

# DUBIOUSLY INVOLVED IN IMPORTANT MATTERS

BY ARTHUR HONEYMAN

May 11, 1970 enjoys a designation in Oregon history: "Bloody Monday", which commemorates an attack by Portland Police 25 years ago upon a demonstration at Portland State University in protest of the Vietnam War, in particular the attack on Cambodia and the overthrow of its government. The demonstration was part of a nationwide university strike that was also an angry reaction to the killings by National Guardsmen of four white students at Kent State (Ohio) and two black students at Jackson State (Miss). For a number of years wreaths of flowers were placed each May 11 where the police attacked in the Park Blocks across from PSU. After awhile, as the war waned and finally ended 20 years ago, Bloody Monday was generally forgotten. Until this year. A 25th anniversary remembrance, which organizers are calling "The War Came Home," will be held for almost week at PSU May 8-11, and will feature films, videos, speeches and oral histories.

~MPMc

BLOODY MONDAY, May 11th, 1970, was the day after my 30th birthday. Believe it or not, this factor induced me to be absent on the day that the Portland TAC Squad hit. The odd thing is that, though I'm the type of physical coward who closes his eyes when a foam rubber ball is tossed to him, and, though some of those present have repeatedly told me that I lucked out by not being there, I've always felt a sense of remorse for going home to clean and rest up. I mean, after all, what did I think it was: my birthday? *I COULD HAVE BEEN A CONTENDER!*

My participation in the actual protest event of May 1970 was both accidental and marginal although I definitely supported any antiwar activity. In point of fact, however, I was somewhat heavily involved in my 1970 campaign to be elected to the Oregon Legislature and was focusing on the task of trying to win the upcoming May primary. It is quite possible that, had my campaign manager not shamed me into it, I would have steered clear of the whole incident. If I have calculated correctly (for my usually good memory fails me here), Tuesday, May 12 was both the day when I lost the primary and the day that just about all of Portland's liberalism marched to City Hall and rallied in protest of Monday's brutality of the TAC squad. As I recall, *The Oegonian* shot a photograph of me giving a garbled speech that nobody understood. But everybody applauded!

The story of my insignificant participation in the PSU event goes something like this: On Friday evening, May 8th, 1970, I sat in a tavern drinking cheap burgundy wine (Red Death it's called by some heavy imbibers such as I was at the time) celebrating our final fling at campaigning with my manager: "You should go support the strike!" he said. I think all I wanted to do was get drunk but my conscience pricked me so I belted down my beverage, purchased a bottle, and wheeled and reeled my way down to the barricades where I spent the next 40 hours or so thinking "historical event" and the like.

Yes, always the self-perceived historian (even before majoring in the subject back when PSU was PSC) and always the wannabe Norman Mailer-type journalist, I perused the scene with the astuteness of an alcohol-befuddled military strategist. Always the romantic, this was Bastille Day almost 200 years later. Yet, at the same time, I constantly questioned my sanity for remaining after my campaign manager (who had long ago left the scene) offered to get me home. To this day, I have no idea why I chose to stay as long as I did -- all night Friday, all day and all night Saturday and most of Sunday, my birthday. You see, I march to my own drummer and there are few things that repulse me more than the thought of being blindly swept into events like sheep milling their way over a precipice of no return. But, somehow, I was analytically conscious that I had indeed committed myself to this course of action and I both marveled and trembled at my epiphanous knowledge of the "moment" as I objectively surveyed the ludicrous makeshift barricades constructed (as it were) of overturned park benches, garbage cans, chains, street repair barriers, and anything else to obstruct easy access to the South Park Blocks.

Everybody knew that the barricades were symbolic and that a fortress they did not make. Nonetheless, they did block angry pro-war supporters from mowing us down with their vehicles instead of merely throwing beer bottles as us as they drove by. I may be mistaken, but I seem to recall that one such cruiser tried to ram through a barrier of benches. I could see that my presence wasn't really needed and that, like the barricades, it was merely useful as a symbol -- only to an even lesser degree, for if or when push came to shove, this cerebral palsied individual would be in the way and would be one more thing to

## SPASTIC POWER

In 1970, I was sort of an instructor at PSU in that, in the Summer of 1969, I persuaded Earl McCannell of the Sociology Department to sponsor and hire me to assist him in conducting an experimental class in the Fall. With his help I created and designed the seminar-style class to promote awareness and to open communication about the hitherto taboo subject of the handicapped in society. It may be that I am mistaken, but because I was unable to locate any prototype class for the disabled, I've always believed that this was the first of its kind. Although, for example, there were the beginnings of radical disabled movements supported by lobbyists to legislate important equal rights and barrier free laws into effect, very little was being done to establish an avenue to change attitudes about the disabled even among radicals. The best publicity going was the Jerry Lewis Telethon which thrived on placing the emphasis on research to cure the disability (a commendable cause which I now applaud, if it doesn't conjure up the image of being helpless or pathetic) rather than also accepting handicapped individuals as potentially contributing members of society. Admittedly, I'm no scholar, but -- as far as I could discern -- the New Testament was the only political tract that ever spoke to the issue of being handicapped in a kindly manner and even that was demeaning in its charity. The problem of creating attitudinal change through open dialogue is very complex and difficult. The problem became most pronounced in my mind in 1970. It was then that I committed myself to being publicly visible as much as possible and the strike strengthened my resolve.

