starting his career writing about resisters to the Vietnam War, Levy was a hero and an inspiration. In *Hard Times* he wrote, "Those who had met Levy were moved by the ferocity of his own struggle, and the many more who had never seen him were excited by his example."

When court martial proceedings began on May 10, 1967, Levy faced five charges:

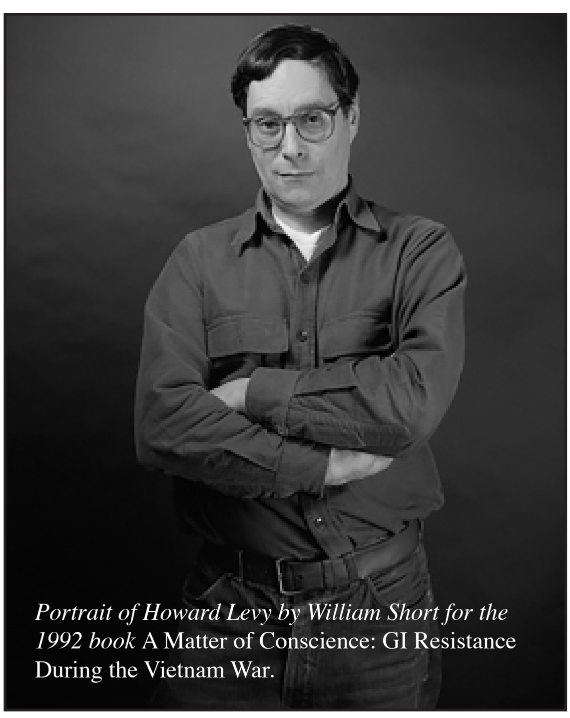
- conduct unbecoming an officer;
- disobeying a lawful command to establish and operate a training program in dermatology for Special Forces;
- promoting disloyalty and disaffection among Army troops;
- intemperate, contemptuous and disrespectful statements to enlisted personnel;
- and interfering with and impairing the loyalty, morale and discipline of military forces.

The trial played out over four weeks in a cramped, over-heated courtroom on post, at times attended by as many as 100 reporters. Two seats were taken by Levy's distressed parents, a third by his girlfriend.

Leading the defense team was Charles Morgan, Jr., the Atlanta-based American

Capt. Howard Levy is taken from the courtroom to the stockade at Fort Jackson on June 3, 1967, after being sentenced to three years of hard labor for refusing to train Green Berets on their way to Vietnam.

University of South Carolina Moving Image Research Collection



Portrait of Howard Levy by William Short for the 1992 book A Matter of Conscience: GI Resistance During the Vietnam War.

Civil Liberties Union lawyer who had represented Julian Bond and Muhammad Ali in their high-profile Vietnam-related cases. (Morgan would later lead the ACLU's effort to oust President Richard Nixon, publishing the practical guide "Why President Richard Nixon Should Be Impeached.")

At trial, Morgan said, "It can no longer be maintained that military personnel comprise a class of citizens excluded from the safeguards of the Bill of Rights. It is the duty of every American to think, to dream, and to speak."

Ten court-martial officers deliberated for six hours to arrive at their verdict: guilty of all charges. The next day, they sentenced Levy to three years at hard labor and forfeiture of pay and allowances.

All hell broke loose.

Spectators spilled into the aisles, and reporters bolted from the room to file their stories. The executive officer of the Fort Jackson hospital, Col. Chester Davis, dramatically pulled out a pair of handcuffs. Shocked, Morgan bellowed, "Colonel, you know those handcuffs aren't necessary."

Undeterred, the colonel snapped the cuffs shut, roughly grabbed Levy by the upper arm, and hustled him out to a waiting car.

Levy's girlfriend sobbed. His parents gasped and rose in protest. Morgan shouted, "This is a disgrace, Colonel. There is no need to lay hands on him. I advise you and instruct you of that now!"

This letter was used at trial as evidence against Capt. Levy, whose friend asked him to reach out to the soldier in Vietnam.

1041 Marion St., Columbia, SC
9-10-65

Dear Geoffrey,

My name is Howard Levy. I'm an Army Dermatologist at Fort Jackson, S.C. I've read your letters to Bill and have been especially interested in your views on Viet Nam since I too have had a deep seated interest in the situation there. I think you would agree that from the time we backed Diem that we have politically not been very astute. The only question that remains, is essentially 1) were we merely naive and therefore did we make unintentional mistakes or 2) does the U.S. foreign policy represent a diabolical evil. As you would guess I opt for the second proposition.

Basically there are two aims to our foreign policy. 1) The stated part – to contain "Communism" and 2) the unstated part – to support "stable" governments so that our foreign investors may profit. It should be noted that our definition of "Communism" is very, very broad. So broad in fact as to become practically worthless.

To get closer to home (your home and I hope it's temporary) are the North Vietnamese worse off than the South Vietnamese? I doubt it. If they are why do so many back the Viet Cong? Guerrilla terrorism? Unlikely. The truth is that the North has instituted land reform, schools and medical facilities. Why hasn't it happened in the South and why do you insist that it will happen? It hasn't in any of our other colonies. It didn't even happen in the U.S. until the Negro got off his ass and made it happen.

Geoffrey, who are you fighting for? Do you know? Have you thought about it? Your real battle is back here in the U.S., but why must I fight it for you? The same people who suppress Negroes and poor whites here are doing it all over again all over the world and you're helping them. Why? You, no doubt, know about the terror the whites have inflicted upon Negroes in our country. Aren't you guilty of the same thing with regard the Vietnamese? A dead woman is a dead woman in Alabama and in Viet Nam. To destroy a child's life in Viet Nam equals a destroyed life in Harlem. For what cause?

If we must destroy a whole people to win, then I don't understand the true context of the word. Who are we winning for? The government in Saigon? Which one? It may change before you receive this letter. I would hasten to remind you that despite your obvious courage and enthusiasm, Viet Nam is not our country and you are not a Vietnamese. At least the Viet Cong have that on their side.

These people know more about America and her generosity than you or I, thanks to American puppets in Saigon. You're no different than the governor of Alabama telling the Negroes that he has their best interests at heart. Even if it were true, and it's not, it would be a contemptible argument because it's so damn condescending. Geoffrey these people may not be sophisticated (American style), but they're grown men and women who have a right to live and choose their own government.

I would appreciate your views on some of the points I have raised. In any event, let me wish you good luck and safe conduct in your present situation.

Yours truly, Howard Levy

Before the attorneys or reporters could react, police set up a roadblock to prevent them from following the car. TV footage shows Morgan demanding to know where his client is being taken. The MPs say nothing.

The next day, *The State* ran two articles about the Levy case on the front page of the Sunday newspaper. They ran next to a story with the latest news from the front lines headlined "GIs Kill 474 Reds; Marines Lose 54."

Levy was taken to Fort Jackson's stockade, but later was moved to a makeshift ward in the hospital, where he was confined until he was transferred to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, just before Christmas. From his cell, Levy pored over his trial transcripts, corresponded with anti-war activists, and held court with the visitors who stopped by to offer reading material and words of encouragement. His days in lock-down deepened his convictions and elevated him as a symbol of GI resistance, not just in South Carolina but across the country and overseas.

Levy served 27 months behind bars, first at Leavenworth and later a federal penitentiary in Pennsylvania, where he was sent after finishing his military obligation. When he was released in August 1969, a reporter at *The State* asked him whether it had been worth it. Levy expressed no regret, saying the trial exposed some hard truths. "I think what we did was shatter the anonymity of the sacred institution of the US Army, particularly its judicial process," he said. "From a public relations standpoint, the Army blew it."

In 1988, when *The State* reporter Claudia Brinson interviewed him for a retrospective on the trial, his answer to the same question was, "My God, not only did we lose, but we set back the cause of military justice by 400 years." Still, he told her, those were the best days of his life.

"There was a feeling in the '60s of unlimited possibilities. Can't we really see what the human experience is all about? Can't we love each other? Can't we raise our children in a reasonable environment? Can't we equalize things so that people aren't divided economically?" ❋

Soldiers face court-martial at "pray-in"

Any relief the Army may have felt with Capt. Howard Levy behind bars was short-lived. Just nine months after he was hauled off to the stockade, evidence of GI unrest was growing on Fort Jackson.

On Feb. 13, 1968, a couple dozen GIs gathered at the chapel across from the post headquarters to pray for an end to the war in Vietnam. They had received the okay to meet — permission that was later denied.

They decided to go ahead with their meeting anyway. They figured that if they were allowed to congregate at the chapel, it would pave the way for further GI organizing on post. If the Army cracked down, they reasoned, it would only serve to amplify the voice of dissent within the military.

They knew the press was watching. The soldiers' civilian allies at the newly opened UFO coffeehouse in downtown Columbia had issued a media alert. It was the first organizing effort between them, and while decisions were made jointly, it was agreed that the pray-in would be done by GIs in uniform on the Fort.

Col. Chester Davis, the officer who handcuffed Levy just months earlier, arrived on the scene and ordered the men to disperse. Most of them complied, but the five who lingered in front of the chapel were charged with disorderly conduct. Two soldiers — Pvt. Robert Tatar and Pvt. Steve Kline — dropped to their knees, refusing an MP's order to stop praying. The two were dragged to their feet and taken away for interrogation. Reporters were told that no charges would be filed against the soldiers, but were later informed that the men would be court martialed.

It wasn't a good look, ordering men to stop praying. The Army knew it had a public relations disaster on its hands. So when they got wind of a second pray-in planned for the following week, they tried to head off bad press by cutting access to the post. Reporter Paul Cowan was able to get on, but was picked up by an MP and detained at police headquarters.

As it turned out, only two soldiers showed up for the pray-in, and they left after MPs took their names. Reporters were taking notes, and the story slowly grew legs after coverage appeared in *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

Pvts. Robert Tatar and Steve Kline defy orders to get off their knees and quit praying.

By the time Cowan's piece ran in the March 9 issue of *The Village Voice*, Pvts. Kline and Tatar's prospects were brighter. At least one congressman, New York's William Fitts Ryan, had called the base commander and pleaded for leniency. Charles Morgan, Jr., Levy's lawyer, agreed to take the case. A familiar buzz was electrifying the Army installation and unnerving the brass.

"Fort Jackson officials began having second thoughts about punishment," Cowan wrote. "Feeling against the war here is more widespread than the response to the pray-in suggests."

On Feb. 23, the Army announced that it was dropping charges against Kline and Tatar. They released a statement that read, "Soldiers' religious affairs are of highest concern to post officials." ❋

Fort Jackson's GIs United Against the War in Vietnam tests American soldiers' right to free speech

The Fort Jackson Eight: (from left) Andrew Pulley, Jose Rudder, Delmar Thomas, Edilberto Chaparro, Tommie Woodfin, Dominick Duddie, Joe Cole, and Curtis Mays.

When Joe Miles' induction notice landed in his mailbox one fateful day in 1968, he wrote back that he was a member of the Young Socialist Alliance, was staunchly antiwar, and would not stop acting on his deeply held beliefs. The Army drafted him anyway, and sent him to Fort Jackson for training.

Pvt. Miles moved into Company B during the first week of January 1969. There he was surprised to find the kind of vibe he had sought out while organizing Black students in Washington, DC. "The GIs were just kind of bubbling," he told Fred Halstead, then writing for the socialist newspaper *The Militant*. "The brothers had a very well-developed level of Black consciousness. It was the first time I had ever seen a bunch of GIs together who were really thinking — about the war, about society, about 'why in the hell am I in the Army?'"

Perhaps nobody was more responsible for setting the tone in Company B than Pvt. Andrew Pulley, an 18-year-old from Cleveland, Ohio. Miles was impressed by the young man's passion and presence. "Pulley used to throw out such beautiful raps to these lifers," he said. "He'd blow their minds."

Miles called Pulley "a tremendous Black revolutionary. The company commander called him a "Black power punk."

One night, while shooting the breeze in the barracks, Miles pulled out some Malcolm X cassette tapes and played them for the guys. "People were really listening," he said. "It was like Malcolm had been made for this kind of audience, and we were ready for him."

The tapes electrified the young soldiers, hitting personal and political notes that rang true for them. They began talking about capitalism, US imperialism, and the war they were being trained to fight. They also talked about race, which was central to their experience in a military that was fighting its first truly integrated war. Blacks were drafted at a higher rate than whites, and made up a disproportionate number of combat forces on the front lines in Vietnam.

The initial group was made up of about a dozen Black GIs and a Puerto Rican. They got serious right away, meeting four nights a week, and the group grew quickly as word spread. When they decided to formalize what they were doing, they chose the name GIs United Against the War in Vietnam, and opened the door to white allies.

It was a strategic move, as they knew the wider their coalition, the deeper their clout. As Malcolm had taught them, Black people aren't alone in being oppressed in America; so are Latinos, Native Americans, and poor whites. "We realized that the working class, period, was being oppressed and exploited," Pulley told Halstead. "As GIs we were being oppressed and exploited more so than any other group of people in the country because we are asked to risk our lives for something we don't believe in." So they opened the meetings to "any person who dug what we dug."

The first integrated meeting attracted more than 80 GIs. Word had already made it up the chain of command, which was clearly rattled. Earlier that day, in an obvious attempt to tamp down the emerging effort to organize GIs on post, the company's first sergeant told the men that, to prevent the spread of respiratory infections, no

more than eight people could gather in the barracks.

Undeterred, the GIs met outside, in spite of the January weather. Joe Cole was one of the white soldiers at the gathering. "There was profound respect," he said. "Although most of the people, either white or Black, had no organizational experience, no one spoke out of turn." Cole was Permanent Party, attached to the post and prohibited from associating with trainees. His hat and insignia signified his status, so when sergeants from his company stopped in unannounced, the group maneuvered around Cole to conceal his identity. "It was an experience I'll always remember."

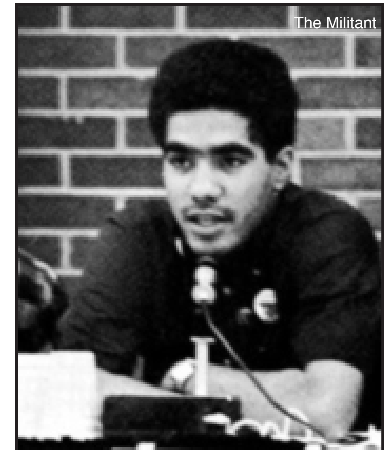
Their first planned action was to draft a petition to post commander Gen. James Hollingsworth asking that the Army provide facilities "for an open discussion on the legal and moral questions relating to the war in Vietnam." They also wanted a forum to talk about free speech in the Army and about racism in the ranks.

They formed "truth squads" to circulate the petitions around post, and in two days collected more than 200 signatures. "After that," Cole said, "it got pretty hard because the whole company was restricted when the brass caught on."

Support for the petition was wider than they expected even though some GIs were too afraid to sign and others were instructed by their superiors to remove their names after they did. Some petitioners were arrested, and others were restricted to their barracks. Leaders of the group were singled out for relentless harassment, including twice-weekly KP duty, long shifts usually assigned once a month. Pulley, Rudder, and Curtis Mays were ordered to strip and wax the same barracks floor every day.

"Although we were being harassed, we fought back," Pulley said. They carefully recorded all the threats and intimidation in affidavits to share with legal counsel as they began building a case against the Army.

The GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee detailed the abuses in a press release on March 13, 1969. By then, five GIs had been court martialed, and a sixth was awaiting trial. Petitioners had lost pay, been fined, held in the stockade, and thrown into "the box" for solitary confinement. "While this harassment is continuing and increasing," the release said, "support from civilians and other GIs is starting to pour in," from high school students, antiwar organizations, and soldiers in Vietnam.



Joe Miles

"In response to our efforts," Miles said, "we have received court-martials, trumped-up charges, and punitive transfers. Our company was on restriction so long that the barracks began to look like jail to us."

The harassment only further galvanized the GI movement. "No matter what they do to us," Miles said, "they'll never stop the way guys feel. They can't put thoughts in jail."

Fort Jackson heats up

When Miles graduated with the supply school class on Feb. 14, he was given three hours to pack his bags and a bus ticket to Fort Bragg, NC. As he was leaving the barracks, someone got on the PA and yelled, "We'll carry on!"

And they did. "After they shipped me out and cracked down some," Miles said, "Andrew and Jose [Rudder] built GIs United right back up again, because there was an understanding on everybody's part just what had to be done." Rudder was a 20-year-old from Washington, DC, who had served in Vietnam and brought a critical perspective.

The days after Miles left were depressing, Pulley said. "The rap that I would give to encourage the GIs to come to the meeting was the fact that for so long we had been sitting down, just waiting on gradualism, waiting on the thing to cure itself rather than getting out and doing it ourselves. They understood it."

The group drafted a statement of aims to help them focus their mission, and began planning to present their petitions to maximize GI participation and press coverage.

"As soon as we announced we'd present the petition, the stuff hit the fan," Cole said. "MPs on post were mobilized. There were trucks with weapons stationed around the brigade area. All guards were ordered to be on the lookout for anyone with petitions. Gates to the post were crawling with guards."

BACK HOME IN THE STATES, NEGROES ARE AT THE END OF THE LINE, BUT HERE IN VIET NAM ITS DIFFERENT—WE PUT YOU RIGHT UP FRONT!!

Company B's restrictions were extended, making a mass action impossible, so the dissident soldiers decided to send two people outside of the company to deliver the petitions. They alerted the press, and on March 3, dispatched Cole and Steve Dash to the base headquarters, where they met a crowd of reporters, cops, undercover cops, Army officials, and the commanding general.

GIs United Statement of Aims

March 1969
Fort Jackson, South Carolina

Fellow GIs:

For the past decade our country has been involved in a long, drawn-out, costly and tragic war in Vietnam. Most Americans do not support this war — increasing numbers are demonstrating their opposition, including active duty GIs. It is the most unpopular war in our history. Yet the government's policy threatens to continue this tragedy for many years to come.

Meanwhile, our country suffers while the slaughter goes on. The vast resources and sums of money the government squanders in support of a corrupt dictatorship in Saigon belong to the American people. It should be used to improve America, to make our country the shining example all of us want it to be — a free society — free of poverty and hunger, free of racial oppression, free of slums and illiteracy, and the misery they produce.

In addition, the rights and dignity of the black man in America have been trampled upon for the past 400 years. While being called upon to fight and die for so-called freedom, he has been forced to suffer racial oppression, discrimination, and social degradation within as well as outside the armed forces.

Many black GIs are becoming increasingly aware of the hypocrisy of fighting against other people of color who are struggling for the same rights of self-determination as they are. Afro-Americans and all oppressed national minorities have the unconditional right to control their lives and determine their destinies as they see fit.

We, as GIs, are forced to suffer most of all in the Vietnam fiasco. Many of us were drafted into the Army against our will — nearly all of us are kept in its grasp against our will — all in order to carry out this illegal, immoral, and unjust war. We are forced to fight and die in a war we did not create and in which we don't believe.

This is not to mention the tens of thousands of innocent Vietnamese who are dying at our hands, many of them killed only because we can no longer tell the difference between them and our "enemies." While all this goes on, the Army continues to trample on our rights as well as our lives.

All the crap, the harassment, dehumanization and contempt for the enlisted man that make "F.T.A." the three most popular letters in the Army goes on full swing in Nam, just like it does here. Inspections, haircuts, saluting the brass, etc., are all part of the grind. And there's a reason for it: the Army has to crush our spirit; it has to tamp the humanity and individuality out of us so we won't be able to fight back.

This is an undemocratic war—the only way it can be fought is with an undemocratic army, where GIs cannot be allowed to think, to discuss the war and speak out against it, to influence and control policy. But it is our right to be human. No one can take that from us—no one has the right to rob us of our dignity, like the Army tries to do every day.

It is our right to think, and to speak out against an unjust war, to demonstrate our opposition if that is necessary. We are citizens of America even if the Army would like to forget it, and these rights are guaranteed to us by the Constitution of the United States.

The Army wants to take away our rights, to keep us from exercising them so they can make us fight a war we don't want any part of. But the Constitution says they can't do that. If we stand up for our rights and use them the Army cannot stop us. If we speak out and demonstrate our opposition to the dirty war in Vietnam, no one can stop us.

If we get together, and if we get out and get the support of civilians who are also against the war, we can defend our rights and make our grievances known effectively. If we can get together, we can win. Some of us have already begun to do this. We have come together as GIs United Against the War in Vietnam in order to organize ourselves to defend our rights and help bring all the troops home from Vietnam now!

If you agree with us, join with us. Together we can tell the truth about the Army and war, and use that truth to make us free!

The petitions were refused on the grounds that they amounted to collective bargaining. "They read off a statement and gave us a direct order to go back to our barracks," Cole said. "We saluted and left." Dash would later be discharged from the Army for "unsuitability."

To the powers that be, it may have looked like a victory but, in due time, it became clear that it wasn't. By now, GIs United had lawyered up and was methodically collecting evidence of selective harassment. This was just one more item to include in their case. The general's refusal to even look at the petitions only inflamed enlisted men and women on the post. "They thought they'd been robbed," Cole said. "Support for us mushroomed."

That support soon spread nationally. NBC's Huntley-Brinkley Report, one of the leading television news programs, sent a crew to Fort Jackson to cover the mobilizing efforts of GIs United and the military's reaction. "It really got around," Rudder said, "and that must have worried the brass."

Just days later, on March 20, a casual gathering outside the barracks after dinner turned into an impromptu meeting of GIs United. "We just started rapping about the war, about the Army, cracking a few jokes," Rudder said. "But guys were listening and I began to get serious and Pulley got serious. There were maybe 200 guys standing around and looking out the windows."

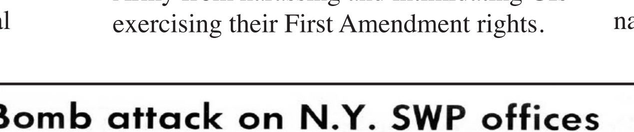
It was light-hearted, at first. Sergeants passing by told Pulley to tuck in his shirt and told Rudder to get a haircut, but issued no orders to disperse. When they were out of earshot, Rudder asked the GIs whether they thought the $10,000 life insurance granted relatives in the case of their death was a fair deal. The GIs shouted back, "No!" Cole talked about Tommie Woodfin, who had faced court martial after he circulated the petition on post.

"There was something in the air," Cole said. Whatever it was aroused Fort Jackson officials. The next day, four members of GIs United were arrested. Charges included breach of the peace and holding an illegal demonstration. Days later, five more GIs from the gathering were put on house arrest. They became known as "The Fort Jackson Nine."

Rudder was one of them. On his way to the stockade, he could hear Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A-'Changing" playing on a friend's stereo. "The significance was lost on the people who were taking me away, but it wasn't lost on the other guys, and it wasn't lost on me."

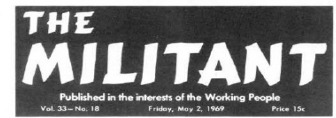
GIs United in national spotlight

On April 1, 1969, GIs United filed suit for the right to hold meetings and to circulate petitions, and asked the court to enjoin the Army from harassing and intimidating GIs exercising their First Amendment rights.



Bomb attack on N.Y. SWP offices

— see page 12



THE MILITANT

Published in the interests of the Working People

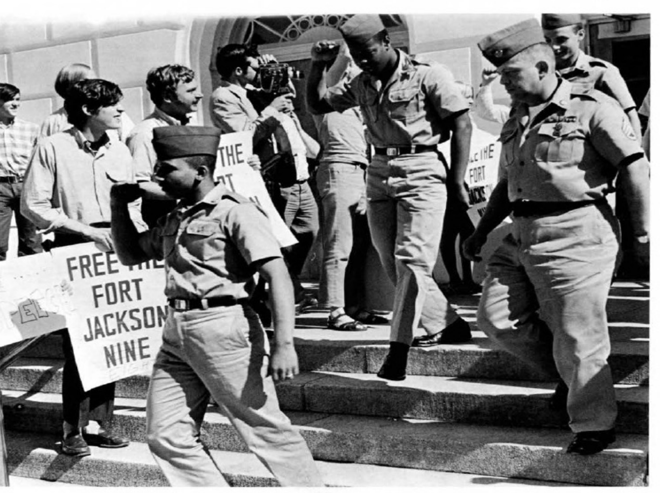
Vol. 33—No. 18 Friday, May 2, 1969 Price 15c

Pvt. Joe Miles discusses the GIs United

— pages 6-7 —

Hearing for Ft. Jackson 8 shows Army has fake case

— see page 12



UNDAUNTED Scene on steps of federal courthouse in Columbia, S. C., as Ft. Jackson 8 emerge from hearing where their attorneys are seeking writ to have them released from illegal Army detention. Placard-carrying supporters are students from University of South Carolina in Columbia.

The story piqued interest in underground and in mainstream news outlets across the country. The implications of the case were huge.

Veterans Stars & Stripes for Peace reported, "For GIs organizing against the Vietnam war in ever greater numbers, Fort Jackson, S. Car. shapes up as the first decisive front. Antiwar servicemen there, organized as GIs United Against the War in Vietnam, seek the support of the entire peace movement as they wage an epic offensive-defensive battle. They ain't seen nuthin yet compared to what things will be like if the senseless slaughter of our men goes on more months and years."

The *New York Times* reported, "A classic case approaches a climax this week at Fort Jackson, S.C. By harassing, restricting and arresting on dubious charges the leaders of an interracial militant enlisted group there called GIs United Against the War in Vietnam, Fort Jackson's brass has produced a cause *celebre* out of all proportion to the known facts. It has also brought about two court actions, directed by capable and contentious civilian legal counsel, which may give a merely fractious episode lasting effect.

"The Fort Jackson lawsuits, if they are upheld, will give the courts a clear opening to declare that American enlisted men do, indeed, have the same right to oppose by all lawful, orderly means the course chosen by their government and military leaders."

The more the Army jailed, restricted, reassigned, and tried to intimidate the troops, the stronger the resistance grew. As Pulley said, "The seed has already been planted. The tree will continue to grow, whether there's a 'ringleader' or not. They can't stamp out a thought."

In a letter printed in the May 2 issue of *The Militant*, Woodfin expressed his gratitude for the outpouring of support he'd received while incar-

cerated. "I can't overemphasize how your letters boost our morale to its greatest elevation, which in turn makes the walls of confinement seem very thin. Your letters reassure us that we don't stand alone."

When the Fort Jackson Nine appeared in federal court in Columbia, a group of students from the University of South Carolina stood outside in a show of solidarity. "It was beyond words," Cole said, surprised at the civilian support for their case.

Fred Halstead

Andrew Pulley, Jose Rudder, and Joe Cole just after being released from the stockade.

The stakes were high, and the defendants were subjected to intense pressure to accept an undesirable discharge in exchange for a trial. Officials promised they could be out of the stockade in 10 minutes and out of the Army in a day. "They had some real masterminds in snakery, in viperishness," Cole said, "including one Army lawyer who would tell us we were going to do long terms."

Pvt. Edilberto Chapparo took the deal, and his buddies didn't fault him for it. He was only 17, and they agreed he should go home. The rest chose to take the case to court. They figured the Army's repeated bargaining meant that it had a shaky legal case against them.

Those instincts proved to be right. The Army ended up dropping charges. At the court martial hearing, attorneys for the GIs "just demolished them," Rudder said. "It was brilliant, and the world was watching."

Prosecuting witnesses appeared confused, and gave conflicting testimony. Pulley said, "[they] kept contradicting themselves. One guy saying the order to disperse was given, another saying it wasn't. And Huffman, the pig, was the main witness, and he had to admit we did everything above-board." The "pig" would be John Huffman, who turned out to be a spy, infiltrating GIs United and being present while they met with their lawyer. The betrayal was not a surprise, as the GI organizers knew there would likely be informers in their midst. They were suspicious after Huffman urged them to take drugs and, on one occasion, to assault an MP. This was contrary to the group's pledge to keep all activities legal so that nothing they did could be used against them.

Miles away

After Miles was sent to Fort Bragg, he resumed his antiwar organizing. Unlike the trainees at Fort Jackson, more of the troops there had experience in Vietnam. In a way, that made them even more open to honest dialogue about the war. As he put it, when enlisted men and women begin to understand that they have not been fighting for freedom, as they'd been told, but rather, "for some chump to make money off of you. Well that radicalized the hell out of you!"

In April while on weekend leave, Miles went to New York to speak at several events. He gave an update on the case of the Fort Jackson Eight and the reasons why he was optimistic about the state of the antiwar movement. "A majority of GIs don't feel that it's worth our lives going 10,000 miles away to fight for freedom, for so-called democracy, when we don't have it back home."

GIs sign an oath to defend the Constitution with their very lives and, he said, "Surely that gives us more of a right than anyone to discuss the war in Vietnam, to discuss racism in this country, or any other social or political issues. We have more right than anyone to speak against this war because we fight it. We go over there and we die."

In May, the Army tried to isolate Miles by transferring him to a unit across the sprawling post. Soon, even that wasn't far enough away. In June, they transferred him to the Arctic Circle.

"Apparently they have now decided that a post some hundreds of miles north of Fairbanks, Alaska, is safer," *The Militant* reported. "The Army apparently hopes that the opposition to the war among American servicemen will be stemmed by cooling one GI's heels at the North Pole."

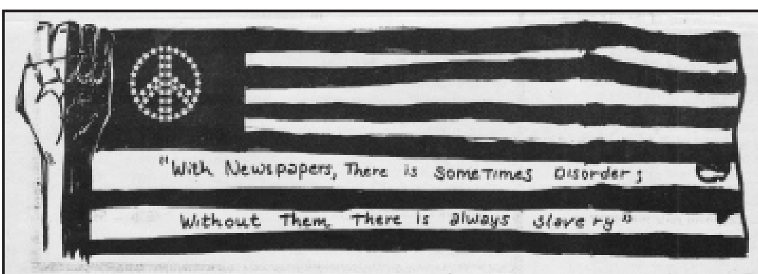
When the Army discharged Pulley, he moved across the country to help organize GIs in Washington. As reported in the Sept. 20 issue of the GI paper *Counterpoint*, "GIs United Against the War in Vietnam has formed on the West Coast and, as Andrew Pulley put it, 'The minds of the establishment are going to be blown.'"

Pulley went on to run as the Socialist Party candidate for the US Congress from California's 7th District, which he lost to Democrat Ron Dellums. During his campaign, Pulley flew to India, Ceylon, Japan, and the Philippines, giving speeches and mobilizing support for antiwar protests abroad.

Col. Thomas Maertens, who was responsible for singling out the Fort Jackson Nine to be charged, told *The Times* that American citizens lose certain rights when they join the military. "The minute I raise my hand and take the oath to become a member of the armed forces and to wear a uniform and to be subject to the code of military justice, I am now a different person in many, many, respects," he said. "If a soldier can stand and equivocate on the field of battle as to whether an order is in fact within his constitutional rights, that man is not going to move forward in battle."

Some 30 years later, Maertens was still appalled. He told *The State*, "We never encountered this in all my years growing up in the Army and serving. I've never seen a situation where people *en masse* defied the authority of the U.S. Army."

Fort Jackson newspaper was a leader in anti-war GI press



The GI antiwar movement depended on a wide network of underground newspapers to keep troops informed, inspired, and mobilized at bases across the country and overseas, mostly in Germany and Japan. They ranged from scrappy, short-lived mimeographed newsletters to more professional, longer-run papers. They were found in barracks across the country, in coffeehouses, on aircraft carriers, and in quonset huts in Vietnam. According to historian James Lewes, there were more than 900 of them all over the world.

The papers offered GIs a place to air grievances, promote protest rallies, share legal resources, laugh at "the brass," and connect with others of like mind. In an era before the Internet or cell phones, the newspapers were vital tools for building and sustaining the antiwar movement within the military and growing alliances outside of it.

