

of hippies who suggested a Woodstock-type rock festival to draw protesters away from the city, thus averting expected violence. The festival became known as Vortex I.

The voices. After 25 years, the voices. Start talking to folks at any bus stop in town, at any casual get together, anytime, anywhere people gather to talk. *Sure, I remember the summer of 1970. Was that the year? Where was I? I went to a rock concert down over at McIver Park. Yeah, that was it, Vortex. It was the first time I ever smoked a joint. I went with some friends. It was great. We watched naked women taking mud baths. Heck, we took mud baths. I think there were some rock bands. We stayed a week. Yes, the American Legion Convention was going on in Portland. Governor McCall put on this pot party to keep hippies and protesters out of town. It worked. Geez, it was brilliant. I might have joined the protesters for a march or two, but I went to Vortex instead. Maybe I should have joined the protesters. Heck, sex, drugs, rock and roll — what can I say?*

Okay, Dick, it's you and me, mused an earnest war protester, who mustered troops of local antiwarriors to fill the ranks of the People's Army Jamboree. *We knew that the estimates of protesters coming to Portland were exaggerated. In fact, we had no idea how many people might show up to demonstrate against the American Legion. We had manufactured the numbers ourselves, and the local papers picked it up. The Legion expected 25,000, so we doubled the number. The FBI reports were compiled largely from media stories, so the numbers of expected protesters reaching 50,000 or more took on a life of their own.*

Not in our town, chorused People for Portland, who mustered their troops of ordinary citizens to train as buffers between potential combatants along the parade routes. Some of the PFP were long-standing peace activists who were familiar with street demonstrations, having themselves marched over the years through the streets of the city. *Our idea was to head them off at the pass, troublemakers, that is. We knew the local kids were all right, and we could spot outsiders who were bent on stirring up trouble. We'd just walk right up to them, look them in the eye, and escort them out of the parade. One little old lady saw the police getting ready to go after some kids who were jeering the American Legionnaires. She shook her finger at the police and told them to go away, that it was they who would cause trouble.*

Why don't you just shoot them? insisted a citizen who'd had it up to here with young people making noises rude and loud in opposition to the Vietnam War. She had spoken in answer to Governor Tom McCall's announcement that the state would sponsor Vortex as a diversionary tactic to attract potential Jamboree participants.

Meanwhile, back at the American Legion Convention, Nixon was scheduled to be the keynote speaker. This was his audience. He loved these guys. No boos, jeers, hard questions from them. No profanity, no communication gap. They planned a Victory in Vietnam parade through the streets of Portland. These were his folks. He was looking forward to the trip.

PAJ planned a Victory for the Vietnamese parade. Juxtaposition was a common protest form by 1970. Juxtapose images of killing with images of living. Stage a Festival of Life in counterpoint to the nightly body count, those images of dead and dying American and Vietnamese troops that were a staple of the nightly television news. Since there were more of them than us, the body count was supposed to let us know we were winning the war.

It was funny, really. We didn't know how many people would show up for the People's Army Jamboree. We were just a handful of college kids and Vietnam veterans against the war. We ran an article in the L.A. Free Press, and underground newspapers across the country picked up the item. Said the place that summer was Portland, Oregon. The American Legion Convention. Rumors flew. 50,000 protesters were coming, the protesters were coming.

The FBI, CIA, the Pentagon, Justice, John Dean, all got into it. Twice a week the White House had in-person briefings with Ed Westerdahl, U.S. Attorney Sid Lezak, others. To their



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credit, they figured out the core agitators in Portland were a loosely organized group of local activists who coalesced around their commitment to end the war, and their commitment to non-violent forms of protest. They agreed there wouldn't be any problem with PAJ organizers. But they were worried about the hordes of hippies, politicians and agitators who might be headed this way.

Portland was abuzz with separate encampments: The People's Army Jamboree, the American Legionnaires, city and state police, the National Guard, the FBI, CIA, Secret Service, the Mayor's men, the Multnomah County District Attorney's men, the Governor's men, the President's men, feminists, People for Portland, The Family whose brainchild was Vortex I, Vietnam veterans for and against the war, huddled, frightened citizens, bemused citizens, outraged citizens, inside and outside agitators (mostly police plants) poised for action, and various and sundry hippies, some looking for action, some looking to party, some searching for community.

