The Movement

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the men and women who gave their lives or the best part of their lives to the movement. It is written about them and for them.

I especially wish to dedicate it to the memory of three men who died too young--Roger LaPorte, Al Uhrie and Bob Madden.

To Karl Meyer, whose remarkable example first drew me to the movement.

To Ammon Hennacy, Wally and Juanita Nelson and James McCain who represented what the movement was at its best.

The Movement, more or less

A movement is a social river. It rises from remote tributaries and it is fed by hidden springs. It waters the dusty plains of ordinary social life it crosses making many things grow--weeds mostly, but also some rare and beautiful trees. Always it seems, it is badly polluted at the end, even when the sources were pure. In flood stage it is a wanton destroyer. At other times only the dry river bed is there to remind us of something that is likely to come again.

I wrote that paragraph one morning after 20 years of thinking about the movement I once belonged to. I suppose it is as close as I can come to a simple picture of the complexities and the strange contradictions of the movement.

I DANBURY PRISON 1966-67

I started to think seriously about the movement while I was in the federal prison at Danbury Connecticut in the winter of 1966-67, serving a one year sentence for destroying a draft card. It was a quiet life in Danbury compared to the scene around the New York Catholic Worker where I had been the winter before. I had time to read and time to think. Mostly, I thought about the movement which had occupied the years since I had left the University of Chicago in 1958 and which had brought me to prison once again. I thought about my life too and whether I wanted to give any more of it to the movement when I was out on the street again.

I got a letter that winter from a woman I had known in the civil rights movement. She was thinking about getting married, she said . . . what did I think ? What I thought was that I wished she would wait until I saw her again, but I couldn't say it. After 7 years in the movement I couldn't see even how to go about finding a normal life. The movement had been my life and even though I was pulling away from it in my thinking, I would find it very hard to fit in anywhere else. I figured that I was virtually unemployable except within the movement, which at that time was almost entirely volunteers with a few who worked for subsistence salaries. A resume which listed prison sentences for draft card burning and freedom riding and unpaid service in Catholic Worker houses wasn't a passport to many jobs in 1967. Anyway, I wasn't at all sure that I could tolerate a normal life after the high times I had found in the movement.

At first, I was mainly concerned with surviving the prison experience, but I soon learned that the only real enemies I had there were the empty days. My fellow inmates were easy enough to get along with. A prisoner with a record of violence against other prisoners couldn't be sent to Danbury, nor one with more than 5 years left to serve. So they were all fairly peaceable short-timers, like me. Many of them belonged to the more refined class of criminal--counterfeiters and bootleggers, government officials convicted of graft. There were a number of respectable looking gentlemen in for tax evasion--some businessmen, several lawyers and even one doctor--or so I was told.

There were other draft refusers in the prison also, and they helped me to feel more at home. About half of them were Jehovah's Witnesses--they are imprisoned in many countries for refusing military service. The others were from various backgrounds. They had become draft refusers as individuals, not because they were members of a group.

The number of draft refusers in federal prisons was growing steadily as the Vietnam War was escalated and the draft calls increased. What made this war different was that the resistance to the war was growing also. The government had failed to put a lid on the anti-war resistance and the peace movement, building on the success of the civil rights movement, grew very rapidly that winter.

I wasn't actually a draft refuser, because I wasn't liable for military service. I had caught tuberculosis in 1959, working at a Catholic Worker house in the slums of Chicago and that gave me a permanent "4F" deferment. I didn't burn my 4F draft card either, I merely tore it neatly in two at a press conference in New York City in March 1966 which was called for that purpose. But that was enough for the Justice Department, which was still half-heartedly enforcing the new law against draft card burning which Congress had passed in August of 1965 after a wave of anti-draft demonstrations around the country.

The early resistance to the Vietnam war was mainly carried on by a small number of people who belonged to a half dozen long established religious pacifist organizations. (Although most of those involved were too religious to belong to any religion.) Dave Miller of the New York Catholic Worker became the first man arrested under the new law after he destroyed a draft card in October 1965 at a peace rally in New York City. He was already a draft refuser and one reason he destroyed the draft card was that he was tired of waiting for them to come and get him. The draft card burning law actually gave draft refusers a weapon because it allowed them to take the initiative instead of waiting passively--often for years--for the consequences of their defiance. It also gave men who weren't eligible for the draft the chance to join the 20-year-olds in defying the government. It had given me a chance I wouldn't have had otherwise to support my draft refuser friends just by tearing up a piece of official cardboard.

Dave was soon followed by others from the Catholic Worker, the Peacemakers, the Committee for Nonviolent Action, and other groups. Pete Kieger of the War Resisters League, who had already served a prison sentence as a draft refuser, joined me in burning a draft card at the March 1966 press conference. By the spring of 1967, the government had given up trying to enforce the new law and draft card burning, free from penalties, was on its way to becoming a fad.

By the spring of 1967, a new group, The Resistance, had become the largest anti-draft organization the American peace movement had ever seen. It seemed as if nonviolent resistance to war was actually going to be a great success.

Meanwhile, back in Danbury, I was trying to keep track of how fast the movement was growing. I slowly became aware that the movement was also rapidly changing as it grew and that it wasn't staying in the path marked out by the nonviolent peace and civil rights movement.

The View from the Hill

Usually you can't belong to something and critically examine it at the same time. But in a way I was able to do both that winter. Just by being there in prison I was living up to my commitment to the movement. But my time was my own and I had a lot of it to dispose of, one way or the other. My body was still committed to the movement, but my mind was free to roam.

I was nominally employed at the greenhouse, which was supposed to train inmates so they could get a job in a greenhouse, when they got out. Most of the time there was very little work to do there and a surplus of manpower to do it. I hadn't picked up a book the year before, but that winter I read constantly.

Once in a while the greenhouse crew was let outside the gates to work on the flower beds in front of the prison. The prison sits on a high bare hill overlooking the countryside and the town of Danbury. (The hill is bare so they can see you if you take off.)

It seemed like I could see a long way from the top of that hill. It was only a two hour drive to New York City where I had been caught up in the beginnings of the anti-Vietnam war movement the year before. Boston was about the same distance off the other way. I had organized a peace team from the Catholic Worker to go there and deliver the anti-war message to College students. At one place they ignored us. At another they nearly mobbed us.

I did begin to get more of a perspective on the movement that winter. A soldier off in one corner of the battlefield has little idea how the battle as a whole is going and knows nothing about the rest of the war except what he might pick up out of a newspaper. I hadn't even read the newspaper the year before except when my friends and I made the paper because of burning draft cards or something. A lot of people just assumed that was why we did it. Since you got your name in the paper, that must have been why you did it. They were right, of course. Actually it did have something to do with getting your name into the historical record book.

Black Power

I had been so caught up in the daily life of the movement that I had seen little of it beyond what we were doing around the New York Catholic Worker. Now at Danbury I had the time and the opportunity to see how fast the movement was growing and what strange directions it was starting to take.

I wasn't even aware of ***Black Power !*** the new slogan of the civil rights movement since June of 1966 when Floyd McKissick and Stokely Carmichael began using it on the Meredith March into Mississippi. Now at Danbury I began to catch up on the controversy it had created. I got letters and visits from old friends in the movement. Dianne Feeley wrote me from San Francisco about the Freedom School where she worked and where *Malcolm Says* had replaced *Simon Says* in a children's game. She said that Black Power was a good thing because it would help the masses of black people rather than just the few that the civil rights movement had helped.

I came across two articles from Commentary about Black Power. The black writer, Bayard Rustin, attacked it. The white writer, David Danzig, defended it. I later saw a column by Roy Wilkins of the NAACP in which he said that he had collected about 200 definitions of ***Black Power***.

Meanwhile, I came across a story in the New York Times which said that in the past year nearly all of the civil rights workers belonging to SNCC, CORE and the SCLC had left the South--no one was very sure for what reason. What was happening to the civil rights movement ?

I still thought of *the movement* as the nonviolent peace and civil rights movement--a moral crusade to which I had committed my life. My last prison term had been 4 & 1/2 months in the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman as one of the ***FREEDOM RIDERS*** in the summer of 1961. Even though I was now involved in the anti-Vietnam war part of the movement I still thought of myself as belonging to a movement that made up a spiritual whole, a movement that was for peace and justice and an end to poverty, a movement that opposed the government of the United States on Vietnam just as it had opposed the government of Mississippi on racial segregation.

The peace and civil rights movements had come from the same sources and there were many people in the early movement who, like me, had been active in both movements. In fact people had always thought of peace and civil rights as closely related issues which were part of the focus of the movement. Only in the late 1960s did they become two separate movements.

The big success of the civil rights movement from 1963 on and the related success of the peace movement from 1966 on led to a rapid growth that fundamentally changed the character of the movement. It opened the way for new movements such as the black nationalists, the new left, the *hippies*, the feminists, the LSD revolutionaries, the sexual liberation advocates etc. that were more rivals than supporters of the old movement. But they attached themselves to the movement and took it over or weighed it down or re-directed it in many places.

Although that winter marked the beginning of my attempt to understand the movement and the changes it was going through, it was only years later that I arrived at any real understanding of what happened. That puzzling story from the Times about the withdrawal of civil rights workers from the South was the start of what eventually became a 7 foot stack of clippings about the strange doings that characterized the movement in the late 1960s.

The Statue of Liberty Project

I got a close up view of the new wave of black nationalism from some of the black inmates in Danbury. Most of them were in for ordinary crimes, but even some of these men were finding a personal salvation in the new political creed. The Black Muslims offered a religious version of the black nationalist faith and recruited many of their adherents in prisons.

In the close quarters of prison life, I overheard the earnest efforts of black nationalists to recruit other blacks to the new banner--*Your strength comes from your color. It goes right down to your roots*. One fellow exclaimed: *They want you to devote your life to being black !* He liked the company of whites and was resistant to the black separatist doctrine.

I established a guarded friendship with one black militant who had been convicted of a conspiracy to dynamite the Statue of Liberty. He and another black militant, plus a blond woman--who was acquitted, blonds are always acquitted--plus a police agent--who could afford to be enthusiastic about the project since he was being paid and also guaranteed immunity from prosecution--had planned to blow up the great symbol of American freedom to show how little that freedom had meant to American blacks.

I had a series of arguments with Walter about civil rights and black power, violence and nonviolence. He was convinced that the issue was black versus white and that a violent showdown was inevitable. He argued that violence was the only way to settle such a fundamental dispute. The real tradition of India wasn't nonviolence, he argued, it was the tradition of the warrior Sikhs, the mastery of the martial arts. Walter was training himself in the martial arts, as were many other inmates, who lifted weights, worked out on the punching bag etc. Walter had learned karate. He showed me how you could completely disable a man with one well-aimed blow below the belt. Very un-Marquis of Queensbury.

Black and White

Despite my service in the civil rights movement, he seemed to regard me as an enemy that he was fraternizing with in the lull between battles. Especially at first, he was very suspicious that I was a police agent--his experience had made him somewhat paranoid. But it was his ideology that made him distrust me. If it had come down to black versus white, then I was a traitor to my own side, and traitors can't be trusted.

Some day you'll wake up and realize who you are ! he told me. That is, I would realize what side of the war I had to be on--the white side--just as he had to be on the black side. He believed that the American government was on the verge of carrying out a policy of literal genocide against the black population of the United States and that armed readiness was their only hope for preventing it. When the *white power structure* concluded that it didn't need all that unskilled black labor--*it will be the ovens, Man !* He was an intelligent and recklessly courageous man who sincerely felt that an apocalypse for his people was fast approaching.

After we were both released, I saw Walter again one time on the lower east side of New York City. He had a wife and two children to support and the necessity of holding a job seemed to have discouraged him from further participation in black militant activities--which would have violated his parole. *They've let me out into the big prison, but at least I can share it with my wife*, he said. Here and elsewhere I have changed names or omitted last names. Especially with ex-prisoners there is always the risk of losing a job. I was fired from a job at NYU in 1971 after two FBI agents called on my boss to acquaint her with my Danbury days.

He was right in a way about my discovering which side I was on. Later on, trying to make a living, trying to live in the only part of town I could afford, I found myself sometimes caught up in a kind of war between whites and blacks, or whites and Hispanics where just being "white" made me a target. When blacks treat you as the enemy because you are white, you are forced sooner or later to accept the role and make the best of it. When you persist in treating anyone as an enemy, you make an enemy out of him, whether he was originally or not.

It's not hard to create a deadly polarization between one group and another--the basic potential for it is always there. It is much easier done than undone, and the individual on either side has little choice if he is caught in the middle of it. The option of standing apart from the battle, being above it all, turns out to be a luxury that you can't always afford.

If you don't have the means to move to the nice part of town, away from the battle zone, your choices are either to fight or to run--to live on the run, as many people do. If you choose to fight, you find that the sides are already made up. Your skin color is a uniform you can't take off. And that is as true for a white man as it is for a black man. It was even truer in the late 1960s because blacks were actually encouraged to act out their anti-white feelings at a time when the expression of anti-black feelings was effectively tabooed except among lower class whites who were beyond the influence of polite society.

Testing Your Beliefs

Black Power wasn't the only thing on my mind that winter and Walter wasn't my only source for contrary ideology. I was really trying to think my way through my own beliefs and to find a way out of my own mental box. What drew me to people like Walter was that his opinions weren't just opinions. They were convictions he was putting his life on the line for. When you do that, it creates a kind of test that no laboratory can perform. Do I really believe this ? Am I willing to accept the consequences of this belief, even if it comes down to life and death ?

The whole of the movement, even the parts that I came to feel hostile towards, still has a fascination for me because of the many people whose beliefs led them to experiment with their very lives. You could say that they had the courage of their convictions, but it is more accurate to say that they were the kind of people who were capable of holding convictions that require courage to hold. The reckless experiment, crazy and dangerous as it often is, also sometimes leads to a kind of knowledge that can be achieved in no other way.

You can pass through your whole life holding certain opinions, thinking that you believe certain things. Somehow you never get around to acting in accordance with those beliefs, so they remain ready answers to standard questions--if anyone bothers

to ask. But getting pushed to where you have to act as if you really believed what you think you believe at once puts a weight on those beliefs, a weight which they not be able to bear. If they pass the test, they acquire a validity they would never have had otherwise. If they don't pass--and usually they don't--you are at least free to leave the ruins of your old faith. You may not find a new one, but at least you aren't trapped in a deceit of your own making; living in a house of painted cardboard, which you believe to be stone--until the rains come.

Everyone has faith in the sense of believing in something you imagine to be so--a place in your imagination where you can find what is missing from life; a secret identity that you will some day reveal. But what characterized people in the movement at its best was an active faith--a fancy that insists upon finding its counterpart in the real world, a dream you are determined to make come true. It's the difference between dreaming about your dream girl and calling her up to ask her for a date. You've decided that it has to be the real thing or nothing. That is why people in the movement went through so many changes in belief. That is why an honest account of the movement can tell you things about human life you could learn in no other way--things that people learned the hard way; knowledge with a price tag on it that someone had to pay.

The Right Wing Draft Refuser

Danbury prison centers around a field used for various sports, with a walkway encircling the field. In good weather you could exercise by walking around the circle and usually find a conversation with some other inmate doing the same. I wasn't usually so sociable, but the monotony of prison life forces you to find ways to pass the time. And other inmates were up against the same problem, so the walkway was a kind of peripatetic school for finding out where the other fellow was at--what base or noble folly had put him in the slammer. (Although you never asked directly *what are you in for ?* You waited for the information to be volunteered or maybe you learned it from other inmates.)

I spent more time walking around with Mack--at a fast clip--than with anyone else. He was a hyper-energetic young guy who was doing very hard time. He had naively expected to win his case and hadn't been ready for prison. The first time they turned him down for parole, he had climbed the water tower in the second yard and sat up there all afternoon smoking cigarettes one after the other. They left him alone because they were afraid he would jump, but he only wanted to get away from the prison for a while. He came down when he ran out of matches and asked the guard for a light.

I classified him as a right wing draft refuser, but I never met anyone else to add to the category. He was a classification of one.

What struck me about his case was that he had done just what a Christian pacifist / anarchist would do but for different reasons. He had openly refused the draft, made no attempt to evade it or to run away from prosecution, and had faced the judge without a lawyer, because he wished to argue his position on his own principles.

He believed that the Vietnam war was wrong because it wasn't being fought as a war. The government was conscripting young men like Mack and sending them off to get killed or crippled. But it wouldn't even declare that is was a war, wouldn't carry the war to its sources, wouldn't use any of its super weapons, and wouldn't call upon the American people to commit themselves to a whole-hearted war effort. The Johnson Administration had deliberately played down the Vietnam enterprise. It needn't undercut any of his domestic programs. The nation could have *guns and butter too*--so long as fellows Mack's age didn't object to throwing away their lives in a half-hearted enterprise while everyone else went on with business as usual.

Barry Goldwater and Ayn Rand

Mack had been an ardent supporter of Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign in 1964. Goldwater's defeat came about primarily because he was seen as a hawk compared to Lyndon Johnson. But Mack felt that Goldwater would have fought the war as it should have been fought and that Johnson's Vietnam policy was fundamentally wrong. What article of the Constitution gives the government the right to draft a man without a declaration of war ? ! he demanded of the judge. *All of them* the judge curtly replied and gave him a 1-6 year sentence--a *zip six* as the inmates called it. In fact, only since World War II has the United States had a permanent military draft, even in peace time.