One of the first GI newspapers was *The Short Times*, which began publishing in 1968 "by and for GIs at Fort Jackson." ("Short" is military jargon for soldiers whose tour is nearly complete.) The first issues were run off on a mimeograph machine and hand-stapled. Over time, *Short Times* evolved into a more sophisticated newspaper with staff and a post office box. They went from a secret operation to meeting openly at the UFO Coffeehouse and, after that was shuttered, at the GI Center near Valley Park in Columbia. The paper published until 1972, a longer run than most such publications.

Its mission was to "reveal and make available information direly needed for GIs who don't believe that Vietnam is worth fighting and dying for" and ultimately, building enough resistance to the war to force its end.

The transient nature of the military and the risk inherent in GIs putting out material critical of the war made the newspapers hard to sustain. That they existed at all is a testament to their creators. The papers had irreverent, sometimes explosive content and cheeky titles — *Harass the Brass*, *Fort Polk Puke, Star-Spangled Bummer, The Hunley Hemorrhoid, Chickenshit Weekly, Kitty Litter* on the USS Kitty Hawk, *Fat Albert's Death Ship Times*, *Rough Draft,* and *The Man Can't Win If Ya Grin*.

In its first two years, *The Short Times*' circulation grew to 5,000. They expanded beyond Columbia to Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter and to the military facilities in Charleston. Soldiers contributed art, poetry, and letters. Volunteers helped circulate it.

AR 381-135
GI's HAVE THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE AND KEEP ANY PRINTED MATTER THAT THEY DESIRE

THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS PAPER ARE NOT NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE DEPT. OF THE ARMY!

THE SHORT TIMES

BOX 543 Columbia S.C. PRINTED FOR AND BY FORT JACKSON GI's

UFO OPENS IN EXILE

SECOND RALLY PLANNED FOR SUNDAY

The UFO in EXILE now open at The University of S.C. Russell House Room 207

Free Food
Free Movies
Free Literature
Free Conversation
FREE ALL GI's

RALLY Sunday February 8 USC's Drayton Hall (see map) 2:00 PM
Free Rock Music ~ Famous Speakers
Workshops on Repression for GI's, Puerto Ricans, Blacks, Women, Workers

In a retrospective written in April 1970, *Short Times* editors recalled, "As the paper gained national prominence, financial aid started pouring in. The tone of the paper changed drastically from the meek complaints of the mistreated GI to bold assertiveness, from feeble suggestions that something was wrong in a particular company to aggressive exposés.

"Distribution became more brazen and overt, both on and off base. The brass and local henchmen grew increasingly paranoid. It was in the air. *Short Times* was not only becoming more effective and dangerous but was becoming, by God believe-it-or-not, FUN."

The more effective the paper became, the more push-back it got. Papers were confiscated, and the staff harassed. Volunteers distributing papers around town were charged with littering. The newspaper took the matter to court, and the district attorney conceded the local statute was unenforceable. "The streets are now ours," *Short Times* rejoiced. "Next objective—the Base."

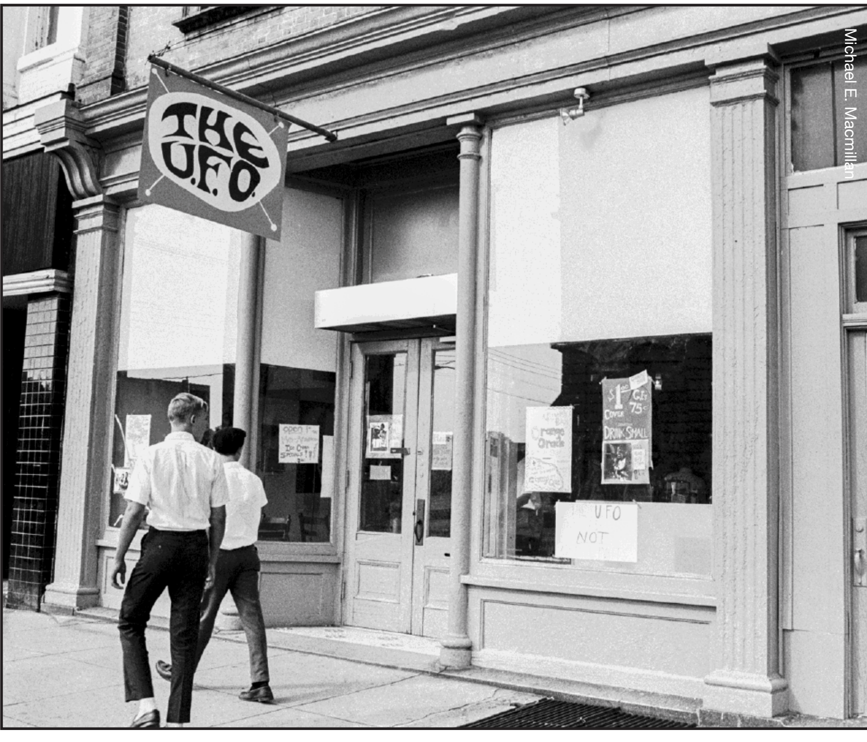
The brass had banned *Short Times* from Fort Jackson, a move supported by *The State*, which ran an editorial praising a court decision that upheld the Army's ruling to forbid its distribution on post, calling the paper "rubbish." Like much of the mainstream media in South Carolina, *The State* has long genuflected to the military community, blurring the line between journalism and boosterism.

"It's amazing how a civilian newspaper can get so upset about a GI newspaper, *Short Times* wrote, "and even more amazing how *The State* writes off one of the principal points of the Bill of Rights, i.e. freedom of the press. But being representative of a town that does quite a business exploiting the GI's paycheck, it's pretty easy to see how they can become paranoid when GIs develop an awareness of their situation. It would be a real disaster if GIs sought to end a war which puts so much money into the coffers of the rich in this state."

It ended pointedly with, "Shame on *The State* for writing an editorial that blasts one of the principles of the Constitution that we, as GIs, are sworn to defend." ☼

Columbia's UFO Coffeehouse pioneers national model for GI anti-war organizing

In September 1967, Fred Gardner left San Francisco with friend Donna Mikelson, and headed for South Carolina to make good on an idea he had to open a civilian-run coffeehouse for GIs, a place for them to hang out away from the constant gaze of their military superiors. He envisioned a space for them to listen to music, read alternative newspapers and magazines, and talk freely about the news of the day. At the time, much of it was about the war in Vietnam.



Michael E. Macmillan

The UFO Coffeehouse opened across from Columbia City Hall in January 1968. Before long, the 1700 block of Main Street became Ground Zero in South Carolina's explosive culture wars.

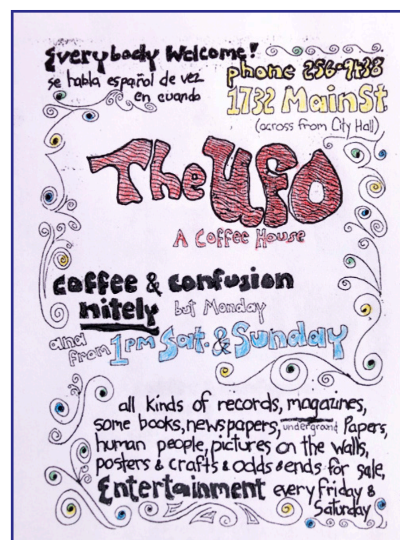
"This is something new," Gardner explained to a reporter. "The guys are discovering that there are other GIs in the same boat who are good guys and good soldiers but who are fed up, disgusted, and demanding some control over their lives."

Gardner told *New York Times* reporter Ben Franklin in April, 1969, "We see coffeehouses run by young civilians as a way to give substance to the idea that civilians who are against the war are not against the soldiers required by a crazy system to fight it."

By design, the coffeehouse concept was not overtly political. "For moral and tactical grounds" Gardner said, "I never tried to influence soldiers. I always had the feeling that if and when men got a sense of their true numbers and realized how many hundreds — how many thousands — of them were choking with shame and angry and unwilling to go to Vietnam, they would find ways of expressing their own feelings."

Gardner related to GIs because he had served a six-year stint in the Army Reserves. The Harvard grad and writer at *Scientific American* had been stationed at Fort Jackson, and understood its influence on the city's culture, economy, and politics.

"The Reserve unit I was assigned to was headquartered on post," Gardner wrote in 2018. "There was a big photo of Sen. Strom Thurmond as you entered the armory where we drilled on weekends, and there was a red-headed officer named Harry Dent who briefed the troops on current events." Dent would go on to make a name for himself as the architect of the Republican "Southern Strategy," a new brand of anti-communist race baiting that galvanized conservative voters and helped Richard Nixon win the White House. For his services, Dent was given the job of special counsel to the president.



Columbia was a strategic choice for the coffeehouse because it was the site of Capt. Howard Levy's arrest and trial, which Gardner had followed with keen interest. "Levy had already turned the base on," he said, "and I knew it shouldn't end with him. There were some GIs stationed there who had attended Levy's court-martial and we figured they'd find us. We were following Howard Levy, literally and figuratively."

Gardner found an ideal location on Main Street, in a former Hawaiian-themed bar that was an easy walk from the bus depot, trainees' portal to a night on the town. Staff painted the outside walls sky blue, and Mikelson free-handed a sign to hang above the front door. They called it the UFO, an alternative to the old-school USO a few blocks away. As Gardner explained to a television reporter, "What's wrong with Bob Hope and Martha Raye and ping pong? Nothing, but there's another culture in this country."

That culture was being re-imagined by a generation of young people whose lives were on the line for reasons that were increasingly unclear. In an essay he wrote years later,

Gardner wrote, “Almost everyone went in ambivalent about whether the war was worth it — the risk, the interruption to their lives. What they saw in Vietnam generally convinced them that it wasn’t because the government ‘we’ were supporting didn’t have much support from its own people.”

UFO takes off

The UFO opened in January 1968. It drew a mix of GIs from Fort Jackson and students from the nearby University of South Carolina. It served pastries, soft drinks, and snacks, but no alcohol, even on weekends when they featured live entertainment.

They loaded the jukebox with folk music and rock tunes. Record albums were stacked next to a Hi-Fi. They hung posters and stocked reading racks with lefty pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers — *The Guardian, The Militant, The Great Speckled Bird* and *The Short Times*. They offered the young trainees camaraderie, GI counseling, and unvarnished information about the war in Vietnam.

“The UFO was like a magnet for dissident GIs,” Gardner said. “Once these guys got a sense of their numbers they started writing accounts of their experience (which we helped circulate as leaflets) and planning an action to express their view of the war.”

So it was that the 1700 block of Main Street became Ground Zero in Columbia’s culture wars, the intersection of the student, civilian, and GI anti-war movement. The coffeehouse attracted an intergenerational, multi-racial crowd that unnerved the city elders. At the time, there was no other place like it.

A write-up about the UFO in the GI newspaper *FTA* described a forlorn soldier nursing an ice cream soda and gazing at a Polaroid shot of himself before joining the Army: shirtless, bearded, a strand of peace beads around his neck. “I get this picture out now and then, and just look at it and try to recognize the fellow,” he said.

While most of the talent was local, some big names also took the mic on the UFO stage. Norman Mailer held court there while promoting his new book *Armies of the Night,* for which he would win a Pulitzer Prize. Folk singer and political activist Phil Ochs delivered a performance powerful enough that a kid in the audience wrote about it 47 years later.

State Media Co.

“That night there was a small amateur poster on the door announcing Phil Ochs,” George Branson posted on his blog. “With 30 to 40 kindred spirits I sat on the floor in front of a tiny stage and watched one of the great iconic performances of my life. Never before or since has person, place and time meshed so perfectly. His performance was raw, funny and profoundly sad. To this day when kids ask me what the ’60s were like, I tell them to listen to Phil Ochs — it’s all there.”

The UFO was so successful that by spring Gardner had left Columbia to set up two more coffeehouses—in Killeen, Texas, outside Fort Hood, and in Tacoma, Wash., near Fort Lewis. The UFO became a blueprint for more than a dozen cafes across the country, offering a new model for organizing against the Vietnam War.

Dissent was rising on campuses, in barracks across the country and, most importantly, overseas. Desertion rates also were rising. The military branches reported over 40,000 desertions in 1967, and more than 53,000 in 1968.

In the June 1971 *Armed Forces Journal*, Col. Robert Heinl, Jr., said, “By every conceivable indicator, our Army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and noncommissioned officers, drug-ridden and dispirited where not near-mutinous.”

As dissent in the ranks grew, so did efforts to quash it, a move that only solidified soldier resistance and further polarized a severely fractured military. While the GI coffeehouses posed a new danger to troop cohesion, military leaders were not sure how to deal with them.

Early on, a hands-off approach was recommended. Army Chief of Staff Gen. William Westmoreland sent President Lyndon Johnson a secret memo in August 1968 reporting, “consensus is that coffeehouses are not yet effectively interfering with significant military interests, and, consequently, suppressive action may be counter-productive.”

If that message had been forwarded to state and local law enforcement officials in Columbia, the general might have averted the overkill that came next, as law enforcement launched a campaign to shut the UFO down and banish its staff from the state of South Carolina.

Cops began cruising the coffeehouse overtly and covertly. They

Uniformed and undercover cops were ubiquitous at the coffeehouse.

parked outside and monitored the comings and goings of patrons. They kept detailed files on each of the staff members, and stole bulk copies of newspapers and magazines to deplete the supply. They charged the UFO (unsuccessfully) with failing to pay taxes. They sent in narcs to try catching customers in drug deals.

It was a long and seamy campaign, but it worked. Two years after opening, the doors of the coffeehouse were padlocked shut, and UFO staff was arrested for "operating a public nuisance."

Arrests spark public outrage

On the morning of Jan. 13, 1970, cops arrested Merle Ferre, her husband, Duane, and Will Balk as they opened the UFO. Lenny Cohen was arrested that night. A fifth staffer, Chris Hannafan, evaded arrest and fled the state.

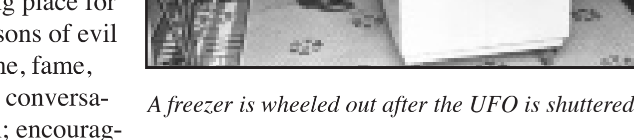
They were all in their 20s. Only Balk, who taught high school French, was from South Carolina. Duane Ferre, the son of a Baptist minister, was a former Air Force officer who did time for refusing to go to Vietnam. (In a small-world twist, he shared a cell with Capt. Howard Levy at Leavenworth, where Ferre was locked up for providing GI counseling.)

On Jan. 14, facing fines and up to 10 years in prison, they appeared before Circuit Judge Harry Agnew. Prosecutor John Foard asked that bond be set at $6,000 for each defendant. The judge raised it to $7,500 for the men and $6,000 for Merle, the only woman arrested. Except for Duane Ferre's military conviction, none of the defendants had a prior record.

The bail amount the judge set for a common-law misdemeanor case was unheard of, more than twice the amount set in two murder cases in Richland County the week before, and three times the usual rate of $2,500 for assault and battery with intent to kill.

Stunned, ACLU Director John Pemberton told the press, "In 80 years of public nuisance prosecutions in South Carolina, there was only one person sentenced to prison, someone involved with organized crime."

On Jan. 14, the day after the UFO staff arrests, volunteers opened the coffeehouse and held a press conference. Steve Eassley read the charges aloud, to much laughter. The long litany of complaints included "providing a gathering place for persons of evil name, fame, and conversation; encouraging, enticing, and allowing minors to become incorrigible and ungovernable; and associating with immoral and vicious persons." They announced the formation of the UFO Defense Coalition, made up of ministers, students, teachers, and sympathetic business owners.



A freezer is wheeled out after the UFO is shuttered.

That afternoon, university students marched from the USC campus to Columbia City Hall carrying signs, chanting, flashing the peace sign for photographers, and handing out leaflets promoting a Sunday rally to support the UFO.

The Columbia *Record* reported the 100 students were orderly as they paraded down Main Street. "About a dozen policemen on hand had nothing to do." The paper reported that "costumes ranged from hippie-style to collegiate."

Balk bonded out of jail on Jan. 15. Merle Ferre was released the next day. Her husband and Cohen spent two weeks locked up before they were able to make bail. Hannafan turned himself in to authorities in New York, but was never prosecuted. Neither was Merle Ferre, even though she asked to be tried alongside the others. The prosecution declined, perhaps because by the time the trial started in April she was nearly nine months pregnant and the optics were problematic.

On the evening of Jan. 15, six cops from the Richland County Sheriff's Department entered the coffeehouse. C.K. Hollis demanded to know who was in charge. A young man behind the counter, Paul Gumm, said that he was. He declined to shake the officer's outstretched hand. A few patrons gathered around to listen to the charges being read before being led outside. Officers shut the lights off, locked the rear door, clamped a shiny new padlock on a thick chain securing the front door, and posted a copy of the court order on the window.

Gumm told a reporter that the problem wasn't the UFO. It was the military. "We don't teach people to kill; they do. The closing of the UFO is another effort to stop the anti-war movement." With that, the press and patrons wandered off into the night, but not before someone taped a sign on the front door that read: UFO closed by The Man.

AR 381-135
GI's HAVE THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE AND KEEP ANY PRINTED MATTER THAT THEY DESIRE

THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS PAPER ARE NOT NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE DEPT. OF THE ARMY!

THE SHORT TIMES

PRINTED BY AND FOR FORT JACKSON GI's

Box 543 Columbia, S.C. January 1970

U F O UNDER SEIGE

RALLY ON SUNDAY

[illegible]

Clay Greene, Brett Bursey, and Steve Essley speak at UFO press conference.

[illegible]

[illegible]

On Sunday, several hundred UFO supporters rallied at what is now MLK Park to hear speakers Andrew Pulley, of the Fort Jackson Eight, and Lee Weiner, one of the notorious Chicago Seven, the group of anti-war protesters charged with inciting riots at the Democratic National Convention two years earlier. Howard Levy, just released from Leavenworth, told the crowd of mostly students, "Nixon may not only be the first American president to lose a war, but he may also be the first president to lose an Army!"

Balk said, "For me and the other defendants, we're facing 10 years of imprisonment. For you, and for every other citizen in this country, the threat is the official denial of each of the guarantees of your freedom. You are under the threat of a very real and very present actions of a totalitarian government."

Another rally, organized by the USC student group AWARE, was held in Columbia on Feb. 8. Duane Ferre told the crowd of 500 that he and the other UFO staff were arrested because of what they were saying rather than what they were doing. "The community is apparently afraid we will corrupt the morals of the soldiers at Fort Jackson by our being opposed to the war in Vietnam."

A month later, support for the UFO was still strong. On March 8, a big crowd showed up for a Freak The Army rally at the State Fairgrounds in Columbia. *The Short Times* reported that some 2,000 people showed up, gleefully projecting, "Such unity will undoubtedly freak the brass."

The State ran a short item on the event. A few days later, it ran a long letter by the angry mother of one of the festival attendees. Mrs. B.E. Miller said her son was duped into thinking it was "a wholesome affair," rather than an anti-war rally. "We do not wish our innocent youth to be counted amount those who were helping to promote this movement and we challenge other parents whose young people were used by this group to speak out. We have tried hard to instill in our child a love of God and country and find this a bitter pill to swallow since the group behind this affair stands for neither of these things."

This is a war story that never got any headlines. The beheading of two Viet Cong taken in battle was mostly the act of a mentally disturbed Sergeant, third from the left in the photo. It was a small act, but one so common that the men thought nothing wrong in having their picture taken for relatives and friends. The photo itself was brought home and published by *Vietnam GI*.

Before publishing it, the editors made every effort to get this story covered by the press. The *N.Y.Times*, *Ramparts* magazine, *United Press International*, *Reuters News Service* and everyone else refused to touch it. Finally *Vietnam GI* published it in May, 1968, and released it for use by the anti-war movement and the "underground" press.

Some months later a national magazine asked to buy rights to the story. After intensive research, interviews with witnesses, and the signing of a contract, the publisher ordered the editors to kill the story.

Meanwhile the Pentagon had started to move. Although they first claimed that the beheading had been done by the Viet Cong themselves, they finally assigned dozens of investigators to bring the case to court-martial. The Sergeant was tried and found guilty. His sentence? He was demoted to Corporal and fined $65 out of his pay for six months. He is now serving another tour in Vietnam. Case closed.

From the GI newspaper Left Face, *April 1970.*

Courtroom drama

The trial lasted 11 days. The prosecution was led by John Foard, Jr., a decorated WWII veteran who was a fiery, old-school former legislator elected solicitor of the Fifth Judicial District in 1962. He had a flair for drama, crying on cue, singing hymns, or dropping to his knees and praying out loud.

Foard called the UFO "the cesspool of all cesspools" and mused at one point, "There are a lot of ways to do this thing, and this is the quickest and surest way." It was Foard's office that issued the indictment, after a petition was submitted on behalf of several business owners in the area complaining about the UFO. The manager of The Elite restaurant testified that UFO clientele blocked the sidewalk and that the music from the coffeehouse was "disturbing."

The defense was led by ACLU lawyer Charles Morgan, Jr. — who had represented Capt. Howard Levy, Julian Bond, and Muhammad Ali in their anti-war cases. Rounding out the team were Reber Boult and Columbia attorney Thomas Broadwater, who told the press as the trial was about to begin, "The real issue is not whether the UFO is a nuisance or improperly managed but whether the political philosophy in power is going to silence a political philosophy they disagree with."

The Short Times write-up of the trial described the jury as "four octogenarian Uncle Toms, an Army lifer-turned-insurance man (who flipped the prosecutor the V sign) an Army lifer's wife, several anally-fixated antiquettes, and two good ol' southern boys."

On the first day of trial, Solicitor Foard waved a copy of the *The Berkeley Barb*, an underground newspaper the prosecution had confiscated from the UFO, as evidence of obscenity on the premises. After Foard read a few passages to make his point, Broadwater objected, arguing that the jury couldn't make a determination of obscenity based on such a selective reading. He demanded that they hear all of it or none of it.

Given the okay, Broadwater launched into reading aloud the 16-page newspaper line by line, including ad copy. Jurors and spectators nodded off and napped during the more than three hours Broadwater read the paper before court wrapped for the day. The next morning, he took up reading where he had left off.

It was not the only oddity during the trial. Circuit Judge Agnew ejected a UFO supporter from the courtroom for being barefoot, stopped proceedings at one point to search for an offensive political button

on another spectator, and emphatically denied a defense request to remove the Confederate flag hanging above the bench.

The first GI to testify was PFC Clay Greene, an editor at *The Short Times*. Taking the stand in uniform, he insisted that the coffeehouse was not dirty, obscene, or drug-ridden, but was a rare place in Columbia for GIs to feel welcome in their off-duty hours. It was not unsavory or unsafe; it was where he met his wife.

On Nov. 12, 1968, UFO manager Lois Levitan was arrested after taping a poster in the front window of American GIs posing with beheaded Viet Cong, an image published in GI newspapers. She was charged with "public obscenity" and sentenced to 60 days in jail.

The trial took a turn when SP/4 David Frank Daigh took the stand. The college Republican said he was asked by his company commander to work as an informant in the barracks to report on any drug or anti-war activity. He was then recruited by Richland County to sniff out drug use at the UFO. Although he went five to six times a week, he never found evidence of drugs and was unable to buy any on the premises.

Daigh's testimony undermined the prosecution's charges that drugs were being used and sold at the UFO, and it exposed the questionable means being used to gather information. Livid, Solicitor Foard offered Daigh a chance to recant. When he did not, Foard fumed, "so you've switched from Goldwater to Broadwater."

The next day, PFC Bill Mackey took the stand and, after preliminary questions, told defense attorney Boult that he was an undercover agent for military intelligence. The prosecution's charges were looking more and more manufactured.

"There was not an iota of evidence by any witness connecting the individual defendants to any of the drug activity," William S. McAninch wrote in *S.C. Law Review* in 1995. "Furthermore, the credibility of the state's witnesses was suspect in that all three of the state's nonpolice witness who testified to drug sales admitted that they had been granted immunity from prosecution for all outstanding drugs sales charges committed or other preferential treatment in return for their testimony against the UFO."

The defense witnesses included two Methodist ministers who testified that they had been to the UFO many times and found nothing objectionable. Foard, a Methodist himself, said that their affiliation made him ashamed. In his closing arguments, in an apparent attempt to underscore his religious credentials, Foard launched into a passionate rendition of *The Old Rugged Cross*.

It took the jury a little over an hour to find the UFO staff guilty. The next day, the judge sentenced the defendants to six years in jail and fined the UFO itself $10,000.

Judge Agnew defended his decision by claiming that Columbia's waters of dissent were being chummed by outside agitators, people with no understanding of or respect for the social constructs that have sustained South Carolina's status quo over generations. Except one of the defendants, the agitators were not South Carolina citizens, the judge pointed out. They had come "for the sole purpose of causing trouble," he said, lamenting the "great number of young people from all over South Carolina were exposed to the teachings of the defendants and the people of South Carolina are not accustomed to teachings from New York and San Francisco, who rebel against our form of life."

(From left) Lenny Cohen, Duane Ferre, and William Balk speak at a press conference in Columbia on May 1, 1970.

By and large, coverage of the trial was not sympathetic to Judge Agnew, especially outside of South Carolina. The *Wall Street Journal* ran an editorial suggesting that Agnew's sentence "could erode respect for the judicial process far more effectively than any radical onslaught could hope to."

Memos detail cops' surveillance

The trial laid bare the lengths that the FBI, state, and local authorities went to in order to shut down the UFO. Those calculated efforts were further exposed through subsequent Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Even redacted, those documents show how deeply law enforcement penetrated the anti-war movement in Columbia and how operatives worked to undermine that work through harassment, intimidation, and pitting organizers against each other. In one instance, cops chose not to arrest a key activist in an effort to raise suspicion that she was colluding with authorities.

In an Oct. 2, 1968, memo to the FBI, local cops reported that they were constructing channels of information to keep tabs on grassroots activists they deemed a threat. "The Columbia Division has been developing sources and informants to place in the New Left groups and will be in the position to immediately learn the identities of the members in the event they subsequently are organized at the respective schools."

On Nov. 13, the report said special agents had seen a poster in the window of the UFO with "obscene language beneath the photograph." The report quoted the copy in question: "The above picture shows exactly

what the brass want you to do in the Nam. The reason for printing this picture is not to put down GIs but rather to illustrate the fact that the army can really f**k over your mind if you let it. It's up to you. You can put in your time just trying to make it back in one piece or you can become a psycho like the lifer in the picture who really digs this kind of s**t. It's your choice."

The poster was widely circulated in the GI underground press, and UFO manager Lois Levitan taped it in the coffeehouse's front window, causing an uproar and leading to her arrest. The aggrieved expressed more outrage over the four-letter words under the photo than the content of the photo itself.

A May 5 report said, "The Columbia Division will continually attempt to uncover situations and activities on the part of the New Left movement which would possibly lead to members being in violation of a Federal or state law. It is believed that the club could be made ineffective through furnishing information to a police officer who is a close Bureau friend on the Columbia PD and suggest that the PD may want to request the Army to place the club off limits.

"Another possibility for counterintelligence operations is through the Office of Economic Opportunity. The Director and Assistant Director of OEO in Columbia are extremely cooperative and have stated they would assist the Bureau in any way they can. Through their work they have close contact with all slum areas within the city and are in the position to learn of any racial group or New Left organizations attempting to organize the individuals residing in this area for possible demonstrations."

In a July 1969 memo, the FBI reported, wrongly, that the UFO was not paying federal entertainment taxes, and outlined ways to pursue charges. "Inasmuch as the UFO Club is presently in financial difficulty, it is felt that this additional collection of taxes by the Internal Revenue Service may further hamper the operation of the club and possibly assist the club in closing permanently."

On Aug. 6, a memo reported: "City police officers have indicated that in the event they can make two or three arrests at the UFO Club on drug charges, they can institute a hearing to have the license for the UFO Club lifted and put the organization out of business."

The Columbia Division had two sources from Shaw Air Force Base visiting the UFO Club on a weekly basis, and "during these visits they would pick up large volumes of dissident type papers, magazines and pamphlets allegedly to be distributed in dayrooms at Shaw Air Force Base. This literature was subsequently destroyed in an incinerator."

A memo dated Sept. 29 reported, "Regarding the UFO Club, it appears that from information received they are continuing to have financial difficulties, and the Columbia Division will continue to have informants and resources to obtain dissident literature at the club on their visits and leave without paying for the same, in an effort to deplete their supply and cost the group extra money."

Winners and losers

A few months after the UFO was shut down, the Columbia Division concluded a report: "The closing of the UFO Club on 1/15/70 has severely restricted the activities of the New Left in the downtown section of Columbia, S.C., and makes it impossible for the group to reach the majority of the soldiers on the weekends on leave from Ft. Jackson. On 3/23/70 REDACTED advised that their office has noticed a decline in the number of soldiers at Ft. Jackson applying as conscientious objectors since the closing of the UFO Club."

At a press conference on May 1, 1970, Balk shared his disappointment with the legal process and the verdict in his case. "It was with a great deal of naivete that I entered the courts," he said. "I really did respect the courts, I did believe justice would be served, I did think people would see the facts and be able to judge fairly. I thought Judge Harry Agnew and Solicitor John Foard could look past their prejudices and present a fair trial. That's impossible for me to believe now."

After the trial, Solicitor Foard launched a campaign to get even with those who had testified in a way that displeased him. He pressured the leadership at Benedict, Columbia College, and USC to review their personnel decisions, suggesting that there "are professors who don't belong at the university." Columbia College chose not to renew the contract of one professor, and conducted a fitness hearing on another teacher who testified. Because he had tenure, he was retained. Foard also took the USC student newspaper *The Gamecock* to task for its sympathetic support of the UFO.

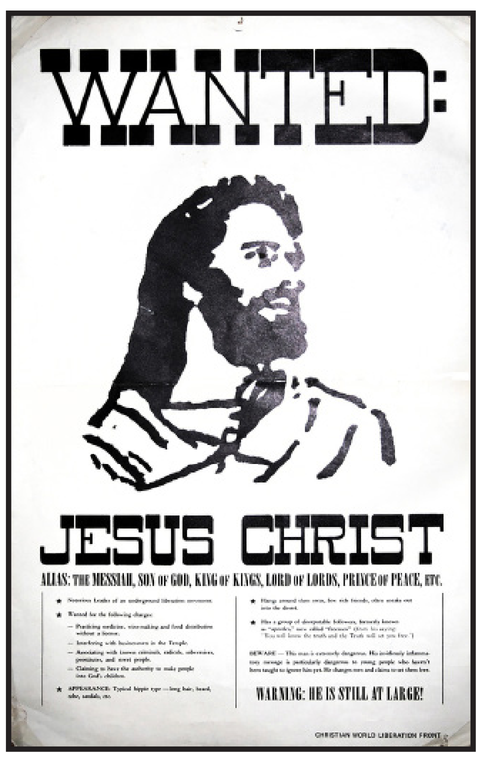
The UFO appealed, but while their case was pending in the state Supreme Court, they accepted a deal. If they dropped the appeal and related litigation challenging the prosecution in federal court, their sentences would be reduced to two years, suspended on probation for a year if they left South Carolina.

They accepted the offer, and fled. While the UFO was gone, the infrastructure and community it left behind helped others carry on the work of supporting GI war resisters at Fort Jackson. ☼

"I felt like I was part of something greater"

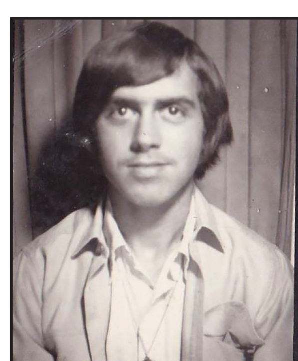
Dave Horner was a rising senior at AC Flora High School the summer he first went to the UFO to see a band with a family friend, a GI who would later serve in Vietnam. "I was amazed by the atmosphere," Horner said. "It had the feel of a hardcore hippie coffeehouse — shadowy." He remembers underground newspapers in the magazine rack and radical posters on the walls, including Jesus Christ as an enemy of the state. It was pretty heady stuff for a 16-year-old of Southern Baptist breeding.