Although the historian in me recognizes that political and philosophical beliefs cannot be accurately labeled or pinpointed (fortunately, I might add), I consider myself far more radical in 1995 than I was in 1970. Back then my agenda was social upheaval at any cost. Today, my personal political and philosophical agenda is strictly pacifistic. Although I'm not a communist, after much consideration, I've come to the conclusion that the political disintegration of the Soviet Union is probably the second greatest tragedy to befall life as we know it since the inception of Western Civilization -- the first being the development of Western Civilization itself. Ah yes, I am fully aware that I (and almost all other disabled individuals) couldn't survive longer than a few days without the evolution of technology advanced by Western Civilization, much less thrive -- and, believe me, I am personally eternally grateful for being born into this society in this era. But though I believe that the disintegration marks the end of the most altruistic political entity in history, this is not why I am a radical. Political persons are not so altruistic as individuals who are dedicated to altruism. To make a long complex story short, genuine radicals are altruists who are willingly involved in the act of placing the welfare of others above the welfare of themselves. Thus, since the phenomenon known as life is valued as the ultimate possession, a true radical would die rather than use violence to achieve goals. Although only a handful of such altruists have achieved such revolutionary success (i.e., Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.), it only takes one to prove that it's not beyond the realm of feasibility, just as it took only the formation of a single vestige of existence to transform nothing into everything (declares my atheistic view of the cosmic process). Thus, as a Gandhian, I assert that armed takeover and resistance is not radical. And, as an atheist, I divorce myself from faith in divine providence; thus I'm bearing the responsibility of my own insignificant role in the cosmic process. Whether or not I live up to my standards of radicalism is another story.

~ARTHUR HONEYMAN



worry about in the face of catastrophe or emergency. Thus I took it upon myself to stay out of the way and, paradoxically, to wander among the strikers ("the troops," I stupidly romanticized) to give them moral support -- or, in retrospect, possibly to show how brave I was. I was fully involved now, though I was also engaging myself in a mental versus emotional balancing act. To jargonize, these were suddenly my brothers and sisters, my comrades, yet I still tried to maintain perspective. In a sense, I was being hypocritical in more ways than one. First, I was betraying what little commitment I had toward historical accuracy and objectivity. Second, I was espousing the concept of human brotherhood and solidarity even though I feared that too much of it might lead to fascism as it did in Europe in the '30s. Third, I believed in the antiwar movement, but it was not number one on my list of priorities as I was pretending. And fourth, I was acting as though I were a college student when I had graduated five years before. In the final analysis, however, I told myself (as I generally do when I pursue a course of action in behalf of a cause) that action is better than inaction no matter how futile a situation appears. One of the things I remember myself declaring whenever I was asked if I really thought protesting war would bring it to a halt went something like: "Well, no. But if we don't protest, it sure as hell won't atop!" Or I would cynically side-step the issue by snidely saying "Peace is not peace unless it's forever and we're not going to live that long." Needless to say, these unnecessary and laconic remarks were received in a variety of ways, as I expected, but I was sincere in my newfound belief in the value of what we were trying to achieve (nebulous though that was) -- so much so that the protesters became "we" instead of "they." For once I had joined a cause instead of creating one.

In all honesty, I cannot recall getting any sleep during the one and three-quarters days in which I stayed at the scene. If I did, it was while sitting up in my walker-cart, much like soldiers on horseback have done for thousands of years. What I do remember is wandering from enclave to enclave of vigilant guardians of the territory. These young protesters (some 10 years my junior) who took it upon themselves to do the dirty work outside in less than pleasant weather while the strategists spent their nights inside the student union, openly praised me for staying with them and showed their appreciation by feeding this CP who cannot feed himself, pouring wine from the bottle into my mouth -- wine that I was, and by offering me other types of drugs that didn't appeal to this Dylan Thomas type alcohol soaked poet. Were it not for them and the comradeship of Michael McCusker (with whom I sealed a friendship that I believe will last the rest of my life), I question that I would have been able to hold up as long as I did.

At any rate, my contribution to that incident was marginal, but its contribution to me was and is monumental.

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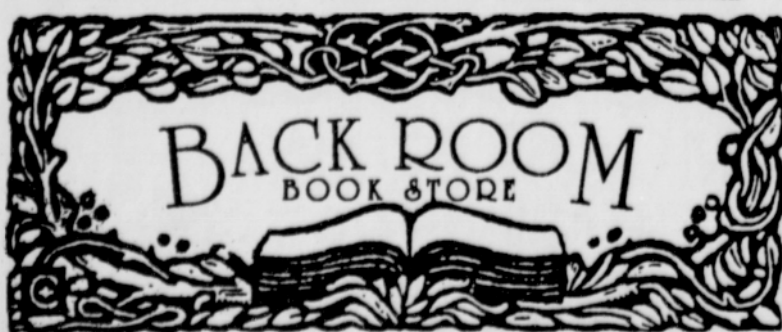


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