Mack's opposition to conscription went deeper than the constitutional argument he had tried on the judge. Many of his ideas came from the books of Ayn Rand. He drew on *Atlas Shrugged* as if it were a bible. Ayn Rand opposes conscription as a kind of slavery and there is an anti-government attitude in her writing that is tantamount to anarchy. Mack's basic idea was individual freedom and that was the basis of his opposition to conscription rather than pacifism or the ideal of nonviolence.

But their ideas never fully account for people and explain why they do what they do. The ideas suggest a direction and they provide a psychological support structure for a frightening decision. But the decision is made on another level and the momentum necessary to carry it out is emotional and spiritual rather than intellectual. There were millions of Goldwater supporters and thousands of Ayn Rand readers who never felt called upon to defy the draft. So also there were thousands of black militants in the 1960s who managed to restrain their militancy so that it didn't land them behind bars. Most Christian pacifists found alternatives to the personal confrontation with the war machine which some would argue was the logical implication of their position.

Whatever it was that impelled us, those of us on the inside tacitly recognized that we had something in common with one another that was more basic than what we supposedly had in common with our ideological fellows on the outside. That was one of the things I began to think about that winter at Danbury.

The Shirley Temple Fan

One Sunday afternoon, Mack and Dave and I worked the Sunday New York Times crossword puzzle. It took us all afternoon to do it, but we weren't pressed for time. Dave came up with a whole line that neither Mack nor I could get: *ONTHEGOODSHIPLOLLYPOP*. Dave was a black draft refuser who was rapidly becoming an ardent black nationalist. Several years later, I saw his name in the membership list of a Black Panthers chapter near his home town. I presumed it was him. Unlike his friend and mentor, Walter, Dave never seemed to want to talk to me although he was friends with Mack. I think I threatened his new black nationalist faith in a way. He couldn't very well exclude me from a movement I had been in long before he had, but neither could he accept the idea that I could legitimately be part of a movement that should include all of the black people and exclude all of the white people. They were assigned the role of enemy in his ideology. He tried to be friends with all of the other black inmates in Danbury and to shun the company of whites in accordance with a basic belief that all blacks were his brothers and all whites were his foes. And yet he obviously found it difficult to like all the blacks he was supposed to like and to feel a proper hostility to all whites. I last saw him the afternoon he left Danbury, looking the way everyone looked when confronting the exhilarating but also frightening prospect of being out on the street again--tense. *DON'T TAKE ANY WOODEN REVOLUTIONS* I advised him, but I think my good advice went unheeded.

Living Up to Your Belief

Dave's problem illustrates the problem of anyone in the movement--the problem of trying to live up to your belief. A believer in nonviolence might suddenly find himself yielding to a violent rage. A believer in violent revolution might discover that he had no stomach for violence. An anarchist might discover in himself an affection for the President and a hope for what his administration might achieve that was entirely at odds with anarchist belief. A young red might discover that he really believed in Americanism deep down, despite his sincere attempt to believe something contrary. A radical feminist, committed to a movement which intended to ***SMASH MONAGAMY !*** might find herself longing for love and marriage. The apostle of sexual freedom discovered that the only woman he wanted was the wife who had divorced him. The fellow who discovered the peace he wanted on the communal farm then realized that he really wanted a private place and that he missed the excitement of the city.

As a follower of the Catholic Worker movement, I supposedly believed in poor people as *the first children of the church*. In an unjust society, the poor were justified by their poverty. A Christian had an obligation to love the poor, to take up

their cause against the rich and powerful who kept them poor by the wasteful materialism of their lifestyle. *The luxuries of the rich are taken from the necessities of the poor.* The poor were the good guys of history, the hammer which would break up the old society; the foundation upon which the new society would be built.

A Nasty Bunch

But my first intense involvement with *poor people*, when I ran a Catholic Worker house in the slums of Chicago, had shown me that I didn't even like poor people, much less love them. I liked a few of them, and some of them, freed from the constraints of polite society, had developed into remarkable characters. But they weren't the good people they were supposed to be. On the average they seemed to be worse than the more prosperous people for whom they were supposed to provide a moral antithesis. Where middle class people were nice in an insincere way, lower class people were nasty in a sincere way. I once heard a young lady volunteer at the New York Catholic Worker remark in a candid outburst: *We have the nastiest bunch of old people around here !* (I won't tell you who said it, but she said it with an English accent.) Moreover, if they were the victims of social injustice, it was also apparent that their own folly and their own vices tended to keep them where society had put them. And most of them were even more boring than the middle class people I was trying to get away from.

I tried to get a better look at the changing movement that winter. It wasn't only intellectual curiosity. It was a vital matter to me because my life had been so completely entwined with the movement. I was really striving to get a perspective on my own life.

It was life itself that I didn't understand. At 22, when I had plunged into the movement, I had felt that now at least I had the right answers to life. I knew what life was about, and, more importantly, I knew what my life was about. But through the years my good answers had somehow turned back into questions--questions that I couldn't answer; questions that led to new questions which hadn't occurred to me before.

Belonging to the movement had given me a perspective on life I wouldn't have had otherwise. Even if it wasn't the one right perspective--as I had once believed--it was a perspective. It did provide a certain distance from ordinary life and thus a viewpoint from which some basic features of life could be better seen.

I had gone right from the University into the movement--from one special situation into another. My direct experience of life had been very limited. When I did begin to wake up to the facts of everyday life, I encountered them at first as novelties. The changes in the movement, which were so contrary to the original spirit of it, turned out to be, at least in part, a subversion by everyday life of something that had tried to be different. The new spirit that appeared in the movement turned out to be an old and familiar spirit.

The Thoughts of Chairman Mao

I had a third hand claim on the New York Times. The fellow who subscribed to it passed it on to Mack, who passed it on to me. I read it minutely, having nothing else to do and being hungry for any information that might enlighten or at least enrich my own confusion.

There was a steady stream of reports about the ***CULTURAL REVOLUTION*** in China. They were somewhat mystifying, but they provided a strange echo for the social revolution in the United States. *Trust the masses*. Mao admonished his youthful followers. The idea that the movement had to be a *mass* movement to be any good was a prevailing notion in the United States. My own experience with *the masses* made me disbelieve that proposition. It seemed to me that it was a handful of exceptional people that made the movement worth anything--that without rare qualities of courage, intelligence and whole-hearted commitment, it was going no where that was any good.

It wasn't *the masses* that were going to prison rather than serve in the army. The masses were volunteering en masse for the army, while a handful of people like me went to prison in defiance of the draft. At the peak of the resistance to the Vietnam War, there were still only a few hundred willing to do it, and perhaps one man out of 100 came from a lower class background. Meanwhile, the army had no trouble getting all the soldiers it needed from the ranks of poor blacks and whites who were supposed to be the backbone of the anti-war resistance. They weren't even the frontbone. In fact, they were the backbone of the war effort and of the sometimes violent opposition to the anti-war movement. They had no oddball scruples about violence, especially if it was perfectly legal and they got paid for doing it.

The army provides the only good chance at a better life that many lower class men ever get. Pacifism is a moral luxury they can't afford. But there is a clue in that. The more you eliminate poverty, the farther you are going in the direction of drying up the recruiting pool for the army. Even when they aren't pacifists, middle class kids aren't attracted to military service. All of the effective resistance to the Vietnam draft came from middle class kids. They weren't draft refusers but they were draft avoiders. But lower class men were as eager to get into the army, by and large, as middle class men were to get out of it. The poor areas of every society are a deep reservoir of military manpower. They make it easy for the government to get into a war. They and their parents provide a bedrock of unquestioning support for any war effort.

The New World

Mao told the red guards that their task was to *destroy the old world and create a new one*. The idea of building a new world was basic to all the movements. Whether by abolishing war and poverty, or abolishing the family, or sneaking LSD into the water supply, everyone dreamed of creating a new and better world.

How you build a new world largely depends on what you do with the old one. The *red guards* in the U.S. got bogged down with the task of trying to destroy the old one. Seizing the power and wealth of the old world as the necessary means for building the new world is sooner said than done. And those doing the seizing always seem to forget their original purpose.

The *flower children*, alias the *hippies*, turned their backs on the old world and set off to where the wide open spaces seemed to offer plenty of room for building a new world. They succeeded in demonstrating that you need more than space if you are going to create a new world.

What Moves the Movement ?

Mao was quoted as urging self-sacrifice and condemning selfishness: *The great proletarian cultural revolution is aimed precisely at destroying selfishness.* What motivates people--what moves the movement--is a basic question about the movement and about society in general.

Those hostile to a movement answer the question of motivation by assuming the most contemptible motives for everyone involved. Those in the movement assume that everyone operates from ideal motives. Even so, there are basic disagreements as to what the ideal motives are. The question for people within the movement was what should your motives be. A secondary question was how you develop such motives or where do you find the sort of people who already have the motives that the movement requires ? The question for people outside the movement was what motivates these people . . . what will it take to satisfy them or stop them ?

Academic historians of the movement usually restrict their focus to one organization and then deduce the motives from the character of that organization. The motives of civil rights workers are deduced from the official purposes of the civil rights organization. Marxist analysts of the movement deduce motives from certain categories such as middle class, working class, women, youth etc. which have a metaphysical importance in Marxist ideology. *I am middle class, therefore I think this:* . . . The use of similar categories is the most common way of interpreting the movement: *blacks* are assumed to have one motive and *whites* another even when they are doing the same thing at the same time.

Particularly in the late 1960s, people in the movement were endlessly questionaired by fledgling sociologists for whom the movement was a kind of happy hunting ground for term paper theses. Basic to such research is a pair of assumptions: 1) People know what their own motives are 2) They will readily reveal them to an interviewer. But I think that people rarely understand their own motives very well and rarely tell others as much as they do know.

What they do instead is to interpret the question *Why are you doing this ?* as: *To which of the standard motives do you wish to attribute your actions ? Do you hunger and thirst for justice ? Are you a Commie ? Are you a publicity seeker ? Are you in it for the money ? Are you here to meet girls ? All of the above ?*

Rather than start with arbitrary assumptions as to what motivated people in the movement, it makes sense to leave it as one of the main questions to be, if not answered, at least refined into better questions. The movement came to include a large chunk of society. What moves humanity ? What is in us ? Where are we really trying to go ? I believe that a careful study of the movement reveals many things about why people do as they do, because they were sometimes put in situations which made them reveal what was in them, as they never would have otherwise. It was a revelation to them as well as to others. They put themselves through tests that no laboratory could perform. In one way the movement was a large and rather explosive laboratory of human behavior. Behavior mostly shows the limitations and directions imposed by conventions and circumstances. But in the movement people often acted much more spontaneously--from their own motives--because they were freed from the close confinement of normal times--at least temporarily--or they transcended them by the power of imagination. Like a hypnotized man who takes his clothes off in front of an audience--they thought they were somewhere else. For a moment anyway, they removed the mask that society requires, and you got a glimpse of their real selves.

Adolescent Rebellion

Although I am given to sustained self scrutiny and I think I am good at it, my own motives are often a puzzle to me--as they were then. The explanations I come up with are in terms of whatever theory of human life I am into at the time. I often feel that I don't really understand myself--or anyone else--in any very coherent and satisfactory way.

A psychiatrist once diagnosed my complaint--at long range and without ever having met me. A lady I briefly dated told her psychiatrist that she was dating a man who had been a draft card burner. *Adolescent Rebellion* was his judgment. I did go through adolescent rebellion. The summer I was 14 I tried to assert, without much success, such propositions as that I should be able to come and go as I pleased without explanation to my parents, that I shouldn't have to be home by any particular time etc. But he was saying that I was still stuck in that pattern and that this was the explanation of my behavior. If he was right, I was in serious trouble obviously, because I was about twice 14 when I destroyed the draft card.

To a man who has pleased his parents by staying on the straight and narrow path to professional respectability, drastic deviation from that path may be seen primarily as a rebellion against your parents and their values. One general way of explaining the movement is in terms of youthful rebellion. Observing that most of those involved are young, you classify it as a *youth movement*--something to be explained in terms of qualities peculiar to young people. But *youth* is one of those categories that are too often used in place of a real attempt at explanation.

History is determined by wars fought between armies of teen-aged boys. Marriage and child-raising is a reckless enterprise which only the young are foolish enough to attempt. But labeling history, family etc. as youth phenomena is misleading. Young people usually manifest what their elders have put into them--what their elders also feel in a less reckless and enthusiastic way.

The Family Flag

It seemed to me that people in the movement were rebelling on behalf of their parents more often than against them. They were rebelling on behalf of the dreams that their parents had abandoned, dreams they had inherited and made their own. They were rebelling against the unhappiness of their parents by trying to achieve what their parents had failed to achieve. The flag they picked up and carried was the flag their parents had dropped. Essentially they felt compelled to try and redeem the family honor.

That seems to have been true of even the most extreme of the rebels. A woman in the Weatherman underground tells her boyfriend that she worries that she might abandon the struggle for revolution just as her parents did--they had been Communists in the 1930s. Her own rebellion is a kind of reproach to them, but it is also in the direct line of the basic beliefs they have given her. Her boyfriend, Larry Grathwohl, was actually an FBI informer, who later produced a book about it all--*An FBI Informer with the Weathermen*.

In fact, most people in the movement seemed to be carrying out the ideas of their parents and usually had the support and sympathy of their parents. Which isn't to say that their parents wanted them to go as far as they did, or to take the chances that they took. But young people always tend to push the limits which their parents try to impose. It doesn't mean they are going in a contrary direction.

That was true at least of those from liberal or left backgrounds, and most of them were. Those from lower class backgrounds were more likely to be at odds with their parents, because they were adopting the set of values prevailing among educated, middle class people and thereby distancing themselves from their parents' ideas. The conflict arose because their parents resented their adopting the values of the university set even though they wanted their children to belong to it. Most whites in the civil rights movement came from liberal, pro civil rights families, but there were those who had to defy the basic bigotry of their working class parents in order to join the movement.

One fellow I knew in the civil rights movement was ostensibly rebelling against the blue collar racism of his parents. But there was another, deeper reason. I think he had found in himself a tendency to effeminacy. Plunging into the dangers of the early civil rights movement was a way of finding his manhood and exorcizing that effeminacy--it worked apparently--and so he was rebelling against what his parents had stuck him with in more ways than one. That isn't a complete account of his motives either. I don't mean to explain a very complex character so simply.

Later on, in the *sexual liberation movement*, in the *women's liberation movement*, and in the *gay liberation movement*--there was considerable overlap among these three movements--there appeared many individuals who had inherited incompatible standards of behavior. What their parents had made of them was at odds with the sexual morality that their parents and society tried to impose upon them. In one way they were rebelling against the moral code of their parents, but, in another way, they were only manifesting the emotional realities that belonged to their parents as much as to them.

Jehovah's Witnesses

The Jehovah's Witnesses that I met in Danbury were actually conforming to the beliefs of their church and their families. Not to have refused military service would have made them apostates. Because of this, probably, they tended to be more ordinary fellows than the other draft refusers. Having the 100 % backing of their families made it easier for them. They were doing what they were supposed to do rather than working out personal convictions which could put them into a painful conflict with their parents.

Even in cases where there was a real conflict with parents, it was more often the result of the rebellion rather than the reason for it. Individuals pursuing the logic of deep convictions would inevitably have to confront the incomprehension, even the hostility of others, including friends and family members. But that wasn't their purpose.

However, in the late 1960s, as the movement grew rapidly and deteriorated rapidly, there was a spirit of defiance for the sake of defiance. In many of the late 60s episodes people are obviously looking for excuses for a confrontation. Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman and others pandered to a kind of lowest common denominator of adolescent rebellion. Instead of partying on the beach at Fort Lauderdale and throwing beer cans at the police, college kids went to the big spring demonstration in Washington so they could party on the mall and throw beer cans at the police.

There was considerable variation among the other draft refusers in respect to their relations with their parents. Judging from what little he told me, Mack's parents seemed to be puzzled and distressed about the bee in his bonnet. Like other working class parents, they were dismayed by his reckless presumption more than anything--why was it up to him to take on the Goliath of government ?

I met one draft refuser in Danbury whose parents seemed to be about 95 % supportive of his stance. His father had managed the campaign of a successful Congressman, who visited him while he was in Danbury. Bill's social standing put him on the level where it isn't so out of line to assert your political convictions. He only got a year from a somewhat sympathetic judge and he seemed to be almost enjoying his time in Danbury, unlike Mack, who had been on the ragged edge of his emotions much of his time.

How much time you got for draft refusal depended on the part of the country where you were tried. Draft refusers in the deep South often got the maximum five year penalty. Draft refusers in states like Oregon were getting suspended sentences--no prison time at all. By the late 1960s, as support for the war dwindled, draft refusers everywhere were getting suspended sentences and probation.

To Paint or Not to Paint

I had an important ideological argument with Bill as to whether or not wood should be painted. He argued that it shouldn't, that painting wood was unnatural and unnecessary and he cited the example of the Maine fishermen who never painted their boats. He was wrong, of course, but the idea of not painting wood turned out to be one of the most durable ideas to come out of the 1960s, judging by the quantity of unpainted wood you see in all sorts of new construction. The idea is durable, but wood isn't, if you don't paint it. Also, you get splinters.

A draft evader from Philadelphia had fled from induction as part of a general battle with his father. He took off in the family car, which his father had traded to a dealer--but Dick still had a set of keys. I think he resented the fact that his father had traded the car instead of letting him have it. His father seemed to be not at all sympathetic to his son. They got him for stealing the car, as well as for draft evasion. If you steal a car and take it across a state line, it becomes a federal offense. He seemed to be a fellow who had rebelled first and then discovered his reasons later. When he encountered the movement of pacifist draft refusers at Danbury, he took to it like a duck to water. He put questions to me like what did we think about this or that--he seemed to want me to teach him the pacifist catechism.