His family moved to South Carolina from Mississippi when Horner was four. "My father was the instrument by which First Baptist Church in Columbia was integrated in the mid- to late '60s. He didn't set out to integrate it, but that's what happened." His father made waves by welcoming a college student from Cameroon into the congregation. "The deacons were outraged, and my father was blackballed after that."



Poster at the UFO Coffeehouse. WANTED: Notorious Leader of an underground liberation movement. Charges: practicing medicine, wine-making and food distribution without a license. Interfering with businessmen in the Temple. Associating with known criminals, radicals, subversives, prostitutes, and street people. Claiming to have the authority to make people into God's children.

Horner was young when this happened, but it gave him a certain social awareness. "I had started to become radicalized in my teens," he said. "My parents knew what I was about, and it concerned them greatly. I left home during my senior year and moved into Freak Row," a cluster of duplexes at the edge of the University of South Carolina campus.



Dave Horner in 1970

"Our apartment was kind of a haven to the GIs who would come by and relax." It's there he met Jose Rudder, one of the "Fort Jackson Eight" soldiers imprisoned for anti-war organizing on post. It brought the war home, literally.

Horner's parents were right to worry about his exposure to drugs, as he admits to seeing needles in the basement of his apartment. He didn't, however, see evidence of them in the UFO. "I never did see drugs at the UFO personally. My impression was that inside the coffeehouse they were pretty scrupulous about that because it would have been an instant bust. Of course, it happened anyway."

He was shaped by the books he read — Joan Baez' autobiography was a "wake-up" — and the music "that was everywhere," especially Bob Dylan. He saw comedian/activist Dick Gregory when he performed in Columbia, and was deeply impressed. "He was funny as hell but also had a seriousness, a brilliance."

His interest in civil rights broadened to include concern for the environment and the war in Vietnam. "It was all of a piece," he said. "The music was political and cultural, all these threads wove together."

Horner started making music as a teenager, playing guitar and singing with pick-up bands and his high school group, The Journeymen. The fall of his senior year he played outside USC's Russell House during the national Moratorium to End the War. "They had a place in back where they were reading the names of the dead, and it took like 30 hours."

When the UFO staff was arrested, Horner was among the students to mobilize in protest. He was in the crowd that marched from the State House to the coffeehouse two weeks after it was closed. "It was so cold," Horner said, "but we knew this is something we had to do."

He did not go to the rally at Valley Park, but saw it as he and his mother drove by on Sunday afternoon. "Her hair would bristle at the sight of these things," he said. She worked for USC's vice-president of Academic Affairs, and was escorted from the Administration Building by the National Guard during the May riots on campus. "Mother worked on the third floor. Her office was the one where Father Leon broke the window with a brick. He was one of my roommates. Small world."

Gardner remembers an obvious police presence at the UFO, and years later when it was revealed that the FBI had been tracking student, GI, and civilian activists in South Carolina, he felt vindicated. "I had told people that the FBI was in on this. They were the silent types in the crowd in suits and turtleneck shirts working for Hoover trying to put the kibosh on the New Left."

For years, Horner had kept notes on the extraordinary events going on around him, and after reading the FBI memos he began to knit the pieces together into a series called *The Palmetto: Adventures With the Southern Underground*, a fictionalized version of the life he saw play out on Columbia's stage. (The work is published as Davis Horner.)

"I felt like I was part of something greater," he said. "The cliché idea that we're going to change the world was what I firmly believed. I would call it a paradigm shift, the world was going through a fundamental change. And then Bobby Kennedy got killed. It was pretty awful the way some of it turned out, but it kept my energy up to be a part of something as momentous as this — and it was." ☼

When Bob Guild came South to counsel GI war resisters, he found a vibrant activist community and a home

Bob Guild has earned the reputation as one of the state's leading environmental lawyers over the decades he has fought to protect South Carolina's wild places and vulnerable communities from polluting industries.

Working for private citizens and nonprofit groups — often with little or no pay — he has successfully challenged hazardous garbage dumps, toxic waste incinerators, and large-scale farms. From his home office in Columbia's mill village, he has taken on some of the state's biggest companies and their high-priced lawyers.

The Short Times

THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS PAPER ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.

Box 543 Columbia, S.C. — Printed By and For G.I.'s at Shaw A.F.B. and Ft. Jackson — Vol. 4, Issue 2 Feb. 28, 1971

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page 3
GI RIGHTS
LAOS
ANGELA DAVIS
pages 2, 5, 7

Bob Guild helped produce the Fort Jackson-based GI newspaper The Short Times.

But it wasn't South Carolina's threatened environment that brought Guild to Columbia in 1972. He came to attend law school and spend his free time counseling GI war resisters at Fort Jackson.

The son of an Air Force pilot, Guild understood military culture and questioned its social systems. "Growing up, the mystique of authoritarianism was not attractive to me. I saw through these crusty old military guys that it was a hardcore facade."

While a student at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, Guild regularly made the hour-and-a-half trip to Washington, DC, to take part in marches and teach-ins against the Vietnam War. For several months, he stayed in the basement of New York Sen. Charles Goodel and volunteered for the most strident Republican anti-war voice in the Senate.

He remembers running into US Sen. Strom Thurmond in an elevator in the Capitol Building. "I was wearing a suit, had long hair, and was wearing a button with a peace dove and a red fist — an anti-war slogan. He looks at me and that button and just starts squawking!"

The elevator got to his floor but Thurmond ignored his staffers' request to move along because he was late for an appointment. "He continues to rant, and they finally have to pick him up by the elbows and carry him off. It was an astounding experience."

Guild was in the Army Reserves in Massachusetts and about to be commissioned a second lieutenant when he decided to apply for conscientious objector status. It was denied. "I'd applied under a nonsectarian, non religious moral objective, which was a tougher needle to thread for an exemption."

In August 1972, the weekend before he started law school at the University of South Carolina, Guild was leafleting outside the Republican National Convention in Miami, and getting maced and teargassed in the process. "There were lots of very chilling activist events in the streets," he said. He hitchhiked from Miami to Columbia to start classes, expecting a conservative and politically hostile climate at school.

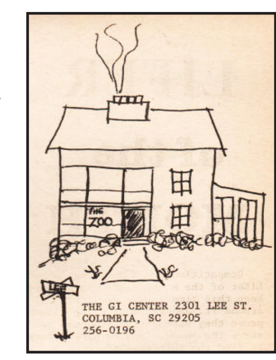
He was surprised to discover that the law school at that time was evolving from an insular institution by and for the state's aristocracy into one that welcomed out-of-state students and a more diverse faculty. "It had a liberalizing effect," Guild said.

"When I started law school in 1972, that was the high water mark for constitutional rights, prisoner rights, First Amendment rights, reproductive rights. Now, the right to privacy, the right to organize, the right to fair elections and voting rights are being restricted by our current Supreme Court. I appreciate how good the framework to protect people's rights was, and see how those rights are currently eroding."

Guild said the culture of the law school was shaped by the changing make-up of the student body. "A third of my class were veterans," he said, "and I loved these guys. They'd seen the world, knew the underbelly of American democracy, and didn't have any illusions. They weren't going to be treated as the sons of the planter class, the sons of solicitors, senators, the movers and shakers."

Trained by the Quakers in nonviolent tactics, Guild volunteered his skills to support soldiers questioning the war and seeking options. "I'd go out to Fort Jackson and visit guys in the stockade, and counsel them. I remember coaching JAG officers who were less versed in military code of justice than I was when it came to free speech and expression of GI rights."

Rich man's war, poor man's fight



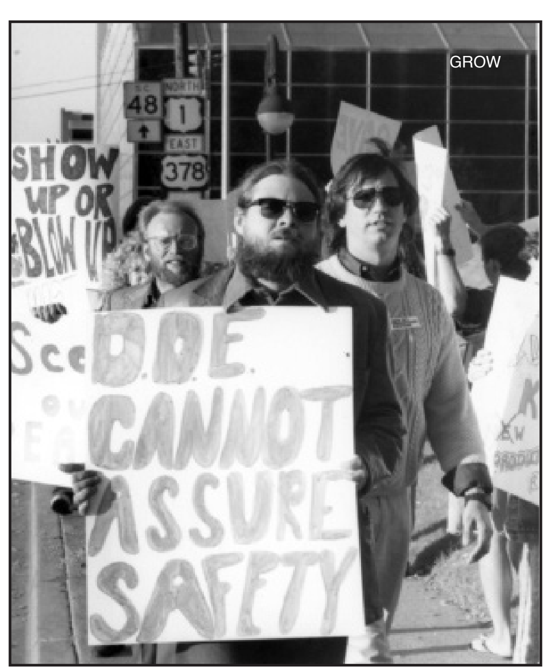
Guild understood first-hand the privilege afforded to men with financial and educational advantages trying to avoid the draft. "I learned quickly that — being a white, middle-class guy — it was easier to get out of serving. I could write an essay. The saying 'rich man's war; poor man's fight' was certainly the rule in Vietnam.

"The people doing the fighting and dying on the American side were largely working class, rural and people of

color. They were more likely to be against the war, but less likely to be able to write the CO application essay. That's why the GI counseling was such an important mission."

His longtime friend and fellow war resister Brett Bursey said his two pre-induction physicals at Fort Jackson in 1968 was evidence of his own privilege. "Few people were getting COs in South Carolina. They would run 200 young men through the physicals like cattle on the way to slaughter. I had decided that I wasn't going to go, and figured that showing proof of serious hearing loss could get me temporary deferment." He had hearing loss from shooting skeet while growing up at Parris Island. The white son of a Navy commander got his deferment.

Guild said, "It was hard to be a conscientious objector unless you were one of the handful who found their way to our door and we could counsel them and help them file. Most people didn't have those advantages. The draft was a great equalizer in the sense that your fates were determined by the lottery, luck of the draw. How ancient a phenomenon is it to have your fate decided by the number you draw? The draft stacked the deck for the privileged, a lot of them went into the National Guard because it was a way of avoiding war."



Bob Guild, Merll Truesdale, and Michael Lowe protest the Department of Energy.

Guild said the military then drew from a broader population than it does now. With the creation in 1973 of the volunteer professional military, "we eliminated the reach of the conscription from reaching into the middle class and college campuses, making it more difficult for Americans to see the true price of foreign warfare wars."

When he arrived in Columbia, the UFO Coffeehouse had been closed for two years and the staff had been run out of South Carolina. "I inherited their logistical structure, and some friends and I organized a GI rights center in Columbia." They called the office on Lee Street The Zoo. "It was a collection of misfits. There were constant comings and goings. One guy was a Citadel grad with a blond afro who had shaved a peace symbol on his head and drove a VW bus with an American flag painted on the front. He lived in the basement, thumbing his nose at The Man every day."

He remembers cops taking down license numbers of people visiting the center, targeting them for harassment. "How hard authorities worked to subvert activists is astounding when you think about the level of resources and effort directed at that time to neutralize the points of resistance, as they saw it. But the reality is you can't keep that sort of effort down. In many ways the counter-attack just spurs more resistance."

Guild volunteered with the Fort Jackson GI newspaper *The Short Times*. He remembers driving the flats to an underground press in North Carolina, where they were printed in an old barn. "We'd fill up the back of a VW bus with the newspapers, then sneak them into the barracks. I got busted once and was officially banned from the Fort."

Bob Guild (left), Brett Bursey, and Steve Bates, from ACLU-SC, talk to the press after winning their free speech case against Gov. Carroll Campbell.

The GIs were hungry for those newspapers. "You tell someone that can't read something, and it will rise to the top of the bestseller list," Guild said.

"It was a free paper," he said, "and the soldiers ate it up. It expressed solidarity with what they were going through, and provided needed information. It had lots of editorial content that was stimulating and had a point of view they were not going to get through official channels about their rights and about resistance within the military to the war."

Columbia was home to the largest training facility in the country during the Vietnam War, and the the local economy thrived on the incoming waves of new recruits. It was a predatory arrangement, Guild said, challenging the common narrative. "One of the ironies is that Columbia always presented itself as a military friendly town, and it's true that they were friendly — to the brass and the defense contractors.

"You could not have found a more hostile community environment than the one they had toward rank-and-file GIs. The recruits would be hassled on Main Street by jewelry salesmen trying to hustle them and religious proselytizers trying to save them. Clubs around the university wouldn't serve them. Literally, GI's were not welcome."

Guild credits the soldiers serving overseas with ending the war. "We know how much resistance there was among GIs in Vietnam. It ground the American war effort to a halt. That resistance has always been under reported and under appreciated." ☼

State Media Co.

Anti-war dissent roils University of South Carolina

Tensions had been brewing for months at the University of South Carolina when they finally erupted in the spring of 1970. The slow-moving storm that began in February came to a head the week of May 7 with a two-day campus strike, an hours-long take-over of the student union, and a full-blown riot four days later that left the Administration Building trashed — along with the university's hope that it could avoid the anti-establishment unpleasantness spreading on college campuses across the country.

The administration and law enforcement responded to the crisis at USC with the sort of heavy-handed paternalism that had stirred student unrest in the first place.

Even with informants and undercover agents infiltrating student groups they labeled New Left, officials at every level were unprepared for the chaos that descended on USC's campus that spring.

At the height of the crisis, when an angry mob of students stormed the Administration Building, USC President Thomas Jones was huddled in an upstairs office putting in a frantic call to the governor begging for help. Assistance was slow to come. State offices were closed for Confederate Memorial Day, and Gov. Robert McNair was in Washington, DC. The university was forced to scramble to find back-up for overwhelmed campus security to handle the escalating student unrest that threatened to spiral out of control.

Ed Tilley, State Media Co.

The scene seems a fitting metaphor for South Carolina itself, a state so perennially fixated on the past that any forward motion is always halting, out of step, out of touch. Rather than try to understand the changing youth culture, lawmakers, university leaders, and law enforcement agencies tried to suppress and subvert expressions of student dissent.

The strategy would backfire. As the crackdowns escalated, students who didn't know or care much about the Vietnam War became sympathetic to classmates being beaten, tear-gassed, and arrested for their beliefs. While USC generally leaned socially and politically conservative, it was hard to justify the level of cop surveillance and physical aggression on campus.

The university first faced serious campus violence in 1814, when three students were caught trying to steal the school bell. Faculty members who ratted them out were visited at their homes by students armed with brickbats. The mob destroyed the bell and damaged the library before the militia was called in to restore order.

There was also the Great Biscuit Rebellion in 1852, when students withdrew from the

college in droves to protest the “rancid meat and wormy biscuits” being served in the dining hall.

The crisis in 1970 was a different kettle of fish. This wasn’t a frat prank gone bad or students fed up with bad food; it was an organized revolt against an increasingly repressive climate on campus and a university leadership tone deaf to student concerns, including new rules limiting out-of-state enrollment, restrictions on who was allowed to speak at campus events, and indiscriminate drug raids in the college dormitories.

Angst was also being stoked by what was happening off campus: a seemingly endless war and changes in the draft system, the shuttering of the UFO Coffeehouse and persecution of its staff, and the riot in Lamar, SC, when an armed white mob overturned two school buses after terrorized Black students were hastily evacuated.

While much of the student body was busy living up to USC’s reputation as an anti-intellectual party school, some among them began connecting the political dots and questioning the wisdom of their elders. They started to challenge a system that was failing their generation at home, in Washington, and in Vietnam.

In the spring of 1966, a few concerned students at USC formed AWARE (not an acronym, just an emphatic name). The purpose of the group was to stimulate “dissemination of ideas which would lead students into an awareness of the full spectrum of political and social thought and the consideration and action of open matters pertaining to the intellectual and physical well-being of the Carolina community.” At least that’s what an informant at the first meeting reported in a SLED memo to the FBI. It also said, “Various informants have described the group as a ‘bunch of nuts,’ Left Wing peacenix types.’ It was also considered by sources as an ultra liberal anti-war, anti-draft group.”

The memo said cops were curating spies so that “prompt, accurate information regarding their plans, activities and the identity of their members can be obtained in order that the Columbia Division may establish an effective counter-intelligence operation” and pledged “to continue its efforts to cause dissension within the Aware group and disrupt any concrete plans they may develop to demonstrate for various causes in Columbia.”

Perhaps because of that sort of infiltration and disruption, AWARE struggled to gain traction and went dormant for a year. It was revived in 1968, and student activists began collaborating with anti-war allies at the UFO Coffeehouse and GIs United Against the War in Vietnam on Fort Jackson.

When Brett Bursey transferred from USC-Beaufort to the Columbia campus in 1968 to study international politics, he was working as a traveler for Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC). He had a van and a slim budget to organize students on South Carolina’s white campuses. “It wasn’t easy,” he said. “The majority of students were oblivious to racism and to the war. It was a pretty steep learning curve.”

Bursey helped re-activate AWARE, and was elected co-chair. The next semester, in February 1969, the group organized White Awareness Week, a series of teach-ins and lectures at the Russell House, USC’s student union. It was timed to mark the first anniversary of what later became known as the Orangeburg massacre, when Highway Patrolmen fired on unarmed students protesting segregation, killing freshman Samuel Hammond who was shot in the back; 17-year-old Delano Middleton who was shot seven times; and 18-year-old Henry Smith, who was shot three times. At least 27 more were seriously injured.

In early May 1970, USC’s campus was papered with posters calling students to strike.

On Feb. 8, AWARE held a rally to show solidarity with the student body at SC State. Organizers hoped to energize Black and women’s liberation groups on campus, and strengthen alliances between groups working to promote social justice and academic freedom. The week ended with a call for the university to stop flying the Confederate flag in public spaces. They also pressed for the flag to be taken off the State House dome.

“In 1968,” Bursey noted, “there were no Black elected officials in South Carolina, a state where Black people make up a third of the population. So racism was a serious problem to anybody paying attention. You can’t fix what you don’t acknowledge, and we did what we could to force a reckoning.”

Whistling Dixie

When he was a high school student in Beaufort, Bursey had an experience that left an indelible impression. “Right after the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964, my high school homeroom teacher was going to a meeting in Columbia and asked if I wanted to come along. When we were in the outskirts of town, he said he wanted to show me something. We stopped at Maurice Bessinger’s Piggy Park, and on the counter was all this incredibly racist literature. Hanging over the counter was a big sign that said: The law makes us serve n******s, but any money we get from them goes to the Ku Klux Klan.”

In 1969, USC had been racially integrated just six years. The school was still overwhelmingly white and unabashedly conservative. At football and basketball games,

Students from USC's right-wing groups react to the burning of a Rebel flag on campus earlier in the week.

students would sing along to "Dixie" playing as a fight song over the PA, and blithely wave Confederate flags in the stands.

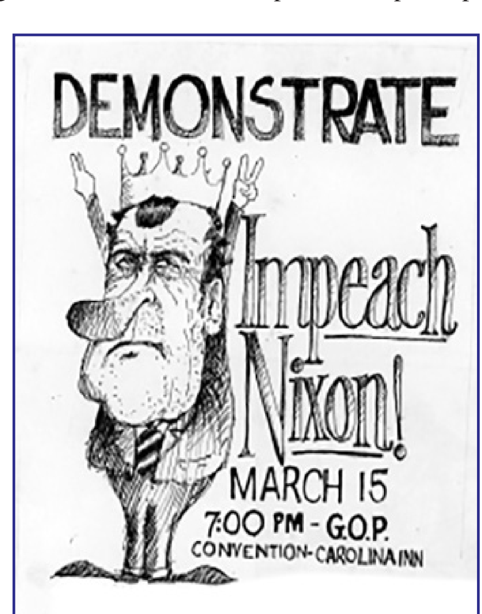
At the end of White Awareness Week, AWARE met to discuss ramping up pressure to remove the Rebel flag from campus events. Bursey remembers, "I brought a Confederate flag to the meeting, and afterward we decided to go to Jones' house, which wasn't far away, and leave a note on this door."

USC President Thomas Jones was away on business, so the group of about 40 students taped the letter to his front door, stepped back onto the lawn, and burned the flag. A passerby, outraged by the blasphemy, punched one of the demonstrators in the face.

When news of the flag burning spread, it riled the conservative element on campus for days. Members of the John Birch Society, Young Republicans, and Young Americans for Freedom flew Confederate flags from their dorm room windows, and gathered at the State House in a show of collective outrage.

Black students, too, were energized by the news, and some were inspired to do some Confederate flag burning of their own. "They burned flags at Voorhees, in Denmark, and at SC State in Orangeburg," Bursey said. "I'm not aware of any illegal protest against the flag prior to that. At that time it was illegal to 'defile, deface, or cast contempt by word or deed upon flags of the Confederacy.' And I was contemptuous and cast it."

Of all the acts of civil disobedience Bursey has planned or participated in over the decades, this was considered by many the most heinous. It struck a tender nerve, and sparked a fierce backlash.



Poster designed by Columbia artist Rick Baty.

Bursey was arrested five days later, and the university put AWARE on probation for the rest of the semester. "I posted a $200 bond, but the case was never brought to trial. Subsequent to that, the US Supreme Court said that burning the American flag was constitutionally protected free speech and, by inference, so was burning the Confederate flag. That outstanding charge is still on my police record, so I consider myself the oldest living Confederate prisoner of war. I demand reparation, or at least my $200."

South Carolina natives know that nothing ignites passion in the Palmetto State quite like the Confederate flag, the symbolic salve for the lasting sting of a lost war and wounded Southern pride.

Bursey has his own theories about why the Confederacy is so deeply embedded in the southern psyche, especially in the minds of working-class whites. There is a cultural element to venerating the Confederacy that is hard to understand if you are not of it. "I grew up in the South, had a beagle named Rebel, and I kept my great-granddaddy's Confederate flag. The majority of testosterone-driven young men have a sense of rebellion in them, and the heritage of that rebel-ness fed into that culture.

"Historically, there is no doubt that rich white guys have been running this show for as long as there has been a show. Now how do they retain power when they're exploiting white working people? They make poor whites believe they at least have something that Blacks don't: a history and heritage that binds them to a re-imagined past.

"The Confederacy in its defense of slavery is the original sin. The history of it is so deep and tortured and convoluted and disguised. The flag has been used as a wedge driven between the Black and white working-class people, and it has been effective. As times get hard and white people ain't got a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of, they are going to blame it on Black people."

Nixing Nixon

In spite of its probation status, AWARE couldn't resist protesting President Richard Nixon's visit to Columbia on May 3 to

celebrate with former SC governor James Byrnes on his 90th birthday.

The protesters planned to greet the president's motorcade at the airport with posters decrying his handling of the Vietnam War, but informants alerted the cops, prompting the Secret Service to use an alternate route. The change "saved the President the embarrassment of observing the signs and banners of the AWARE Organization," cops reported in an FBI memo. After "a scuffle ensued," seven demonstrators were arrested, one suffering a dislocated shoulder.

Officers maintained that the protesters posed a threat because of the sticks holding up their posters. The demonstrators suspected that the only real threat was to the president's public image.

Bursey was among those arrested. In an odd twist, that experience would serve him well in 2002, when he went to the same airport to protest the arrival of President George W. Bush. Bursey was again arrested on trespassing charges, at almost the exact same spot as the first time. He challenged the charges, and the case wound through the courts. It became a national story about the limits of speech in a free society.

The writing on the wall

In March 1970, AWARE members talked about how to mark the upcoming national Anti-Draft Week. Plans for writing and performing a skit never came together. So, in the early hours of March 20, under the cover of darkness, four USC students visited the Selective Service office in Columbia to make a political statement. To ensure that the message wasn't missed, they scrawled it on a piece of paper, tied it to a brick, and hurled it through a window. They painted "Hell No We Won't Go" and "PEACE NOW" on the walls, and tossed red paint on draft files to symbolize the blood of young men South Carolina was sending to fight and die in Vietnam.

> Amerika!
> You have become a monster. A self destructive monster that thrives on war, racism, poverty and desperation, a monster that grows fat by consuming the sons & daughters of humanity.
> There is no amount of damag we could do here that would be commensurate to the death and destruction wielded by the Selecti Service System in the name of Amerika.
> There are those of us who will not be consumed or corrupted to feed your insanity.

From SLED's file, photocopied evidence of damage protesters left at the Selective Service office on March 20, 1970.

The next day, during a hearing to decide whether the university would revoke AWARE's charter, two students were arrested at the Russell House. One of them was Bursey. The other was his good friend and comrade Jack Weatherford, co-chair of AWARE.

Bursey remembers it well. "The doors flew open and SLED agents rushed in, threw me and Jack up against the wall, handcuffed us together, and put us in the back of a car." It was the beginning of a long, strange trip that would alter the course of Bursey's life and challenge his deepest beliefs.

As they prepared for trial, Weatherford met several times with Bursey's and his attorney, Rauch Wise, to discuss their case. That became a critical point later on, when Weatherford's true identity was revealed.

On the opening day in court, Bursey soon realized he was about to pay a high price for trashing the draft board, and that he would be doing it alone. "It became evident I was going to go to jail when Solicitor John Foard — an over-the-top cartoon of a Southern solicitor — called the first witness for the prosecution: Jack Weatherford. The first question was, 'How long have you been an agent for the State Law Enforcement Division?' Weatherford said, 'About a year and a half.' They asked him, 'And what was your job at SLED?' Jack said, 'It was to watch Mr. Bursey.'

"My mind was truly blown. I couldn't process that my revolutionary comrade was a cop. He ran AWARE meetings, convincingly arguing against the war and racism. I vouched for his admission to the first Venceremos Brigade to Cuba. On the witness stand, his demeanor and tone of voice changed, affording my first glimpse of the primal Jack. How could he fool all these people all this time?"

The two of them last talked when Bursey was loaded into a paddy wagon right after the trial. Bursey shook his head and said, "You really know how to hurt a guy." Weatherford responded, "You did it to yourself, Bursey."

The betrayal baffles Bursey to this day.

An FBI memo reveals that law enforcement hoped to bring Bursey to trial as soon as possible "concerning his malicious damage to private property," charges they hoped would result in at least three years in the slammer. If their plan worked, they predicted that "the militant New Left activity in Columbia will be nil."

Upon conviction for the misdemeanor offense of malicious mischief, Bursey was

sent to the state prison, given a buzz cut, a jailhouse uniform, and locked in a cell with a Vietnam vet convicted of murder.

Bursey's parents had posted his $12,000 bond — which was several times the going rate for murder — but he was held for 12 days until he agreed to "not speak, print, or utter anything in derogation to the peace and dignity of the United States of America or the State of South Carolina." He finally accepted the conditions and, upon release, immediately violated them.

Troopers lock and load outside the Russell House.

"After I got out on bond," Bursey said, "I was visited by a fellow in a Dept. of Correction uniform. He wanted me to know that the Klan sorts at CCI were looking forward to killing me. Some of them were serving life sentences for murder and had little to lose by following through with their threat."

Bursey soon changed his name and went underground for a year before being arrested in Texas with peyote. While the psychoactive cactus is considered a legitimate sacrament for certain Native people, Bursey was the first person charged with a felony for possessing it. He was sentenced to four years in federal prison, but won the case on appeal.

Bursey was ultimately brought back to Columbia. Including the time he spent in jail while fighting extradition, he served two years for spray painting anti-war slogans on the draft board wall.

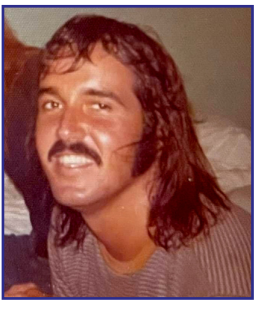
Bursey considers his time in prison and months in solitary as an inner-journey that set him free. "I learned more at CCI than I did at USC."

FREAK show

Buzz Martin was a Coastal Carolina transfer when he arrived on USC in 1970. By then he had been radicalized by the year and a half he spent in New York, where he marched in the streets and heard leading anti-war protesters speak. He also carried the scars of a brutal beating by NYC cops when he was in the wrong place at the wrong time, at the scene of a Black Panthers event that got ugly. He suffered three broken ribs at the hands of cops while being transported to the precinct.

His anger was still raw when he returned to South Carolina, and his respect for authority at low ebb. "Three of us conceived of the idea of FREAK," Martin said, "which became part of the whole gestalt of what was going on there, what some people called The Troubles. FREAK stood for Freedom to Research Every Aspect of Knowledge. I think I came up with that. We were the merry pranksters of the movement in Columbia. We did a lot of things."

On April 13, FREAK led a contingent of some 250 students to the president's home on campus to protest an uptick in dormitory drug raids and arrests on campus. Dr. Jones refused to speak with them, promising to meet with a delegation the next day.



Buzz Martin, one of the original FREAKS at USC.

That meeting was not productive, so in the evening, a crowd of students again gathered in front of the president's home. Dr. Jones again refused to meet with them. Aggrieved, they marched to the Russell House, intent on taking it over. After internal discussion, university officials decided to allow the students to remain, with a reported 50 staying overnight without incident. That restraint would not be used when it happened again, a few weeks later.

Meanwhile, students continued to exert pressure, holding mass gatherings and meeting with university officials. Record turnout for student elections on April 28 reflected a campus inflamed by what was happening at USC and in Columbia. Details emerging from the UFO Coffeehouse trial only validated student fears of cop over-reach and brazen violations of free expression.

On April 29, the day after the UFO trial concluded with six-year sentences for the defendants, Solicitor Foard, who had led the campaign against the coffeehouse, took aim at USC because of sympathetic professors who had testified on the UFO's behalf. He pressed for state law enforcement agents to be installed in the Russell House, a show of force aimed to deter any dissident activity. The solicitor pressed for measures that Jones called "repressive" and refused to endorse.

Foard demanded on local television that Jones resign. The school's trustees circled the wagons around the president. The board held firm in their support of Jones and the way he was leading the university through unprecedented campus turmoil.

An ad hoc Student Emergency Coalition for Academic Freedom at USC issued a resolution that said the school community "is disturbed and distressed by the brazen attempt by a few ill-informed local politicians to exercise unjust and dictatorial control over the University of South Carolina." It went on to call on the trustees to "publicly reaffirm unqualified support of academic freedom, unqualified support for freedom of association and freedom from police or political restrictions on the use of Russell House or other public University building."

USC's student newspaper *The Gamecock* charged the solicitor with going too far, its editorial board writing, "His role has gone beyond one of official duty to apparent

harassment and intimidation of academics who have spoken freely and openly, as they should in any American community."

Tension heats up on campus

On May Day, Nixon announced that American troops had entered Cambodia, escalating a war that while campaigning he had promised to end.

On May 4, the National Guard gunned down four students at Kent State, igniting outrage on college campuses across the country. At USC, students met to discuss taking part in a national strike. They gathered off campus because Bursey was banned from USC for vandalizing the draft board office. They formed a Strike Committee, which included representatives from the faculty and student government. They mimeographed a statement to circulate to students and the press, and papered posters across campus announcing the strike.

Accounts of what happened over the next weeks varied, depending on who you ask and what you read. The university issued its version of events in a detailed publication titled *The Months of May*, perhaps because the days seemed interminable. In it, President Jones said the university had "faced one of the most difficult and potentially dangerous situations in its history." If you relied on headlines, he said, it might be missed that USC managed to stay open and survive the crisis without anyone suffering severe injury, and with "minimal damage" to university buildings.