That was the scene in Portland during the late summer of 1970. But a funny thing happened on the way to the confrontation. The separate, disparate encampments began to communicate with one another. A steering committee was formed to coordinate the actions of government agencies, People for Portland, PAJ and Vortex organizers. Whatever their differences regarding the issue of the Vietnam War, the folks who comprised the troops agreed on one thing: Nonviolence was the only violence they wanted to experience on their streets. This was their community. While the right to dissent would be supported, only nonviolent forms of dissent would be allowed. The government and citizen troops adopted roles of mediation in the confrontation situation that was about to occur between the American Legion and the People's Army Jamboree.

Elaborate plans were made for arrests of great numbers of protesters. Jails were emptied to make room for them. Combat troops stood ready to enter the city if needed. National Guard troops drove their vehicles in circles around the city to create the impression of great numbers. The National Guard carried no live ammunition on orders of Ed Westerdahl, who armed his state police and was confident their judgment in the possible use of arms would be rational and mature. No Kent State would visit Oregon under his watch.

For all the elaborate preparation, for all the careful attention to open lines of communication among all groups involved, in the end, perhaps twelve hundred people marched with the People's Army Jamboree through the streets of Portland. The American Legionnaires held their parades without incident save some taunting from the sidelines.

In the end, Nixon didn't come to Portland. At the last minute he was replaced by Vice President Spiro Agnew. In the space of 65 minutes, Agnew arrived in a helicopter, intoned a speech, reboarded his helicopter, and left the city. In and out, just like that. *We won. We kept Nixon out of Portland, made him change his plans. Little us, in little ole Portland. Our voices were heard. We made Life magazine and the national news.*

When it was all over, the city of Portland had suffered one broken window. Journalist Terry Drinkwater was reportedly hit over the head by a flagpole welded by a drunk Legionnaire. Everyone declared victory and went home.

Stay tuned for the sequel to this story: *Richard Nixon reincarnates the Huston Plan on his way to Watergate. Nixon wanted to go wherever he wanted to go, and the People's Army Jamboree stood as a roadblock to the man who was President.*

Dory Hylton is working on a book about the People's Army Jamboree. She lives in Portland. She is a professor of history at Lewis & Clark College and recently recorded a CD of jazz songs, accompanied by pianist Jessica Williams.

The American Legion canceled its plans to hold another National Convention in Portland this year. They claim the city does not have enough hotel rooms, but the real reason might be that the Legion is worried a group of old hippies will stage a 25th anniversary reenactment of the People's Army Jamboree.

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SCHOLASTIC BRIBERY

And, what about Portland State University? Where/what would it be had those seven days of protesting never occurred? My lack of regular participation on campus for the last 18 years or so disqualifies me from making an adequate judgment on the subject, but my perspective sadly discerns a backlash in liberal arts education and a forward focus on business and economics.

In a sense this difference is understandable because both business and economics offer rewards and results more immediate and tangible than liberal arts subjects. On the surface this is a positive step in that it offers Oregonians opportunities to thrive in a society that places a high premium on material wealth. At the same time, however, I contend that the very tangibility of such rewards often (possibly almost always) relinquishes individuality to the status quo which, in my opinion, is inadvertently motivated to exercise control in favor of self-interest rather than probe beyond into the fluid and shadowy world of the common good.

The system has made the decision that it no longer desires to shell out good bucks for students to learn to think for themselves. Such learning might lead them to protest. So why not seduce them with the opportunity of a high standard of living after graduation? It's plain to see that's what people want.

Establishing a good solid flow of income as a priority in the post-college lives of students not only makes the job of the state board of education easier, it also serves as a subtle but de facto method of bribery in the perfectly legal and orthodox sense of providing succinct ground rules for achievement. Challenge or deviate from those rules and your career is likely to go down the tube. It is a sad but effective system to perpetuate America as a business.

-A.J. HONEYMAN

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