Here it is, Dick: True pacifists will not eat meat, nor will they kiss those who do. We are kind to our enemies and cruel to our friends--to make up for it. We believe that nonviolence will ultimately prevail, even if it has to become violent to do so.

None of the draft refusers I met in Danbury seemed to have had any real contact with the organized peace movement. That wasn't true however of the other federal prisons, such as Allenwood, Pennsylvania, etc. where most of the pacifist draft refusers wound up. Perhaps that isn't so surprising because draft refusal is necessarily a tough individual decision. The group or the organization isn't going to do your prison time for you, so the decision has to be yours alone. The person able to make such a decision and stick to it--they nearly always gave you more than one chance to change your mind--was usually a maverick of some sort.

Many people regarded the draft refuser as a kind of masochist. But when you look at the realistic alternatives, you can make a case for just the opposite point of view. A fellow who went into the army was in for a comparable amount of time, and was even less free than the imprisoned draft refuser, who had no further obligations to the authorities once he was locked up. If you refused to work or cooperate in other ways,

all they could do was put you in a solitary cell and take some of your good time away. They did that to me when I quit the first job they assigned me. But putting me into a solitary cell was like throwing Brer Rabbit into the briar patch--I enjoyed the peace and quiet. The draft refuser was only a prisoner, but the draftee was a kind of slave, who had to constantly respond to the call of his masters, even if he wasn't put into the position where he had to kill and / or be killed--or perhaps be crippled for life.

The men who went to Canada to avoid the draft inflicted an exile on themselves that was a worse punishment than anything the government could have done to them. Those who got into careers and marriages they didn't really want in order to keep a deferment, actually chose a life sentence over a two year sentence. What is remarkable about the average person is that he finds it easier to march to his death, so long as he is part of the group, than to face a much smaller danger all by himself. I don' think the draft refuser usually reasoned that out, but his capacity for solo courage actually saved him from a much worse situation than the one his defiance got him into.

Once they were in Danbury, people like Dick or Mack were more likely to become aware of the organized peace movement. One reason was Mrs. Honey Knopp, the representative of the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors. She visited any draft refuser in Danbury once a month and provided an important kind of support and liaison for individuals who found themselves in prison with no one at all to encourage them. I know that she was an important source of moral support for both of those fellows.

I saw Dick later on in New York City. He was sporting a tremendous fright wig of curly blond hair that had a stunning effect on passersby. He was also actively engaged in the peace movement.

Rare Spirits

In Danbury, as in other situations that the movement put me into, I had the privilege of meeting people who were an elite that had been selected and screened by the circumstances. They were the *green berets* of the movement, who had gotten there by getting past the obstacles that stop most people. They were remarkable for their independence of mind and for their high spirits. It more than halfway compensated me for the deprivations of prison life that I had the chance to meet people that I would never have met otherwise.

The weren't really typical of the movement, but they were the yeast that was essential to the ferment of the movement. They set a standard for the whole movement. For every one that went to prison, there were a dozen who would at least take part in a small direct action where you might get arrested. For every one of those, there were 100 who would attend one of the annual big rallies. Others would at least voice an opinion they hadn't dared to hold before.

There were people in the movement in the late 1960s that were as good as those in the early movement--in fact some of them were better--but they were lost in the crowd; they no longer set the standard. Instead of a standard, you had an average that was brought down to the level where people already were. Blacks as such were the movement, not the small number of blacks and whites who had put their lives on the line for civil rights. Similar categories such as *youth*, *workers*, *women* etc. gave you an automatic standing in the movement. You needed both unflinching faith and courageous good works to belong to the early movement. In the later movement, justification by category was available to everyone.

It was a repeat of what happened to the church. In order for it to become large and powerful the standard was lowered to where the average person had only to step over it to belong. Instead of challenging the best, it catered to the average. The leaders that emerged in the late 1960s were those who understood how to please the crowd and work the media, just as conventional politicians do. The simple and straightforward spirit of the movement disappeared in the fog of routine dishonesty that is characteristic of conventional politics.

A similar thing happened to the serious leftist movements. The black militants who actually prepared for an armed revolution were "joined" by thousands of black college kids, who stayed in college, but who grew Afros and wore "African" clothes to show their solidarity. The feminists who planned a new social order where there was no such thing as marriage and where children were raised collectively, were joined by *feminists* for whom it was this year's ideological fashion--something to puzzle the boys with. Nothing destroys a movement as quickly as popular success.

The Latest Styles in Motivation

The basic question of what moves the movement was usually not asked within the movement except implicitly. Instead the answer is assumed as part of an ideology. In the sections of the movement that followed some sort of Christian philosophy, the idea of sacrificing yourself for others was usually accepted as a basic ideal of human behavior. In other parts of the movement, this idea was derided as a martyr complex. The Marxist groups actually had a similar idea--it is right for the individual to take heroic risks for his ***CLASS***. But they were suspicious of those not motivated by *class interest* and would go to a great deal of trouble to show that they were so motivated, that they weren't being altruistic.

What appeared with a peculiar prominence in the Women's Liberation Movement was the idea that selfishness is an ideal motive. In a published letter to her daughter, Betty Friedan insists that all she has done for women, including her own daughter, has really been done for herself. (The letter is in *It Changed My Life*.) She implies that it is wrong and dishonest to be altruistic--even towards your own daughter !

The considerable vogue which this idea enjoyed shows how even our understanding of ourselves tends to follow fashion. I was walking down Michigan Boulevard in Chicago one spring day with a young woman friend. We saw a peace vigil and decided to join it for half an hour. In downtown Chicago, on a warm spring day in 1963, you could usually find several demonstrations of various kinds going on. Afterwards, as we walked away from it, she told me what had been on her mind during the silent vigil: If a reporter had come up and asked her why she was there, she would have answered that her reason was *Absolutely Selfish ! I wish to prevent a nuclear war and make the world safe for my children.* (She didn't have any yet. Little did she realize that there was a reporter there, taking down her words !)

Her *Absolute Selfishness* might appear to others as at least relative altruism. But her account of her own motives isn't persuasive. Did she really think that her personal participation would make the difference one way or the other, and that this some day result explained why she was there ? The vigil was going on without us and continued without us after we left. Even if that vigil and it's thousands of successors do ultimately prevent a nuclear war, that result doesn't explain the involvement of any one person, does it ?

Why do you need to be there, if they don't really need you to be there ? Wouldn't moving to New Zealand be the effective personal action to protect your children, if that was your central concern ?

The question of *why ?* in this instance might be better put as *why not ?* It was a fine day. We didn't have to go out of our way. The vigil gave us an excuse to stand around for half an hour in the spring sunshine. It was an interesting looking group of people. It was an experience--something you could talk about later--or write about. A lot of people participated in movement activities on that basis--*why not ?* but that doesn't explain where the movement came from.

I think my friend answered the imaginary reporter's question that way because she was an avante garde young lady who started fashions or at least stayed on top of them. And the idea of being forthrightly *selfish* was just then coming into fashion. Maybe she started it. Anyway, she was the first person I ever heard make a brag out of being *selfish*.

The idea that selfishness is not a vice but a virtue of the highest order appears conspicuously in the writings of Ayn Rand and I suspect she was the ideological source of that idea as it appeared in the careerist wing of the women's liberation movement in the late 1960s. She was a hidden and unacknowledged source, because she was classified as a rightist and reactionary writer. (She is an anti-Communist Russian emigre.) Most of those in the early women's liberation movement were from leftist families (in fact, many of them were *red diaper babies*) and they would have been embarrassed to admit that Ayn Rand had shaped their ideas.

Anyone who reads Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* has to be struck by the forthrightly selfish and wonderfully creative heroes and especially the heroine, who is in essential ways a model for the feminist movement. She has neither husband nor children--she allows no *moist-mouthed* weaklings to depend upon her. Instead, she pursues her own pleasure with no inhibitions and her own self-fulfillment through heroic business enterprise. Both of these ideas--living for yourself alone and the achievement of spiritual self-fulfillment through a splendid career in business--are basic to the modern feminist movement.

The idea of living for yourself alone is the exact reverse of the idea that you should live for the whole human family. Although both ideas are options for the individual who has no family to care about. Instead of feeling obligated to everyone, you feel obligated to no one, not even your own family.

Brothers and Sisters

People often attempt to present the ideas of the movement as a harmonious synthesis of right thinking. That can be done only by ignoring the flat out contradictions between one movement and another and the contradictions even within movements, which often came to include the ideas that were exactly contrary to their original ideas, carrying both sets along in a peculiar juxtaposition. Thesis plus antithesis equals synthesis. Which equals lunacy.

An idea basic to the early peace and civil rights movement was that society should be one big family, that all men are brothers--and not like Cain and Abel were brothers. Among the black nationalists, this universal brotherhood was for blacks only. It included black Africans and excluded white Americans. For a while, every black man was a *brother* and every black woman was a *sister*. *Brother* was soon abbreviated to *Bro* as in: "get outta my face, *Bro* ! or I'm gonna whip your ass ! " and then dropped. At the same time, they invented a new racial epithet for whites--*honkie*--which they hoped would would carry the same contemptuous sting for whites that *nigger* did for blacks.

In the women's liberation movement, there is the idea of a universal sisterhood for which the brotherhood of man is the target. It is essentially female nationalism and like other forms of nationalism, it defines itself by the antagonistic relationship to the antithetical enemy.

I found *Atlas Shrugged* in the prison library and I read it because it was Mack's bible. I even wrote a bunch of notes on it for him. I wonder if he still has them--and if he ever read them ? One reason it must have appealed to him was the way it glorified business. Mack had a degree in accounting--one of the heroes in *Atlas Shrugged* is an accountant--and, despite his prison sentence, later managed to become a CPA. Ex-cons have special trouble where state licensing is required.

In the early movement, a thorough antipathy to business was a common attitude. But a positive attitude towards business--even a belief in business--appeared in the careerist wing of the women's liberation movement, and it is still characteristic of modern feminists. A similar attitude characterized many of those in the ***black power*** movement, who were really pursuing the conventional kinds of prosperity and power for themselves, although they pretended to be *revolutionaries*. They invoked the ideals of the civil rights movement--like service to poor blacks--and used them as camouflage for pursuing their own ambitions.

The Prison Library

Considering that Danbury is a prison, there is a remarkable collection of books in the library there, many of them no doubt left behind by pacifist book worms imprisoned during prior wars. In the Mississippi penitentiary, in 1961, we were completely cut off from newspapers, television or radio and we were given just two books to read: the bible--King James version--and *Race and Reason* by Carleton Putnam--a book which assembles *anthropological* evidence to show why racial segregation is necessary. At Danbury, I had all the books I wanted and all the time in the world to read them. In that respect, it was like a year of graduate study at government expense. If I don't seem entirely grateful for it, it is because I don't believe they intended to confer any such benefit upon me.

There was no professional librarian and the books were in a somewhat arbitrary order. *Crime and Punishment* was in with the Mysteries. *All Quiet on the Western Front* was in with the Westerns. But this arrangement forced me to expand my horizons. There was nothing for it but to go down the row of books, one by one, and pick out anything that looked interesting.

I was delighted to find in *The Bostonians* the evidence of a women versus men movement in 19th century America. It was news to me and it seemed to verify my working hypothesis that any division of the human race could become the basis of a hostile polarization. That was what had struck me about ***Black Power***.

I was still blissfully unaware of the ***WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT*** which had sprung up in the summer of 1966. I might have had early news of it from a St. Louis friend, Shulie Firestone, who was one of the early radical feminists in Chicago. But I wasn't in correspondence with her, and, when I did see her again, in New York City, in 1967, she didn't tell me anything about the women's liberation movement. I suppose I wasn't interested either at that time. I had become increasingly antagonistic to all the bizarre changes in the movement. She later wrote one of the major feminist theory books: *The Dialectic of Sex*. She gave me a copy of it, but it was a long time before I read it.

Actually, the women's liberation movement had come and gone before I ever took much interest in it or learned what they were up to. Part of the reason was that, like the rest of the left, they tended to be secretive about their real ideas. In leftist organizations generally it is almost part of the ideology to conceal the real ideology. They usually met in semi-private, women-only, *consciousness-raising* sessions and rarely organized the public demonstrations that were standard in other serious political movements.

Also, by 1967, the movement had become such a menagerie that the feminists were not very noticeable--strange as it seems. Compared to the *hippies*, the black militants and the *new left* revolutionaries, who were growing quantities of hair, putting on spectacular costumes and blowing up things, the feminists didn't attract much attention. They came to national attention because of a media blitz which they enjoyed in late 1969 and early 1970. Every major publication did a story on them, as did the television networks, and they suffered the devastating effects of being popular all of a sudden--famous for being famous, as it were. That was typical of the way that the media covered the movement. They can ignore something for 20 years, but once one magazine features it, then they all have to feature it--now it's news.

In some ways the feminists turned out to be one of the most durable and influential movements to come out of the 1960s, although, like the other movements, their real aims were defeated. A watered down and self-contradictory version of feminist ideas is often found in modern society. The original feminists were real radicals. Extreme as they were, their ideas had a rational consistency and seriousness which is missing from current feminism.

The Love of Violence

Aside from the gratuitous and fundamentally foolish nationalism, what struck me about ***black power***--in its extreme forms--was the gratuitous lust for violence. People were taking up guns--or gun fantasies--because they wanted to, not, as they pretended, because they had to. Violence was their first choice, not their last resort. Politically, it made no sense at all. The riots put an end to the revolution. Clearly, they embraced the ideal of violence, not as a means to an end, but as a psychological end in itself. They said that violence was a necessity, but it was really a luxury, one that they could not afford, but they bought it anyway. Black people everywhere are still paying for it.

Trying to understand this foolish belief in violent revolution--this love for the chimera of military triumph--which characterized both the black militants and the new left, started me thinking about violence and nonviolence. Some of the books I came across offered comparisons from other times and places.

Milovan Djilas, the Yugoslav ex-Communist imprisoned by Tito, wrote a book about his home land Montenegro: *Land Without Justice*, where bloody feuds were a way of life for the mountain people--all of them orthodox Christians. They also carried on an intermittent war with their neighbors in Turkey. Djilas doesn't seem to condemn their violent ways, but he criticizes one of their raids across the border because it was unprovoked and because *they invented ways of killing*--like hanging a butcher from one of his own meat hooks.

A novel by Franz Werfel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* dramatized the mass murder of Armenian Christians by their Turkish neighbors in 1915. More than a million were killed. It was perhaps the first genocide of a century which would see many more.

In the *Times* there were often references to massacres in all sorts of places--contemporary ones in the news columns, historical ones in the book review section. An African king in pre-colonial times, Mutesa II, murdered several thousand of his subjects when he ascended the throne. It was a routine precaution to consolidate his power, supposedly.

The Riddle of Black Power

From an ordinary perspective ***Black Power*** turned out to be predictable and unremarkable--one more example of pugnacious, short-sighted nationalism. What made it remarkable to me was that it had apparently grown out of the civil rights movement, which had achieved its successes because black and white civil rights workers had joined together and used the dynamic methods of nonviolent direct action. How had the very negation of this interracial and nonviolent movement been created by it ? That was the riddle.

In liberal / left journalism of the period, there is a standard explanation for the rise of ***Black Power***. It says that: 1) blacks tried to use turn-the-other-cheek methods to achieve impossible ideals like interracial brotherhood. 2) the blacks were violently repulsed and defeated by racist whites. 3) so, in the late 1960s, they turned to violence from a kind of desperate necessity.

It is a plausible-sounding explanation. Many people still believe it, I suppose. In fact, not only is it a false explanation, but all the items in it are false. I knew that when I first heard it--it didn't fit what I knew about the movement--but it took me many years to figure out the real explanations of black power. (For more about this and related questions, see the sections on the civil rights movement and its aftermath, later in the book.)

There is a similar riddle about what happened to the peace movement. It achieved a remarkable success in stopping the Vietnam War. It is one of the few times in history that people have actually forced a government to put an end to an unnecessary and unjustified war.

But this nonviolent anti-war movement somehow became a movement that was actually pro-war and anti-American. It pretended to still be pacifist--more than one long time pacifist was willing to front for it--but its real position was support for the military victory of the other side.

A movement which started as a *ban the bomb* movement in the late 1950s produced an epidemic of mad bombers in the late 1960s. Bombing incidents in the United States occurred at the rate of about 2000 a year in that period. Of course that included right extremists and other sorts of crazies--there is never a shortage of such people. But much of it was due to the movement.

There was a good spirit at work in the early movement--that was the one essential thing it had going for it. There was a multitude of evil spirits in the late movement--the venom, the violence, the relentless dishonesty were unmistakable signs of what was happening at the very heart of the movement.

The success of the movement led to its ruin. It attracted people who are attracted to success, to the new possibilities of power. They were never attracted by the ideals of the original movement.

The success of the movement also knocked the lid off of a Pandora's Box of social restraints. What came fluttering out into the bright lights of the television cameras was a revelation about what human society is really like.

Danbury Prison Cafeteria, March 1967

Especially in the winter time, prison life centered around the cafeteria. It was the place where you met your friends three times a day. When you don't have much else to take an interest in, meals become very important, if only to break the monotony. Anyone who has spent a year in prison understands why inmates riot over bad food.

Walter and Dave often sat with Mack and me. Even though they considered whites to be enemies in a formal way, they couldn't pass up the chance to argue with people that were as interested in political philosophy as they were. It is no use trying to argue ideology with someone who has never really thought about it, and, for most inmates, it was the last thing on their minds.