The 18-page document offers a detailed chronology of the days' events meant to inform and reassure students, their parents, alumni and, no doubt, donors. A more revealing account is the draft document Jones wrote for the board of trustees. It shows the intense pressure he faced — and largely resisted — from angry lawmakers and key law enforcement officials who he thought were pushing an overly aggressive and potentially deadly offensive against student dissidents.

Media coverage varied widely between the mainstream, alternative, and student newspapers, and in reports from local and national television outlets. A SLED transcript of a student marshal's account offered yet another perspective. Marshals were appointees of student government who were dispatched across campus to try and help diffuse tensions. Dave Kidder was one of them. W.K. Leonard, coordinator of the state's chapter of the John Birch Society, provided authorities a document with Kidder's testimony. It included descriptions of a meeting with state Sen. Floyd Spence, chair of the Committee to Investigate Communism in South Carolina, and Kidder's habit of staking out the Horseshoe to record license plates vehicles from out of state.

At noon on May 7, a crowd gathered around the flagpole on the Horseshoe for a planned rally. About 500 people turned out, including 50 professors and two dozen ROTC cadets in uniform.

Three invited speakers were cited for violating USC's new policy barring non-students from speaking on campus. One was Doug Thiel, a teacher from Benedict College who sang a song, and another was Tom Broadwater, the UFO attorney who was invited to give an update in the case that had generated such interest on campus. He told them that they were acting "in the finest tradition of university students."

State Media Co.

SLED Chief JP Strom orders students to quit blocking the bus carrying those arrested for refusing to leave the Russell House.

Calls from the crowd to lower the flag to half staff in honor of the students killed at Kent State were ignored until violence looked imminent. Several students, one of them senior president-elect, stood on the platform and held onto the rope to prevent the flag from being lowered, ignoring the pleas of marshals and an increasingly agitated crowd.

A student officer called President Jones to tell him, "The police are being cursed and abused. The crowd is getting out of hand. Please order the flag lowered. Please!"

When Jones finally ordered the flag to be lowered, campus police arrived to take control of the situation. The crowd erupted in cheers and boos, causing a tense face-off between those for and against the move.

The restless crowd broke up at around 2 o'clock, but a few hundred moved on to the Russell House student union. There, they held a meeting to decide next steps. At some point, about 40 students sat on the floor in front of the information desk. Arm in arm, they chanted and sang songs, ignoring a series of pleas by teachers, administrators, and elected student leaders asking them to leave.

AWARE alerted state ACLU Director Jon Kraus about the scene unfolding in the student union, and he got there just as things were heating up. "I talked to a couple of students and told them that the state police were coming," Kraus said, "and that they could get arrested or leave and come back to protest the next day and next day after. No one was interested in leaving. When the state police entered, the students broke out singing 'God Bless America,' which I thought a great disarming protest tactic."

Shortly after 5, the governor's press secretary announced that police were on the way. As news spread about the stand-off at the Russell House, the crowd outside swelled.

At 5:18, a long line of police cars with lights flashing pulled up. Cops in riot gear marched in military formation up the ramp to the front entrance, to students' shouts of "Seig Heil, Seig Heil!" As the police

advanced, tossing aside anyone in the way, the crowd made oinking noises and yelled "Kent State!"

Through a bullhorn, SLED Chief J.P. Strom told the demonstrators that they were trespassing and warned that they risked arrest if they didn't move. Nobody did.

A cop twirled his black billy club and said, "Black power." Nobody laughed.

Unease spread through the lobby as cops and students waited for a bus to transport the demonstrators to jail. By now, the crowd outside had grown to some 800 students, reporters, and cops. They filled the ramp to the Russell House entrance, spilled across the sidewalk and down Greene Street, now lined with dozens of patrol cars.

A second police contingent arrived and carved a corridor through the crowd to allow the arrestees to be led away. At 5:40, the students emerged, fists raised in defiance, and were loaded onto a bus. A dozen students sat down in the road to stop the bus from moving. They were soon joined by more students, until there are about 100 of them blocking the way. On the bus, the arrestees sang "America." Someone smashed a bottle on the roof of the bus. Another student was forcefully loaded on board.

Some 50 National Guardsmen filed out from the back door of the Russell House. The reinforcements allowed the bus to slowly move forward. It was so full that it scraped the pavement as it pulled away, eliciting cheers and laughter. Three more buses full of police followed the first one, packed with arrested students.

At 6:30, the last cop cars left the area, as the crowd hissed its disapproval of what they'd just seen.

While the drama was happening at the Russell House, two blocks away another tense scene was playing out in front of Longstreet Theater. Cops had discovered that Bursey, who had been banned, was on a Walkie Talkie talking to student activists. "I was first told I couldn't come on campus except to go to class," Bursey said, "and then they expelled me because I kept going to AWARE meetings. Then they banned me, by court order, from a section of the city. I never heard of such. The day the Russell House 'sit in' happened I was standing on the outside by a few feet of that section of the city that I was banned from, talking to the students inside the Russell House with a walkie-talkie. SLED Chief Pete Strom thought that I was involved in the disturbance.

"Then, like a scene out of a bad movie, Strom strode from the Russell House to the theater and stopped in front of me.

Brett Bursey is arrested blocks from the Russell House during "sit in."

He pokes me on the chest and says, 'Boy, you're in a heap of trouble. We're gonna make an example of you.' So Pete Strom arrests me for violating my bond, which he can't do. A cop can't walk up to you and arrest you; a judge has to issue an order for that. Basically they kidnapped me off the street and kept me in 'the hole' without charging me."

Tensions explode

The May 8 special edition of *The Gamecock* covered the shocking events unfolding on campus. It offered an hour by hour breakdown of the day's drama, from the flagpole to the Russell House, to the governor's press conference later that evening, where Gov. Robert McNair declared, "We walked the last mile and a half, and we will not walk that mile and a half again." He said his office had waited as long as it could "and then some" before acting, and called the student take-over a defiant disregard for government and the law. "We do not tolerate actions like those taken today."

The newspaper ran a piece Barbara Herbert wrote while she was locked up in Harbison Women's Institution. "It is very strange to think that we are incarcerated," she wrote. "Most of us who had come to the Russell House had no intention of getting arrested. I wandered over feeling isolated and impotent to make one more protest against the war, the student murders, racism — the whole rotten system. We had come to be together to define some kind of community.

"Then came the threats, first of suspension, then of arrest. It was crazy. We who felt so pushed and bullied by the force of horrifying events over which we had no control were being bullied even more. There was really little choice for those of us whose only weapons were our presence and our ideas. We had come to witness our concern with our bodies. To leave would have been cowardice and wrong."

Challenging the popular narrative that attributed student unrest to outside agitators, *The Gamecock* noted that 32 of the 41 arrested were students, 20 from South Carolina and five from other Southern states.

On the Friday after the two-day strike, some 450 students gathered on the State House steps to protest the student arrests and to appeal to the governor to intervene. The doors were locked, in anticipation of their arrival. Speakers talked about Kent State and the erosion of academic freedom at USC. A few students who had been arrested and were out on bond addressed the crowd. For more than an hour, students chanted "We want McNair" until the Highway Patrol arrived in riot gear to break it up.

Over the weekend, dozens of SC activists carpooled to Washington, DC, for a nation-

al anti-war rally. Meanwhile, back on campus, the USC Young Republicans called for a “strike back” to condemn “irresponsible elements” and “radical agitators” trying to “disrupt and control our university” and help “enemies of this country in an effort to demoralize the American people.” A statement listed their objectives: To educate the students about American anti-communist activities in Southeast Asia, to blame mob violence for the deaths at Kent State, and to announce USC Back Nixon Week.

Anger across campus was reflected in a column in *The Gamecock*, where Michael Ball argued that while the governor and cops could ban out-of-state residents from USC in an effort to keep dissent off campus, “all the king’s horses and all the king’s men can’t stop native polarization and native radicalization. History will not bypass South Carolina.” Blaming outside agitators was a ruse, he said.

“I saw large numbers of natives in the crowd just as angry about the issues as anyone else,” he wrote. “Even the moderates did not enjoy being gassed and pushed off a campus reputed to belong to them. No one who thought about it likes being considered a child of the state.”

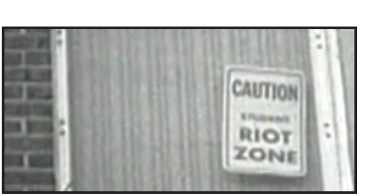
On Monday, when the hearings were to begin to decide the fate of those arrested at the Russell House, hundreds rallied on the Horseshoe to press university officials to grant them amnesty. The arrestees were under temporary suspension, and it was unclear whether they would be able to take the upcoming exams that would determine their academic status. Also at issue was the delay in processing the detainees. They were unable to post bond the day of their arrest, a move Kraus called “an attempt at depriving the students their constitutional rights.”

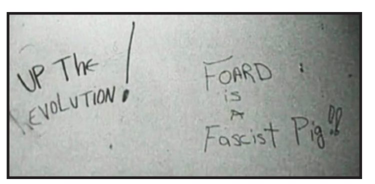
At the request of the USC administration, Gov. McNair declared a state of emergency. A 9pm–6am curfew was mandated, non-students were barred from campus, and law enforcement were authorized to disperse groups of six or more.

At 3:15, a crowd of about 300 headed for the Administration Building, where trustees were meeting. Martin was among them. “I was at the front of the group, and someone said we can come in if we’re peaceful, so we went on in, which was a little strange because that was a whole lot of people to pack into the offices. There was a throng of us. We went in, and everyone was peaceful.

“Then suddenly some people I’d never seen before came running through, saying ‘trash the place,’ and pulling files out, knocking things off the desks. They were obviously agents provocateur, or planted by the people who were trying to put us down. Or they were people who wanted to push us to more radical action. I don’t know, but people started to get into the mood, and I wasn’t immune. I remember handing a phone out the window for someone to make a phone call.”

A friend tipped him off that the National Guard were on the way. “I had a sudden attack of good sense, and just walked out the door,” Martin said. “Next thing I knew they descended. For the next few weeks there were a lot of troops, there were tanks on a college campus. How weird is that? Tear gas was all around.”





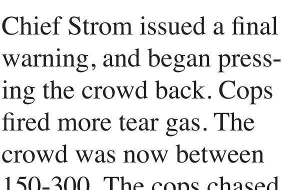
USC’s Administration Building

The Gamecock reported on the bedlam. “After some songs, chatter and speeches, someone said he wasn’t suggesting anything ‘but the Administration Building isn’t too far away.’ After they arrived, they weren’t sure what to do. After one speaker said the Board of Trustees, who were located on the second floor, closed disciplinary meetings, a small group suggest that the crowd open it.”

The paper describes a battle between eight marshals and two cops fending off more than a dozen demonstrators trying to get inside the building. The crowd behind them surged toward the entrance, chanting “Power to the people!” They pushed through the line and were met inside by Patrolmen guarding the stairs to the second floor. The demonstrators began wandering around the first floor. One called his mother long distance on the reception desk telephone, another made calls to other colleges to boast about the take-over. Some began rifling through cabinets and tossing files on the floor. At least one person left angry graffiti on the walls.

Rumors started circulating that cops were preparing to fire tear gas, so students moved furniture to block the back entrance and passed around wet rags for protection from the noxious fumes. A few ventured outside to see what was going on. They saw more than 100 Highway Patrolmen and Columbia police officers marching straight toward them.

When the cops were 50 feet away, two of them broke rank and chased the demonstrators. “One policeman drew his revolver and pointed it at the crowd,” *The Gamecock* reported. “The crowd scattered. One youth stood his ground and begged the policeman to put back his gun. The policeman put his gun back into his holster, drew his club and started swinging the billy stick at the young man.”



Chief Strom issued a final warning, and began pressing the crowd back. Cops fired more tear gas. The crowd was now between 150-300. The cops chased a group of students and, when one fell to the ground, began beating him, opening a gash on his head.

Kidder’s account in the SLED transcript inserted an odd racial element that wasn’t reported anywhere else. He recounted, “Marshals had attended a meeting where it was announced that the Monday riot target would be the Administration Building. Marshals wore green armbands, which apparently SLED did not know. One SLED officer hit a long-haired marshal twice before Kidder could explain who he was.

“Outside, a fierce white fellow decided to go in and clear out the hippies. Fifty other

whites immediately agreed to help them, and they started to move into the Administration Building. When the hippies saw this they got bug-eyed, and were considering a quick exit when 30-40 big Negroes pushed in and formed a line between the hippies and whites. The whites backed down when face to face with the Negroes. It was obvious to Dave that the Negroes were ready for battle."

The National Guard arrived, with rocks and bottles flying, Leonard reported. When they received the governor's orders, "bayonets were lowered, and the troops charged the crowd. Then the tear gas commenced. Tear gas was bad in rooms and elsewhere. The tear gassing polarized students into two groups, Left and Right. Dave felt that most students were conservative before the riots but were now sharply divided. The riots were broken up."

Leonard's account continued, "On Tuesday the students didn't believe the curfew was real, but more tear gas and clubs convince them it was. Police entered a few study rooms, and TV rooms in dormitories, and even clubbed a few in dormitories."

Buzz Martin remembers being tear gassed near the library. "All of a sudden, BAM! They were on us. A canister hit close to where I was, and I was stumbling around. Somebody reached out to me and said, 'I've got you, buddy, we're going to help you.' They took me in and washed my eyes."

Another time, he was in the back of a parked pick-up truck when "city cops grabbed me, handcuffed me, and put me in the squad car. Next thing I knew I was in jail." The charges were dropped, but he at least was spared the indignity of having his long hair shorn while being processed for incarceration. "Some people got their heads shaved, but I did not. The thing people did when they wanted to grow their hair back quick was to put mange medicine on their heads, which made them socially undesirable because that stuff really stinks."

Bursey said the students' heads were buzz cut so that cops later could more easily identify them on the streets.

Aftermath

On May 18, *The Gamecock* reported that USC students were collecting eyewitness accounts on police brutality to pressure the governor to launch a probe. They already had 23 statements. Five students said they were beaten by police, and 13 said they saw others beaten. Twelve said they saw dorms gassed, and numerous students said they saw police in dorms, a claim cops denied.

One student reported that he was in his dorm room when a police officer entered, with more right behind. "He pushed past the others, and I kept pleading with them, saying that it was my room. They all clubbed me as I went by. They pushed my roommate out of our room and he fell down — blood on the floor. They hit him while he was on the floor."

Another student described the tear gas during the police raid. "The air in the room became flooded with gas and it was impossible to breathe. We had to stay in the room or run outside and face arrest and clubbing." They ran upstairs to flee the noxious fumes, but later that night his roommate was arrested and clubbed without being told of the reasons why."

President Jones' draft report to trustees admitted that "It is possible that innocents in lobbies or first floor rooms were clobbered. It's also possible that they were not innocent. Curfew violators were picked up wholesale (perhaps as many as 130) both on and off campus. At one point it seemed probable that any college age person on Columbia streets was picked up. This situation is still hopelessly confused."

The *Carolina Plain Dealer* reported, "Referring to the Administration Building takeover last spring, [Robert] Bender said, 'Jack Weatherford, an undercover SLED agent, was a major force in leading the protest. We have him on film entering the building, and we have the signed affidavits of witnesses inside the building. Weatherford was the co-chairman of AWARE and he figured in the planning stages of the takeover.'"

In the same issue, Joe Goodman made the case that Weatherford was more than an informant, arguing that he was an agent provocateur. "He not only aided the government agencies in keeping tabs on the activities of political organizations and persons, he also played a significantly important part in provoking situations, incidents, and events taking place during his involvement. He may be regarded as an 'agent provocateur' because he did not do things which would merely aid in surveillance or maintain his authenticity as a radical student. It has been alleged by a number of sources that he actively participated in the destruction of university property by encouraging others during the Administration Building incident while the Treasure Office was being damaged. It would be difficult to interpret his behavior as anything other than 'inciting' during what was clearly a minority action."

On May 29, the campus curfew was lifted, and life slowly returned to normal. The students who hadn't been suspended or expelled went back to class. Teachers went back to teaching. And cops went back to keeping tabs on organizations it considered threatening.

Of the Russell House arrestees, 12 of the students were expelled, the rest were suspended. None were allowed to take that semester's exams.

The experience lingers in the minds of those who were there during those extreme days on campus. Martin said, "Stakes were really high. How are you going to get an education in the middle of all this? It *was* an education, but not exactly what we signed up for."

SC educators publish student rights manual

While college students were mobilizing against the war in Vietnam, some of their younger brothers and sisters were doing the same in America's high schools. For those approaching draft eligibility, the war was more than an academic exercise. Some of them resisted the idea of being drafted to fight a war they opposed. And some were punished for their resistance.

In 1968, three high school students in Iowa were suspended for wearing black armbands to protest the Vietnam War. Their families filed suit, claiming that the students' right to free expression had been violated. The case, *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, was heard in 1968 in the US Supreme Court, which ruled that elementary, junior and senior high school students' free speech is protected. The Court established that public school officials cannot censor student expression unless it disrupts "normal school operations" or infringes on the rights of others.

After that ruling, some school districts put together pamphlets to educate students on their rights and to connect them with resources if they needed help navigating the boundaries of dissent. The SC Department of Education published *Student Rights and Responsibilities in South Carolina*, drawing from the ACLU's statement on academic freedom in secondary public schools and USC law professor Eldon Wedlock's paper "A Student's Right to Due Process."

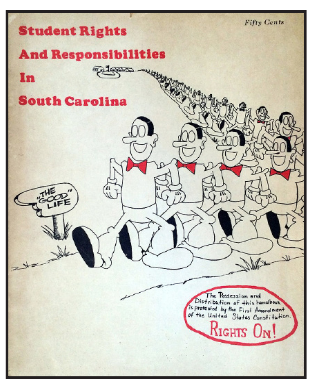
First Amendment attorney Jay Bender was a student of Wedlock's in 1972. He had long hair, rode a motorcycle, and made an impression in the staid law school. "Eldon was an engaging and energetic professor," Bender recalls, "with a world view quite different than the native sons who made up most of the faculty."

It clarified what students could do legally to express themselves and explained what they could not be compelled to do while on school grounds. They are not required to participate in officially led prayer, the reading of religious verses, or other faith-based ceremonies in school. They can opt out of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance or singing "The Star Spangled Banner," and cannot be required to stand.

The pamphlet is surprisingly edgy for a state-sanctioned publication. That might explain why it didn't make it into the hands of students as originally intended. The first edition, printed in 1972, was distributed to school administrators but was never circulated among the students. It was revised and reprinted the following year.

The manual offered practical suggestions about what to do if expelled, and what to expect before and during a student hearing. It warned that their right to participate in boycotts, walkouts, and protests at school had not been established.

It addressed dress codes, of serious import for students through the



ages. In South Carolina, the courts had ruled that students could wear their hair and dress as they wished so long as it did not "run afoul of considerations of safety, cleanliness, or decency."

USC's AWARE group tried to involve Columbia's high school students in the anti-war movement, but were kicked off campuses. At the same time, recruiters were in those same schools pushing ROTC and military service.

"We did have high school students involved in antiwar rallies and protests," Brett Bursey said. "I think sometimes we forget that some very young people were mobilized against the war in Vietnam. Merll Truesdale was one of them. He was in middle school when he started going to meetings and marches. Some of those kids were quite serious."

Grass Roots Organizing Workshop

GROW was many things in the 21 years it inhabited the cinder block building behind the old ball park in Columbia's mill village. It was a cafe that served wholesome food and cheap beer. It was a bar that offered a stage for local garage bands. It was an eco-friendly, union print shop and publisher. It was a flop house for friends down on their luck. It was a meeting place for activists to organize against the nuclear industry, US imperialism, and the social injustice keeping the country from living up to its promise.

GROW was a working collective born of a shared vision by people who dared to try and reinvent a culture stratified by race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion. It was a radical experiment that challenged basic assumptions about what it means to be an American, a Southerner, a consumer, a capitalist, a patriot.

"Millions of people in America and across South Carolina are becoming more aware of the source and urgency of our problems," reads an early GROW brochure. "What is unique is that we are organizing to do something to stop the madness. We think that freeing ourselves from being hopeless participants in this brutal system is too important not to try. We know our fancy thoughts and high ideals are going to require a lot of hard work and creative efforts to take root. So we have come up with some plans to help them flourish, directed at the grass-roots."

GROW

GROW was a vibrant hub of grassroots organizing in South Carolina between 1978 and 1998.

Their plans included working with local groups in poor neighborhoods to help build community and connect vulnerable people with resources. With one in five South Carolinians living below the federal poverty level, GROW staff were painfully aware of the immediate needs of too many of their neighbors. They belonged to that demographic themselves, making do with less and scuffling to get by. But they stayed mindful that poverty is built into the system and that their ultimate goal was not to provide social services but to get at the root of South Carolina's chronic privation.

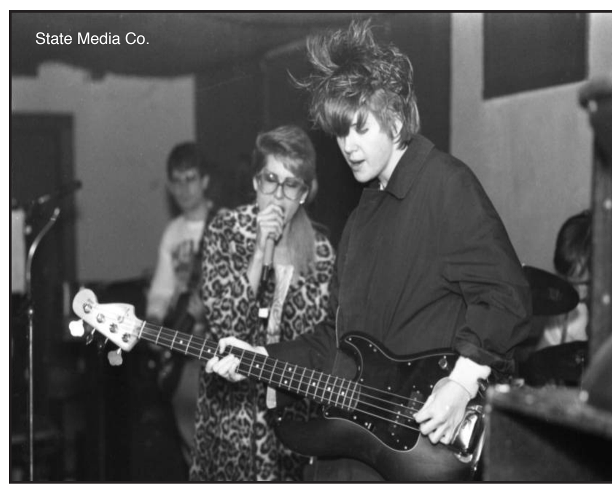
From its inception, GROW was self-sustaining. Founders didn't want the nonprofit to be dependent on grants or beholden to big donors. They wanted full control of projects, messaging, and priorities. Their work was driven at a grassroots level by activists who understood the vagaries and personalties of South Carolina politics and culture.

To help pay the bills, they opened the GROW Cafe, a diner by day and dive bar at night. Upstairs, they operated Harbinger Publications, a full-service, worker-owned print shop that offered clients recycled papers, environmentally friendly inks, original designs, and something no other printer in South Carolina had: a union bug. The shop was a proud member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

During its first two years, GROW trained a core staff and a stable of volunteers, and set about to identify and establish relationships with community leaders and allies in Columbia. They opened a community center in the Bluff Estates neighborhood to teach residents practical skills like canning and gardening, and started a food co-op that for the next 40 years supplied hundreds of families with fresh produce and pantry staples.

In 1978, GROW created the Natural Guard Fund to act as fiscal sposor for the ambitious anti-nuclear campaign they were spearheading. They started the No Nukes is Good Nukes Road Show and created the Alternative Energy Fair to take concepts of sustainability and environmental justice to South Carolina classrooms and county festivals.

GROW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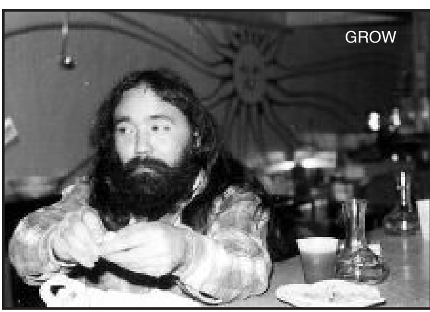

GROW

In 1990, GROW started the alternative newspaper *POINT*, which published monthly for 10 years. The free paper was distributed in Columbia, Greenville, and Charleston, and by mail to subscribers. It was the first publication in the state to go online, in 1995.

GROW organized the first challenges to the practice of flying the Confederate flag in South Carolina's public spaces, including on the State House dome. When the flag finally came down in 2000 — only to be immediately relocated to a place of prominence on the people's lawn — GROW activists showed up at the State House with a thousand whistles and neon yellow signs that said: SHAME. Led by Dixie Whitebread, a dozen members of the guerrilla group Step-daughters of the Confederacy turned out in their redneck best to celebrate the occasion and present lawmakers with a giant lawn jockey to thank them for their continued service to the Lost Cause.

A whole lot of chutzpa and blind optimism emanated from that unassuming building at 18 Bluff Road. Here are the *Cliffs Notes*.

In the beginning

GROW started as a study group of serious-minded young people who were meeting in living rooms and around kitchen tables in Columbia to talk about new books, global events, and the peculiar animal that is South Carolina politics. Many of them had been mobilized by the civil rights and anti-war movements, and knew first-hand the power of an educated and dedicated army organized into a unified front. They'd peered behind the curtain and seen the corporate wizard dictating America's foreign and domestic policies. They would not be fooled again.

Doug Gilmore, State Media Co.

Staff and volunteers pose for The State, *which ran a story on GROW in 1981.*

"It was extraordinarily stimulating being with a small group of people trying to figure out how to change the world," Bob Guild said recently. His home was a regular meeting place in the early days. "We were not just academically trying to understand these radical visions of the world, but trying to implement these ways of thinking and analytical processes into activism. It was always focused on action."

To put into practice the principles they had cultivated, they needed a physical space from which to operate. "We wanted to create an institution to support the political work we were doing, to have an address and a phone," said GROW founder Brett Bursey. "We needed a home."

He found a place on Bluff Road just outside the Columbia's city limits, "an inch from civilization," as he put it. "I think DHEC came in one time in 20 years."

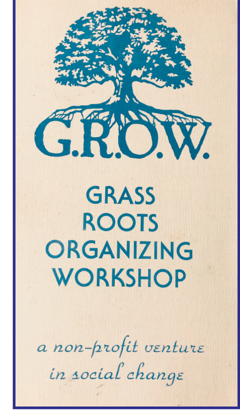
The place was gritty, metaphorically and literally. The building was a stone's throw from the train tracks, and trucks trundled by all day on their way to the nearby quarry. The neighborhood was peopled with characters rich enough for a bad novel. This was before USC-driven gentrification chased them off and killed Olympia's oddball charm.

Retired mill workers — disparagingly called lintheads back in

the day — lived on either side of GROW. Hazel and Monk on one side, Pete and Tina on the other. Staffer WendyBrinker said, "Pete's mother, who was a linthead proper, came to live there in the living room after she had a paralyzing stroke. I remember visiting there one day and his mother, who never moved, started waving her arms in the air wildly and it scared the hell out of me. Pete told me that was the movement she did working the looms."

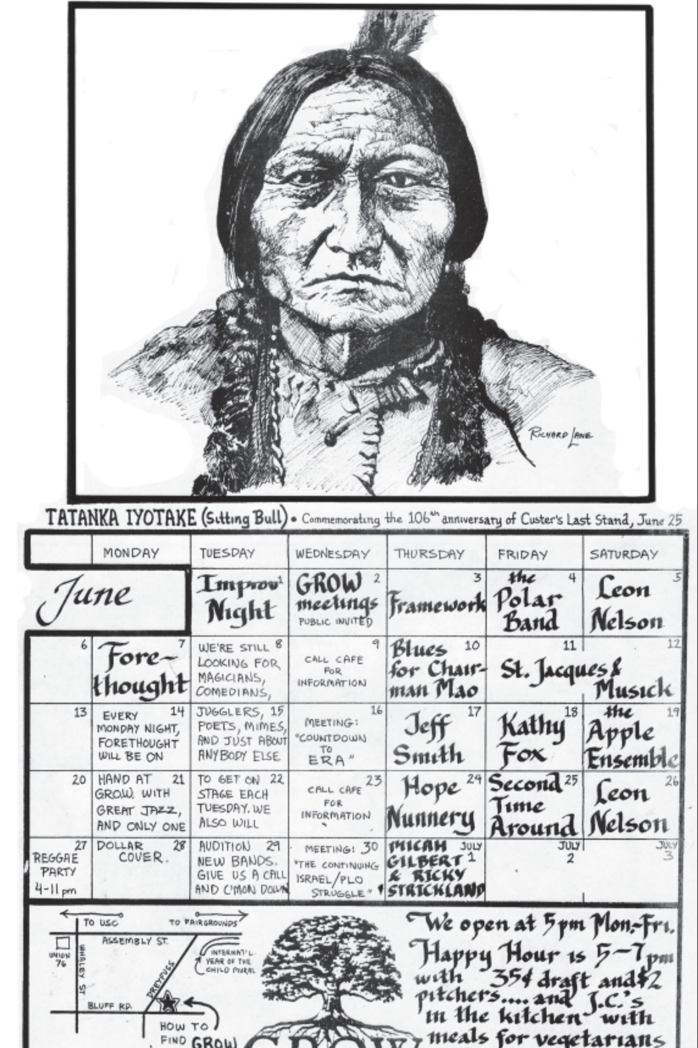
Arnold, Ronald, Coly, and one-armed Carl lived on the corner in a shotgun shack and trailer parked in the backyard. Coly had wild, white hair, 13 or 14 children, and a fondness for Elvis and overalls. Most days he could be found sitting on the sagging front porch playing his beat-up Martin guitar with more abandon than skill. Across the street was a weedy lot and the rusting frame of a metal building draped in kudzu. On Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings, from GROW's open windows you could hear the congregants of the Pentecostal church down the street being moved by the Holy Spirit.

At least a few of the neighbors were leery when the hippies moved in. They weren't sure about the strange goings on at GROW, and a few protested the Cafe's beer license. A Mr. Kirkland, who ran a Christian daycare center up the road, testified at a hearing in front of the alcohol commission that he had driven by the building and "witnessed a young couple committing Sex Act Number Two." The Cafe kept its beer license, but never did find out what Sex Act Number Two was. Just to be safe, the bar implemented the Pervert Patrol, a regular policing of the parking lot by a staff member wearing a helmet with a flashing red light on top.



What's old is new again

Early records show that the corner of Dreyfuss and Bluff was the site of a laundry "pressing club" in 1916. Four years later, in 1920, *The State* reported a fire at that address in "a small tenement house" where three children narrowly managed to escape before firefighters arrived. In 1929, in a letter printed just before Christmas, an 8-year-old living there asked Santa for a popgun, firecrackers, a football, and some fruit. In the 1950s, the building was advertised for rent as a store or warehouse. The Dixieland Music Co. lost the property in 1960 for failure to make payments.



	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
June		1 Improv Night	2 GROW meetings PUBLIC INVITED	3 Framework	4 the Polar Band	5 Leon Nelson
6	7 Fore-thought	8 WE'RE STILL LOOKING FOR MAGICIANS, COMEDIANS,	9 CALL CAFE FOR INFORMATION	10 Blues for Chairman Mao	11 St. Jacques & Musick	12
13	14 EVERY MONDAY NIGHT, FORETHOUGHT WILL BE ON	15 JUGGLERS, POETS, MIMES, AND JUST ABOUT ANYBODY ELSE	16 MEETING: "COUNTDOWN TO ERA"	17 Jeff Smith	18 Kathy Fox	19 the Apple Ensemble
20	21 HAND AT GROW. WITH GREAT JAZZ, AND ONLY ONE	22 TO GET ON STAGE EACH TUESDAY. WE ALSO WILL	23 CALL CAFE FOR INFORMATION	24 Hope Nunnery	25 Second Time Around	26 Leon Nelson
27 REGGAE PARTY 4-11 pm	28 DOLLAR COVER.	29 AUDITION NEW BANDS. GIVE US A CALL AND C'MON DOWN	30 MEETING: "THE CONTINUING ISRAEL/PLO STRUGGLE"	JULY 1 MICAH GILBERT & RICKY STRICKLAND	JULY 2	JULY 3

By 1977, when Bursey cut a deal with owner "Slick" Dyson to fix the place up for reduced rent, the building had been empty for nearly a decade, not counting the bats and rodents who'd taken up residence. The roof sagged and leaked, leaving parts of the upstairs rooms open to the sky. The wood floors and window frames were weathered and warped. The plumbing looked like it was designed by Dr. Seuss. The electrical wiring was a lawsuit waiting to happen.

Undaunted, volunteers rolled up their sleeves and got to work. Michael Craig and Michael Lowe, with the Red Potato Woodworking Collective ("cabinet makers, custom woodcrafters and builders of things great and small") led the renovation. The effort was financed with a $10,000 donation by Bursey's mother, Bobbie, who spent several months on site pitching in. "She was always my biggest supporter, and she believed in the work we were doing," Bursey said. "We couldn't have done it without her."

Lowe remembers salvaging timber from a washed out bridge to use in framing the downstairs walls. "We're lucky the building didn't fall down the first day, much less 20 years later," he said. It was a tough job. When problems arose, and they often did, they repeated their mantra: deal with it.

They set up offices upstairs, filling the musty rooms with cast-off furniture and hand-me-down equipment. They refurbished the bar and bought tables at an auction for the cafe they planned to open to support the organizing work that was GROW's primary purpose. They installed a pay phone downstairs, all they could

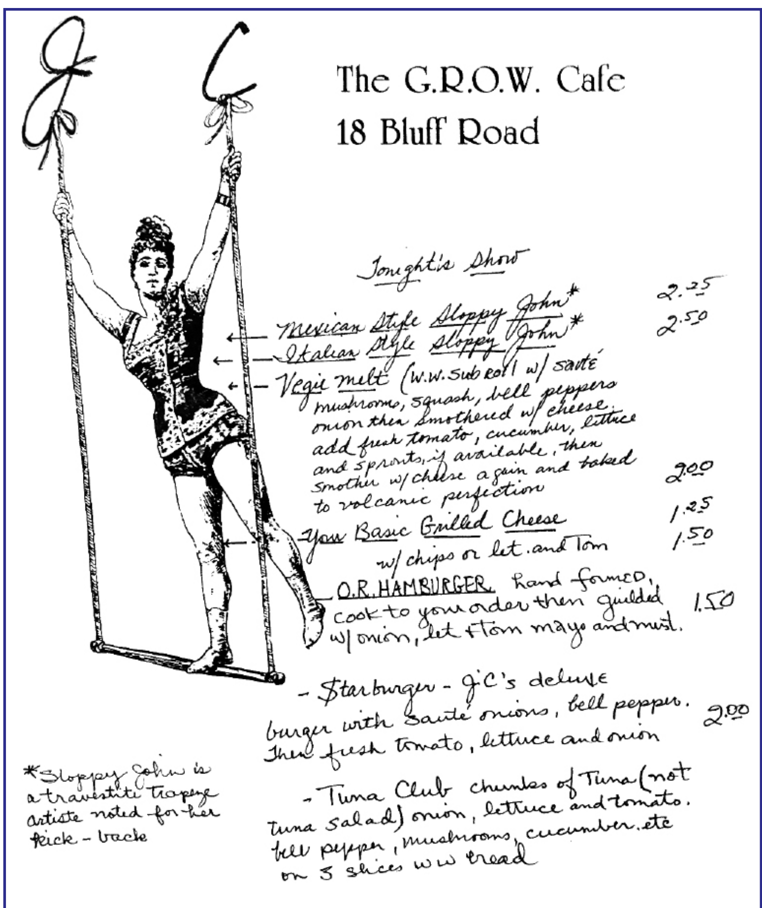
afford. Artist Joe Byrne designed a logo, the GROW tree.

None of them had a lick of business experience, yet they gamely set about to launch several ventures powered by sheer determination and a deep-seated belief in their mission.

Loveburgers, baby!

The GROW Cafe opened in January 1978, on a Friday the 13th. Family, friends, and the idly curious gathered in the dark, drafty downstairs for the grand opening. Hanging on the wall behind the long, wooden counter, a hand-painted sign read: "It's not just a bar, it's a lesson." The first act to take the stage was Blind Dave Quartet.

Famously uptight Columbia hadn't seen anything remotely like it since the city elders shuttered the UFO Coffeehouse eight years earlier.



When it opened, the Cafe had meat on the menu, but switched to vegetarian fare to reflect GROW's commitment to nonviolence and the environment.

GROW attracted a variegated crowd, and quickly cultivated an odd cultural cache. "Sometimes in the evenings it was like that bar scene in Star Wars: sheer diversity," Bursey said. "Mill people, Black people, gay people, men in suits, the *literati* — it was a cultural Left Bank."

Poets. Politicians. Artists. Students. Writers. Rednecks. Everyone seemed to drift through at some time or other. Stop by for a beer or a burger, and you might run into Mayor Kirkman Finley, activist Modjeska Simkins, writer William Price Fox, or future SC Supreme Court Chief Justice Jean Toal, who went to the Cafe with her husband and young children. She told *POINT* in a 1994 GROW retrospective, "There was music as well as good political talk. It was unique. It was one of the first places that was integrated in an easy sort of way, as far as racial backgrounds and economic backgrounds."

Dale Eady and Wes White, aka Moss Man.

Brinker, who worked at GROW on and off between the time it opened until it closed in 1999, said recently, "GROW was like a vortex. You just never knew who was going to walk through the door, and that was the appeal of it. It was such a fun place to work. There was a sense of adventure because there was always some hi-jinx going on."

Brinker was 16 when she went to GROW for the first time. She had a loveburger, sweet potato fries, and an epiphany. "I walked in the door and thought: Damn, I've found my tribe! This is where I belong."

For her, it was the ideal intersection of music and art, her two loves. She also appreciates a story well told — the stranger, the better, and the place never failed to deliver. In fact, GROW adopted and frequently repeated gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson's quote "When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro."

"You could go down there and have any conversation you were looking for," Brinker said. "Musicians were in and out, and I felt special, a lot of these cats were older than me and they accepted me, embraced me, and figured out what I had to offer. The cultural part of the movement, you can't really ignore that. I think the art and music is just as big a part of it as anything."

The Cafe's live shows featured mostly local talent, but some up-and-coming bands and bigger names played there, too: Sonic Youth, Black Flag, Alex Chilton, and the Minutemen. Elaine Townsend played her first show at GROW in 1979. She was so young she had to sneak out of the house to play. "That first night and my first few gigs after that really gave me the bug. I knew what I wanted to do."

In 2007, *Free Times* quoted former Columbia musician Marc Minsker in a story about GROW. He recalled one night when the Liquid Sillies "fronted by the dynamic, Saran wrap diapered singer Dr. Yaki," took the stage at GROW. "Yaki got crazy during a rocking performance of Billy Ocean's Caribbean Queen. Yaki poured a Colt 45 over his head, sliced open his plastic wrap diaper, removed two ham hocks from it and threw them into the audience, hitting someone squarely in the face. From there on out, it was total chaos."

Frank Sarnowski was the first Cafe manager. His political awakening came in 1968

when, at age 14, he "realized that the Vietnamese were real people and the American government wasn't always right."

Sarnowski hit the road doing his "Jack Kerouac thing," hitch-hiking around the country for nearly two years. He returned to Columbia in early 1978, and reconnected with Bursey, who offered him a place to stay in return for working at the newly opened Cafe.

Becci Robbins

Wendy Brinker, Merll Truesdale, and Richard Lane at GROW party.

"From the outside is was just a run down hole in the wall," Sarnowski said, "but inside were the coolest and most interesting people you could ever meet, and the best blues you could ever hear. It was a vegetarian grill, where you could smoke cigarettes, drink beer, shoot pool and attend a revolutionary meeting all in the same evening."

During his two years on staff, he was paid in food, beer, tips, and the minimum wage of a VISTA worker. Grim as that may sound, he said, "I really enjoyed living there. It was always a stimulating environment."

For much of Sarnowski's tenure at GROW, he worked weekdays in the Natural Guard office in Barnwell, returning to the Cafe in Columbia on weekends. "Working at GROW cemented my commitment to a more just and equal society. I now believe that, eventually, we can make change possible."

The staff's motivation was never the paycheck, Carol Eady said in 1980. "It's nice to have money in your pocket, but this is really political work even though we're running a bar, and that is satisfying."

Dale Eady said, "In a job like this, there is no one really to answer to but yourself. If you're really slack someone will call your hand. There are so many reasons for this place to be. It's an experiment in collective living and working. It's a meeting place where people come to discuss ideas. When you live and work together it establishes an atmosphere. It's not easy, and requires a lot of work, but it's worth it. It's creating a family. It's like a community marriage, realizing all of somebody's faults and still loving them."

Michael Gooding was a college student living in Olympia when he first went to the Cafe. "I'd go by GROW all the time, and I thought, well that's a funky looking little place, I need to stop in there and have a beer. So one day I stopped in and said, yeah, this *is* a funky little place. But I fell in love with it. It wasn't like all the typical places college students went."

It was the election of Ronald Reagan that scared Gooding into political action. While working as news editor for USC's student newspaper *The Gamecock*, he covered a new group on campus. Intrigued, he began going to the meetings and, in turn, sharpening his politics, especially regarding the nuclear arms race being waged from his own backyard.

Before long, he was recruited into GROW's anti-nuclear campaign, and eventually became the Cafe's manager. He loved the rich mix that walked through the door. "It was a diverse group of people that came there," he said, "whether they were working there or involved politically or just showed up for a beer. It was a really interesting group of people. Some were just lunatics, but just fascinating people with great stories."

Guild became a regular at the Cafe and at GROW meetings. In fact he met his partner Nancy Barton there before she founded Columbia's battered women's shelter Sistercare.

He said, "GROW was a 10-minute walk from my house, and it was a welcoming social place to be with like minded folks." He was deeply involved in the political work that happened there. "It was a wonderful place to be with like minded folks. Hundreds of campaigns centered on GROW and that group, that institution. It was important and it is missed."

Longtime Columbia environmental activist Leslie Minerd also lived within walking distance of GROW, and would hang out there often. Even as a woman alone, she was at ease there. "I was a little shy," she said, "but I felt like I could go and feel completely comfortable. I was so sad when it was gone, it was heartbreaking."

Her favorite memories were going to the themed parties. "If you can wear something crazy and get dressed up, that's what's fun. I love to satirize the crazy stuff. You have to laugh to keep from crying."

Minerd became pals with GROW staffer Ray Permenter, who was living proudly out long before it was safe to do so in Columbia. "He worked behind the bar, and was a good friend," she said. "His nickname was Gay Ray. He helped open the doors, figuratively speaking, for a lot of people who came after. Things were so different in the early '80s. He was willing to take the risk, and he was fearless about it."

Permenter started one of Columbia's first public gay activist groups, which held its regular meetings at GROW. It was a welcoming space that was hard to find at the time. As he explained to a reporter, "You could walk in and they'd accept you for who you were. They didn't pass judgment. It was family. All ages. All creeds."

GROW regular Alden Richardson said, "The Cafe was precisely my cup of tea. I really enjoyed the food and the company. And after you had fun downstairs, you could go upstairs and get involved in something — somebody always needed a hand doing something. And then you could go back downstairs and have a beer, or shoot the breeze, or brainstorm. It was a unique set-up."

Becci Robbins

He said, "The thing about GROW that was different and really made it work was you gave somebody a space, a phone to do their thing, and everyone was doing what they wanted to do. There were always three or four things going on at a time which allowed people to work together. It was the most successful model that I'd ever seen. Ideas flowed back freely between people, and that's why a lot of things got done."

Don't fear crazy hippies

Brinker was in high school when she first went to GROW. Her boyfriend's roommate, Richard Lane, worked there as the in-house illustrator. When Lane went to Colorodo for a few months, he asked Brinker to do the calendar art while he was away. "They said I'd get 20 dollars and a pitcher of beer," Brinker said. "So I did the art work — Patti Smith and Bob Dylan — and JC, the crazy hippie who ran the Cafe, gave me the money but refused to give me the beer."

Not one to back down, Brinker demanded to see the boss. "They said, 'You gotta go see Brett. So I went up there — back when you had to go outside to get upstairs — and I said, 'I did the work and I want my beer.' I guess he appreciated my tenacity, so he walked me downstairs and poured me a pitcher."

Doug Gilmore, State Media Co.

Elton and Lynn Manzione worked at Harbinger *in the early 1980s.*

She told him she was an artist, and he asked her whether she wanted to volunteer. "That was my invitation," Brinker said. "I became the resident banner painter and sign maker."

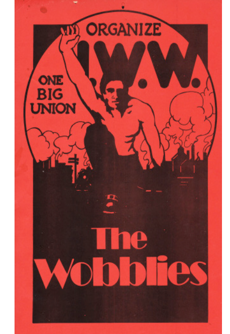
Her first assignment was to design a logo for the new print shop. She was working on it when a man came in and asked whether she had a car — a coveted commodity at GROW — because he needed a ride to "where the Indians are."

Brinker was intrigued by the guy who introduced himself as Moss Man, so nicknamed for the Spanish moss he used to festoon the metal breastplate he wore. He was a striking sight, as Brinker remembers. "He's got on his Osceola necklace and peace pipe coming out of his pocket, he's barefoot." She told him she would drive him. "So we ended up going to Sara Ayers' house, the goddess of Catawba pottery, and we hung out in the yard with her all day long while she baked her pottery. It was a beautiful thing."

At the time, Brinker didn't know who the woman was, as Ayers was just becoming recognized for her pottery. By the time she died in 2002, Ayers had made a name for herself as master of South Carolina's oldest, and dying, art form, with pieces showing in museums and fine galleries. Moss Man was born Wes White in Charleston and, in 1988, was accepted into the Cherokee Nation and took the name Taukchiray, "white" in the Catawba language.

He graduated from USC in 1969 with an anthropology degree, and began studying the Four Holes Indian community in Dorchester County.

In 1979 and 1980, he worked at GROW as a VISTA volunteer. Bursey was his boss. "Moss Man's eccentricity made him hard to take seriously," he said, "until I started getting calls from the Smithsonian asking for him."



In 1974, White began working for the Center for the Study of Man at the Smithsonian, documenting Lowcountry and Piedmont tribal history. He would go on to study other tribes in the American Southeast, and was lead researcher for Lumbee River Legal Services in 1982 when he co-wrote the Lumbee's petition for federal recognition.

Even after GROW lost its VISTA workers in 1981, Moss Man was a regular fixture there. "One day I saw him sliding something under the carpet upstairs," Bursey said. "I asked him what he was doing, and he said he was storing his important papers. We pulled back the rug, and there are all these letters and maps. He thought it was a safe place to keep them."

Bursey said Moss Man was a reminder to not judge a book by its cover, however odd. For Brinker, the afternoon she spent with him watching a master artisan bake her pots offered an important lesson. "It taught me to be unafraid to accept invitations from crazy hippies. You might have a great adventure."

Mi casa es su casa

Over the years, GROW housed people who needed a place to stay. Staffer Merll Truesdale was the only full-time resident. Others came and went. There were the Booth People, who lived in the Cafe after hours, and Linda, who slept for a while on the covered porch upstairs. Road Warrior lived for months in the Rat Room, the storage closet behind the bar because, as he reasoned, "Who else are you going to get to live there?"

Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one. - A.J. Liebling

Judge Glen Davis and Hattie Fruster (center) helped keep the GROW food co-op on Bluff Road running over four decades.

Brinker moved into GROW for a while, as well. After quitting a "good job" at SCE&G in 1985, she was hired to work at Harbinger. No longer able to make her rent, she moved into GROW. They stole carpet from Bursey's office and hung it as a divider at one end of the upstairs hallway. "That became my room," Brinker said. "Merll was right down the hall in Little Tijuana. Donnie lived in a tiny room off the typesetting room. I remember we were happy to be declared destitute because we could shop at the Harvest Hope food bank. We took turns shopping and cooking for one another down in the old Cafe kitchen."

Donnie Green was one of the first printers at Harbinger. "Donnie had three sons," Brinker said, "and he named them all Donnie. He was funny as hell and great at his job." She tells a story about the time Brett was out of the country, and Brinker was in charge. Donnie was to print some books for a client who would be driving up from Charleston to pick them up. "We would have had plenty of time to put them together and get them trimmed, but Donnie decided to go on a bender the night before. He was a beautiful man, had heart of gold, but man did he indulge his fancies."

Brinker often gave him rides to see his father. "There was always a craps game going on in the back and a lot of Schlitz going down." She set out after midnight to find him. "I bought two Bulls and off I went. I only had some vague idea of where I was headed, but knew the neighborhood, and man was it was rough." She aroused suspicions cruising slowly up the streets, but finally got help from a group of people who pointed to the right house. "I knocked for about five minutes. Finally I walked in not knowing if I was about to be shot, only to find him passed out in a back room. I put the can next to his ear and popped the top, and brought him into consciousness. I managed to convince him to get up and come back to the building. And damn if we didn't get the books out in time!"

Food for people, not for profit

GROW was organizing around food insecurity before that term had even been coined. For the staff it was personal. They were underpaid and uninsured, and many of them lacked transportation, decent housing, and the regular meals that stability affords. They worked in a neighborhood with other people scraping to get by.

At some point, the staff started storing donated canned goods and kitchen staples in a room they dubbed the Malcolm X Food Bank. Through the Columbia Housing Authority, GROW secured a building in the Bluff Estates neighborhood they called "the HUD House." It was home to some of the VISTA staff and their families.

When the deal for the free HUD House ended, a local land owner offered the use of property on Bluff Road that included a stand of pecan trees and a dilapidated two-story wooden farmhouse. There, GROW worked with a local group to set up a Community Organizing Center and a food co-op that would defy all odds by operating continuously for 40 years.

The co-op provided more than access to quality food; it was also a community center offering practical services such as free health screenings and tax filing assistance. It held regular meetings to address problems in the neighborhood, and on Friday nights had live music, fish fries, and wiener roasts. But the heart of the operation was the twice-a-month food buy that supported nearly 200 families.

Chris Kueny was there in the early days. The UNC graduate had hitchhiked from DC to Columbia seeking meaningful work and landed at GROW. Needing a place to stay, he moved into an upstairs room in the drafty, old Bluff Road farmhouse, and helped run the co-op. The experience would inform his politics and expand his perspective. "To learn about hunger is to not have eaten, get on the bus, get into GROW, and it's five minutes after they stopped serving so you're screwed. That is a very special feeling that has given me empathy through my entire life."

He remembers being paid $20 every two weeks, living on one meal a day, and eating lots of cabbage and sweet potatoes. Twice a month, he drove to the farmers market to buy bulk produce, packaged meats, and pantry items that volunteers would sort into boxes for families to pick up.

Renee Bursey, who came to Columbia in 1979 to help her brother with the new venture, helped manage the food programs. "I wanted to serve my country, and didn't want to join the military," she said. This was a way to do her part it without signing up with Uncle Sam.

She wasn't sure how she would fit in at GROW, but found her niche in the co-op. "I didn't think food stamps were very equitable, and that everyone should have access to quality food."

The program was unique in that GROW established itself as a grocery store that could take food stamps for purchases, put them in the bank, and leverage the food buying power by writing checks at wholesale markets.

At the time, more than 500,000 South Carolinians relied on government assistance for at least part of their food purchases. Being able to buy groceries at wholesale prices at the GROW co-op increased a family's food buying power by a third or more.

While the co-op proved to be one of GROW's most lasting successes, it wasn't easy to get established. There was the predictable friction of white strangers moving into Black neighborhoods. It took time to build trust, which came after GROW delivered on its promises. Critical to its success was the support of Judge Glen Davis and Richland County activist Hattie Fruster, respected leaders in the community.

The relationship with Judge Davis was established not long after the food co-op started, when two GROW activists appeared in his courtroom on misdemeanor trespass charges. They had gone to the Westinghouse Nuclear Fuels plant not far from the Community Center to deliver a letter to the plant manager about the danger of radioactive leaks into the water table. The manager refused to meet with them, and when they declined to leave were arrested.

Six Black women from the Bluff Road community made up the jury. Defense attorney David Bruck, a USC law school graduate who would go on to make a name for himself as the country's premier death penalty attorney, delivered the first and only innocent verdict of GROW's 700 anti-nuclear arrests. He asked the jury whether they would trespass to save a child from drowning. The women all agreed that they would, and sided with the activists.

Harbinger print shop

In 1981, GROW bought a printing press and started Harbinger Publications, which operated for more than 30 years. It was a full-service shop that, in the 1980s, ran three printing presses and employed five workers.

They voted to join the IWW in 1982, when South Carolina's rate of unionized labor was the lowest in the country. "It is with a great deal of pride that we associate with a union which has been fighting for the same goals as we have for longer than we've been alive," the staff announced in their newsletter. Known as the Wobblies, the IWW was a socialist labor union formed in 1905. Their ultimate goal was to call One Big Strike to overthrow the capitalist system.

Harbinger printed primarily for other nonprofits, small businesses, and political candidates needing posters, post cards, and yard signs. The shop designed books, brochures, letterhead, and newsletters. James Clyburn, then working for the Human Affairs Commission, was a regular client, as was Columbia attorney and former Senator Tom Turnipseed. Harbinger also printed programs for every play at Trustus Theater from its opening until Kay and Jim Thigpen retired 25 years later.

The quality of the work belied the Third World equipment the shop used. Brinker was a designer at Harbinger, and took her job seriously. "There was not a whole lot of money back then. You wanted the work to be good because you didn't want to have to reprint anything. Working for the collective good, it was very motivating to do my best, to streamline and work efficiently."

They never refused a job, even when they could smell trouble, like the time they ignored their instincts and agreed to print thousands of rabies brochures for DHEC. State contracts were notoriously difficult, but they needed cash. In fact, in the middle of printing the job GROW's electricity was cut off for failure to pay. Undeterred, they covered the windows and jimmied the lock to turn the power back on long enough to finish the job. Just when they thought their work was done, DHEC sent the brochures back to be repackaged because they had been delivered in used beer boxes.

To save money and the planet, the staff at GROW were mad recyclers, reusing everything possible and adopting some practices they'd seen in print shops operating in the Third World.

Harbinger magazine

The print shop also printed *Harbinger,* a "grassroots journal" with a mix of essays, editorials, investigative reporting, and news about GROW's grassroots campaigns. In its early years, much of their political work focused on US involvement in central America, the anti-nuclear movement, and the fallout from the Reagan Administration's Draconian policies.

GROW recruited Elton Manzione and his wife Lynn, to help with producing the new magazine. Manzione, a Vietnam veteran, was working at a newspaper in Tennessee and was frustrated that he wasn't given free rein to cover the hard-hitting stories as he'd been promised.

Manzione was also hired because he knew how to run the kind of press that GROW

800-555-NARC

In the early days, GROW relied on a pay phone they installed downstairs. Offices were on the second floor, and the stairs were outside. When they finally could afford a phone system, the old GROW number was reassigned by the phone company to a narcotics tip line.

A few years later, GROW was behind on bills and their number was temporarily appropriated by the phone company. If you called GROW in October of 1981, you would be connected to Chem-Nuclear, the hazardous waste dump in Barnwell that GROW had been fighting for three years.

A Bell System representative attributed the switch to a coincidence. GROW staff took comfort in the fact that the phone company had a sense of humor.

was using. "I had printer skills, so we figured it was a good match. I was also a left-wing lunatic. That helped."

Manzione had worked for mainstream newspapers as well as *Osceola,* the *Athens Observer,* and at Sojourners Press, whose publications included the GI anti-war newspaper *FTA*.

He and Sue Bowman wrote a series of pieces on the nuclear industry with a seriousness and unique perspective. Manzione broke a story about the University of South Carolina's acquisition of Black properties on Wheeler Hill, which the local press would "discover" in 2021. Harbinger also ran original art and cartoons by Richard Lane and Joe Byrne.

The magazine folded in 1984, replaced by *GROW Notes*, an occasional newsletter that offered updates on grassroots campaigns and solicited volunteers for its ongoing projects.

Last call at GROW Cafe

The Cafe closed in January 1984. The work was demanding and the bar scene had turned violent one too many times.

"The effort wasn't really paying off," Brinker said. "You had these fights breaking out. There was a pool table in there, and it just got kind of rowdy. We wanted to be peaceniks, not manage drunks."

Gooding was there the night some bikers, the Charlotte Sun Downers, threatened the staff. "They showed up with sticks and clubs. We called the sheriff, and the cops got there in the nick of time. At the next GROW meeting we talked about shutting it down because we could no longer assure people's safety."

Afrikan Dreamland, a blues-reggae band out of Nashville, played the final show.

Garage bands and their groupies in the Midlands mourned the loss. "There was really an amazing local music scene in the '80s," Brinker said. "It was just phenomenal. I'd put it up against any zip code in the country. There was no shortage of creativity and talent. There were so many bands, so many musicians in this town, and nowhere to play."

This poster hung over the boss's desk at GROW. If an image could capture the gestalt of the place, this is it.

After the Cafe closed, GROW threw occasional parties, fundraisers that never brought in much money but made lasting memories. The annual Mutant Be-In at Halloween was a beloved tradition that spanned a decade. There were winter cotillions and debutante balls, excuses to dress up and mock the crusty traditions of the old South.

Brinker and some friends tried to revive the Cafe in the early 1990s. "We did a second-generation version of the Cafe, a second blossoming of the place. We did art shows, Nicaraguan poetry, all kinds of things." It was fun while it lasted, which wasn't long. Another whole circle of people got a taste of the GROW experience.

Becci Robbins

Among them was Steve Hait, who moved from Chapel Hill to Columbia in 1992. "I was exploring the neighborhood on my bike, and found myself in front of this wall with The Incredible Hulk bursting through it. I had to go inside and see what was going on. I went in and found a bunch of people I have dug ever since."

Hait served many years as the technical guru for *POINT*, which was just getting off the ground when he moved to Columbia, and later for the SC Progressive Network. With great courage, he led a staff of stubborn Luddites into the digital age.

All things must pass

All these years later, we ask whether it was time well spent. "I have zero regrets," Manzione said. "I loved every minute of it. The only thing I wish is that I could have fed my family a little better, maybe had a little more material security, but I wouldn't trade it. Those were the best days of my life."

Brinker said, "It was a collective that I think helped bind the community together when there was no other place. They were beautiful, incredible people at GROW. It was quite the perch. There were people there doing their dharma, paying their rent on earth and I always felt privileged to be among them."

Gooding remembers his years at GROW with gratitude. "I don't think there was a time in my life that I felt more vital than I did during that time. We felt like we were so plugged into something much bigger than us and more important than us as individuals. I've never had that sense since then about anything I've done."

Bursey said, "Modjeksa's slogan was 'making a way out of no way.' We made a way out of no way for more than 20 years. We kicked some sand, as she would say, and did some good things. It was a good time. And it ain't over." ☼

SC committee echoes McCarthy-era red baiting

In 1958, in the middle of the Cold War, the state legislature formed the Committee to Investigate Communist Activities in South Carolina and charged it with investigating "any communist activities" and executing "an educational program to inform the people of South Carolina of the threat of communism to national security."

The committee reflected the state's odd and long-lived obsession with communism, which they used as a tool to label and disparage progressive activists. "Pinko" was shorthand for un-American.

Anti-communist crusaders put civil rights organizer Esau Jenkins in their crosshairs.

The committee operated in secret. It was comprised of three members from the House and three from the Senate. Kershaw County Sen. John C. West was chair for the first six years. West was a powerful force, serving as lieutenant governor (1967–1971), governor (1971–1975), and ambassador to Saudi Arabia (1977–1981).

Typical of the tone and tenor of the times, in Gov. George Timmerman's 1958 annual message to state lawmakers he charged that professors at Allen University were "highly trained communist workers" and that approval of its teacher-training program would be suspended until the university looked into the matter. A few weeks later, he hit Benedict College with similar claims. The seven professors targeted at the HBCUs were especially vulnerable because the schools had no tenure protections. Within months, they were forced out and left South Carolina.

"While South Carolinians generally are recognized as having a degree of patriotism and devotion to God and Country that is second to none in the world," the committee reported in May 1964, "the concept of and pride in that heritage should not lull us into the fallacy of thinking it can't or won't happen here." The committee lifted up Cuba and Malcolm X to make its point.

In April 1965, the report explained the need for keeping the committee's work secret. "It should be noted that this committee has guarded with extreme caution the publicizing of its activities… mere knowledge that an investigation is being conducted may result in a premature conclusion that is tantamount to guilt. While the committee's activities in the investigative field have rarely been publicized, they have been consistent and detailed."

The committee reported that it had been following closely the civil rights organizing at Highlander Center in Tennessee, and expressed fear that it was extending its reach into South Carolina. It cited as an example the Progressive Club near Charleston that was established in 1948 by Esau Jenkins to mobilize Black voters. Jenkins had been trained at Highlander. The committee thanked SLED Chief Pete Strom for his leadership on managing this perceived threat.

Black, white, and red all over

A report in May 1968 noted that since the committee's formation "more than 136,000 Americans have been killed or wounded fighting communism" and "more than 75 billion of American dollars have been bled off from needed domestic programs by the communist gambit of brush fire wars in an international chess game, the prize of which is Freedom."

The committee recommended that the SC Board of Education require secondary school teachers to have at least six credits in understanding "the confrontation between democracy and communism, and the nature of the struggle between economic systems."

Powerful politician John C. West chaired the SC Communist Committee for six years.

It said "front groups" required careful investigation of their funding and backers. "As a result of the present level of public debate on important issues of 'Race' and 'Peace' it is reasonable to expect that an increased number of front groups will be formed by the Communists, or if not formed, then taken over by them." It warned that "a new threat is arising — a threat created by a mixture of Communist and ultra-racist conspirators."

The committee's 1971 report quoted FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who warned "the movement has mushroomed into a major security problem" which "reveals itself as a firmly established subversive force dedicated to the complete destruction of our traditional democratic values and the principles of free government."

The Committee concluded with "as concerned public servants the members of the General Assembly should know more about this new-type of subversion in this country that is erupting in civil disobedience and encouraging young people to mock the law."

The report included a list lifted from *Toward Soviet America* by William Z. Foster, former chair of the Communist Party USA. It selected these bulleted items to underscore the depravity of the enemy:

- "The Russian woman is also free in her sex life, the free American woman, like her Russian sister, will eventually scorn the whole fabric of bourgeois sex hypocrisy and prudery."
- "In the so-called Black Belt of the South, where the Negroes are in the majority, they will have the fullest right to govern themselves and also such white minorities as may live in this section."
- "Science will become materialistic, hence truly scientific; God will be banished from the laboratories as well as from the schools.

The final report recommended that the committee change its name to the Internal Security Committee to "embrace a greater realm of investigative authority. This authority would free your Committee to investigate any subversion whether Communist motivated or otherwise that affects the peace, order and internal security of this State and its citizens." ❋

Richard Lane III, 1953–1998

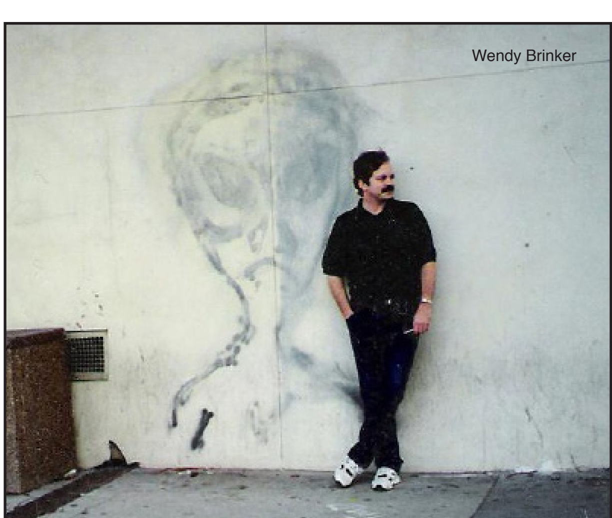
He believed in art, angels, and aliens

Richard Lane had an artist's eye and a comic's sensibility, which made him perfect for the job of GROW's in-house artist. He was there from the beginning, designing ads and illustrations for Harbinger Publications, and penning detailed drawings for the Cafe's monthly calendars.