A group of pacifist prisoners in Danbury during World War II went on a long strike to protest the segregation of black prisoners in the prison cafeteria. They were confined to solitary cells for 4 & 1/2 months, but they eventually succeeded and the cafeteria was desegregated in early 1943. Jim Peck, one of those involved, gives an account of it in *Freedom Ride.* He says that there were black nationalists in Danbury at that time who opposed the desegregation.

In 1967, there were still whites who avoided blacks and blacks who deliberately segregated themselves in one part of the cafeteria. But friendships between blacks and whites were not uncommon.

The civil rights movement always had more whites than blacks in it. But terms like *blacks*, *women*, *youth* only became important in the movement in the late 1960s when it was your category rather than your character that mattered. When you look at that photograph of the original freedom ride--the 1947 Journey of Reconciliation--you can count more white faces than black. But the more relevant fact is that almost all of these gentlemen had been in prison during World War II as pacifist draft refusers. They even spurned the government camps where most conscientious objectors spent the war. Whatever they were, they were hardly typical of *blacks* any more than they were of *whites*.

But they were the kind of people who built both the peace movement and the civil rights movement. They were responsible for starting the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) which grew out of the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation and which began sit-ins to desegregate restaurants in the early 1940s. They were still doing it, a dozen chapters scattered around the country, when the Greensboro sit-in of February 1st 1960 captured the attention of the fickle news media and created the one semester fad on black college campuses that ushered in the 1960s.

Jim Peck was active in CORE until he and the other remaining whites were pushed out by the black nationalists--and the careerists who pretended to be militants--who took it over after 1965. What was left of CORE by the end of the 1960s was a small gang of pistol-packing, capitalist-oriented hoodlums. What was left of SNCC--alias "Snick"--the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee--was a hand full of pistol-packing, communist-oriented crazies.

The watchwords of the civil rights movement were love and nonviolence. That was more the rhetoric than the reality much of the time, but there was a serious effort on the part of most people in the movement to live up to that spirit. By the end of the decade, the same movement was marked by murder. Murder of white and black policemen by the Black Panthers and other gangs. Murder of whites at random by groups like the Zebras in San Francisco. Murder of their own members and of rival black militants by the Panthers, by Ron Karenga's US, by the Blackstone Rangers and by many other black militant gangs and short-lived terrorist organizations that never got the funding and the fame that encouraged these groups. The riots which erupted in 100 American cities were a disorganized expression of the same spirit. Other black people were the targets of this violence more often than whites--they were more available. The Revolutionary Action Movement planted bombs in department stores where many black people shopped--serves them right for patronizing white-owned stores. Herbert "Rap" Brown, the last chairman but one of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee--now renamed the Student

National Coordinating Committee--was wounded and captured when he attempted the armed robbery of a black social club in Harlem. They sought power over their own people, the kind of power that only successful violence can give you. Huey Newton dubbed himself the ***SUPREME COMMANDER*** of the Black Panthers and tried to be just that, posing for his official picture in a throne like chair with an armed man standing at attention on either side. It was a dream--an evil dream--but real people died because of it. It showed us something about black people that we didn't want to see--blacks were supposed to be the good guys. It shows us something about people that we need to understand.

How did something so good turn into something so bad ? That is the basic question about the movement.

I actually liked the food in Danbury. It seemed pretty good compared to Catholic Worker cuisine. I put on some weight that winter.

One thing the movement had done for me, it had cured me of being a finicky eater. When I had anything in front of me resembling a decent meal, I appreciated it.

II UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO CAFETERIA, MARCH 1958

My last year at the University of Chicago, I almost stopped eating. I had never really become reconciled to dormitory food, but the real trouble was my emotional state. I had fallen in love in a desperately unhappy way and my appetite had disappeared.

That was the real reason why I plunged into the movement when I did. I fell in love during my last year at the University. So much is a fact. But I don't know whether I can explain it very well. The logic of my emotions was as puzzling to me, much of the time, as was the behavior of those other passionately driven people that I met later on in the movement.

It made a certain kind of emotional sense: I was disappointed in love so I set off in quest of the new world of love that I believed must be out there somewhere. I really believed in love--I suppose that every young person does. It was the essence of my religion. God is Love, Love rules the world, Love is our ultimate destiny, the one thing really worth living for.

The promise of heaven was the promise of the face to face encounter with Love. But Love was down here on earth also--all around us and in us, if we were good enough to have it so. You didn't need to wait for death to encounter the essential joy of heaven.

Love to me meant a woman's love--a garden of joy and delight; the old garden restored. I think I really expected to find the heaven on earth of true love and happiness.

When the love I hoped to find turned out not to be there, I didn't become disillusioned with love. I became disillusioned with *this world*. I became disillusioned with my world, which was the world of the University. I had come to like it very much after my first year there, but now I felt fundamentally disappointed with it. It was a new world that hadn't kept its promise.

The trouble was with middle class people . . . the trouble was with the University itself so far removed from real life and real people. The trouble was with me, but it was a trouble that the University couldn't cure--in fact, it made it worse.

I think that some such thorough despair of *this world* is the source of passionate religion and politics. We must find or make a new world because we have come to feel that there is something basically wrong with the old world. Our imagined alternative may be another country or another life. It may be, as it was for me, another part of the same city, one that was as strange to me as any foreign country could have been.

The people, the real people, lived in those miles and miles of tenements that you passed riding the 63rd Street Elevated. You could look right in the kitchen windows of those apartments where the people lived and you felt that the human warmth you needed must be there, if is was anywhere.

Love and Food

Living at the University, my first time away from home was a cold shock. After the warmth of the family kitchen, dormitory food was hard to get used to. Proverbs says *better a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therein.* I suppose that means a stall-fed ox--the equivalent of corn-fed beef steak. There wasn't much love lost between the food service workers at the University and the privileged young princes and princesses they were compelled to wait upon. And that affects the food somehow. Years later, when I was trying to get away from being a movement bum and had to take any job I could get, I actually put a curse on the sandwiches I was compelled to go and fetch for the big shots. For some reason, the sandwiches weren't any good--so I was told--but all I did was ruin the taste by concentrated dislike of having to be an errand boy.

I have visited the University since, and I understand better why I fled from it. For all its intellectual wealth, for all its fine display of cultural goods, there is an emotional poverty there and a spiritual emptiness. What it can't teach you is exactly what, at 20 years of age, you are most desperate to learn--what is life about ? What is my life about ? How do I find love and happiness in this cold, competitive world of intellectual curiosities. What you want is a live woman and a god you can believe in. What they give you is a stuffed dodo and some more or less correct information about it.

The emotional poverty isn't peculiar to the University, although it took me a while to find that out. But it is aggravated by the fact of so many young people, away from home for the first time, who are used to getting and haven't yet learned to give much of themselves. It is called a *community* but that is a euphemism for a cold collection of people who remain strangers to each other.

Also, I think, people who are emotionally deficient often find a refuge in the protected environment of the University. It becomes a kind of greenhouse for those that can't tolerate the harsh weathers of life outside.

There is a kind of emotional stunting that accompanies academic life. We develop one part of ourselves at the expense of other parts. The determined pursuit of some arbitrary line of study makes us neglect other knowledge, and sustained study requires a corresponding suppression of the emotional side of ourselves. You don't do much dancing or singing when you spend your nights in the library, and, after a while, you forget how to dance and sing, or perhaps you never even learn.

The students feel the narrow confinement of their emotions and do what they can to escape. They attend the Humphrey Bogart movie with a far more concentrated attention than they give to the law lecture. There is something there that they need to learn before it is too late. The law can wait.

There was a folk music group at the University--it was the first place I had encountered the folk music which became popular in the early 1960s and which usually accompanied the movement. Attending the *hootenanny* was one of the things I liked best at the University. We would sit around and sing *Michael Row Your Boat Ashore*. What we were really doing was borrowing the feelings of an imaginary community of people who were really close to each other, who lived and worked together like the folks in the song.

The attempt to find or create that *community* was one of the basic desires that created the movement. The groups that grew up around the various protest groups, the hundreds of attempts at communal farms--they all showed the desire to meet an emotional need we all have that modern society doesn't meet. It is odd to reflect that the early Communist movement, circa 1830, aimed primarily at restoring this human community. The connection between that and the Red Army parading through the square every May 1st might be hard to explain to an alien visitor.

In late 1960s speeches and writings, *community* occurs regularly as part of the rhetorical litany: the *black community,* the *gay community* etc. The pretence that community had already been achieved replaced the serious attempts to create it. The idea is that your category--your race or your sexual problem--creates that vital emotional and spiritual bond with others.

The Singing Community

One of the main things I liked about the movement was that it put me into situations where it was right and necessary to sing. When they punished us for singing in the Mississippi Penitentiary by taking our mattresses, we kept right on singing, because it was a necessity for us. It was the thing that kept our spirits up. It was the one effective antidote to the fear we felt.

We sang on the Civil Rights picket line in St. Louis in the summer of 1963. We sang at Joe Hill House in Salt Lake City in the summer of 1965. We sang at our gatherings at the New York Catholic Worker in the fall of 1965.

The epitaph for the labor movement was *they don't sing anymore.* You can measure the apathy of a church congregation by how many of them won't sing the hymn. In the late 1960s, chanting and shouting of slogans replaced singing. What is worse is the preachy political song which is performed for those who thereby *support* the movement without participating in it. The singing that was characteristic of the early movement at its best had a deep emotional and spiritual resonance which was missing from the later movement and which is missing from conventional society.

The Empty Chapel

The spiritual emptiness is almost part of the University charter, as revised for modern times. The University still centers around a stone chapel, but its aesthetically correct battlements seem to be designed to rule out all of the wrong-headed passions of the religions that people really believe in. No passionate belief has any claim upon that coldly beautiful monument to bone dry ideas, tentatively adhered to. Inside is no sacred object which it is forbidden to touch. Nor is there any holy man who can tell you the secret of life.

So I perceived that place anyway, during my last year at the University. I passed it on my way to see M. Later, I passed it while I avoided seeing her. I wrote in my notebook: *It seems to me that I care very little about M. But I care nothing at all about anything else.* I wrestled with a terrible despair that winter and it changed the course of my life.

What I felt about her was that, even if I won her--and maybe I could have--she could never love me as I needed to be loved. And it wasn't just her. Somehow the fault lay much deeper. I seemed to need a love that could not be found--not at least at the University of Chicago during that year when the 1960s were waiting in the wings of the theater.

The Christmas Angel

I fell in love with her at the Christmas party, while we were all singing Christmas carols. The beauty of her woman's voice, combined with the beauty of an old song, moved something deep inside me. A young man's hunger for a woman and his spiritual hunger for the promise of Christmas . . . for a moment, I felt that everything I had been looking for was there. My feeling for her arose from that brief hope of finding the perfect synthesis of love and Love--sensual and emotional bliss, mingled with the spiritual joy of finding the one thing you needed to make your life all that it could be. I wasn't the first man, I don't suppose, who made the mistake of confusing a woman with a Christmas angel.

It wasn't that she hurt me really, but she made me feel a deep disappointment, not just with her, but with love as it could be found in the ordinary way. She didn't hurt me because almost as soon as I realized I had fallen in love with her I also realized that I had made a mistake and I began at once to try and work free from a kind of emotional captivity. And I succeeded. Within a few months my basic emotional strength and resilience was returning and I was well on my way to recovering from what seemed like a kind of serious illness. And I still believed in Love. I hadn't compromised my ideals or done anything I would have been ashamed of.

But I no longer believed in the kind of life that the University seemed to offer me. Because it didn't seem to offer the love I needed.

There were many alternatives to M., but I had already been there two years, and I had already explored all the possibilities I could find for achieving the true love and happiness I wanted. When I had met her, I had felt that *Now at last !* I had found the love I needed. The fact that I had fallen in love with M. showed me that she was more attractive to me as a woman than the other women I knew there. Whatever her faults, she seemed as good as any of them, and better than most. I felt that there was no use looking further, that it had been proven to me that the love I wanted, which really was my essential aim in life, could not be found there. There was a basic deficiency in my life at the University that I didn't know how to remedy.

I had a kind of waking dream about her one time. We were together in a place far away from the University, doing something to help poor people. And that made it right between us. That different world made possible the feeling that was not possible in the cold and empty world of the University. The spiritual rightness of being with ***THE PEOPLE*** made it emotionally right between us--as it never could be around the University.

The Lure of the Slums

That was why the slums seemed to lure me--they were the places where ***THE PEOPLE*** lived. From a distance, they seemed to have that vital feeling which I lacked--that firm hold on life which I groped in vain to find at the University.

I felt that the refinement of middle class life and the limitations imposed by academic studies were a kind of straitjacket upon my emotional development. I felt myself to be still a boy and not a man. I felt I was love's victim because I was emotionally puny--I lacked the strength to fight successfully for what I needed. What was wrong with the University was that it didn't teach you how to fight--and you couldn't win the battle of life if you didn't know how to fight it. I developed a growing conviction that the University was not preparing me for the life I wanted.

In fact, leaving the University and plunging into the movement did help me to become a man. The rough and tough challenges I encountered in the movement were a kind of antidote to the restraints and the refinements of academic life.

I think that some such compelling personal need pushed most people into the movement. I mean of those who really threw themselves into it whole-heartedly. There were many people, especially in the late 1960s, who participated in a very limited way.

But many people fall in love in college, with unhappy results, often enough. Most of them have sense enough to forget it and find someone else. Why didn't I ? I think the disappointment of being in love with the wrong woman was the catalyst but not the cause of my plunge into the movement.

Falling in love seemed to have yanked me out of the world of day dreams where I had spent my youth. And somehow I couldn't go back again. I had always had a dream of love that soothed me. Now it seemed I had to have the real thing--and it wasn't there. The real world, which I saw now for the first time, as it were, was a world I couldn't tolerate. It was the negation of all my dreams. It was my worst fears come true. What was wrong with it was fundamental--it wasn't a world of love. It was in fact a world ruled by hatred.

It isn't that I wanted to get married and couldn't do it. I knew I wasn't ready for marriage and it was the last thing I was worried about. What I wanted was a world that could satisfy my great expectations of life. And what I expected of life was, in one way, a set of childish dreams and hopes that I now had to abruptly discard. But it was also a set of deep feelings that I couldn't discard--they were me, they were my real self. There had to be something in the real world, some place or some person that corresponded to them.

I was ready for true love, for storybook love, and abruptly discovered that what is offered in the marriage market is an entirely different item. It isn't what you want, and the price is your life !

I think what I had come up against was an inherent contradiction in the way I was raised, in the way that most young people of my class and kind are raised. In essence, we are prepared to live in a world that doesn't exist. We are coached for a starring role in the drama of life and then discover that we'll be lucky to get into the cast at all. Instead of being the Star of the Show, you are given a push broom and asked to sweep the theater.

Geology Was My Calling

I had never resolved the basic question of what I was being educated for. I told people that I was going to be a geologist. But I had delayed committing myself to the course of study that would make me one. I told myself that I would be a writer. But I realized that only a handful of people make a living writing what they want to write. I knew it wasn't a practical ambition. Indeed, it isn't.

I think every well-raised kid is raised with this kind of contradiction. When you are 5 years old, they give you paper and crayons and tell you to make a picture. And it goes on from there. You are to ask yourself: *what great and wonderful thing shall I do with my life. Shall I be a great painter or a great composer ? Or a poet perhaps ? Am I the new Van Gogh, the new Beethoven or the new Tolstoy ?* Your mother's love verifies what you have never doubted, that you are a very special person with a grand life ahead of you. Your great expectations of life are the maps you will follow.

Meanwhile, your father points out that they are hiring down at the Pepsi-Cola plant and that maybe you should try to make a little money this summer. There is a shortage of geological engineers. It pays well and you get to work out of doors a lot.

The Catholic High School I attended reinforced the ambivalence as to what life was about and what my life was about. The Jesuit priest who was my senior year English teacher assigned us to write a paper as to what we planned to do. I dutifully produced something entitled *Economic Geology as My Vocation*.

That phrase *economic geology* was something I took from an article in an encyclopedia as the correct label for the field that geological engineers are in. *Vocation* is an old Christian word that means a *calling*. The idea is that God calls each one of us to do something, some task that is important in his great plan of the universe.

At Regis, *vocation* usually meant a call to be a priest. God called you to a life of heroic self-sacrifice. He called upon you to labor in the great task of saving mankind. A *vocation* was what the great Jesuit martyr Isaac Jogues had. Camping out in a Canadian winter, traveling through a wilderness without roads, half of his fingers gone from his first encounter with the Iroquois, he presses on to meet them again--they'll kill him this time. God calls him to save savage mankind and nothing can prevent him from going on. (The Iroquois women chewed the fingers off by way of testing his mettle--and displaying their own.) Several fellows in my class signed up to become missionary priests. I liked the idea of being murdered by the Iroquois but I didn't like the idea of celibacy.

But *vocation* also meant whatever you did with your life. If you weren't going to be a priest, then you would probably raise a lot of good Catholic kids, make a lot of money in business and be generous with the Church.

Called to Make Money

So the idea of my paper--I had decided against being a priest--was that God called me to the great task of making good money in a field where there were a lot of openings at the time. I don't think I believed it, but I was accurately reflecting the ideas I had been given about life.

The University of Chicago didn't help me resolve the contradiction. There are two contradictory ideas of what higher education is for and both are found at the University. One idea is that you prepare yourself for a secure place in the prosperous part of society. You stay on the straight and narrow path that will make you a professor, a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer or a businessman. The other idea is that education should lead you into the whole vast realm of human knowledge. It should develop the whole person into someone who is worthy to be the free born citizen of a great republic.