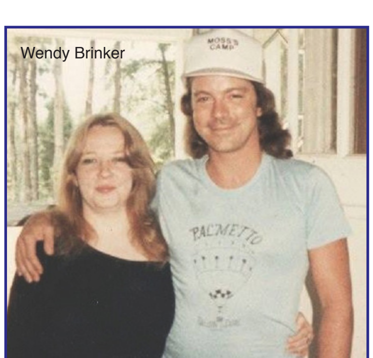
Lane was an only child, and the beloved nephew of noted South Carolina legal pioneer Sarah Leverette, with whom he was very close. He was bright, sensitive, a Boy Scout.

By his early 20s, he was showing his artwork in Columbia. A write-up in *The State* in 1978 described him as "a personable young man with a red beard." The reviewer compared his art to Larry Lebby, who would later paint the portrait of Modjeska Simkins that hangs in the SC State House. "Like Lebby, Lane has complete mastery of his medium, and uses it to good advantage in his choice of subject matter. He softens the pencil's touch for backgrounds, and deepens foreground objects with a ball point pen."

Lane was affable and unassuming, gifted with a wicked, dry wit, evident in the cartoons he drew for Harbinger. "I think you have to be intelligent to be funny, and he was hilarious," said Wendy Brinker, Lane's best friend from the time she was in high school until his death in 1998. "He was a brilliant man, so intelligent, and had such capacity for information, for facts. We both had crazy mothers and took comfort in each other's misery. Our sense of humor and our deviousness ran along the same tracks. We didn't have to say anything. All it took was a look and we would just die laughing. It was annoying to be around us."



The heart of her friendship with Lane was their shared love of art. He was prolific, and modeled for Brinker the habits of someone compelled to create. "He inspired me so much," she said. "He always had a notebook, and watching his process made a huge mark on how I process things. He really encouraged me in a way I had not experienced. He didn't need accolades, there was no acrimony, no jealousy. He was all about one love and helping each other — just a beautiful human being."



Richard Lane and Wendy Brinker

Brinker watched him paint the waterfall behind the bar at GROW. She was there for the unveiling in 1978 of his Incredible Hulk mural on Halloween night. And in 1989, she helped him create what became Lane's most lasting mark on Columbia, the now iconic mural of the sun god Ra on a concrete slab near GROW.

Ra is the falcon-headed Egyptian deity that rules over the heavens, the earth, and the netherworld. Brinker and Lane watched from the upstairs windows at GROW as crews tried to remove the crumbling remains of a train trestle. "The support that was just ahead of Ra came down without a hitch," she remembers. They glued a giant Jim Morrison poster to it and "called it art watching the wrecking ball destroy it." The second support wasn't so easy. "Too much rebar. They banged away at it for days, to no avail. We loved that it was resistant!"

Richard Lane painted The Incredible Hulk on the GROW building in a nod to the anti-nuclear fight they were waging inside.

The two artists thought the defiant monolith deserved some attention, and decided on a mural of Ra. "I had a set of hieroglyph stamps and a book on how to read and write them," Brinker said. "That's how he translated his messages." She said that on the left side it reads "Angels are real, they love you," and on the right side it translates to "Here comes the sun."

Weathered and faded over the decades, Ra has been touched up twice to refresh its colors. In 2004, it became the center of a small park. Bob Guild, head of the Granby Hill Alliance that backed the preservation effort, said in *The State*, "Because Richard is gone now, it has all this great significance to all the people in the community who were his dear friends. We just think it's a wonderful thing that we are able to incorporate it into the Greenway."

Toward the end of his life, Lane shifted his work. He began making sculptures and art featuring UFO themes. "We were both very much into aliens," Brinker said. "In fact, we once saw a UFO when we were together." She recounts the day they took

their six-year-old god-daughter to the park to fly a kite. “There was this beautiful blue sky, and we got the kite up, and right off the tip was a silver metallic round object that simply hovered there. It stayed there 20 minutes, with no sound, no movement, and then it took off. Our god-daughter asked, ‘Was that a UFO?’ We looked at each other and said, ‘Well, yes, we think it was.’

“It was amazing. We were convinced. Statistically, the universe is teeming with life, we both accepted that. It gave us something to joke about, too. So he started doing UFO paintings and alien-type art. It was really cool.”

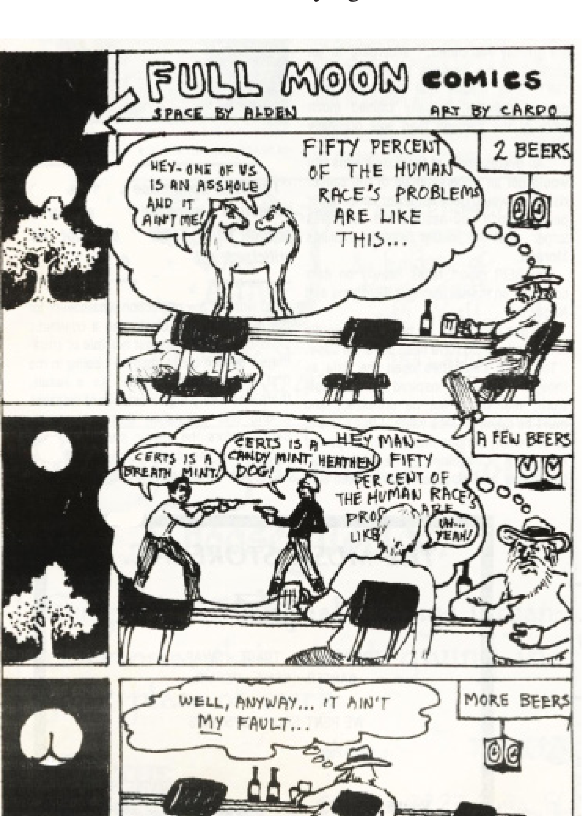
State Media Co.

Beautifying the GROW bar

Michael Lowe remembers relying on Lane for posters and graphics for the anti-nuclear campaigns. “Richard was very helpful and always willing. It might take a while, but the end project would always be perfect.”

Lane, Brinker, and Columbia artists Joe Byrne and Rick Baty gave GROW character and color. It would have been a much less interesting place without them.

“We were very luck to have them,” Bursey said of the visual artists at GROW. “The original cartoons and illustrations that they produced for our publications, flyers, and posters were cutting edge. Being able to draw is one thing; being able to turn that ability into social commentary is another kind of talent.”

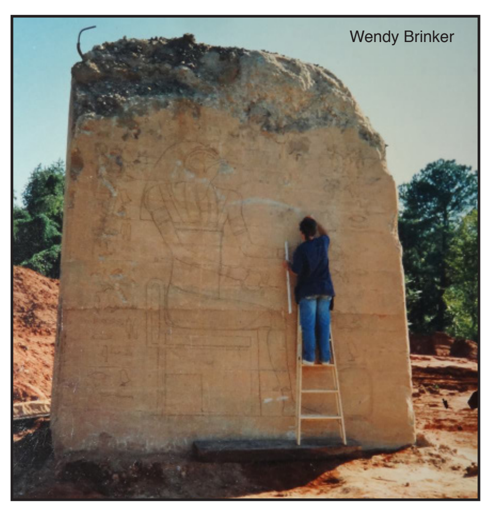


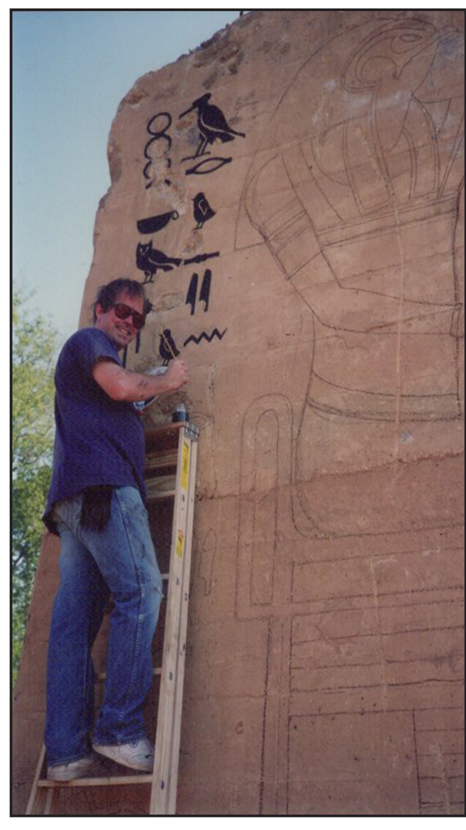
Alden Richardson had a bartering deal to cut Lane’s hair in exchange for illustrations for his barber shop ads. “He had pretty hard hair to cut,” Richardson remembers, “but the ads were great. Richard was a remarkable man. Too bad we lost him so early.”

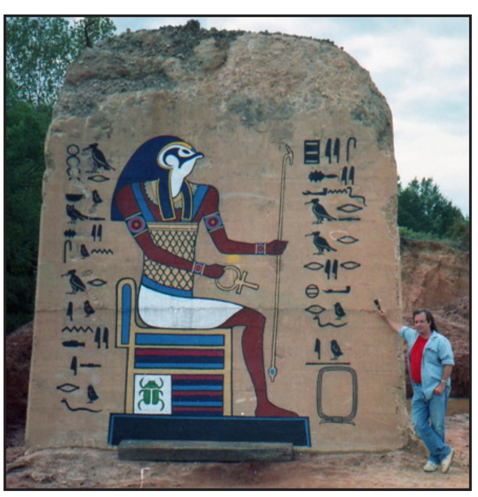
Lane died unexpectedly in Colorado in the spring of 1998.

One can only wonder what Lane would make of the fact that Ra has become a local landmark. “I think he would be most honored,” Brinker said. “The restoration really is an indication of how much people love his work. There’s a huge hanging poster of it at the airport as well, so hometown pride and recognition abound!” ☼

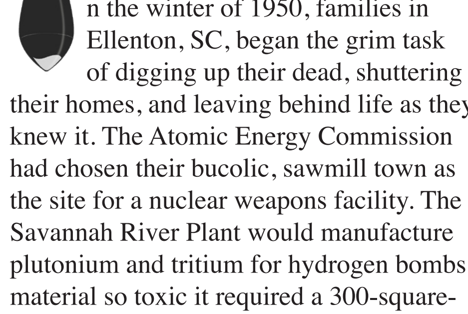
Making Ra


Wendy Brinker





Art by Joe Byrne



Hell no we won't glow

SC activists wage long fight against nuclear industry

In the winter of 1950, families in Ellenton, SC, began the grim task of digging up their dead, shuttering their homes, and leaving behind life as they knew it. The Atomic Energy Commission had chosen their bucolic, sawmill town as the site for a nuclear weapons facility. The Savannah River Plant would manufacture plutonium and tritium for hydrogen bombs, material so toxic it required a 300-square-mile safety perimeter.

The sprawling facility would displace the people of Ellenton and Dunbarton, and several unincorporated communities. All told, about 6,000 people, many of them Black farmers, were forced off their land.

The announcement that South Carolina had landed the $260 million SRP construction contract was a boon to the state's struggling economy and a hawkish feather in the caps of the state's political elite that would solidify their power for decades to come. US Sen. Olin Johnston said the plant meant "my people will have an opportunity to contribute even more to the defense of our nation. I am sure South Carolinians will cherish this opportunity." *The State*'s editorial board said the nuclear facility meant that South Carolina had "moved to the front in the fight against communism."

The people displaced by what locals called the Bomb Plant were some of the first American casualties in the Cold War, the term George Orwell coined in 1945 to describe a nuclear stand-off between "monstrous super-states, each possessed of a weapon by which millions of people can be wiped out in a few seconds." Two years later, in a speech to lawmakers at the SC State House, presidential adviser Bernard Baruch was the first American to publicly use the term.

Byrnes and the bomb

It was no coincidence that America's bomb plant was built in James Byrnes' old congressional district the year he returned from DC to run for governor. He had been serving as the president's right-hand man in two war-time administrations, and was in the rooms where the weightiest decisions were made.

Byrnes had hoped to be President Franklin D. Roosevelt's vice presidential nominee in the 1944 election, but lost to Truman. Some argue that Byrnes could have become president, but his deep ties to white supremacists and vocal support for segregation made him nonviable as a national candidate in a party then trying to tone down its racist appearances.

President Harry Truman appointed Byrnes to a secret, interim committee whose job was to make recommendations on how to use the atomic bomb. The men at the table chose to ignore the scientists and military leaders who urged a less aggressive path, suggesting that sharing atomic secrets rather than dropping the bomb could open a new era of cooperation.

Byrnes argued that dropping the bomb would make the Soviet Union "more manageable." He had "joined the ranks of those viewing atomic weapons as a panacea for the nation's military and diplomatic problems," Martin Sherwin wrote in *World Destroyed: Hiroshima and Its Legacies*.

First published in 1975, the book tracks America's development of the bomb and the controversial decision to drop it. Sherwin asserts that Byrnes wanted to drop the bomb before the war was over for political reasons, substantiated in the memo from the interim committee posted at the National Atomic Testing Museum's web site. The committee's final report in June 1945 noted, "Mr. Byrnes recommended, and the Committee agreed, that the Secretary of War should be advised that, while recognizing that the final selection of the target was essentially a military decision, the present view of the Committee was that the

The sign reads, "It is hard to understand why our town must be destroyed to make a bomb that will destroy someone else's town that they love as much as we love ours."

bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible; that it be used on a war plant surrounded by workers' homes; and that it be used without prior warning."

Byrnes got his way, and the nuclear arms race began in earnest on Aug. 6, when the United States dropped the "Little Boy" atom bomb on Hiroshima, killing over 100,000 civilians. On Aug. 9, the more sophisticated "Fat Man" plutonium bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, killing over 80,000.

Bomb Plant transforms Barnwell

Straddling Barnwell and Aiken counties, the plant benefited from being represented by the governor and some of the state's most powerful politicians, Rep. Solomon Blatt and Sen. Edgar Brown. Both hailing from Barnwell, Blatt served 32 years as Speaker of the House, Brown was president of the Senate for 30 years.

By 1951, SRP was the largest single-site employer in the state, a distinction it still enjoys. The massive construction project radically changed the Barnwell area's physical and cultural landscape. The locals moved out and what the industry called "atomic homesteaders" moved in.

The nation's first mass mobile home parks were hastily assembled to house the newcomers. The phenomenon was covered in a story titled "Don't Call Them Trailer Trash" in a 1952 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*. "There are nearly 3,000 trailer families in the bomb-plant area now, huddled in 100-odd parks and courts around the 315 square miles of the H-bomb reservation," the *Post* reported. "They are a new breed upon the earth — a growing tribe of willing migrants who by their own choice have arranged their lives so that they will be free to travel wherever there are atomic plants to build."

Beginning in January 1952, a private company from Philadelphia built four "cities on wheels," with 1,000 metal trailers on each site. Seemingly overnight, 400 acres of farmland was converted to fields of mobile homes. Some of the locals moved to New Ellenton, which was established without much planning. As one resident put it, "The gridiron pattern was bulldozed into the hills, and the street pattern took shape without regard to grades, drainage, soil erosion, or aesthetics." By 1952, the town was home to nearly 4,000 residents.

In 1967, in an effort to boost the nuclear industry even further, South Carolina lawmakers passed the Atomic Energy and Radiation Act "to promote and assist in the establishment of private atomic energy facilities."

Only Vestiges Remain of

The Four Cities on Wheels

Augusta

Williston

The four trailer cities at their peak in September 1952 which were located at Aiken, Williston, Barnwell and Augusta, Ga. Of the 17,000 people then living in 4,000 homes on wheels, only several hundred families are left now at Aiken and Augusta.

Aiken

Barnwell

To house new workers at the Bomb Plant, hundreds of acres of farmland were transformed from row crops to rows of mobile homes, the country's first mass trailer parks.

The Act authorized the state to buy land and lease it to private corporations producing or handling nuclear materials. It paved the way for construction of the Barnwell Nuclear Fuel Plant, later renamed Allied General Nuclear Services.

AGNS was the product of a consortium of some of the world's richest corporations, including Allied Chemical, Gulf Oil, and Royal Dutch Shell. The plant was built to reprocess plutonium from spent uranium fuel rods, and was touted as the future of energy production — not just in South Carolina, but in the world. The promise of wealth and relevance proved too seductive for the state's politicians and business leaders to resist. So began the Palmetto State's transformation into the Plutonium State.

For 25 years, the industry operated almost entirely unchallenged. The first to raise questions about the plant's safety in any public way was Towsend Belser, a veteran of the Navy's nuclear program who

said Barnwell was a poor place to build the reprocessing plant because of its high water table and the risk it posed to the area's rich wildlife. He launched a one-man lobby that was largely ignored until the spring of 1971, when *Sandlapper* ran a dense, detailed article Belser wrote about problems at Barnwell.

Longtime activist Ruth Thomas co-founded Environmentalists Inc.

Perhaps no one was as spooked by the magazine piece as Ruth Thomas, who remembered having a sleepless night after reading it. First thing in the morning, she called Belser to ask what she could do. Together, they established Environmentalists Inc. Their first order of business was to force the plant to hold public hearings and then ask allied organizations to intervene in the licensing process.

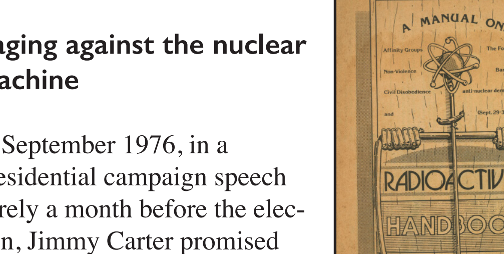
Thomas set off to speak to anyone who would listen, a habit she would maintain the rest of her life. When she died in 2020, the newspaper headline announcing her death read: "Fierce little old lady who opposed nuclear expansion dies at 99." It would have irked but not surprised Thomas, who was used to such dismissiveness. When she showed up with her piles of files, it was easy but foolish for her adversaries to under-estimate her.

"Ruth would show up with her cardboard boxes and stand up against these flocks of high-speed lawyers," Bursey recalled. "The way hearings work, you can be effective if you're specific and persistent, and Ruth was both. She threw lots of nails in the road that kept the industry from cutting corners on safety."

Environmental activist Leslie Minerd called Thomas her surrogate mother. "I did a lot with Ruth and learned a lot from her. We went to many hearings together. She was relentless."

Activist Michael Lowe also watched Thomas in action over the years. "She had ultimate faith in documents, and would show up with her tomato boxes full of files." He said she would rummage through her piles of information, stirring impatience and irritation of the men she was grilling. "It was a great tactic. I loved her."

Raging against the nuclear machine



In September 1976, in a presidential campaign speech barely a month before the election, Jimmy Carter promised he would stop commercial plutonium reprocessing to stop nuclear weapons proliferation. In an effort to blunt Carter's advocacy for alternative fuel sources, President Gerald Ford ordered a three-year delay on starting the Barnwell plant just five days before the election.

In early 1982, President Ronald Reagan canceled Carter's policy, but the industry's financial momentum was gone and the plant was dead before it ever opened.

During Carter's presidency, a new group of activists was emerging in South Carolina. They were younger, more outspoken, and inspired by the civil rights and anti-war movements to believe in the power of direct action. They had learned to question authority and to take agency over their lives by refusing to remain silent in the face of what they believed to be a grave mistake.

By then, the state was home to four nuclear reactors, with six more in the works. South Carolina was welcoming shipments of radioactive waste from sites across the country for burial in Barnwell's loamy soil, and was working hard to open the reprocessing plant. The state was well on its way to becoming the nation's nuclear dumping ground.

By the time Greenville state Sen. Dick Riley was running for governor in 1978, the state was accepting 85 percent of the nation's low-level radioactive waste. While campaigning, Riley stopped by GROW to consult with the staff about South Carolina's relationship with the nuclear industry. He left weighted down with reams of damning information to fuel his fight with the nuclear waste industry and the politicians who benefited from it.

Riley won the election, and soon made headlines for blocking a truck from Three Mile Island loaded with waste headed for burial in South Carolina. He was widely quoted in state and national media saying, "South Carolina can no longer be the path of least resistance in seeking the national answer to nuclear waste disposal."

Across the country, the public was growing increasingly wary of the dangers posed by the nuclear industry. That mistrust manifested dramatically on May Day, 1977, when more than 2,000 protesters occupied the construction site of the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant in New Hampshire. Before it was over, security had hauled away 1,414 demonstrators, making it one of the largest mass arrests in US history. It took police from three states 12 hours to clear the site.

Five of those arrested were from GROW. It was a heady experience feeling the full force of collective power, and they left Seabrook fired up and ready to take on the nuclear threat at home.

Right away, they crafted a recruiting handout that read, "We saw a non-violent army in action. No matter what else comes of the occupation, those of us who worked with the effort are excited about the way we worked together and the potential of our further efforts. The idea of stopping nuclear power is indeed a bold one, spitting in the eye of the most powerful forces in the world, the multinational energy corporations and the national and state governments who are geared to serve their economic interests, but it feels right and needs doing."

Organizers spent the next year planning a mass demonstration in Barnwell, holding meetings and direct action trainings across the South.

Calling out the Guard

In 1978, GROW created the Natural Guard Fund to act as fiscal sponsor for the ambitious anti-nuclear campaign they were preparing to launch. They printed membership cards that said, "We pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor in defense of the earth and its inhabitants."

GROW sent Frank Sarnowski to Barnwell to open a Southeast Natural Guard office and lay the groundwork for the massive anti-nuclear protest they were spearheading. They rented an old building with a residence upstairs to serve as the base of operations for volunteer activists from across the South. He and Pat Springer from the Catfish Alliance in Tallahassee anchored the office. They oversaw production of the Radioactivist Handbook, a detailed manual outlining the nonviolent civil disobedient training required to participate in the mass action.

The Natural Guard maintained a presence in Barnwell for the major rallies and direct actions in 1978 and 1979. The strategy was to win over the workers whose livelihoods did not depend on the bomb plant. Volunteers put together the No Nukes is Good Nukes Road Show, and created an Alternative Energy Fair to take their message to classrooms and county festivals. They printed brochures about the bomb plant and distributed them in bulk to allies far and wide. The brochures unfolded into posters designed by Columbia artist Joe Byrne that were pinned to walls from Japan to Bonn.

That first year, the activists targeted AGNS, which was being subsidized by $13 million in federal funds and had 450 employees, all in limbo as the plant's future was being debated.

Well in advance of the April rally, organizers set up a 20-acre camp in a field near the plant. They built a small city, with an office trailer, phones, water tanker, kitchen, hospital, toilets, children's tent, and a helicopter landing area that national media had requested. Trained organizers and self-sufficient affinity groups 500 activists strong came from across the South. Each group had a spokesperson to represent them in a council that made decisions for the group.

In 1978, Jackson Browne (right) surprised 1,500 anti-nuclear protesters with a concert in a soybean field near Allied General Nuclear Services plant near Barnwell. Organizers didn't advertise his appearance beforehand because they wanted people to come for the cause, not the celebrity.

On Sunday, with police and news helicopters circling above, "The Grim Reaper" led 2,000 protesters to the AGNS facility. They assembled along the dirt road leading to the main highway and, two by two, marched under a blazing sun three miles to the rally site. They sang protest songs, picked up roadside litter, and aroused the curiosity of the locals who gawked from their cars and front porches.

Once at AGNS, the demonstrators delivered petitions demanding the plant be shut down, and made statements to the press. Through a bullhorn, Bursey said if their demands weren't met they would be back in the morning.

At the rally, Dr. John Goffman, the nuclear physicist who first isolated plutonium, warned that SRP, with 35 million gallons of high-level nuclear waste, posed the biggest threat to America's national security. A direct hit by conventional weapons could force, within hours, the evacuation of the entire East Coast.

Noted Australian pediatrician Dr. Helen Caldicott told the crowd, "It is insane to think that there is any storage facility whose safety can be guaranteed for half-a-million years. By the year 2020, there will be 30,000 tons of plutonium produced in this country alone, and they don't know what to do with it."

Her words were prophetic. As the Charleston *Post & Courier* reported in 2021, the Savannah River Site is "among the most contaminated places on Earth, a storehouse of the deadliest radioactive materials known, enough to obliterate humanity.

The government can't get rid of it and still doesn't know what to do with it. Just keeping it contained has cost billions of dollars, stands to cost untold billions more and has no end in sight."

Bursey said a decades-old tank farm holds 35 million gallons of nuclear sludge left behind from nuclear fuel reprocessing. It is radioactive enough to generate heat for decades. "It corrodes the metal that contains it, and has to be stirred or it can ignite. It's a ticking time bomb that isn't going away."

The longterm cost and risks to public health seem obvious now, but in 1978 the group of anti-nuclear activists who were gathered outside the AGNS plant were a long way from vindication. Out-spent and out-gunned, they fought back as best they could.

The long day on that first mass action at Barnwell was capped by the unannounced appearance of Jackson Browne, then at the height of his career, who played for three hours. He told the rapt crowd, "The US government and the nuclear industry have chosen the most dangerous possible energy strategy, and it is based on the exclusion of meaningful input from the American people. The development of effective conservation and solar energy is the only humane option that we have."

He ended his set with "Before the Deluge," just before the skies sparked with lightning and let loose with another hard rain. He sang, "*Some of them were angry at the way the earth was abused by the men who learned how to forge her beauty into power; And they struggled to protect her from them only to be confused by the magnitude of her fury in the final hour… And in attempts to understand a thing so simple and so huge believed that they were meant to live after the deluge*."

The next day, hundreds of protesters took their grievance a step further by trespassing on AGNS property and risking arrest. Cops overseeing the demonstration ordered lunch for themselves and hoped the driving rain would thin the crowd. Undaunted, they chanted "Rainfall, yes! Fallout, no!"

When the protesters' support teams arrived with tents and portable toilets, it became clear that the activists were not going home anytime soon. Then, like a vision from another age, in rolled the Moral Equivalent of War Machine, a contraption the size of a small car with giant, wooden wheels and a series of rope and pulley-driven ladders that were designed to unfold over the top of the barbed-wire-topped fence that surrounded AGNS. Protesters rolled the hulking device towards the facility, nearly crushing the enraged head of the SLED SWAT team in the process.

The arrests began. Before it was over, 280 drenched protesters were bused to detention centers in Aiken, Barnwell, and Orangeburg. One of them was a professor of theology at Georgetown who had played his guitar all weekend. His last song, before the cops shut him down, was "Jailhouse Rock."

Lowe was among the protesters arrested that day. His perspective was unique in that crowd. He had worked as a crane operator at the VC Summer nuclear plant for three years. "I learned a lot," he said. "I was aware of the potential dangers of nuclear power, but I didn't care enough to not take their money." In time, though, he decided there had to be a better way to meet the country's energy needs. "It is such an intricate machine and needs such attention to detail that it's expensive. Solar made so much more sense."

Lowe was the rare "professional anti-nuclear organizer," working for the Natural Guard, the Palmetto Alliance and, later, with Greenpeace. He has been arrested six times protesting nuclear facilities. "I was acquitted three times, all with a magistrate's jury, and I've been convicted three times for trespassing."

Civil disobedience was an act he did with deliberation. "I always wanted to be the one arrested first," he said. "I always wore a bright blue Hawaiian shirt to set an example. It was a very emotional time. When you gather 5,000 people in a soybean field, any little spark can set off total chaos. I was always painfully aware of that. It's a frightening thing."

GROW

Modjeska Simkins, an early and ardent critic of nukes, speaks at a rally outside the Bomb Plant in Barnwell.

Barnwell II

As GROW staff and allies were organizing a second mass action in the fall, a reactor at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania had a partial meltdown on March 28, 1979. The accident, the most serious in US commercial nuclear power history, alarmed average Americans and galvanized anti-nuclear activists.

With renewed urgency, and supported with funding raised at a musical benefits by Browne, Bonnie Raitt, and other celebrity activists, anti-nuclear advocates met for what they called

United States of America (Du Pont) vs. The Savannah River Plant Six

The SRP-6 are from left to right, John Penley, Rosemary Freriks, Michael Gooding, Mitch Yarborough, Barbara Smith, and Chris Kueny

The Demands of the SRP Six

- **An immediate halt to production of weapons grade fissionable material for America's nuclear bomb program at SRP.**
- **A call for a comprehensive study to determine to health and environmental impact of SRP on the surrounding region and it's citizens.**
- **The ability to exercise constitutional rights to freedom of speech and freedom of peaceful assembly.**

The SRP Six: (from left) John Penley, Rosemary Freriks, Michael Gooding, Mitch Yarborough, Barbara Smith, and Chris Kueny.

Barnwell II between Sept. 30 and Oct. 1. On Saturday, they held an Appropriate Technology Fair, with booths promoting alternative energy options that are sustainable, decentralized, community owned, and ecologically sound.

On Sunday, about 2,000 people gathered for a rally. They heard Graham Nash, local bands, and a host of speakers, including The Farm's Stephen Gaskin, nuclear physicist Dr. Michio Kaku, and Columbia activist Modjeska Simkins. Fired up, the crowd then walked seven miles to SRP, chanting and waving banners at passing cars.

On Monday, with civil disobedience on their minds, they split up, marching to SRP, AGNS, and Chem-Nuclear.

Chem-Nuclear, a private company adjacent to the Bomb Plant, began operating in the 1960s as a commercial facility for the burial of low-level nuclear waste. "It was one of the least-managed places when it came to safety," Bursey said. "We had information that irradiated chemicals were leaking into the ground behind the facility. I met a five-legged dog across the street from the plant, and the man who lived there said his neighbor had a pig with too many legs. I asked to see it, but they'd already eaten it."

Shortly after noon, 40 demonstrators gathered on Route 64. The group read a petition and challenged someone from DOE to a debate on nukes. When they got no response, they laid out a picnic and proceeded to eat lunch.

After refusing to leave, law enforcement officers moved in. At three sites, cops arrested 161 protesters for trespassing and took them to the National Guard Armory for processing.

The SRP Six

After only a small event at SRP the year before, in 1982 GROW staff and allies were busy organizing yet another protest at the Bomb Plant, this time as part of a "peace sabbath" being held in 18 countries. The South Carolina crew planned to gather on May 30 in front of the Department of Energy headquarters at SRP, as they had done before.

Michael Gooding with his arresting officer at the Department of Energy.

This year, however, their permit was denied based on SLED's assertion that the organizers were members of the (nonexistent) Revolutionary Communist Workers Party, Nazis, convicted felons, and "persons bent on the destruction of the United States," thereby posing a threat to national security.

Organizers were forced to move the rally site several miles away, to a "safe zone" in field full of briers and fire ants. The event went ahead, attracting more than 1,000 demonstrators, but not everyone took the change in stride. Chris Kueny approached a cop monitoring the scene and told him, "This 'free speech zone' is crap, and we want to get [a case] before a judge. We told them we'd be back the next day."

He and fellow GROW activist Michael Gooding were among a group who spent that night camped out and making plans to get arrested the next day on the DOE lawn — a move the larger group did not endorse because of the heightened legal risk of trespassing on federal property.

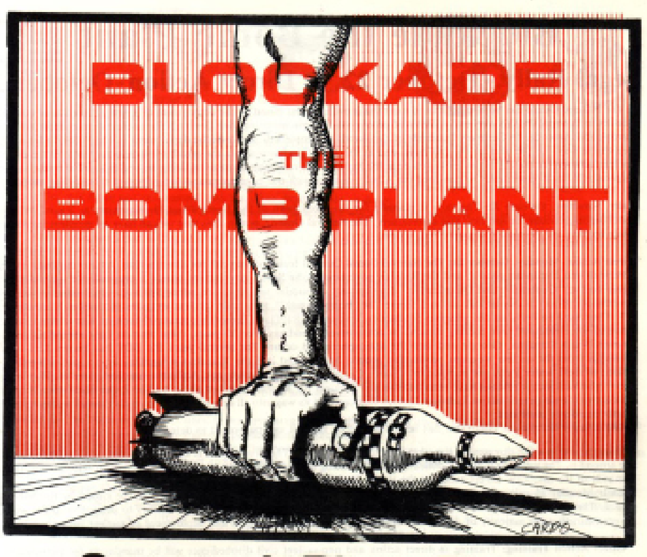
"We were pretty radicalized by that time," Gooding said. "There was a big debate about getting arrested, but we were the young Turks and alienating people wasn't our concern. We knew we would get arrested. We knew it was going to be peaceful. We didn't know that the trial would be as tough as it was or that we would get a really reactionary judge."

When they arrived in the morning, they saw a bright yellow line painted across the DOE lawn. On the other side, officials of all stripes were waiting for them. Kueny said, "They ranged from a guy that looked like Otis [the disheveled drunk] on "The Andy Griffith Show" to a DOE guy with a black wire in his ear."

Ignoring repeated warnings, the six crossed the line, waving flags and chanting. "The Otis-looking guy had cue cards," Kueny remembers. "He read the first one warning us that we were trespassing. Then he read one warning us we were going to be arrested, and then another one saying he was arresting us."

The protesters were processed on site, and driven by US marshals to Columbia, where they spent the night in the Richland County jail. They faced $1,000 misdemeanor fines. Bail for the three locals was set at $3,000; $5,000 for the two women from out of state; and $25,000 for the activist who had claimed the name John Doe upon arrest.

The SRP Six, as they came to be known, drove to Aiken on July 16 for a preliminary hearing before Chief US District Judge Charles Simons, Jr. It did not go well. In court, the five represented by Columbia lawyer John Delgado wore suits. Mr. Doe, aka John Penley, chose to represent himself. He showed up wearing blue jeans, a headband, and an air of utter contempt.

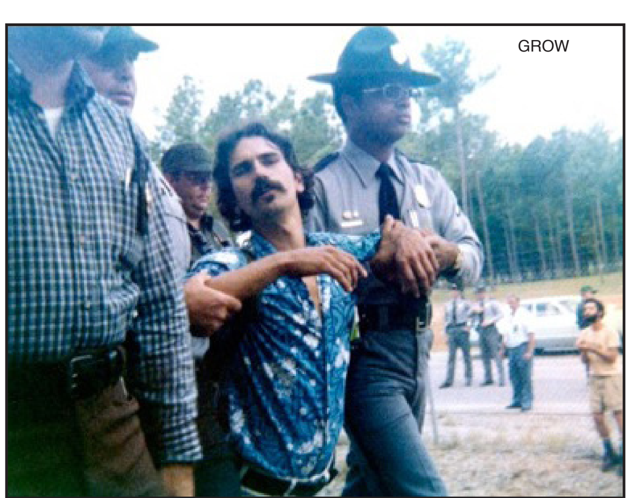


The judge called the defendants anarchists and lamented that he couldn't put them in jail. He denied Delgado's request that the judge recuse himself because Simons owned 100 shares of stock in DuPont & Co., the company operating SRP for the federal government. Simons said, "If I had any question in my mind as to my ability to afford the defendant a fair trial in this case, I surely wouldn't hesitate to remove myself."

His assurance reassured no one, least of all the defendants. As Kueny said, "I got arrested on DuPont property, got booked by DuPont security guards, got photographed in the DuPont mug shot room, and now we were going to be tried in a DuPont town by a judge that owns stock in DuPont."

Trying times

The two-day trial began on Aug. 2 in the Aiken courthouse. At considerable expense, the defense had brought in high-profile peace activist Father Philip Berrigan and Dr. Carl Johnson of Denver, an expert on increased cancer rates near nuclear facilities. The judge decided they could testify only if the jury was not present. "So he sent the jury out while our prime witnesses were on the stand," Gooding said. "It rendered their testimony useless."



Michael Lowe during one of his six arrests protesting nukes.

If they jury had been in the courtroom, they would have heard Berrigan say that the six were "duty bound, as citizens of this country" to draw attention to the risk of nuclear power. They would have heard Dr. Johnson testify that people living near SRP were in "immediate danger" from radioactive emissions and that there was "urgent need" for a study on the effects of those emissions on human health and the environment.

Classified reports he had obtained revealed that plutonium had been released during routine operations at the plant and "radioactivity nearly four orders of magnitude greater than acknowledge in reports prepared for the public." Mice and rabbits in the area were reported to be heavily contaminated.

"It was star-studded," Kueny said of the players in the courtroom. "Modjeska was in the audience, Henry Dargon McMaster was our prosecutor, the judge was Strom Thurmond's former law partner, and our defense attorney, John Delgado, was one of the best in the state — whose service we paid for by painting his house."

The jury took 20 minutes to find the defendants guilty. The SRP Six left the courtroom feeling righteous. They had done what they'd set out to do: focus attention on the Bomb Plant and the risks it posed to current and future generations. Outside, they were met by a local farmer who, grateful for their actions, gave them money to buy lunch on him.

Facing $1,000 fines, the defendants applied for indigence status. As staff at GROW, Gooding had no doubt that he would qualify. But he again found himself at the mercy of a judge who said he regretted not having the power to lock them up.

"We were found indigent but the case was kicked to Judge Gambrell in Columbia. He said, 'I wish I could put every one of you in jail.' He was so biased! We were shocked."

The judge ordered that they be locked up pending his decision. "This time," Gooding said, "instead of being in the drunk tank they sent us upstairs and put us in a cell. When you get in the real jail and those automatic doors slide behind you, it's sobering."

The young Turks were long on courage but short on cash. “Modjeska Simkins saved us,” Kueny said. Fortunately for them, she posted their bond. Unfortunately for her, Penley would jump bail and flee the state, leaving Simkins holding the bag. GROW spent weeks raising the money to pay Simkins back. Penley eventually turned himself in, served time and, according to Kueny, apologized to Simkins, who forgave him.

Gooding said his brush with the state’s justice system opened his eyes. “What a political science education it was to go to trial in South Carolina with conservative judges,” he said. “I learned more in that process than I did during four years at USC. All that stuff in the books is interesting, but this is how it actually works.”

Nearly 50 years on, Gooding has no regrets, even though he suspects his federal criminal record may have affected his employment record. “The arrests served their purpose. We wanted people in South Carolina to know that this isn’t a nuclear power plant; this is a place that make nuclear weapons, and a lot of dangerous stuff is stored here.”

Blockade the Bomb Plant

Workers driving to their Monday morning shift at the Bomb Plant on Oct. 24, 1983, passed an odd sight on the side of Hwy. 125. Barely visible in the early morning light was a slow procession of 100 people waving signs and chanting. When the sun was high enough to see clearly, two cars flanking the east-bound lanes slowed and stopped. Two people got out and sat in the road. They were the first link in an organized human roadblock designed to throw a wrench into routine operations at SRP.

Cops were prepared for a demonstration of some sort, but didn’t know what it would look like. When security moved in to arrest the activists in the road, another group took their place. The process repeated until, 45 minutes into the operation, cars were backed up for 20 miles. At one gate, 54 people were hauled away. At another, 60 women from the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom swarmed the stop light, with 25 of them blocking the entrance for 15 minutes.

Graham Nash — Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee and founding member of Crosby, Stills and Nash — marches at Barnwell in 1979.

About 100 police officers were on the scene, wearing rubber gloves to protect themselves from the rabble. “We don’t know who we’re dealing with, and we don’t want to have any physical contact with them,” SLED spokesman Hugh Munn told a reporter. “We don’t know what kind of infections they have.”

Later, GROW staffer Randy Tatel explained why he sat in the road. “When I decided that nuclear weapons were a political and humanistic insanity, I turned to find a legislator who represented me, and there were none. It fell to my shoulders to be my own representative and take the military machine head on.”

The blockade went as planned. The only time it got dicey was when a truck sporting a **Gods, Guns, and Ammo** bumper sticker revved his engine and threatened to drive around the organizers’ safety cars at the front of the line.

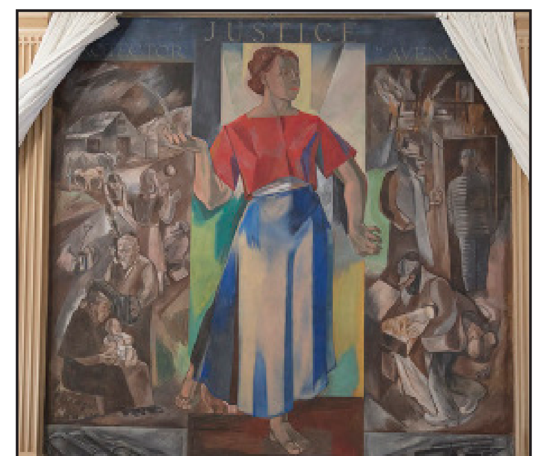
By the time it was over, 79 anti-nuclear demonstrators were charged with failure to obey police orders. Some paid the $110 bond and were released; but others refused. Days later, 24 of the women were still in jail. They

Justice denied

The SRP Six were tried in Aiken at the federal courthouse which itself had once been the center of public controversy. A large mural called “Justice as Protector and Avenger,” painted in 1938 by Stefan Hirsch as a project of the New Deal, ignited fierce debate. The local newspaper objected to “the barefooted mulatto woman wearing bright-hued clothing.” The federal judge who presided in the chamber called it a “monstrosity” and a “profanation of the otherwise perfection” of the courthouse.

A compromise was suggested that the artist lighten Justice’s skin tone, but the NAACP and others objected. Prevented by the feds from painting over the mural, the town elders decided to cover the painting with a curtain lest it offend local sensibilities.

Having heard of the mural, the SRP protesters decided to see for themselves the object of so much drama. “One day we got into the court before anyone else,” Kueny said, “and we pulled back the drapes, and there it was. We looked behind the curtain.”



Four years after the SRP Six were found guilty by the judge, the building where they were tried was renamed Charles E. Simons Jr. Federal Court House, a final insult to the GROW activists who for years had been the target of the judge’s wrath.

had refused to identify themselves, each claiming to be Jane Doe or Nancy Reagan.

The blockade itself was almost blocked by an injunction US Attorney Henry Mc-Master filed for the US Dept. of Energy to prevent the Natural Guard from disrupting work at SRP. The injunction was so broad it meant that anyone who trespassed or blocked access to the plant — and anyone who aided and abetted them — risked criminal contempt of court charges and incarceration without a warrant, or bond, for six months.

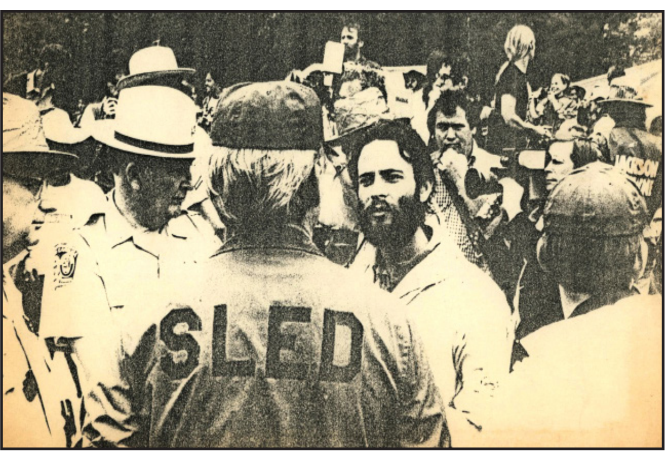
Judge Simons happily obliged by issuing the injunction. The Natural Guard rushed to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, which suspended Simons' order just hours before the weekend rally and mass action.

The judges' heavy hand was rebuked by *The Columbia Record*, which said the judge "bucked basic constitutional tenets of reason and restraint. If he thought his order would have a chilling effect on the demonstrators, then he had another thought coming. If anything, the injunction had a reverse effect, giving the protesters and their cause far wider publicity than they otherwise might have had."

The Aiken Standard offered this message to the protesters: "Go peddle your wares elsewhere." The paper's editorial board called Simons' injunction "fully justified" and his proposed six-month prison terms appropriate. "To allow a pesky band of demonstrators to close down the nation's No. 1 defense plant is unthinkable."

Two months later, the Natural Guard was served "interrogatories" by the US Justice Department demanding names and contact information for all of the organization's supporters and details on any future plans to protest the Bomb Plant. The government also asked for the name of all groups Bursey and GROW staffer Sue Bowman held membership in, their political beliefs, and the substance of any conversations they had about nuclear weapons with anyone not a US citizen.

"These questions are a disturbing harbinger of growing repression in 1984," Bursey responded in a press release. "The government has no right to interrogate me as to my beliefs and associations because I oppose nuclear weapons. This administration is trying to portray the 80 percent of Americans who favor a nuclear freeze as un-American."



SLED photo of Brett Bursey discusses tactics with Capt. Leon Gasque, head of SLED's SWAT team, at the first mass action in 1978.

Natural Guard lawyer Robert Hallman said, "The present administration is attempting to get blanket power to stifle critics of their policies. It appears the government is on the counter-offensive against the people in 1984."

He remembers the trial well. "Simons and I had quite a history over the years. I considered him fairly brutal to people in the courtroom. He just wasn't a good man, he wasn't a good judge, so he and I had some real pitched battles in the courtroom. [Danny] Sheheen was the lead lawyer presenting the case. Simons said, 'I see Mr. Hallman sitting there. He always likes the sound of his own voice, I'll hear from you, Mr. Hallman. So I continued the argument, and he made that ruling. The ink didn't get dry on it before we had lawyers at the 4th Circuit and had him reversed. He was slammed down the same day."

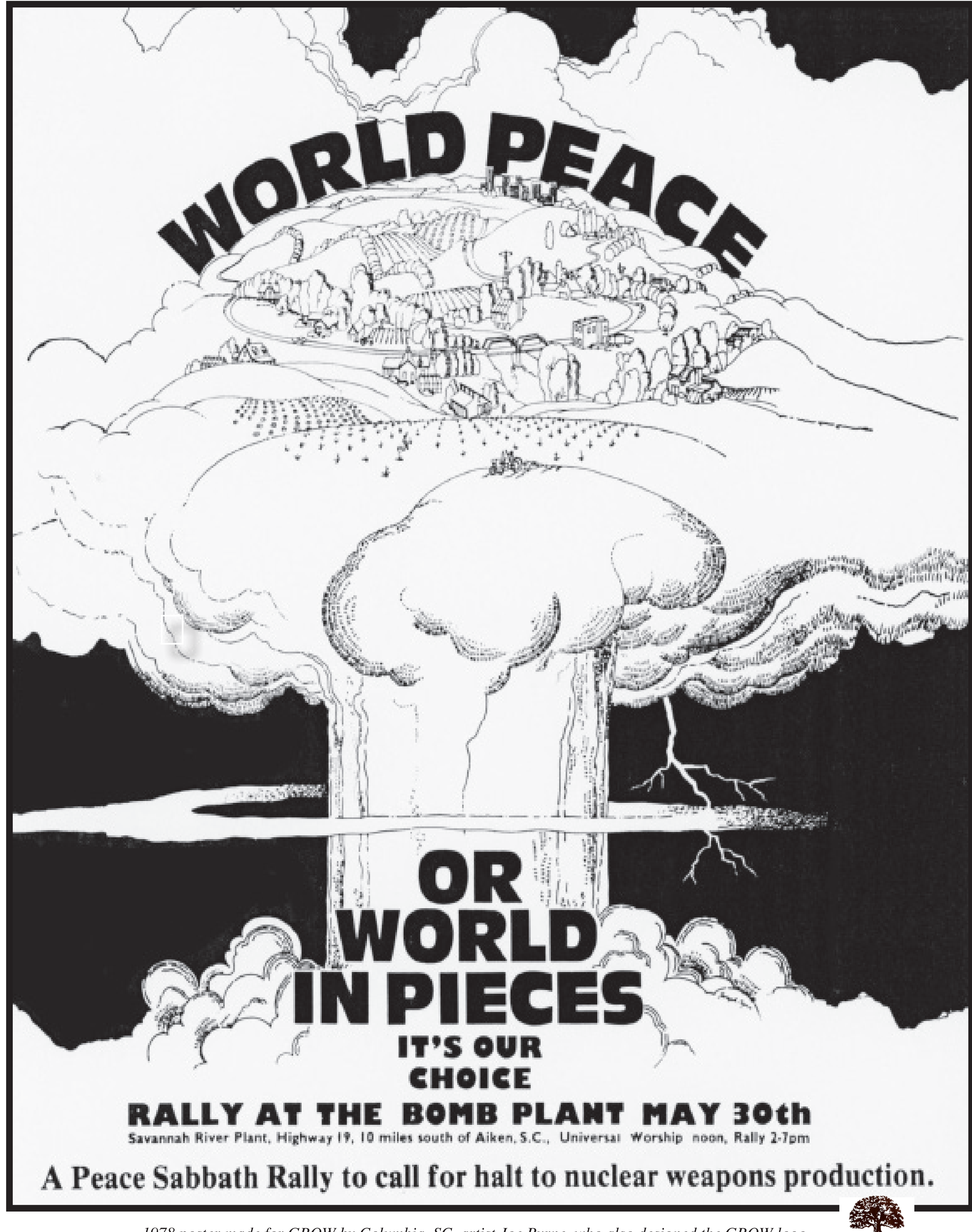
At the blockade trial on Jan. 11, 1984, retired Navy Adm. Gene LaRocque testified about the affects of radiation contamination, telling the crowded courtroom that in the event of nuclear war SRP was a serious risk. "We must assume that the whole Aiken area would be a prime target for a major Soviet nuclear strike," he said. LaRocque, along with other retired, high-ranking officers, founded the Center for Defense Information in 1971 out of concern that defense contractors had too much control over military policies.

Andrew Summers explained why he got arrested. "The church today has little power to believe or act because it is largely acculturated to the American ethics of consumerism. I believe that the blockade of the bomb plant was a prophetic action. People from different places, life-styles, and ages (21 to 77) came together and made a public statement of concern. It was a statement of criticism about public health and military policies... and it was an experience in which despair and resignation were transcended temporarily. Numbness and denial were confronted, and the anesthetic fog was lifted a little."

Newsweek reported that the most damning testimony came from William Lawless, who worked at SRP for six years and said superiors repeatedly tried to bury or downgrade reports on sketchy operations at the plant and radiation levels as much as 200,000 times the EPA safety standard for drinking water. The matter had captured the attention of Congress. "This could turn out to be one trial won by the losing side," the magazine reported.

In a 1984 article in *Southern Changes*, Sue Bowman said, "Six years ago, the Natural Guard took the point on opposition to nuclear waste and reprocessing with 800 arrests in 1978 and 1979."

Bursey added, "We were then viewed as the lunatic fringe. Now the governor and even Sen. Strom Thurmond have come around on the issue. Direct action is but one of the factors that change social and political realities, but I believe it is a dynamic catalyst that can light fire under an issue. The issue of nuclear disarmament will be resolved when the social and political costs outweigh the gains."



1978 poster made for GROW by Columbia, SC, artist Joe Byrne, who also designed the GROW logo.

The Age of Reagan

Selling the idea that government is bad, greed is good

When Ronald and Nancy Reagan moved into the White House in 1981, GROW felt the chill winds of change. They feared the loss of their VISTA staff, which had helped power their work during the Carter years. As grass-roots organizers, they tried to tamp down a creeping dread, and braced for what was to come.

They were right to worry. The conservative agenda that Americans were fed for the eight years of the Reagan Administration kept GROW running from one crisis to the next, from fighting crippling cuts to social programs at home to protesting escalating US intervention in Central America.

The presidential campaign had been brutal, and the Republicans' slash-and-burn tactics bought them a landslide. They took it as a mandate and an excuse to avoid negotiation or collaboration across the aisle. The Reagan Administration quickly set about smashing unions, deregulating industries, beefing up defense spending, launching the War on Drugs, spreading fear of AIDS, cutting taxes for the country's richest, slashing funding to serve the poor and mentally ill, and reshaping the Republican Party into what would emerge as the modern conservative movement.

At its core, the message was the line Reagan used to great effect on the campaign trail: Government is not a solution to our problems; government *is* the problem. But while popular narrative today credits the president with reducing the size of government, in reality he increased spending and turned the United States from a creditor to a debtor nation. That brand of doublespeak was the handiwork of a growing industry of conservative lobbyists and think tanks whose job was to formulate, package, and sell a national agenda that elevated corporate control, choked the middle class, and left the most vulnerable Americans to fend for themselves.

While campaigning, Reagan promised voters that he would cut welfare, telling a well-worn story of a Chicago mother with "80 names, 30 addresses, 12 Social Security cards, and is collecting veterans' benefits on four non-existing deceased husbands. She's got Medicaid, getting food stamps, and she is collecting welfare under each of her names. Her tax-free cash income alone is over $150,000."

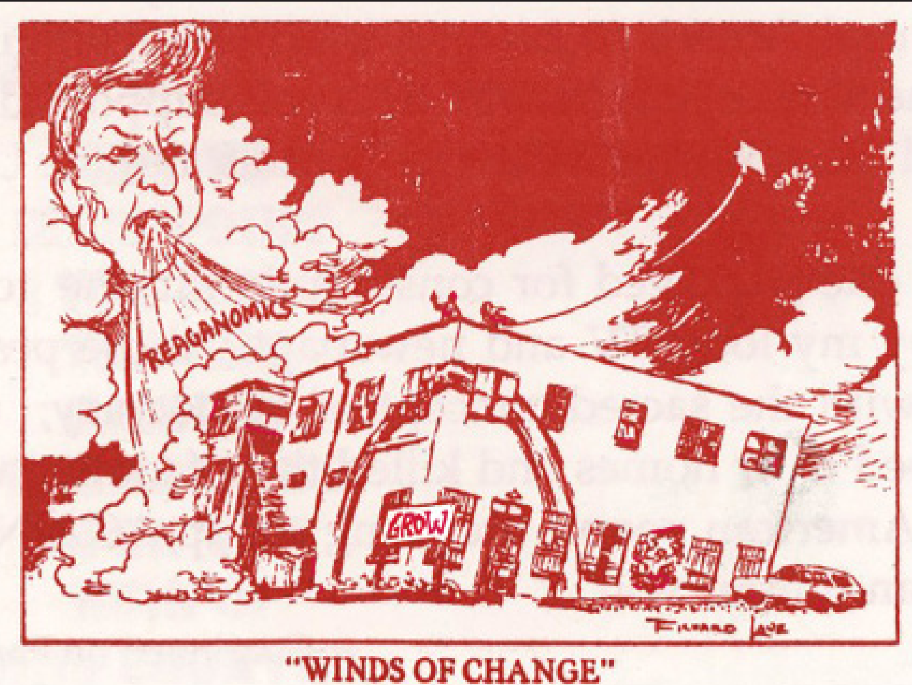
Problem was, when reporters went looking for this "welfare queen" they discovered she didn't exist; she was manufactured. No matter, by then the damage was done, and the idea of welfare cheats took root in the country's imagination.

The promise to roll back welfare was Reagan pandering to a base that was being groomed to believe that their tax dollars were being given willy nilly to grifters and free-loaders, not to families unable to make ends meet in a country as rich as the United States.

The hard-fought gains of the civil rights movement were still fresh, and racism still lingered in the hearts and minds of many Americans, including at the highest levels of government. In 2019, Tim Naftali, former director of the Nixon Presidential Library, reported in *The Atlantic* about a conversation that had recently come to light between Reagan and Richard Nixon that the latter taped in the fall of 1971. The candid chat was released in 2000, but because of its explosive content was withheld to protect Reagan's privacy. Nearly two decades later, the tapes were made public.

California Gov. Reagan called Nixon to vent about a recent United Nations vote against the United States. "Last night," he told the president, "I tell you, to watch that thing on television as I did, to see those… monkeys from those African countries — damn them, they're still uncomfortable wearing shoes!"

The president laughed, commiserated, and then made several calls to his allies, which he also taped, recounting Reagan's outrage. Nixon's version of the story called the delegates from Africa "cannibals."



"WINDS OF CHANGE"

The GOP gets a makeover, and it ain't pretty

While political candidates have always spun and inflated their abilities, the new messaging conservatives were constructing in the 1980s consistently appealed to humans' worst instincts, and turned gas-lighting into an art form.

President Ronald Reagan endorses Carroll Campbell (left) for governor at the Carolina Coliseum Coliseum in Columbia on July 24, 1986. Sen. Strom Thurmond is on the far far right.

The source of much of the new nasty came out of South Carolina. It began with Columbia native Harry Dent, who constructed what became known as the Southern Strategy, updating the GOP's playbook for an evolving electorate by using coded language to appeal to a base of voters clinging to old ideas and beliefs.

"In South Carolina, there are essentially three demographics: traditionalist whites, poor Blacks, and New Southerners, the latter of which is middle- to upper-income, educated and racially mixed. For the purposes of the primary, the second group is of little consequence," wrote Jason Vest in 1995 in *POINT,* which was published out of the GROW offices.

Vest said, "The New Southerners are a vaguely enlightened strain of libertarian conservatives, the architects and beneficiaries of a successful decade-old state economic policy rooted in foreign trade and investment. The traditionalists (or, more specifically, conservative Christians), however, are another story, and the battle has been for their votes."

Mapping and mining this social strata is central to the Southern Strategy, which is credited with securing Nixon's election. In appreciation, the new president appointed Dent special counsel, a position he held for four years.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, another South Carolinian took the Southern Strategy and put it on steroids. Lee Atwater, the celebrated bad boy of the GOP at home and in DC, turned the rigged game that is American politics into a bloodsport.

"Atwater's tactics were a bridge between the old Republican Party of the Nixon era, when dirty tricks were considered a scandal, and the new Republican Party of Donald Trump, in which lies, racial fear mongering, and winning at any cost have become normalized," Jane Mayer wrote in *The New Yorker* in 2021.

Atwater worked in the Reagan White House, managed George H. Bush's presidential campaign, and had cultivated such powerful connections within the party that by age 37 he was head of the Republican National Committee.

At home, Atwater was the key strategist for top Republicans, including Carroll Campbell. The Greenville native who served in the SC House (1970–1974) and Senate (1976–1978) was no stranger to racial politics. Early in his career, Campbell fought integration of South Carolina's public schools, once leading a caravan of 800 cars to the State House to fight "forced busing," language straight out of the new Republican Party playbook.

The issue was so hot that it provoked a mob of white parents armed with ax handles, bricks, and chains to overturn two buses that had taken Black students to schools in Darlington County. On March 3, 1970, some 200 men and women fought with nearly as many cops for half an hour. News accounts reported that police were barely able to rescue the children before violence broke out. Of the 40 people charged after the riot, just three were sentenced to jail.

With Atwater's help, in 1978 Campbell was elected to the US House, becoming the first Republican since Reconstruction to represent the 4th Congressional district. He beat Democrat Max Heller, a two-term Greenville mayor.

Controversy surfaced after it was reported that Campbell's campaign had conducted polling to determine voters' reaction to learning that Heller was "(1) a Jew; (2) a foreign-born Jew; and (3) a foreign-born Jew who did not believe in Jesus Christ as the savior." After the poll, an independent candidate with ties to the Atwater spin machine entered the race and made Heller's religion a point of his campaign. While these tactics failed the smell test, they didn't stop Campbell from getting elected then, and again, for governor, in 1987.

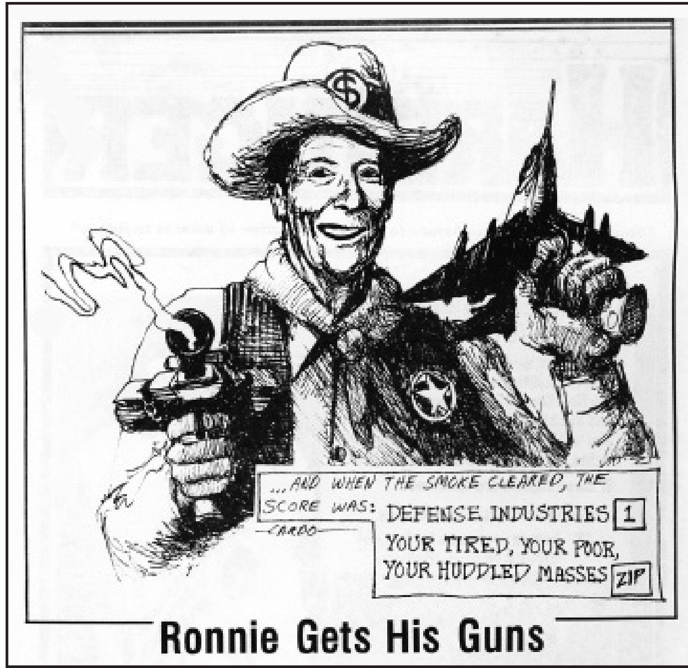
Boogie Man

Bursey remembers having a beer with Atwater at a bar in Columbia. "I didn't agree with him on practically anything," he said, "but you should respect well-honed skills of your opposition, and Lee was the sharpest knife in their drawer."

Just three years apart in age, Atwater was Bursey's contemporary. Polar opposites politically, they nonetheless had a lot in

Lee Atwater (right) with Washington colleagues Paul Manafort and Roger Stone in 1989. Ronald Reagan used their firm — Black, Manafort & Stone — during his run for president in 1980. Donald Trump was the firm's first client.

The firm lobbied Congress for various "governments" overseas, including dictators Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, and Angola's Jonas Savimbi, for which it received $3.3 million in the early 1990s, according to the Center for Public Integrity.



common: both driven, extreme, and gifted with an uncommon confidence. They were smarter than most, schooled in the peculiar vagaries and personalities at the helm in South Carolina, and clear about the way the game is played in the Palmetto State.

Atwater's record was unmatched, but for him it was just a game. "I've always thought running for office is a bunch of bullshit," he wrote in an unpublished memoir. "Being in office is even more bullshit. I'm proud of the fact that I understand how much BS it is."

The memoir was never published because Atwater died before he could finish it. At 39, he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Aggressive treatment didn't buy him the time he hoped it would, and he died a year later.

The unfinished manuscript was picked up — and apart — by John Brady, who would spend four years writing *Bad Boy: The Life And Politics Of Lee Atwater*, published in 1996. The book documented a lot the public already knew about Atwater: his singular and savage political skills, his meteoric rise to power and influence over party politics, his idea to position the South Carolina presidential primaries between Iowa and New Hampshire, boosting the state's political clout. People also knew about his love of blues music that had him socializing in circles seemingly at odds with his seamy political associations. The handler who pedaled racial politics recorded with B.B. King, was friends with James Brown, and was given a guitar by Rolling Stones band mate Ron Wood.

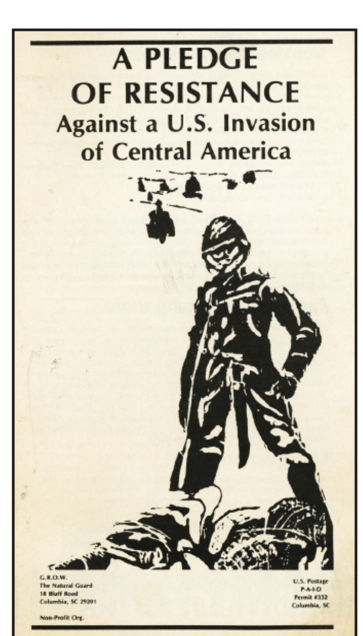
The book revealed a lot the public didn't know, as well, including the family secret that profoundly shaped young Lee. At age 5, he was in the kitchen when his toddler brother climbed onto a basket next to the stove and pulled a pot of boiling oil on top of himself. The boy died at the hospital later that day. Atwater wrote that his brother's screams haunted him his whole life. The family buried their youngest, and with him any mention of the child's name.