On the one plan, you try to get through your courses in accounting and get into graduate school. On the other plan, you learn to appreciate art, music and literature, spend your time pondering great ideas from the great books. I suppose it suits people who have a bent that way and who have inherited enough money so they will never have to hold a job they don't like. Unfortunately, I thought it suited me too.

Actually, the vocational training the University gives isn't very practical in terms of preparing people for the job market. They tend to turn out 1000 Ph. D. s in fields where there are 10 openings per year. They prepare them for a few respectable professions like professor and doctor that are already overcrowded. What they really give people is the stamp of respectability--a sort of unwritten certificate which shows that you belong to the better class of society. It serves to make you unfit for most of the jobs that are actually available, although it is an essential stamp on a passport to the positions where belonging to the better class is an unwritten qualification. When you add to that a set of great, idealistic expectations of life, you give people a remarkable tangle of problems that they can wrestle with for the rest of their lives.

The Dancing Accountant

I meet with young people today who are wrestling with the contradiction I wrestled with. One coed told me that she was taking fine art and also preparing for law school. Another told me she was taking accounting and dancing. Did she mean to be a calculating dancer or a dancing accountant ? I asked her. But I understand the ambivalence. Accounting represents that practical effort towards the good job that will secure your place in middle class society and save you from no job or bad jobs that pay the minimum wage. But her heart isn't in it.

What she really wants is that vocation, that high destiny that makes life mean something. Dancer, artist, writer, rebel--that real life we are cheated out of somehow. That real life that most of us only find in our dreams.

So she bets her life one way, and then hedges the bet. But it is hard enough to achieve either one, and if you don't make a choice and throw yourself into that choice, you may wind up with neither. You can't just take a one dollar chance on a grand destiny and then gracefully resign yourself to being rich but not famous in a conventional career. To get either one, you have to go after it like you believed in it. Getting the career is difficult. Getting the grand destiny is next to impossible. Trying for both at the same time . . . that is what everyone seems to be doing. People fool themselves that you don't have to make a choice, or that one can lead to the other. You get tenure as an English professor on your way to becoming the great writer. You want to be the new Van Gogh so you get into the art department. The idea is that there must be a way to do it that is easier, that doesn't have the awful risks.

The Motors that Drove the Movement

The decision to go for that ideal destiny, the whole-hearted effort to find your vocation--that was one of the motors that drove the movement.

What did I really want from life ? *Writer* was just a label for a different kind of life. No one was stopping me from writing after all. I wanted Love, with a capital L, but what did it mean ? It didn't seem to mean any of the girl friends I could find. Both ideas were arrows that pointed to some other place, some place that is essentially different from the one you are in. But what place ?

I don't think I know the answer. Every answer I thought I had turned out to be wrong somehow. But all the same I feel it, and I think I am far from being the only one that feels such things. That is one of the great riddles about people--why do we have a real need for what seems to be un real ?

What struck me about people in the movement was that they were all looking for something that could not be found. And the individual success of being a *writer* etc. was only a lame substitute and a symbol for what we really wanted.

What was characteristic of people in the movement, at its best, was a sustained and serious effort to find or make a new life. Self-fulfillment was one aspect of it, but equally important was to find a life that you could share with people you cared about. It wasn't just that I wanted to achieve some wonderful thing for myself. What would make it wonderful, what would make it fun, would be something that could include all my friends. One of the worst characteristics of conventional life is the way that each one of us is caught in a lonely struggle to survive and succeed. It's like we are under an obligation not to help or to accept help--even from our best friends. *Every Man for Himself* seems to be cut into the very cornerstone of the old world. You put on the uniform and fall in line, but there is no emotional or spiritual closeness in this ordered mass. You sacrifice your best self in order to belong, but you only belong in the way that a replaceable part belongs to a machine.

Love and Vocation

My own idea of vocation was that of a calling to the wonderful life I expected. And finding your true love was the most essential part of your vocation. I thought of love as something that came down from above as the ultimate blessing of life. Instead, it came as something that grabbed me from below, as something that trapped me and tried to imprison me forever. Like the market place for the jobs that I didn't want, the marriage market was a competitive place. You had to hustle and you better not be too choosey or you'd get left out.

I really expected a heaven-sent love, the first installment of the grand destiny God had planned for me. Instead, I found myself obsessed with a woman who obviously didn't even understand me as a person. It wasn't that she tried to understand me and failed. Rather, she understood the game she was playing and that was enough for her. I found myself captured, temporarily anyway, by someone who was a more experienced player in a predatory game where the more people you hurt, the more points you made.

What I wanted, I think, was a replacement for my mother's love. I wanted someone to believe in me and encourage my adult aspirations the way that she had encouraged all my childish aspirations.

I wanted to be the special and important person that my mother had encouraged me to be. I wanted that heroic and wonderful vocation that God had planned for me. In my last year at the University, I saw clearly that I was on an entirely different road.

I think that true love was my ***non-negotiable demand*** of life, to use the parlance of the late 1960s. Had I been given that, I would have accepted the conventional life and made the best of it. Love would have made up for whatever else was missing. Without it, conventional life was a bad bargain at a ridiculous price. Give up true love and your chance at a grand destiny. In return you get security, room and board in the prison of conventional life.

The Realities of Marriage

While I was spending my youth day-dreaming about true love and sometimes developing romantic crushes on girls I didn't yet know very well, I wasn't blind to the realities of marriage. My own parents seemed to have a marriage that was better than others I saw, but there was a basic unhappiness in their lives that true love should have made impossible. I saw the same thing among my relatives and among my friends' parents.

One basic reason, I suppose, is that man and wife mutually coerce each other to abandon their dreams and to carry the burden of bringing up children to the middle class standard. A wife has to remind her husband, if he needs reminding, that his dream of life must not interfere with getting and keeping the job that will pay the bills.

As a young man, my father had worked as a reporter for the newspapers in Denver. But when the Depression came, he was lucky to get on with the post office, where he spent his life, as his father had done before him, paying out his life, one day at a time, in return for the money that insured a livelihood for his wife and four children and that enabled his son to dream of being a writer. You pay out the best years of your life in exchange for the money to go on living. Then when you finally retire, you can try to make something out of the left over remnant of your life.

Growing up, I felt his unhappiness. I realized he was spending his life at a job he didn't like, that he had to take orders from people with less intelligence and ability than he had.

I felt the unhappiness of all the adults I grew up among. Somehow, life hadn't delivered on its promises to them. But all the more was I resolved that my own life would be different. In fact, they too seemed to expect that my life would be different. Somehow, they passed on their dreams to me. Their hopes weren't so much abandoned as they were transferred to my brother and my two sisters and me. We had opportunities they didn't have. We would find what they hadn't found, and come back to share it with them.

The Rebel Postal Clerk

The first time I was arrested and given 30 days in jail for passing out anti-tax, anti-war leaflets inside the federal court house in Chicago--the charge was *unwarranted loitering*--there was a very small item about it in the newspaper. It described me as *a 22 year old postal clerk*. I knew they had me wrong. My grandfather worked for the post office; my father had been a postal clerk before he worked his way up to supervisor; and it was true that I had been working part time at the post office when I was arrested--the arrest lost me my job. But I was something different.

But so were most of those that I ever met in the post office. My grandfather was a very intelligent man who could recite the names of all the presidents. Working for the post office at the turn of the century when you had to be literate--many immigrants weren't--was a more prestigious job then, than it was when I tried it. The post office employs millions of men and women who were born to be something else. They are in reality writers, or musicians, or prophets. What the 1960s did was to encourage many of these people to make the reckless attempt at becoming their real selves.

Like many others that I met later in the movement, I really had no taste for being a rebel. I was in most ways a conventional, conservative and timid person. What got me into trouble were my day dreams--my inability to give them up.

Peter Pan Syndrome

If that fellow who was experimenting with long range psychiatric diagnosis had diagnosed me as suffering from ***PETER PAN SYNDROME***, he would have been closer to the mark. I wanted to avoid the fate of the adults I knew and to keep on flying away to Never-Never Land. When you are used to flying and very good at it, you need some powerful inducement to give up your wings forever.

Like many people in and out of the movement, I also suffered from ***DON QUIXOTE SYNDROME***. My real feelings were attached to things and people that I had imagined. Whereas the actual world seemed to me to be an illusion created by evil spells. If you went at it hard enough, surely it would suddenly dissolve into what you knew had to be there, a world of love.

I still think that I suppose. Surely this world, ruled by hatred, where forty wars are going on, deciding the shape of the future, cannot be the real world. A world which has 50 million abortions every year must be under an evil spell.

I think the seed of my rebellion was sown far back in my childhood and that this was true of others in the movement. Everyone feels the contradiction between life as it is and life as it is supposed to be. It doesn't take that much to tip a person in the direction of holding out for the one, instead of settling for the other.

Old Clothes and the New Man

There was a May procession when I was in Catholic grade school. All the boys were supposed to wear black pants and a white shirt. I showed up in black pants and a green shirt. Nuns don't shout, but they have ways of saying things to you that is the equivalent. I was really sorry for what I had done. I hadn't heard her clearly, as I tried to explain. She made me march at the very end of the procession as a punishment. I didn't mind. I felt that I had got off easy.

I really thought at the time that I just hadn't understood her. I suppose I was day-dreaming instead of attending to instructions. But there was nothing wrong with my ears. I think I was unconsciously rebelling against the role thrust upon me of being one of a hundred little black and white penguins, marching in step in a long silent file. It wasn't much of a rebellion, but it was the best I could do. I think I rebelled because my mother treated me as number one fellow in the world and the school treated me as the third kid in the fourth row. It was an unacceptable demotion.

The school wasn't really being cruel to me. They were actually preparing me for the real world. They were preparing me for a world where you have to conform if you want to belong. To get along, you must go along. They were preparing me for the day when I would have to exchange the school boy uniform for an army uniform. They were preparing me for the day, later on, when I would put on the suit and tie that I would wear for the rest of my life.

The first thing I did when I arrived at the Catholic Worker house in the slums of Chicago was to fish out an old felt hat--no one wore hats then--and a set of rumpled work clothes from the second hand clothes box. By putting on these old clothes, I put on the new man, who began to define himself by rejecting the suit and tie of the old, unliberated man.

There was a period in the 1960s when millions of young people felt free to wear blue jeans for any and all occasions. Young men who persisted in wearing suits and ties began to feel that they were improperly dressed.

Fortunately, that is all behind us now, and we have returned to the situation where Japanese artists, African rebels and every male in the United States who isn't a low class bum wears a suit and tie. Now the females get to wear suits and ties too. That seems to be the enduring legacy of the late 1960s.

At the height of the Vietnam War and the resistance to it, there was a press conference in Washington at which a few young men read their anti-draft statements. No two looked alike. Each one insisted on making his own statement. One gave moral reasons for refusing the draft. Another gave political reasons. A third gave personal and poetic reasons. But each one insisted on his own separate identity, his own standing to address the fundamental question of peace and war.

What they refused to do was to join that mass of men who dressed exactly alike. Who marched in rows and died in heaps in a far off place.

Robert Kennedy remarked of the so-called *hippies* that they were claiming an individuality that conventional society denied them. Their costumes were often outlandish, but their aim was to try and find that unique identity they felt that life had given them, which society took away from them.

You can argue the question as to whether or not it is right for the individual to sacrifice himself for the common good. But the reality is that individuals usually are sacrificed involuntarily and for no good reason. The main objection to the Vietnam War wasn't that young Americans were dying for their country but that they were dying for nothing. The wholesale waste of individual lives is characteristic of society, and war is only the most obvious form of that waste. What you are given in exchange is the pretense, the comforting illusion. that your life has been sacrificed for some great purpose, and not just wasted for no purpose, or for a purpose which would mean nothing to you.

Vocations and Careers

The ideal of a *vocation* is implicit in the idea of a *career* that appeared in the older wing of the women's liberation movement. Betty Friedan, the apostle of **CAREERS FOR WOMEN**, insisted that women must be unhappy when they are limited to home-making and child-raising. In a career they would find the missing self-fulfillment. But she obviously means much more than is realistically meant by a *career*.

She isn't just talking about a long-hours job that pays well and gets you a carpet on the floor and a name plate on the door. In her book, ***THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE***, she bemoans the lot of the woman who is only a housewife instead of a *poet*, a *scientist*, or a *statesman*. Clearly, she has in mind, not what the Help Wanted ads really have to offer, but the sort of exalted destiny that only the few achieve, the grand role she saw herself as playing by leading the women's liberation movement.

She takes credit for starting it--there are some others who would dispute this dubious honor--and suggests that it will *liberate* men as well as women and bring about world peace. (See the Sunday *New York Times Magazine* of March 4th 1973) Clearly, she sees herself as having achieved a career which is really a vocation worthy of Isaac Jogues.

Actually, Mrs. Friedan, who also wrote: *I have no taste for martyrdom*, goes Isaac Jogues one better. Not only has she made a key contribution to the salvation of humanity--by her own reckoning anyway--but she hasn't lost any fingers in the process. In fact, she achieved considerable success in worldly terms. Her best-selling book couldn't have hurt her bank account and she was elected president of the largest feminist organization, the National Organization of Women.

Something like that is everyone's dream. You not only achieve some wonderful thing but you get the money and applause that such a feat deserves while you are still young enough to enjoy it.

In reality, the person who turns his back on society to follow some far off star is likely to pay a heavy price, like Isaac Jogues, even if he or she achieves the great aim. Beethoven lived in poverty and never succeeded in getting married. Today, a Van Gogh painting is worth a fortune, but in his life time he sold no paintings and couldn't even support himself. He was eaten alive by loneliness and he died by his own hand in an insane asylum. They made a good movie about him half a century later, but he never got to see it. Tolstoy had a prosperous life, but he was born rich. That's the way to do it, I suppose.

When I interviewed several veterans of the peace movement in 1984, I extracted a confession from one that he had hoped to be the American Gandhi. He did in fact take a leading role in the nonviolent direct action peace movement, which disappeared into the leftist anti-American movement of the late 1960s.

The Ski Bum Vocation

There is a conventional version of the alternate destiny--a vision of life as an endless vacation. It also turns up in Mrs. Friedan's main book. She cites a story called *Sarah and the Sea Plane* as the last echo of the golden era when women's magazines regularly pushed the idea of careers for women. But actually, all Sarah wants to do is to fly off into the blue sky away from earth's troubles. It isn't that she means to make a living by flying people around in a sea plane.

That escapist impulse seems to be the only alternative that many people can think of to spending your life as a total conformist. A young woman that I knew in the 1950s told her boy friend that she was going to become a ski bum. Actually, she wasn't serious. She was just pushing him to get serious, which he did. But the only idea of an alternate destiny she seemed to have was to take up some sport or recreational past-time as a serious, full-time pursuit. Of course there are even worse forms of the escapist impulse--self-destructive forms like drugs and alcohol; frivolous, time-wasting and life-wasting forms like television and trash literature. I think we all feel the urgent need to escape the narrow limitations and the dull routines of our lives. What the movement did was to provide people with alternatives that were worth pursuing, that weren't just ways of killing time.

Although young women today are mostly not even aware of the real ideas of the feminist movement, many of them have adopted a version of the basic feminist idea that women should have careers. It is a belief that you can find the spiritual and emotional fulfillment of a grand personal destiny in becoming some sort of professional--security, salary and self-fulfillment all in one package. Added to this is the wishful notion that you can raise children as a side line, without neglecting either them or the demands of your profession. It is a bundle of incompatible desires, wrapped in illusory promises: love without the risks; security without boredom; spiritual blessings plus money in the bank.

The ideas that appeared in the movement were often spectacularly wrong-headed. But they had some logical consistency because they were taken seriously. When the same ideas appear in conventional society, they lose that logical consistency because they are only notions which aren't taken seriously but which protect people from having to really confront the question that is raised. A young woman may not really believe that a career is the answer to life, but the idea saves her from wrestling with a frightening question that seems to have no answer.

The Nonviolent Warrior

My own rebellion against conventional life wouldn't have gone far except for the fact of the movement and my luck in encountering it when it was still a very small enterprise that most people had never even heard of. It was meeting an extraordinary person that introduced me to the alternative of the movement.

My last year at the University of Chicago was also Karl Meyer's last year. But he had already dropped out for a year and then come back. During the year he was away he had encountered the Catholic Worker movement in New York City. He had even gotten arrested with them when they refused to participate in the annual air raid drill. It was his intention, which he carried out in the summer of 1958, to open a Catholic Worker house in Chicago. The battered doorway of that storefront spiritual enterprise in the slums of Chicago became my entrance to the new world, the world of the people, the world of the movement that became my life.

Karl was the first nonviolent warrior I had ever met and one of the best and the bravest. It was really his example that drew me to join the movement, and he had the same effect on many others. David Harris once described the ideal nonviolent warrior as ***Gary Cooper without guns***. That description fit Karl, who faced the bad guys alone with no weapons except the moral force of his own passionate convictions and the unflinching courage that encourages friends and wins the respect even of foes. (David Harris was one of the founders of The Resistance in March 1967. He became the most publicized draft refuser in the country when Joan Baez married him.)

Karl was a person who always seemed to be larger than he really was. The intensity of thought and feeling showed in his face in a characteristic way so that he seemed to loom over you, even though--as you realized when his back was turned--he was a person of only average size.

When I interviewed him for my book, many years later, he told me that his seeming inability to find friends had driven him into the movement--he was attracted to the people he could meet there. What he didn't seem to realize was that it was the peculiar passionate intensity, which marked him as a young man, that made people

shy away from him. You were afraid he might be a mad man. You were more afraid that he wasn't, and that whatever it was that was burning him up might be more dangerous to others than mere insanity. In fact it was. Insanity isn't contagious, but the runaway passion of a grand vision of life can be contagious. That grand vision has a way of turning into a great illusion, and, before you find it out, your life is half gone.

Anyway, his explanation didn't satisfy me. When you are worried about your popularity, you buy a new suit and take dancing lessons or something. You don't move into the slums and start sharing your residence with bums.

There were other political radicals on the University of Chicago campus in the spring of 1958. It was one of the few campuses where there was any visible radicalism in the late 1950s. But what distinguished Karl from the others is that he was 100 % serious. He had made an essential commitment to something that would change his life and make him turn his back on any chance of conventional success and achievement.

My friend Ted was probably the most radical man on campus in terms of his ideas. But they didn't prevent him from preparing for a career in the diplomatic service. Karl's ideas pushed him to leave the University, pushed him to move into the slums, pushed him into a federal prison by the summer of 1959--the first of a number of jail sentences.

I was still a very conservative person when I met Karl and I didn't agree with his ideas much more than I agreed with Ted's. But he was the only person I knew who had the courage to choose an alternative to conventional life. That was really what I wanted to learn from him.

One Handed Rebels

The movement has often been misdescribed as a *student* movement. Rather, it was a movement of ex students--of people who had made a basic decision to leave the University, and to leave the career opportunities that affluent society offers. The essential moral impetus of the movement was created by people who necessarily had to make such a choice. They had been *students* at least in the sense that they were educated and intelligent people who could have claimed a position in the more affluent part of society. There were not from the lower class--contrary to another basic myth about the movement. Rather they were people who had chosen to do something which pushed them into the lower class--at least in economic terms.

Can you rebel against society with one hand while you hold on to your place in it with the other ? The wishful idea that you can produced the late 60s rebel who hurled defiance at the establishment while he continued to pursue his Ph.D.

The fellow who built a career by espousing a cause was typical of the late 60s movement. What was essential to the early movement was the person who sacrificed a career in order to espouse a cause. The momentum of the movement was generated by this kind of whole-hearted and uncompromised personal commitment. They understood that *you cannot serve God and Mammon* both.

It wasn't that so many really succeeded in finding careers through the movement, but that so many tried to do it. Instead of pushing the movement they tried to catch a free ride on it and the weight of their personal ambitions brought the movement to a halt. For every black who used the civil rights movement to get elected to political office, there were dozens who tried to do it. For every feminist who wrote a best seller there were many others, less successful, who tried to write one--whose essential aim was to use the movement to find a better career for themselves.

The movement did finally come to the campus in the late 1960s as a traveling fad, like the panty raids of the 1950s or the goldfish swallowing of the 1920s. The one time rumpus on the campus was essentially a sham drama because the students weren't serious--weren't in a position to be serious. They were ostensibly rebelling against the establishment to which they continued to cling. They wanted to be revolutionaries without leaving the safety of the campus or losing any of the privileges that belonged to them. They were rebels who counted on the indulgence and protection that is given to students.

Serious Rebels

Karl was the first person I met who turned his back on affluent society in order to seriously pursue a very different life. Later on, I met others who had made the same kind of choice. Ammon Hennacy of the Catholic Worker had spent a good part of his life working at farm labor because he refused to pay taxes for war. He had first gone to prison in 1917 as a pacifist opponent of the draft. Wally Nelson of the Peacemakers group, a Negro pacifist imprisoned during World War II, worked as a traveling salesman for the Antioch Bookplate Company to avoid paying the taxes which support American wars. It was just part of his life long commitment to the peace and civil rights movement.

Jim McCain, a Negro school teacher in South Carolina, lost his job in the late 1950s because of his civil rights involvement and never worked as a teacher again. He became one of CORE's most effective civil rights workers. I met him in Mississippi in 1961 where he was working as a *field secretary* during the Freedom Rides. It was a dangerous assignment. I spent one night in Jackson but he lived there for the duration. I was introduced to Medgar Evers also--the local head of the NAACP. He was shot and killed in an ambush outside his house in Jackson in June 1963. The NAACP had not supported the sit-ins or the Freedom Rides at first, but they became involved later in providing legal support. Medgar Evers had become more and more involved in direct action the year before he was shot.

Later, McCain lost that job because of the hooliganism and corruption that engulfed CORE. In the late 1960s, young black PhDs could use a nominal commitment to the civil rights movement to get academic positions they wouldn't have gotten otherwise. By the end of the 1960s the civil rights movement had became a kind of gold rush for ambitious blacks and for crooked hustlers of every variety. It exists today as a branch of the establishment. But there was a time when it was a real movement and that was due to the personal commitment and sacrifice of people like Jim McCain.

There were peace walks in both New York and Chicago in the spring of 1958 and there was an unusually large turn out. Instead of the usual two dozen or so, over 100 came out in Chicago and 200 in New York. It seemed to show that something was in the wind. The 1958s--often erroneously called *the 1960s*--had begun.

Except for Karl and a couple of others, the students at the University of Chicago were oblivious of the peace walk. A Hyde Park lady, fresh from the demonstrations down in the Loop, handed out leaflets in the student cafeteria building. My friend Leslie glanced at the leaflet, then disdainfully tossed it on the floor. It was his year for disdainful gestures. He disdained everyone except Sigmund Freud and Harry Stack Sullivan. He was studying to be a psychiatrist.

The Drop Out

When I left the University of Chicago in the spring of 1958, I intended to come back in the fall--although I didn't really want to come back. When I learned that the University had dropped my scholarship it gave me the excuse I needed to drop out for a year--so I told my parents. It turned out to be many years.

I could hardly have refused to go back had they continued the scholarship. There was too little money in my family to justify such a gesture. I don't really know why they did cancel it--my grades had slipped a little during that last turbulent and unhappy year, but I still had a B average. At the time, it seemed Providential. It still does.

That summer also I met my true love. I met a young woman that for some time afterwards I thought of as part of my personal destiny.

I didn't know her very well and I only saw her once after that summer, although we exchanged a few letters. But believing in her in a religious way gave a me a place to put my deep yearnings for a woman's love. It freed me because I could ignore women and follow a course that took me to places where very few nice young ladies were to be found.

Imaginary Girl Friends

Don Quixote has a noble mistress who inspires all his noble deeds. In reality, she is quite a different person from the one he imagines. But the person he imagines plays a vital role in his quest.

Isaac Jogues has a woman he loves--Mary the mother of Jesus. She is a very real person to him. She soothes his trouble and inspires him to go on.

There is a stained glass window of a woman and child in the monastery at Snowmass. It is lit up at night and the monks sing to the heavenly persons that it represents. When I visited there, it seemed to me that the window represented for each monk the family he would never have.

There is a lot to be said for imaginary girl friends. They have major advantages over real ones. They give us a first line of defense against the encroachments of real girl friends.

The blues singer says: *I love you, honey, but I don't like your low down ways*. You never have to say that to an imaginary girl friend. She is what you want her to be. She understands perfectly what it is you are trying to do with your life--even if you don't quite understand it yourself. She encourages your great aspirations, and she will be faithful forever, no matter how long she has to wait. She doesn't drop hints that she may be looking for a new fellow if you don't put on the suit and tie and turn yourself in at the employment office pretty soon.

Like most young men, I tended to be obsessed with women. I still was but I had found a religious way to sublimate and defer those passions, which, more than anything else, trap us in conventional life.

Chicago November 1958

I stayed an extra month at my summer job, and then, having as it seemed all the time and money in the world at my disposal, I went to Chicago to see what Karl's slum enterprise was like.

Since I had been a child, it was the first fall that I didn't have to be back in school. That fact alone gave me an exhilarating sense of person freedom. I was almost 21, old enough at last to make my own decisions, to chart my own course across the mysterious oceans of life. Our youth passes while we are the prisoners of the school room. Then we soon become the prisoners of the office. But there is that time in between when we are free from both. It gives us a space in which anything might grow.

One of the basic characteristics of the Catholic Worker Movement is that it really does tend to anarchy. There is little or nothing in the way of centralized organization or control. An individual or a small group starts doing something more-or-less along the lines of the social ideals of the Catholic Worker and, sooner or later, you write to the paper in New York to inform them that there is a new branch of the movement. Of course they don't have to print the letter either, and then you won't get the support you might otherwise get from Catholic Worker readers in your area.

Obviously it lacks the discipline found in most organizations. But, through the years, that has proven to be more a strength than a weakness. There was a similar lack of organization and discipline in most of the early peace and civil rights organizations. It leaves the door open for the energy and initiative of people who don't like taking orders and do like to pursue their own enterprises. It can lead to a very inefficient kind of operation but it can also produce a spectacular kind of efficiency. You get 10 times the work from a person who is carrying out his own ideas as you do from one that is just doing what he has been told to do.

Karl's enterprise in Chicago was unusual even compared to other Catholic Worker houses then and now. At that time there were only half-a-dozen Catholic Worker houses in the country. Today there are several hundred. Karl's partner over the summer, Ed Morin--who was an ex Maryknoll seminarian--had gone back to school in the fall and left Karl as the sole proprietor of the *Catholic Worker Center*. There were only a couple of homeless men staying with him and he worked at a book company to pay the rent and buy the groceries.

He didn't really want to operate a charitable institution. The attitude he expressed was: *This is my home and, because I am a Christian, I leave the door open.* His main purpose was to be a full time pacifist radical.

A Broker for Charity

He had a basic criticism of the way the New York Catholic Worker operated. Dorothy Day had let herself become *a broker for charity* he said. She collected donations from all those who didn't want to deal personally with poor people. Their charity consisted of employing her to do it for them. Karl tried to refuse donations and his response to people who sought to bring him more derelicts by way of discharging their obligation was: *Why don't you do something for him ?*

His idea was to share his home with several homeless men and to set an example for others. And that is what he ended up doing later on--after he married, and after the full scale *house of hospitality* closed down. He and his wife Jean made a permanent home for four old men who lived on the lower floor of their two story house in the *inner city* of Chicago aka *the slums*.

When I talked to Karl years later, he didn't seem to agree with his original position, and he expressed some regret that he hadn't organized what has come to be the usual sort of Catholic Worker operation: a succession of young volunteers tries to provide minimal assistance for a large number of down and out people and the whole thing is supported by a network of donors and contributors.

But it seems to me that what Karl did is the real solution to the problem of homeless people. What is it that homeless people need except a home ? And what does that mean if it doesn't mean being taken in by a family. ?

I don't mean to imply that it is an easy solution or one that everyone should attempt. Karl and his wife were both people of exceptional strength of character. And the old men that Karl made part of his family--to share a home with his young children--weren't the bad alcoholics or the drug addicts or the deranged characters who make up a substantial part of those who come to the Catholic Worker. They were rather likeable old men, sometimes rather childish, who no longer had enough hustle to compete in the hard conditions of lower class life.

Personal Hospitality

Peter Maurin, the founder with Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker Movement, did put forth both ideas about hospitality. He called upon the Church to establish *houses of hospitality* in every diocese, but he also saw it as the personal obligation of individual Christians: *There are guest rooms in the houses of the rich but they aren't for those who need them*. A number of the people influenced by the Catholic Worker adopted the idea of having a *Christ Room* in their homes for the homeless stranger.

Matthew 25.35 & 38 *I was a stranger and you took me in*, is addressed to the individual Christian. And, as verses 43-46 make clear, the refusal to take in the stranger has some very serious consequences. I admit that I do not live up to that injunction very well, but I try. I cherish my solitude and I don't like having *strangers* in the house. But three times in recent years I have taken in a *homeless* man and let him live with me for several months--under pressure from God, as it were, and not wishing to be included with ***THE GOATS*** on Judgement Day. I do see it as a personal obligation for anyone who pretends to be a *Christian*. And, if even a fraction of those who call themselves *Christians* would obey the injunction of Matthew 25.35, there would not be enough homeless people to go around. We would have to import them from other countries to meet the demand. I would be on a waiting list to get one. All the organizations and committees set up to talk about the problem of homelessness could adjourn and do something else.

Obviously, you have to be careful about who you let into your home. But most homeless people are harmless enough. And I have seen even the *problem people* change substantially when treated as individuals by someone who cared about them. At Karl's house in Chicago, I saw several alcoholics who joined AA and quit drinking after Karl took them in. I saw more than one mentally confused person recover a measure of sanity in a situation where he felt safe and that someone cared about him. We all tend to get crazy when nobody loves us. The philosophy of *personalism*, as I learned it from Karl, means that you treat people as persons rather than as categories. And it works if you work at it.

More than one Catholic Worker house has discovered that the more people you take in the less you can do for any one of them. And it is wrong to encourage individual Christians to shed their personal moral responsibility by writing a check to someone or something which will supposedly do it for them. The basic problem with organized charity is that it encourages Christians to buy their way out of a serious moral obligation. And, more often than not, the money never gets where it is supposed to go. The Board of Directors dine at the Ritz on the money you sent to feed the down and out. You bought the desert wine anyway.

Making Your Own Money

One of the fellows that Karl had staying with him in the fall of 1958 was staying with him again when I visited Karl in 1984. I only saw him one other time. By an odd coincidence I was there when they brought him into federal court in New York City in 1966 on a counterfeiting charge. I was sitting there waiting for my own arraignment for the draft card. It was instructive to hear the different views of this man's character put forth by his lawyer and by the prosecutor--it was a bail reduction hearing. His lawyer portrayed him as an angelic character, an upright citizen and a dutiful son etc. The prosecutor portrayed him as the devil incarnate. I suppose that, like most of us, he is a little of both. But the federal courts aren't sympathetic to people that make their own money. There are all sorts of legal ways to make money without working for it, but that isn't one of them. He was an intelligent man and a clever artist. He was also something of a con man and he had a problem with drugs. If you are a drug addict it means *a life sentence on the installment plan* he told me.

Jesus and Frank Sinatra

Roger, Karl's other lodger, turned up again a year later when I had come back to take care of the house. But I didn't have the time to talk to him as I did when I first encountered him. I suppose he would be classified as a mental case, but I think the origins of his problems were really emotional--like a lot of mental patients. I believe he came from a family in which he had mainly received either neglect or abuse. His mental problems were created by the fact that no one cared about him.

Like a lot of the people who turn up on skid row, he had no obvious vices. He wasn't an alcoholic or a drug addict and only got in trouble with the law because he ran away from the mental hospital. Most of the time he was a sensible and well-behaved person. He was an excessively mild young man with a habit of screwing up his face as if to expel bad memories and dismal prospects from his mind. He didn't have enough aggressiveness to commit a crime but neither did he have enough aggressiveness to go out and hustle a job. He lacked education and job skills and didn't now how to *dress for success*.

I had a long conversation with him one afternoon in which he explained to me how he understood his problems and his strategy for dealing with them. I think he gave me an insight into my own madness. I recognized a similarity to my own notions about life, even though I could put mine into more sophisticated terms. The main difference between us was just that I was more fortunately situated.

He drew me a diagram which explained the hypothesis he had worked out as to the connection between Jesus and Frank Sinatra. Actually it made some sense when you understood his terms. Some girl must have complimented once by telling him that he looked like Frank Sinatra--he did in a way. And yet there was an obvious gulf between his situation and Frank Sinatra's situation. What did Sinatra have that he didn't ? was the question he was trying to answer. What was the secret of Sinatra's success and why was Roger such a hopeless failure ?--no money, no job, no home.

From religious revivals he had absorbed the doctrine, found in Mark 11.13, that, if you have enough faith *in your heart*, you can do anything, even move a mountain. And he was trying to muster enough *faith* to get where he wanted to go. And having no success. So he had decided that Sinatra must have a special sort of ***heart*** which gave him that direct connection with Jesus--that is what the diagram showed--and so enabled him to succeed in everything while Roger could succeed in nothing. He explained his idea of the power of faith: you find yourself locked out of the house but faith somehow enables you to get over the locked door. Yet he found himself to be a helpless person. Later, while Karl was absent (he was in prison) Roger was locked out of the Catholic Worker house and broke out the kitchen window to get back in. Perhaps he was beginning to learn that the Lord helps him who helps himself. But unfortunately that got him put back in the mental hospital.

His ideas might seem absurd but don't we all focus our aspirations upon some model person whose achievements we hope to equal ? And we all look for some Power that can help us beat the long odds against success. When we fail we try to analyze our failure in the terms we understand. Roger's real problem was that the odds against him were so long. He was an emotional cripple trapped in the basement of society. He sensed quite accurately that only some sort of miracle could rescue him.

Karl worked long hours at his minimum wage book company job. But in the evenings and on week ends he pursued his main goal, which was to help build an American peace movement.

The Peace Movement in the 1950s

Peace demonstrations of various kinds are so common place now that it must be hard for people to imagine a time like the late 1950s when pacifism was almost invisible. The entire American peace movement could have assembled in the basement of a church--it usually did--and there would have been room for the civil rights movement. Mostly they were the same people.

Outside of a few people in the Catholic Worker, there was no such thing as a Catholic pacifist. It was generally regarded as a kind of heresy to give anything less than 100 % support to the American armed forces. The pacifists tended to be converts to Catholicism rather than cradle Catholics. Dorothy Day, Ammon Hennacy and Karl Meyer were all converts from radical backgrounds.

Karl and I once attended a meeting of the Young Christian Students, supposedly the most liberal group in the Catholic Church at that time. Karl got there first and by the time I arrived he had them all excited just because he seriously argued for Christian pacifism. *At first we thought he was joking*, the chairman said. It is startling to see how much of a shift there has been in the American Catholic Church in respect to Christian pacifism in the last 50 years. The Catholic Worker Movement and the anti Vietnam War movement played an important role in bringing about that shift and Karl Meyer played a seminal role in both of those movements.