Perhaps that tragedy contributed to his drive to think big, take risks, and live with a certain urgency. He showed an early taste and aptitude for dirty politics. In high school, he promoted a friend for student body president — against the friend's wishes. Atwater papered the halls at school with posters advertising the candidate's platform of "Free Beer on Tap in the Cafeteria—Free Dates—Free Girls," circulated a list of the candidate's fake accomplishments, and devised a ranking system that put his friend in the lead. He then deployed bullies to intimidate "hippies" and others likely to vote for the opposition.

Atwater wrote that on the outside he was condemning the threats of violence, but privately was pleased that he could manipulate an upset victory, which the school later voided on a technicality. "I learned a lot," he wrote. "I learned how to organize, and I learned how to polarize."

He sharpened the tactics he tested in high school into a buzz saw of political opportunism that carved his dizzying ascent to the top. He lived fast and hard, taking no prisoners and harboring no regrets. Until later, that is.

Much has been made of Atwater's religious conversion and change of heart after battling a brain tumor. In a piece that ran in *Life* magazine a month before he died, Atwater wrote, "My illness helped me to see that what was missing in society is what was missing in me: A little heart. A lot of brotherhood. I acquired more wealth, power, and prestige than most. But you can acquire all you want and still feel empty. It took a deadly illness to put me eye to eye with that truth, but it is a truth that the country, caught up in its ruthless ambitions and moral decay, can learn on my dime. I don't know who will lead us, but they must be made to speak to this spiritual vacuum at the heart of American society, this tumor of the soul."



GROW was part of a national effort to challenge foreign policy by mobilizing the grassroots with a united plan of action should the United States escalate its military involvement in Central America.

Not everyone bought it. His old partner Roger Stone was among the skeptics, telling *The New Yorker*, "Lee was a great storyteller but, in the end, he was just grasping at straws. The Atwater family disagrees and has no doubt that he became a Christian. But at that point he was also Buddhist, Hindu, and everything else."

Stone, who would be convicted in 2019 for lying, witness tampering, and obstruction of justice, considered Atwater an opportunist. "We both knew he believed in nothing. Above all, he was incredibly competitive. But I had the feeling that he sold his soul to the devil, and the devil took it."

Stone should know; he was pardoned by former President Donald Trump.

Author Brady also has doubts about the sincerity of Atwater's contrition. Among the material the family allowed the biographer to access were hundreds of cassette tapes, which Atwater used to keep notes when he could no longer write. Also recorded on those tapes were his prayers to God, which Brady said were all variations of, "If you spare my life, I will be the best foot soldier you have ever had."

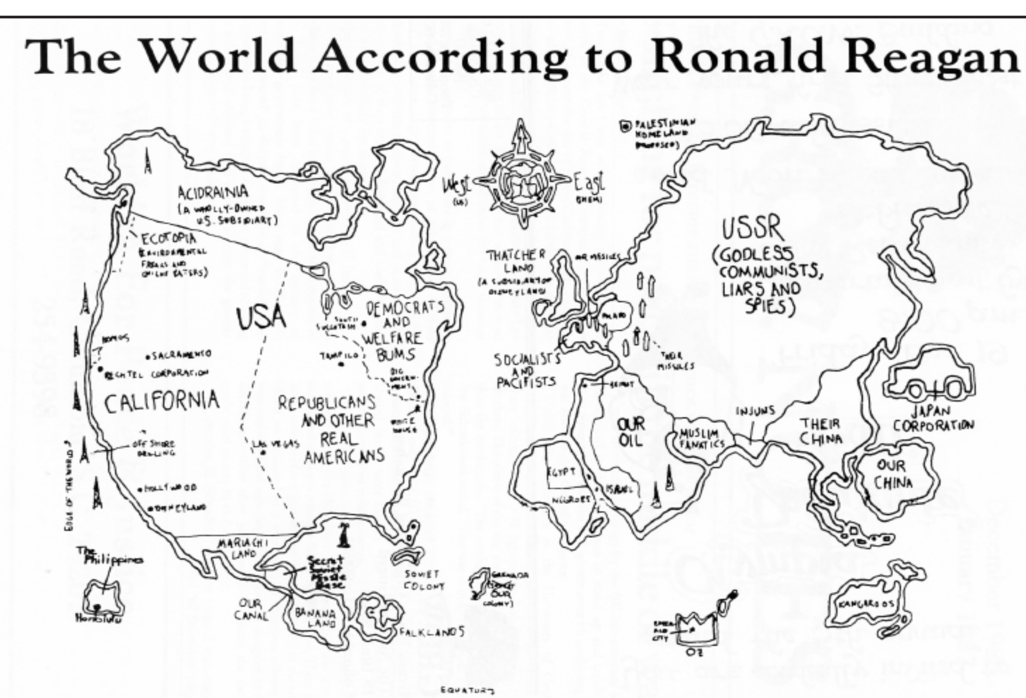
Atwater was wheeling and dealing to the very end, Brady said, bargaining with the Almighty. The last visitors Atwater had before he died in Washington, DC, on March 29, 1991, were Ronald and Nancy Reagan.

VISTA gets the ax

Among the social programs that President Reagan gutted was VISTA — Volunteers In Service To America — an anti-poverty program launched in 1964 as a domestic version of the Peace Corps. Volunteers served in communities across the country, offering educational and vocational training in low-income and under-served communities. It was a perfect fit for GROW.

"When President Jimmy Carter was in office," Bursey said, "he recruited antiwar Vietnam vets to run VISTA, and appointed former SNCC organizer and future US Congressman John Lewis its national director. The order of the day was not to treat the symptoms of capitalism, but to build a movement to root out the causes."

"One evening in late 1977," Bursey said, "a long-haired, wild-eyed 'Nam vet stopped by GROW and said he wanted to give us money. It was Dan Carney, the state director of VISTA, who said he could give us 10 slots that would pay volunteers a minimum wage for a year of service. I got to pick the people and their projects."



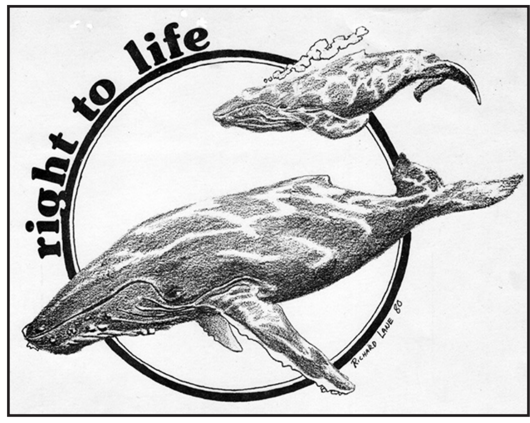
Graphic from December 1984 issue of GROW Notes.

Within a few months, GROW was supporting 14 full-time staff. Some of the crew were organizing food co-ops, a few worked in the GROW office, and everyone pitched in at the Cafe downstairs. To keep costs down, some shared housing and depended on the company car.

It was, of course, too good to last. GROW lost its VISTA workers in 1981.

"The staff was devastated the night Reagan was elected president," Bursey said. "We knew we were going to lose our VISTA sponsorship and that our work just got much harder."

Upon Reagan's re-election in 1984, *GROW Notes* gave its readers a pep talk. Under the headline "Four More Years. Don't Mourn; Organize," it offered this message to the deflated troops: "The next four years will be a challenge, but we are united and we will not be defeated. We cannot afford to become cynical and burned out. We cannot afford to become victims to government harassment or dictated by right-wing dog-



ma. We must resist the ideology of racism, sexism, anti-gay bigotry, red baiting and union busting. We must not let the movement for peace and justice be replaced with the movement for war and oppression."

The newsletter pointed to troubles in the United States and around the world, from South Africa and the Philippines to Central America, and told readers to take comfort from the resistance rising in those countries at the same time.

"It is encouraging to see our brothers and sisters resisting the hands of imperialism and corporate control. We as a people who feel a deep commitment to build a better world cannot ignore what is happening around us. The time has come when the survival of the planet is at stake. You have to take a stand. Are you on the side of the people, or are you on the side of the privileged few?"

The staff at GROW and their allies soldiered on in spite of the odds that were being stacked ever higher against them. If anything, the country's dramatic shift to the right only stoked their fears that gave their organizing work new urgency and purpose. ☼

Score one for the people

The Carroll Campbell Memorial Free Speech Press

When GROW won a settlement against the governor in 1988 for $50,000, it was a sweet and unexpected victory. Icing on the cake was catching Gov. Carroll Campbell in a lie — under oath.

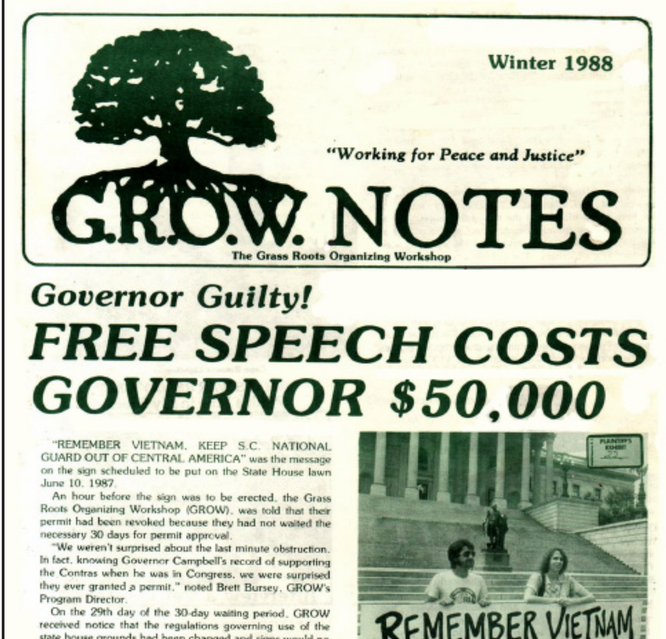
That the governor was in court at all was rare, if not unprecedented. He had tried to claim privilege, but a federal judge compelled him to appear.

It started in May 1987, when GROW was granted a permit to erect a sign in front of the State House for a period of two weeks, standard practice at the time for nonprofits wanting to promote their work. The signs had to meet size requirements and fit in the fixed holes provided on the grounds. Surprised but pleased to be given the green light, they commissioned GROW artist Wendy Brinker to paint a large, wooden sign that read: **Remember Vietnam; Keep SC National Guard Out of Central America.**

The message was a reference to Republican governors who President Ronald Reagan had recruited to do an end run around the Congressional ban on using the US military to destabilize a democratically elected government by deploying state guards instead. Gov. Campbell was among the willing, sending the SC National Guard to Honduras' border with Nicaragua to threaten the new socialist government. GROW found it an inappropriate use of state guards. Hence, the sign.

Merll Truesdale and Brett Bursey proudly pose with their $50,000 settlement check.

But when they arrived at the State House to put it up, they were told their permit was no longer valid. There had been a rules change that morning. Nothing personal, they assured; from now on, nobody could put signs up — not GROW, not the United Way, not the Boy Scouts of America.



Winter 1988

"Working for Peace and Justice"

G.R.O.W. NOTES

The Grass Roots Organizing Workshop

Governor Guilty!

FREE SPEECH COSTS GOVERNOR $50,000

"REMEMBER VIETNAM. KEEP S.C. NATIONAL GUARD OUT OF CENTRAL AMERICA" was the message on the sign scheduled to be put on the State House lawn June 10, 1987.

An hour before the sign was to be erected, the Grass Roots Organizing Workshop (GROW), was told that their permit had been revoked because they had not waited the necessary 30 days for permit approval.

"We weren't surprised about the last minute obstruction. In fact, knowing Governor Campbell's record of supporting the Contras when he was in Congress, we were surprised they ever granted a permit," noted Brett Bursey, GROW's Program Director.

On the 29th day of the 30-day waiting period, GROW received notice that the regulations governing use of the state house grounds had been changed and signs would no longer be permitted on the capitol lawn. Historically, two locations had been designated for non-profit organizations to place signs on the state house grounds in downtown Colu bia. The United Way, the Childrens Trust Fund and the Wildlife Agency are some of the organizations that have displayed messages on signs.

"We had plenty of reason to believe that their new policy was based on the content of our sign, and was, therefore, unconstitutional," said Bursey. The ACLU took the case and hired two long time GROW supporters, Bob Guild and Robert Hallman, to represent GROW. Civil charges were filed in Federal Court charging Governor Campbell and other

GROW supporters Sue Bowman and Rev. Sam Stone with sign.

GROW called foul, and then called Bob Guild and Bob Hallman, part of a legal team Bursey had assembled over the years. This group of lawyers, some of the best practicing in South Carolina, worked *pro bono* because they believed in "the cause."

Under the aegis of the state ACLU, GROW's team perfected a case, and successfully filed an action to collect depositions from the governor and the Budget and Control Board, which oversaw the permiting process. Members offered differing accounts, split on party lines. Republicans supported the governor's claim that he did not know the message on GROW's sign before issuing the ban. Democrats said they had eight meetings about the sign and the governor had been quite agitated, bent on banning "Bursey's sign" specifically. After his lawyers advised Gov. Campbell that he couldn't legally ban GROW's sign because he disagreed with its content, their argument became that the change in policy was in the interest "of aesthetics and safety."

In crafting their case, GROW's lawyers referenced *Edwards vs. South Carolina*, the landmark case decided in 1963 by the US Supreme Court in favor of Black students arrested at the SC State House while peacefully protesting segregation. When police ordered them to disperse, they prayed, sang, and refused to move.

A magistrate's court convicted 187 students of breaching the peace. The state Supreme Court upheld the convictions, but the US Supreme Court begged to differ. Justice Potter Stewart wrote in the majority opinion that the students' actions "reflect an exercise of these basic constitutional rights in their most pristine and classic form." The First and 14th Amendments "do not permit a state to make criminal the peaceful expression of unpopular views."

Guild and Hallman subpoenaed Gov. Campbell, who was forced to appear before a jury on Nov. 14. When he took the stand, he admitted that he might have been the one to mention that Bursey believed that those who fought in Vietnam, including Campbell's brother, were war criminals. He denied that his personal opinions about Bursey or his opposition to the involvement

On March 2, 1961, students demonstrate against segregation. Hundreds assemble on the State House grounds. Refusing police orders to disperse, 187 are arrested.

of the state guard in Central America had anything to do with his decision.

"In court, the governor was a disingenuous slime-ball," Bursey said. "He came in smiling and acting like it was a campaign event, and I was thinking, we've lost; they're going to believe him. But after the governor left, Judge Karen Henderson issued a directed verdict of guilty and ordered the parties to have a settlement on her desk the next morning."

Guild said *GROW v Campbell* was a rare win. "I can't tell you how many righteous causes did not result in victory. We have a constitutional legal system that oftentimes evinces principles that are not lived up to. You get lots of hostile judges who say 'I don't care what the law says, or the constitution says, I'm not going to rule for you. You can take me to court. You can appeal.' There's a road to Richmond, as federal judges in South Carolina used to say talking about the appeals court."

Occupy Columbia protesters at the State House in 2011.

Guild said the sign case was "unprecedented in terms of valuing free speech. It also was a reflection of the importance of defending the right to free expression and ability to challenge authority."

The case made GROW $50,000 richer overnight. They paid their lawyers, settled some bills, and bought a new printing press, which they christened the Carroll Campbell Memorial Free Speech Press. For the next 35 years, it paid the bills and supported a grass roots movement.

As the Edwards case had done a generation earlier, the GROW case was used to help deliver settlements to the Occupy protesters who were arrested during Gov. Nikki Haley's over-reach in policing the State House grounds. As part of a national movement in the fall of 2011, the "99%" took a stand against the slender minority feasting on the nation's economic pie by taking over public squares, sometimes for weeks.

In Columbia, Gov. Haley was not happy about the Occupy Columbia demonstrators camping on the State House lawn, and ordered them to leave. Nineteen of them refused and were arrested.

The Occupy protesters were prepared to make their case in court when the solicitor dropped charges on Dec. 4. The activists were awarded $10,000 each.
In a press conference just feet away from where his clients were hauled off in a driving rainstorm, attorney Joe McCulloch said the unlawful arrests had been carried out at the behest of the governor, whom he chided for not knowing her history

"In *Edwards v. South Carolina*," McCulloch said, "the Supreme Court issued a stern rebuke of state authorities who arrested and removed from the State House grounds a number of peaceful demonstrators protesting the evils of segregation. The Court said resoundingly that people have a right to these grounds and the right to express themselves. The importance of this decision is an affirmation of the bedrock of the First Amendment."

Bursey said, "The GROW case expanded on the *Edwards v. South Carolina* case. The lingering value of it was the rewriting of the use of public property. It is a lesson we have to continuously remind activists about." ☼

Know your rights

The *Edwards vs. South Carolina* case established that citizens have the right to assemble on public property as long as they are acting lawfully. *GROW vs. Campbell* built on that case by adding that regulations governing public spaces had to be applied evenly, regardless of the assembled's message. In response, the state shifted from a permitting process to a reservation system, making usage of the space a matter of coordination rather than granting permission.

This fundamental lesson is often lost on demonstrators and police, who routinely operate under the belief that a permit is required to use the State House lawn, and other public spaces. You need not apply for one; your permit is the Constitution. That said, best practices for organizers is to coordinate gatherings with authorities as a matter of safety and courtesy.

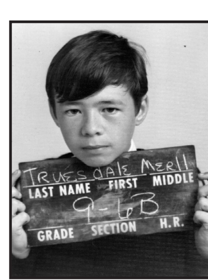
Merll Clyburn Truesdale 1955–2019

A self-made SC revolutionary

Merll Truesdale was many things. Mechanical was not one of them.

"Merll was a special guy," his friend Michael Lowe said. "He was an intellectual, a philosopher, but Merll couldn't operate a wheel barrow."

He was 40 when he got his drivers license, and even then it seemed unwise to those who knew him. Lowe remembers standing around out front of GROW with friends "drinking beer and telling lies" when Truesdale returned from delivering a print job in the company van. "In unison, everyone says, 'Here comes Merll! Get out of the way!' He pulls in and hits the building. That was normal. That was my boy."



His friends remember Truesdale's uncanny ability to recover names, dates, and historical factoids. He was a blues lover's Rain Man.

Bob Guild said, "Merll had a photographic memory, from who played on a particular cut of an Allman Brothers album to when such-and-such happened in the movement," he said. "I'd say I'm going to fact check him on that, and it was pretty rare when he didn't get it right. Somewhere in that skull he'd remember a name or a detail."

Michael Gooding, Truesdale's friend since they worked together at GROW in the early 1980s, said, "He had a memory like a computer. Merll knew my life better than I remember it."

Lowe said, "He remembered everything. He knew more about me and my past than I did. I think he had a file on 500 people in that impenetrable room he had at GROW."

When GROW set up shop in 1977, Truesdale found a home, quite literally. He moved into an upstairs room facing the ball park, where he lived for 20 years, much of it with his beloved pit mixes, Grendel and Ruby.

By the time Steve Hait met him some 15 years on, the room was like an archaeological dig. He said, "His room was packed with stuff only Merll would have. It was densely packed with all sorts of radical political stuff, music, counter culture stuff. He just lived and breathed it, and that drew me to him immediately."

Where Truesdale first got his radical politics isn't clear. He grew up in Columbia the youngest of seven children, but there was such a gap in their ages that he was reared, essentially, as an only child. He took an early interest in politics. In middle school he signed up for the "bucket brigade" to take up donations for George Wallace's presidential campaign in 1968. By then, he was marching against the war in Vietnam.

He graduated from Columbia's Spring Valley High School in 1973, and enrolled at Midlands Technical College, where he studied political science and was elected student body president.

Truesdale loved cold beer, red wine, and an occasional cigar. He had a deep, eclectic knowledge of music, and curated an impressive collection. He occasionally played harmonica with locals. For awhile, he played with the Free Beer Blues Band (which dropped the name after bar owners complained that the band's posters misled patrons into thinking there was free booze on site.) He had a taste for quality weed, and for many years served as an esteemed judge at the annual Cannabis Cup in Amsterdam.

GROW

In Washington, DC, for a VISTA conference.

"Every year," Hait said, "he saved up money and, come October, would go to Amsterdam for a week or two. Growers from all over the world would compete to see who reigned supreme. I like to think of Merll dressed up in the fancy clothing he liked to wear with a hat and a cane strolling around Amsterdam. In my mind that's how he looked."

People who knew him well agree that Truesdale was complicated, an enigma, capable of severe mood swings. "He was

funny and brutal at the same time," Gooding said. "He was the most honest person I know. I don't remember him ever beating around the bush."

Brinker said there was Merll and then there was "Earl," the manifestation of his darker side. "He was like a bulldog," she said. "You never knew when you reached out whether he was going to bite your hand or roll over and show you his belly. He was unique. He was steadfast, he was a hard worker, he believed in the movement, he wasn't much to suffer for fools, but he was the first person to jump in if anyone needed something within the extended family that GROW was."

When they worked together, they were "thick as thieves." He was who she relied on after Richard Lane died, a loss that slayed her. "When Cardo died, Merll was really there for me. He saved me. Such grace for me to have somebody I could remember with. The three of us hung out so much together, to have him was a great comfort."

Their relationship wasn't always easy. "But we're all linked together; it's family, good and bad, and I wouldn't trade it for the world."

Truesdale was a man about town, a fixture at festivals and certain night spots, where he would hold court. Brinker called him the Pope of Five Points.

Leslie Minerd said she thought of GROW not as a cafe or print shop but as "Merll's home." She said, "I could always rely on him. He was so easy to talk to, a good friend to everybody. I never heard him talk poorly about anybody."

With Drink Small

Alden Richardson was close to Truesdale since their paths crossed at GROW in the late '70s. "My brother Merll," he said. "I never met anybody like him, and don't think I ever will. He had the best heart of anybody I know."

"Merll was a character, a colleague, and a comrade," Guild said. "We miss him terribly. To see the archival stuff documenting what he did over the years makes my heart sing, from a baby-faced kid to a long-haired guy marching in the streets of Columbia."

Becci Robbins

On left, with the guerrilla group Step-daughters of the Confederacy in 2000.

When declining health forced Truesdale into an assisted living facility in 2017, the treasured artifacts of his life were parceled out to friends. Hait got three cases of harmonicas. He and Gooding took one of them on a visit to the home. "Merll went from staring off into the ozone to putting the harmonica up to his mouth and tentatively blowing on it. Within 30 seconds he was getting it, and it really sounded great. He had this big grin on his face that you usually didn't see at that point in his life. He was really reinvigorated by that harmonica."

Truesdale died in 2019. Lowe had visited him the night before he transitioned, playing music since conversation was no longer possible. "I put on 'In Memory of Elizabeth Reed,'" Lowe remembers. "He lifted his arm up, then fell back to sleep. I thought he was going to die. But he didn't die. They called the next day to tell me he was gone. He waited until Earth Day."

It was a fitting exit for the longtime environmentalist, and a nice hook for a guy who loved a good story.

It was Richardson who took on the task of emptying his old friend's house. "I went through all the paperwork. He made multiple copies of everything. We were able to save a lot." Truesdale's hoarding tendencies had stuffed the place floor to ceiling with hats, CDs, record albums, photo albums, magazines, news clippings, and treasures he'd collected over the years. Inventory included a Fidel Castro bobble-head, a Sandinista mask, gargoyles large and small, Che Guevara swag from boxer shorts to ashtrays, and an extensive library.

A few days after Truesdale's death, Hait visited Drink Small and recorded his recollections about their friend. While strumming his guitar, he said, "I met Merll at the UFO Coffeehouse on Main Street. They were hippie types. They'd sit outside with their shoes off, Black and white. Merll knew every Hank Williams song. He could play harmonica a little bit. He wasn't the best, but he would get into it. He's alright with me."

He launched into an impromptu riff:
Merll, we miss you, all of us, we miss you.
I hope you've gone to a peaceful world.
I can see Merll with a harmonica in his hands, I can see Merll – Lord have mercy — with a harmonica in his hands.
He'd be so happy to see me, with a guitar in my hands.
Merll, I love you boy, good God almighty;
If you want to find out something about Merll Truesdale, call Drink Small.
Go down to Five Points, they've got my picture on the wall.
We miss you, Merll. I hope you made it in.
One of these days I'm going to meet you again.

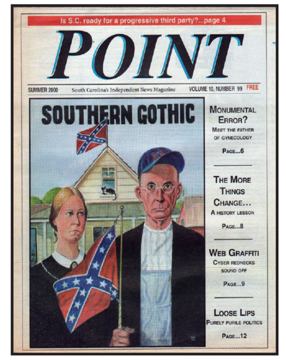
Afterword

While this project ends with 1988, the story does not stop there. GROW continued to be the center of the progressive community in Columbia for another 10 years, until the building was sold without warning in 1998. It was an important decade that maybe somebody will write about someday. It has its own heroes and unlikely triumphs.

The late Rep. Joe Neal, a founder of the SC Progressive Network and a key legislative ally, leads the inaugural class of the Modjeska Simkins School, in 2015.

In 1990, GROW launched ***POINT*** newspaper, an alternative monthly that published statewide and, later, also online. It offered readers a steady diet of skewered politicians and corporate toadies served with a side of snark. It was illustrated by Horde Stubblefield, retired from a career drawing for New York's finest magazines, and it was kept alive for 10 years by a talented pool of volunteers and a handful of faithful advertisers.

Heritage for Hammerheads...page 7
POINT
APRIL 1997 South Carolina's Independent Newsmonthly VOL. 8, NUMBER 87
A Booming Business or how South Carolina learned to stop worrying and love the bomb Page...4
Unnatural Beauty SRS' L Lake is a world apart Page...5
Loose Lips Politics as usual Page...8
Byte Me Computer activist vows to get even Page...10


Is S.C. ready for a progressive third party?...page 4
POINT
SUMMER 2000 South Carolina's Independent News Magazine VOLUME 10, NUMBER 99 FREE
SOUTHERN GOTHIC
Monumental Error? Meet the father of gynecology Page...6
The More Things Change... A history lesson Page...8
Web Graffiti Cyber rednecks sound off Page...9
Loose Lips Purely purile politics Page...12

In 1996, GROW founded the **SC Progressive Network** at a weekend conference in the Lowcountry at historic Penn Center. Activists from 28 organizations and of all ages and varied experiences hammered out a mission statement: "The purpose of the SC Progressive Network Education Fund is to promote — through education and action — human, civil, and workers' rights, reproductive freedom, environmental protection, and government reform."

A quarter of a century later, the mission holds up. Our history shows a commitment to our founding ideals, and echoes the strategy of our radical roots by addressing social and political problems at their source. The Network has organized mass rallies, held town hall meetings, led panel discussions, and attended countless legislative hearings. In 1998, it created the state's first online campaign finance database to track donor contributions to politicians.

SC Progressive Network Co-chair Marjorie Hammock and Dr. Robert Greene II, lead instructor for the Modjeska Simkins School, congratulate student Nicole McCune at graduation on July 2, 2022.

Since 2008, the Network has monitored elections and run the Election Protection hotline in South Carolina. In an effort to address the documented problem of "Driving While Black," the Network introduced a bill that became law in 2006 to require cops to report stops. The Network led the successful challenge to the state's voter ID law, and won a lawsuit in 2016 to allow Greenville County college students living on campus to register to vote.

The Network is working to end gerrymandering and to reduce the influence of money on politics. Its Missing Voter Project is a model for engaging with and mobilizing under-represented communities.

The Network is the only homegrown, statewide progressive organization in South Carolina. With a new HQ in the heart of Columbia, the Network is poised to take the organization to the next level. In 2019, we bought the property next door to the Modjeska Simkins House and began two years of extensive rehabilitation. We envision a vibrant cafe and community space in the spirit of the original GROW — a welcoming place for people of like mind and shared purpose.

The new GROW also is home to the **Modjeska Simkins School for Human Rights**, which the Network launched in 2015 to teach a people's history of South Carolina and practical organizing skills to an emerging generation of activists. To date, seven classes have completed the intense training. The 171 graduates give us great hope.

A second incarnation of GROW is taking root at 1340 Elmwood Ave. in downtown Columbia, next to the historic home of Modjeska Simkins.

For a bibliography and a list of resources used for this project, visit modjeskaschool.com. There you will also find a growing repository of photos, posters, flyers, documents, and recorded interviews.

For more about the Network, see scpronet.com, which has links to our blog, ongoing projects, and YouTube channel. Join us!

GSA FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6
UNITED STATES G[illegible]ERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI (100-449698) DATE: 11-4-70

FROM : SAC, COLUMBIA (100-344) (P)

SUBJECT: COINTELPRO - NEW LEFT
IS

ReCOlet to Bureau, 9-25-70.

For the information of the Bureau, [redacted] Columbia, S. C., is [redacted] and has extensive investigation and contact with University students at the University of South Carolina (USC). [redacted] is in continuous contact during the evening hours with various students conducting interviews and making [redacted]

[redacted] is very cooperative with Special Agents of the Columbia Office and offers assistance in all types of cases, and in his contacts with narcotics cases, he frequently comes into contact with New Left type individuals at USC.

UACB, the Columbia Division will contact [redacted] at the University of South Carolina and make arrangements to have him pick up at least two members of the Student Mobilization Committee (SMC) and while pretext [redacted]

It is believed that the individuals being interviewed under pretext will assume that [redacted] who is [redacted] of the SMC group at USC, is an informant of [redacted] and will spread the word at the USC campus which will eliminate her as a leader of this organization.

1 cc 908 9&D
1 cc 910 9&D

EX-106 REC 11

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2- Bureau (RM)
2- Columbia
(1- 100-344)
(1- [redacted]

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IDL:rat
(4)

NOV 18 1970

generation no

no war • no hate • no nukes • no draft • no greed • no racism • no sexism
no homophobia • no animal cruelty • no poverty • no pollution • no injustice
no capital punishment • no prisons for profit • no military industrial complex

"It became evident I was going to go to jail when the solicitor called the first witness, Jack Weatherford. He asked, 'How long have you been an agent for the State Law Enforcement Division?' Weatherford said, 'About a year and a half.' Then he asked, 'What was your job at SLED?' Jack said, 'It was to watch Mr. Bursey.' My mind was truly blown. I couldn't process that my revolutionary comrade was a cop."

***Brett Bursey**, on trial for defacing the draft board wall*

"A majority of GIs don't feel that it's worth our lives going 10,000 miles away to fight for freedom, for so-called democracy, when we don't have it back home."

***Pvt. Joe Miles**, GIs United Against the War in Vietnam, Fort Jackson*

"I got arrested on DuPont property, got booked by DuPont security guards, got photographed in the DuPont mug shot room, and now we were going to be tried in a DuPont town by a judge that owns stock in DuPont."

***Chris Kueny**, anti-nuclear activist on trial for protesting the Bomb Plant*

"The Columbia Division has been developing sources and informants to place in the New Left groups and will be in the position to immediately learn the identities of the members in the event they subsequently are organized at the respective schools."

*Memo from **Columbia police to the FBI** Oct. 2, 1968*

"From the outside is was just a run down hole in the wall, but inside were the coolest and most interesting people you could ever meet and the best blues you could ever hear. It was a vegetarian grill where you could smoke cigarettes, drink beer, shoot pool, and attend a revolutionary meeting all in the same evening."

***Frank Sarnowski**, GROW Cafe manager*

"It was a collective that I think helped bind the community together when there was no other place. They were beautiful, incredible people at GROW."

***Wendy Brinker**, GROW staff*

generation know

know justice • know peace • know equality • know unity • know freedom
know harmony • know worker solidarity • know safe communities
know good government • know your rights • know your history