What there was of a peace movement in Chicago centered around the American Friends Service [AFSC] where Bradford Lyttle was the peace secretary. The Chicago area pacifists had close ties with all of the pacifist organizations of the late 1950s. Besides the Catholic Worker, these were the Peacemakers whose scattered members were kept in contact by a newsletter printed in Cincinnati by Ernest and Marion Bromley; the Fellowship of Reconciliation [FOR] and the War Resisters League [WRL] headquartered in New York. The Committee for Nonviolent Action [CNVA] was organized by the FOR and the WRL. Ken Caulkins and his wife Ellie started the Student Peace Union [SPU] in Chicago in April 1959. There was also SANE, the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, but it was more of a liberal talk group than a pacifist action group.

While I was staying with Karl in November of 1958, I attended a peace demonstration in front of the Chicago Amphitheater where President Eisenhower was giving a speech. It was a significant turn out for the time. About 40 people assembled. They wore blue arm bands in imitation of a U.N. peacekeeping force recently sent to the Middle East. They carried various home made signs. One read: *Negotiate Patiently*. It was the first demonstration I had ever seen.

I didn't intend to participate in the demonstration. I wasn't a pacifist and, even if I had been, I would have objected to the method. That is, I cringed at the idea of appearing in public with a sign. But I had a sort of free speech sympathy with people who were trying to present an alternative to the Cold War and to the nuclear arms race with Russia.

I had intended to mingle with the crowd of bystanders. But it was a raw November night and I was the only bystander as it turned out. That was one of my first lessons about the movement--the difficulty of finding a neutral and comfortable corner once you're faced with it.

A Crowd of One

After a while, I gave up trying to be a crowd of one and went over to talk to Karl and to our friend Mary--who was quite pretty. *Please don't talk* someone admonished. It was supposed to be a silent vigil. So I lit a couple of cigarettes for Mary and me. *Please don't smoke* someone requested. But we did it anyway. We got to see President Eisenhower whiz by in his bubble top limousine quite close to us. One fellow crossing the street remarked loudly to his companion: *I bet they don't* _____ *either !* He was wrong about that.

One Chicago pacifist conspicuous by his absence was Joffre Stuart. He wasn't there because of a mutual agreement with some of the group who objected to him. Part of the reason was his beatnik style--they were trying to look respectable--but the main

reason was ideological. Joffre always handed out *incomprehensible leaflets* [Ginsberg's poem] which pushed *free love* and *anarchy* as inseparable from pacifism. He also gave a flag-burning speech in which he burned small flags, starting with the flag of Israel and the U.N. flag and ending with the American flag. He carried shopping bags full of literature and made regular rounds to call on fellow pacifists.

Arguments of that kind were characteristic of the movement first to last, but they were never as rancorous then as they became later on. In general, there was a spirit of cooperation in the early peace and civil rights movement which would usually over ride the inevitable disagreements about ideology and tactics, and the rivalries between organizations and individuals. In the late 1960s such arguments led to permanent splits. In the Civil Rights movement they even led to shoot outs between rival groups.

I had long arguments with Karl about pacifism and related subjects. In time I adopted many of the ideas I first heard from him, but I had any number of objections to them at that time. As fast as Karl would argue away one objection I would think up another. I did move in the direction of *nuclear pacifism*, the position that atomic and hydrogen bombs were fundamentally immoral because they killed indiscriminately. But I still believed in the righteousness of *limited war*. I still had the illusion that wars could be fought without the killing of innocents. They can't even take out a certified *terrorist* without zapping a kid or two.

Actually our ideas are so closely tied to our feelings that our deep feelings have to change before our basic ideas have room to change. It was remarkable to see how rapidly people could change their ideas once they had taken the plunge into the movement. The 1001 theoretical objections could vanish like smoke once a person got caught up in the spiritual and emotional vitality of the movement. That is what happened to me eventually.

I went with Karl to hear him give a talk to a group at Northwestern University up in Evanston. It was one of the few times I heard him give a formal address and he was remarkably effective even though the group seemed to be almost entirely unreceptive to his pacifist ideas.

Karl was an intelligent man and a good speaker but his real effectiveness came from his total sincerity. He easily put down the clever arguments of the bright young men that tried to confute him, because they were playing with ideas, while Karl was living the ideas he argued for.

Intellectuals like to think that *ideas are powerful*. That is, they like to think that intellectuals are powerful people. But what power is there in ideas unless they move people to actually do something ? And, if your ideas haven't moved you to do anything, how likely is it that they will move anyone else ? It is really the courageous example that moves people, that makes them pay attention to the ideas.

People were forced to take Karl's ideas seriously because they were forced to respect the passion and the courageous personal commitment which accompanied those ideas. His ideas had re-shaped his whole life and his life re-shaped his ideas--tested and validated them so that they carried a weight which ideas alone don't carry.

Karl, like others in the early movement, was a kind of fanatic. He was willing to die for his beliefs. And people are right to be afraid of such fanaticism. But we have to recognize that in it lies the force which does change the world--for better or worse. People die--and kill--for very bad ideas, but without some such whole-hearted commitment you are not even in the contest, you are defeated before you start. We are prosperous and comfortable and we have no stomach for fighting so we hire mercenaries to do our fighting for us. But, in the end, the mercenaries are no match for the fanatics.

A Superior Breed of Fanatic

If Karl was a fanatic, however, he belonged to a superior breed of fanatic. It isn't a minor distinction that should be made between the man who will kill for his beliefs--or send someone else to kill--and the man who will die for them but who won't kill. Karl's example was that of a man who gives his life, one day at a time, for what he believes in; who makes a commitment which requires both courage and sustained hard work.

In common with other radical pacifists, Karl had a basic code of conduct in respect to others which to him was an integral part of his belief in the philosophy of nonviolence. Any sort of coercion, manipulation or dishonesty was incompatible with the code of the nonviolent warrior. The refusal to coerce others wasn't just a philosophical notion, it was an ideal he tried to live up to in his daily conduct to others, in the way he ran the house for instance. It could be a very inconvenient way to deal with people and later on, when the house had become large and boisterous he was forced to at least halfway abandon it. Dealing with an incoherent and belligerent drunk by strictly nonviolent means can take half the night--not a small consideration when you have to get up and go to work the next morning. Getting several stout fellows to pick him up and carry him out the door may not be compatible with nonviolence theory but it seemed to be the sensible way to handle it at times.

Thoreau and Joan of Arc

Karl's major heroes at that time were Thoreau and Joan of Arc. How can a pacifist admire a Warrior Saint ? *She made war on war* was his slightly lame explanation. I think he would have been a warrior had he been born in an age where war still required individual skill and valor, before it became an affair of mass, mechanical slaughter. I think her essential anarchism also appealed to Karl. She took her orders, not from the King, but from God--that is, from the Voice in her own head. Karl also wrote his own marching orders.

Thoreau was one of the original sources of Gandhi's nonviolence. Thoreau's jailing for tax refusal and the *Essay on Civil Disobedience* which resulted from it provided a basic model for advocates of nonviolence. The pacifist program common to the radical peace organizations called for tax refusal and draft refusal. It was too simple minded a program for many so-called *radicals* but it was typical of the direct action style of the early movement. Governments wage war because people provide the money and the manpower to do it. They squawk and then hand over. They go along under protest, but they go along. If people refuse the money and the manpower, the war must stop. A person who wishes to call himself a *radical* must go after the *root* of the thing, and that is the root.

Thoreau's *Walden* also had a major influence on Karl and on American pacifists in general. Thoreau sets out to show how to live with the very minimum of things. And it isn't just a set of ideas but a practical idealism that went along with his attempt to live in that way. The ideal of *voluntary poverty* in the Catholic Worker Movement is a kindred ideal. At the annual Peacemakers conference, a discussion of *Simple Living* was always a major item on the agenda. The ability to live simply and to endure poverty is a necessary part of a radical life. The more we own, the more we need, the stronger is society's hold upon us. That is what *conformity to this world* means. [Romans 12.2]

My friend Meryl Greer, after reading *Walden* when she was 13, moved into the attic of her parents' large house, leaving behind her room with all its things, to try and live as simply as possible. She organized the first civil rights demonstration in her affluent suburb when she was 14.

Experiments in Simple Living

Some of the experiments with voluntary poverty and simple living were extreme and led to absurd results. The five room store front which Karl had rented lacked a bath tub. As a result we had to go to one of the few remaining municipal bath houses in Chicago, which was several miles away. Since Karl insisted upon walking--we walked everywhere--it took us most of the afternoon to get there and back. By which time you need another bath, if it is a hot day.

His ideas about food would have appalled even Thoreau. He once cooked a supper which consisted of noodles. No sauce, no butter, no seasoning even, just noodles. I heard once that Karl's cooking led to an exodus from the 1961 San Francisco to Moscow Peace Walk, but Karl denies it.

Anyone Can Cut Hair

He also had a thing about not going to barbers. Anyone could cut hair he said. I think that anyone can, if you just trim a little with a scissors and don't care that much about the result. Keep in mind Jim Forest's dictum: *the difference between a good haircut and a bad hair cut is 10 days.* But Karl wanted a 1950s style close cropped

hair cut and insisted I could do it with the hand operated non-electric clippers he had bought--you worked one handle with your thumb while you moved steadily, keeping it very short on the neck and longer towards the crown. In theory. I tended rather to go to the scalp in places--but I only drew blood twice--while leaving little tufts in other places. I still remember his heart felt exclamation of dismay, when, after about two hours, he finally looked at himself in the mirror and saw what I had done to him: *Oh ! Sullivan !* he said. He convinced me of many things, but I think I convinced him that not everyone could cut hair.

He wasn't the only eccentric in the movement. Edward Lanwermeyer and Philip Leahy wouldn't handle money and they stopped riding in cars. Their friends laughed at them but they were trying to get at the problem of how things control our lives.

War and Poverty

The voluntary poverty of the Catholic Worker is a kind of first step towards dealing with the involuntary poverty of the slums--the terrible destitution that destroys people spiritually and emotionally even when it doesn't destroy them physically. Gandhi says that poverty is the worst form of violence and some such recognition was commonly found in all branches of the early movement. Poverty is the tap root of war and the basic reason for racial segregation. Which is really a form of segregation by economic class. We recognized that there was a connection between our prosperity and their poverty, that the one is tied to the other.

What often passes for pacifism today is the idea that prosperous people on our side can agree with prosperous people on the other side that none of us want to fight. We would all rather go shopping. It ignores the violence built in to both societies by which some are kept poor while others are made prosperous.

It ignores the historic violence by which the great power and wealth of both sides has been achieved and it ignores the problem as to how this power and prosperity can be kept without further violence to defend it. It can't. As my friend Murphy Dowouis once said, you cannot defend with nonviolence, what was acquired by violence.

The situation created by successful violence is inherently violent. Only by turning this stream of violence against others, can we turn it away from ourselves. Governments came to power by war. They stay in power by waging war. Otherwise, there is a steady erosion of power. Which invites internal or external aggression. So we are pushed into another war. And another. And another. There is never an end to it. The existence of a great concentration of power and wealth requires a concentration of violence to sustain it. There can never be peace.

Like others in the movement, Karl tried to live as simply as possible and as close to the poor as possible. He was indignant about some New York pacifists who drifted into the *jet set style* of movement organizing that was typical of the later movement--

flying around the world, running up long distance telephone bills, staying in hotels etc. You can mark the decline of the movement from the point where people started flying off to conferences about poverty or racism instead of staying home and trying to deal directly with the situation of poor black people. It opened the door to a lot of people who like to fly off somewhere to attend a conference and who don't like to deal directly with poor people.

The Great Change in the Movement

There was a basic integrity in the movements of the early 1960s which rapidly eroded in the late 1960s. The main reason was the big political success of the Civil Rights Movement followed by the big political success of the anti Vietnam War Movement. A flood of new people came into the movement who were attracted by the popular success of the movement. They never went near the movement when it was small and struggling, when it offered no opportunities. The new popularity of the movement pushed it more and more to pander to the lowest common denominators of pop morality, and those who knew how to do it, became the new leaders.

But some of the old hands tried to ride the wave. So those who once exemplified the integrity of the early movement were swept along in the flood of changes that overwhelmed the movement. It isn't so much that they betrayed the movement as that they stayed with the movement when they should have quit it. They lost track of the radical Christian faith which was the foundation of the original movement and which carried them through hard and lonely times. Times had changed.

In trying to understand how and why the movement changed so drastically I came to realize that many of the people in it had changed, often without realizing it themselves. Their commitment to *the movement* tied them to a ship which drifted more and more off course, like the blind old Captain in *The End of the Tether*. They stuck with the movement even as the original ideals of the movement--their original ideals--were eroded and replaced by something contrary. They were seduced by the big success of the movement. That **Worm of Ambition** which gets into every man undermined their commitment to a small movement which had strict standards. The movement itself became more and more *political*, more and more the kind of amorphous and unprincipled coalition which is typical of conventional politics.

In holding up Karl as an example of the kind of person that gave the early movement its integrity and its radical energy, I must also point out that a saint is usually a model in only one major aspect of his life. There is a proper caution given by the church: *you can go to hell imitating the imperfections of the saints*. But we rightly pay homage to the first man to climb Everest or the first man to run a 4 minute mile even if, 10 years later, he couldn't do it again. We recognize that he has permanently raised the standard by showing that it can be done, whether or not he ever does it again himself.

A radical idealist often fails to live up to the standard he once set. He is a kind of moral artist whose later work is sometimes best ignored if we are to give him the applause he once truly deserved for a great performance. A lot of the best people in the early movement burned out or lost faith, or tried to *turn back towards Egypt*.

Burned Out Idealists

It isn't so easy to remain an idealist. Martin Luther, the hero of the peasants, exhorts the nobility to *stab, smite and slay* to suppress a peasant rebellion. Joe Stalin was once a seminarian studying for the priesthood. Then he was a passionate revolutionary against the Czar. Then he became the new Czar, and crueler than any of them. Pol Pot started out as an idealist. Adolph Hitler scattered crumbs for the mice when he was down and out and staying in shelters. Kurtz sets out to bring Christian civilization to the *Heart of Darkness* where he concludes that the best thing is to *exterminate all the brutes*. Margaret Sanger was a socialist dedicated to the class struggle before she arrived at the conclusion that the only solution was to get rid of lower class humanity through eugenics, contraception and abortion. More than one idealist who began with a faith in *the masses* has ended by turning his back on them after arriving at a similar conclusion by bitter personal experience. Put to the test of direct personal experience, the *humanist faith* leads to the conclusion that **people are no damn good !** Which is where the Christian faith has to begin.

The millionaire Cardinal whose strongest personal belief is in the victory of American arms doesn't recognize how far his beliefs have moved from the beliefs of the first Christians. The faithful servant of the Russian bureaucracy still thinks of himself as working for the Revolution. Americans rounded up Vietnamese villagers and stuck them in concentration camps in the name of *freedom*. Now they are kicking down doors in Baghdad as part of *Operation Freedom*.

Studying the movement, you can see a process of moral and spiritual erosion at work over a short period of time. There was an erosion of the original ideals and they were replaced by something quite different which often still bore the same label, now used as camouflage. I don't know that I understand the reasons. But it is my task to try and understand them. One reason is the difficulty of preserving the same faith and the same love as the years go by and wear us down. Bismarck said: *if a man isn't a radical at 20, there is something wrong with his heart. If he is still a radical at 40, there is something wrong with his head*. I don't buy that cynicism, but there is some truth in it. There are young man's heresies which arise from excessive enthusiasm and old man's heresies which come from weariness. But, if the first love was true, the passage of time should not make me give up on it.

People who believed in themselves and in the movement when they were younger lost that faith as the years went by. A faith in the movement and a faith in your own destiny can be a mixture of metals that cannot stand up to time and pressure. A personal yearning, compounded with a faith in the cause, has a fault line. When we

fail to achieve our personal desire, we lose faith in the cause. A high aspiration, which we fail to achieve, gets replaced by a more mundane ambition which is far more vulnerable to compromise and corruption. If you decide after all that you want what the world offers, you must pay the price that it demands. At 20 you take your own success for granted. By 40 you learn that, if you neglect the world, it will neglect you. There is a galloping corruption among supposedly *principled politicians* who run for high office. Goldwater was a liberal by the end of the 1964 campaign. It is remarkable how many *pro life* politicians have become *pro choice*--and vice versa--when they run for higher office.

Power Corrupts

Those in the movement were not immune to these temptations when the movement suddenly became a big success. People were seduced by the temporary success of the movement. If they were immune to the temptation of money, they weren't immune to the temptation of power. *Power corrupts*, and even the desire for power corrupts. But that couldn't have happened unless they had first lost that original faith in themselves and in the original ideals of the movement. By 1968, Dave Dellinger, my boss at *Liberation* Magazine, was the chairman of a broad coalition which included the New Left, the old left and all sorts of people with all sorts of ambitions and agendas, declared or undeclared. Karl Meyer had a similar position in the Chicago anti war coalition.

Dave still thought of himself as the Christian pacifist he had been when he went to prison--twice--in World War II for refusing the draft. He still saw himself as the principled advocate of Nonviolence, while he fronted for an amorphous coalition which included the SDS radicals, the Black Panthers, the Socialist Workers Party, the Communist Party and the left liberal wing of the Democratic Party. The American so-called *Peace* Movement changed as completely as the Civil Rights Movement. It was dominated by groups and ideologies which were fundamentally antagonistic to Christian Nonviolence although they concealed it behind front positions.

The old movement was enveloped by the fog of dishonesty that always accompanies conventional politics and popular movements. It was driven by the ambitions of a new political gold rush, and infected by a legion of chronic and epidemic spiritual diseases. The *Power of Truth and Love* disappeared from the movement as it disappeared from Gandhi's movement when he become entangled with conventional politics and lost control of the *mass movement*. And I was halfway caught up in those changes before I quit. Since then, I have tried to understand it: How the original faith was lost. What happened to my faith. What became of that Spirit which inspired the early movement.

But I didn't really believe in ***THE MOVEMENT*** at that time. I believed in the Catholic Church primarily and in *the works of mercy* that Karl was carrying out as a good example of what Christians should be doing. I believed in the Church, but I also believed that the Church needed reforming. I believed in my own life. I wanted to believe in it, anyway--wanted to find a life for myself that was worthy of belief.

I stayed a month at Karl's *Catholic Worker Center*, as he then called it, and then went home to Denver for the winter. I wasn't open to becoming involved with the peace movement and although I sympathized with the hospitality work, there wasn't that much to do there then.

That winter I lived at home and worked for the post office as a mail carrier. I liked having a real job, especially working out of doors. It was a sensible and down to earth way to pass the day compared to the limbo I had been in the year before.

But I was really doing something quite different. I was consciously or half-consciously putting myself through a kind of basic training for the new life I meant to find. I was preparing myself physically and spiritually for a great quest which would take me far away from the routines of ordinary life.

The summer before I had worked on a forest protection crew--engaged in Blister Rust Control in Yellowstone Park. Many of the crew were from the South and from places where football was more like a religion than a sport. Their main goal in life was to make the football team. It meant fame and the love of women. The alternative was social obscurity and the disdain of women--the cheer leaders anyway.

So they drove themselves relentlessly to get in shape for the upcoming season. They would do calisthenics on top of a hard day's work. They pushed themselves--and me--up steep mountain paths at a brutal pace that had everyone panting with exhaustion by the time we reached the road where the truck would pick us up. You must go *through trials and tribulations to reach the stars*--to be a star.

That next winter, just before I took the plunge into the movement, I was doing a similar thing for a similar reason. I kept the fasts for Advent and Lent with great strictness. I disciplined all my appetites and desires. I quit smoking. I prayed daily to keep my mind turned towards spiritual ideals.

I felt that it was love that I wanted and that sexual restraint and self-discipline was the right road to the kind of love I wanted. I still believe that, although there was a time later on when I drifted into the *sexual revolution* of the late 1960s. And then I began to see up close what *careless love* does to people. The evidence from many spoiled lives is that the lack of sexual self-discipline leads away from the love relationships that people need.

But back then I believed in sexual restraint as a matter of faith--faith in the morals taught by the church, and faith in my own quest for love. I wanted an emotional and spiritual fulfillment that lay far beyond the satisfaction of physical desires. It made sense to give up the one in order to achieve the other. I really believed that I could find a relationship with a woman that would bring me an ultimate kind of happiness. I didn't want to settle for anything less.

Self Discipline

Many people reject the very idea of moral self-discipline, although they may recognize some forums of it, such as that exercise and diet are necessary to maintaining a good body. But how do you maintain a good soul ? Moral self-discipline is the only way to achieve the spiritual strength which is necessary for personal freedom of a very basic kind. The alternative, which most people wind up with, is to unwillingly submit to external discipline--the discipline imposed by circumstances and other people.

Being your own sergeant and putting yourself through a kind of basic training seems like masochism to many people. But their fate is usually to fall into the hands of a *sergeant* who puts them through much worse and in the service of something alien to their own lives. Philo says that *Every Good Man is Free*. Sin is slavery. It isn't just addictions to drugs and alcohol which enslave us. Sex easily becomes an addiction which destroys us and destroys others.

I was the friend of old ladies that winter. I did some volunteer repair work on the house of one old woman that I met delivering mail in the poorer part of town. My youthful soft-heartedness was reinforced by a belief in the necessity of *charity*. I was in love with humanity more than I have been before or since. There is a natural kindness in young people who have themselves been raised in a kindly way.

The Cross of Gold

Towards the end of the winter, I drove a mail collections truck. I liked driving about alone, seeing the city I had grown up in from various view points, reflecting upon what my life was and what I wanted to be.

Looking down one city street I always noticed an old church with a cross of gold on the steeple. I regularly went to church but I never went to that church, because, I suppose, seeing it from a distance gave a certain perspective which I wanted.

It wasn't far away. It seemed to mark something in the near future. It didn't stand very high--only 100 feet or so above the street--but it was well above the level of the houses. It seemed to stand for something which was above the level of ordinary life, but not so far above as to be unattainable. It wouldn't be easy to reach it, but you could reach it by an effort.

In dreams, when I discover to my surprize and gratification that I can fly just by moving my arms, I am always flying at that level, just above the tops of the telephone poles. I am still close to the earth, but I am free, as a bird is free, from the constraints and the dangers down below. The spirit that I sought in religion was a spirit that sympathized with youth and freedom--the desire to get off the ground and reach the top of the steeple.

It was a plain cross of gold which seemed to have the power of gathering whatever light there was in the short afternoon of a gloomy winter day. It wasn't a crucifix with its terrible load of a dying man, executed like a common criminal. It seemed to symbolize, if not triumph, then spiritual success at least. It was a symbol that had traveled far since the early times. It seemed to offer the spiritual power that I needed to make my world what I wanted it to be.

The Door to Another World

The door of the Church had always been the entrance to a different world. It was a place that offered an alternative to ordinary life. It was a place of important mysteries. It was a place where you heard old stories that would come around again, that would become the new stories which belonged to the future--to my life.

What was wrong with ordinary life, with my life, wasn't that it was bad, but that it was boring. The world I had grown up in was a thoroughly pleasant and comfortable world. War was something that happened to other people far away. Poverty was something you got glimpses of out of the window of the family car. It came a little closer when you encountered tough kids at the auditorium downtown. But they ran when they saw the security guard coming.

As a child I read books and escaped to the out of doors. I read books I didn't really understand, but they were fuel for day dreams. An aunt complained that I *always had my nose stuck in a book*. Why didn't I have some adventures of my own instead of reading about other people's adventures she challenged me.

The closest I came to adventures of my own were my famous explorations and expeditions into the wilderness. I had unusual chances. I spent part of the summer at my grandfather's ranch in Wyoming, where you could climb a small mountain and look off 100 miles in any direction. I spent the rest of the summer with my family in Yellowstone Park where my father got himself transferred every summer to take charge of the Old Faithful Post Office. The splendid rightness of the high mountains seemed to show what a grand place the world could be. In Yellowstone, the trail through the forest went on and on but you always expected to find something wonderful beyond the next turn. And sometimes you did.

But when summer was over, you found yourself back in the small world of school and home. The books were a relief, but I knew that my aunt was right in a way. The books were like maps. They weren't the real thing.

Boredom

In my late teens, I became increasingly bored with life. Instead of life opening out as I grew up, it seemed to be closing in. The wonderful visions of childhood faded and there was nothing to replace them, no apt focus for all the energy and enthusiasm and happy expectations that I had preserved from my childhood. And it was apparent that the adult world which I was fast approaching was an even narrower and duller life. The standard teen age excitements of cars, sports and illegal beer didn't interest me very much. The only real promise of adventure and excitement was the hope of a grand romance. I still believed in romance, but I couldn't seem to find it. The attempt to find romance was usually a failure. For those of my friends who succeeded, it seemed to lead right back to the dull routine of life. A successful romance put an end to the last possibility of adventure.

Later on, while I was active in the movement, I met young persons who were drawn to it, just as I had been, because, by the time they turned 18, they were desperately bored with life. At the time when they were just embarking on the great voyage of life, they saw plainly that the adventure was over before it had begun. The unrewarding and dangerous experiments with sex and alcohol and driving too fast were the only alternatives they could find to settling into the predictable pattern of life that was already laid out for them.

The chance to go away to the University of Chicago had come as a great relief. It offered the hope of a new world to be explored. My cousin and my brother--who were already there--were enthusiastic about a place where guys talked about things besides cars, sports and girls. It was at least a novel world. It was the first place I heard folk music, or saw a Buster Keaton movie, or encountered political radicals. The slums of Chicago were as spectacular as a mountain range in their way.

It was the first place I ever ate in a Mexican restaurant, a little Mom and Pop place under the 63rd Street Elevated. Denver wasn't short of Mexican restaurants back then, but somehow I never ate in one until I went away to school. My friend introduced me to *lox and cream cheese on a bagel*. It has converted many to sympathy with Judaism. *This is Good !* When my friend Jim came to visit, we took the train up to Milwaukee and ate *sauerbraten* in a fancy German restaurant. We ordered May wine over strawberries, although we were still under age.

For a while, I found the world in and around the University very interesting. But by the end of my second year there, that restless boredom with life had returned and it was worse than ever. Falling in love had been the epitome of the excitement I had found in a new world and the deep disappointment that followed made me feel more than ever that my life lacked some essential thing, something that I had to find.

High and Low

Falling in love had given me a spiritual and emotional high. In the low that followed, I felt a driving need to get away from there. My nemesis--that old boredom--had tracked me down and moved into my room.

In the aftermath of my disappointment with love, I became more religious than I had ever been before. It seemed to offer the only way out of my situation.

It was the church that provided the one real alternative to the dull and petty routine of life. It assured you that a great drama was unfolding and that you were part of it.

It is that promise which gives religion and passionate politics its strong appeal. We tire of television, of endless soap operas and novels, of the limited warfare of the sports field. We want a real war, or at least the essential elements of it--the great struggle between the good guys and the bad guys. A life where our greatest challenges are getting along with the boss and paying this month's bills isn't worthy of the role we have given ourselves in the great drama of life. Our actual lives seem to be mockeries of the lives we are prepared to live. In a fundamental way, our actual lives violate our deepest feelings about life, about what it should mean to us.

It was religious belief that gave me the strength that I needed to get through my last year at the University. And it was religious belief that gave me the good excuse and the confidence to undertake a drastic departure from the life that was plainly marked out for me.

An old and well worn religion like the Catholic Church has so adapted itself to what people require of it, that anyone can find something there that he can use. A pacifist can find saints who were martyred for refusing to serve in the Roman army. An army officer can find warrior saints who served the Church by waging war against her enemies.

A Catholic family can find the social network and the moral code it needs so that the boys don't end up in prison and the girls don't have illegitimate children. Religion is often the decisive factor in whether or not a family works its way out of the slums or slides deeper into them.

But at the heart of the old religion there is a radical attack upon *this world* and a vision of a new and better world. It isn't just an idea. It is something that calls us, that strikes that responsive chord which lies very deep in all of us.

I derived my original mandate for rebellion from my Catholic faith despite the fact that the Catholic Church in the 1950s was a bastion of the established social order. In most churches, along with the religious symbols, the American flag was prominently displayed to show the patriotic loyalty of Catholics. There was a synthesis between Americanism and Catholicism. Like other American Christians, Catholics saw the American military forces as the defenders of Christian values against the evil and anti-Christian power of the Communists.

But it is only by compromising our beliefs that we accommodate them to other, rival beliefs. If you are really in love with one woman, you can't be in love with another. If you really believe in something, you feel a jealous hostility to any rival belief. People who really believe in the Catholic Church, believe that it is the sole effective instrument by which the world can be transformed. If you believe in the spiritual power of the Church, it is a heresy to believe that the salvation of the world depends upon America. That compound faith in America and Christianity, typical of many Americans, is a false faith with a major fault line. It will not withstand a real test.

Historically America has been white and Protestant. Catholics have been an alienated minority to some degree, although not as much as groups like Jews and blacks. There was a certain psychology of alienation in the Catholic Church as I was raised to believe in it. As a boy I thought that *public* was a synonym for *Protestant*. If you were a Protestant, you went to the public school. If you were a Catholic, you went to the Catholic school. I grew up with a strong feeling that Catholic versus *non Catholic* was the primary division of the world. If you weren't with us, you were against us. A credulous old nun once told our class of a prophecy: *In 1954 the streets of America will run red with blood !* Catholic blood, she mean't--once again we would be martyred for our faith. Years later at Danbury when my black nationalist friend told me that the government had a plan of genocide for American blacks, I immediately recognized the psychology.

Contra *This World*

But religious and racial differences are only the underlying fault lines upon which society can be divided. There has to be some active force to shake loose the established order. And that force is generated by individuals who felt, as I felt, a passionate dissatisfaction with the status quo--with *this world*.

This world can be defined as *this society*. A basic formal difference between Christian belief and Socialist belief is where you locate the new and better world. Do you look to a future world that lies entirely beyond this one or do you see it as soon developing out of society as it is now ?

But, in practice, it is really the energy and intensity of belief--the youthful impatience--that determines where the individual tries to find the new world. For many luke-warm believers in Socialism, the Revolution is as unlikely an event as the Return of Jesus, and the new society is as distant as heaven.

And for some youthful and passionate believers in Christianity the new world is impatiently expected. Why shouldn't the world change now ?

The real possibility of a very different and much better world necessarily invalidates the world as it is. And who can believe that society, as it is, is society as it should be ? Or that the next election will bring about the necessary transformation ?

Of course people do believe that--that it all depends on the man at the top and that replacing Smith with Jones will lead to the new society. Or they believe in replacing one *system* with another *system*, a mechanical change that will make the difference, whether it is brought about by ballots or bullets.

What I believed in during that winter of preparation was, as near as I can define it, something like this: I believed that society needed changing in a basic way, in a radical way. I felt that I couldn't live my life as I wanted to live it in society as it was. So it wasn't a theoretical or impersonal idea but something that grew out of my own personal passions. And by society I meant society in general. I was concerned with American society primarily because that was where I lived. I didn't believe that some other society, whether primitive or non-*capitalist*, had already created the model for the new society. I think I didn't want a model. Rather I wanted the creative work of changing society and the creative freedom of building it myself. I no more wanted a model to copy, than a painter wants to paint from a numbered pattern manufactured by someone else.

Changing Society

I believed in an idealistic social movement as the agency of social change. That is, I believed that society could only be changed by many personally dedicated individuals working together. I believed in Christianity as the source of the idealism. But I don't think I believed even then that the Catholic Church as such was the institution that could bring about a social transformation. Because it was obvious that the Church itself was almost as much in need of reform as society in general. And that Catholics, as a category, were part of the problem rather than part of the solution. My rebellion against society as I found it was also a rebellion against the Church as I found it. Like other dissident Catholics I found an indictment in the ideals of the Church for what the Church had become. I didn't quite appreciate the difficulty of reforming the church any more than I understood the problem of changing society. But I thought I did thanks to the wonderful arrogance of youth.

But in all of this there was a kind of youthful optimism and enthusiasm. If I thought that the Church needed reforming, I also was confident that it could be reformed. If I thought that the world was evil, I was also sure that good would triumph over evil. The evil was only a necessary part of the drama. It is a dull plot that doesn't feature a suitable villain. No one worries that the villain will win in the end--we all know how the story has to be told.

In the basic ideas of Christianity there is this balance between the idea that the world is evil and the counter idea that the world has been saved. Even though the evil seems to be in command, the days of its reign are numbered. There is a good force at work in the world and good will triumph before the drama is finished.

Old Man's Heresy

There is a complex balance in this idea--the world is in the grip of evil that has great power, but in the end good will prove to be more powerful. There are two common variants of this idea, both of which lead to heresies. One is an old man's heresy. It stresses that the world truly is evil, that there is no remedy for the evil in this world except to escape from it. It is only in a separate and future world, only in heaven that good will prevail. This world and most of those in it are condemned.

Some such attitude appeared among the violent extremists in the movement later on. They saw American society as too evil to be reformed--it had to be destroyed. And they saw those who were trying to reform it as enemies, not allies, who deserved to be included in the destruction.

The other variant is a young man's heresy. The world is basically good. Life is good, love is good. People are my friends. There is no cause for fighting. The evil in the world can be abolished by a little more common sense and good will.

I think I shuttled between those two heresies as a young man. I wanted to believe in the one--that life could be good, that my life was going to come up to all my happy expectations. But I was pulled towards the other by the appalling facts I had already discovered about life. Even though I had pieced my dreams back together, I couldn't ignore the lines which showed how thoroughly they had been shattered once before.

The Catholic Church of the 1950s was also a bastion of working class values. It taught sobriety and an honest day's work. It taught you to believe in and make the best of an ordinary life. Religion gave a kind of secret dimension to life--you were assured that your life was very significant, even if, externally, it didn't seem to be very significant.

And yet there was also in the Church some encouragement for the fanciful ideas about life that a young day dreamer might have. If you took some of the stories and ideals and began to believe in them in a serious and literal way you could arrive at a personal mandate for trying a life that was dramatically different.

Life was supposed to be a struggle between good and evil was it not ? How did that square with becoming a dentist or a realtor ?

Testing My Vocation

I wrote a novel that winter. It really was a way testing my *vocation*. I half planned to save money that winter and then return to the University in September. But I switched to working part time and set myself the task of writing 4 pages every morning, to see if I could do it. If I did, it would give a kind of justification for not returning to the University and for allowing my claim to be a *writer*. Which meant a special vocation that gave me a kind of deferment from being conscripted into an ordinary life.

And I succeeded in producing a complete manuscript by the end of that summer. I knew it wasn't a mature work and I didn't try to publish it. I thought I might work on it again some time.

I never did and, some years later, it got too close to the fire place on a cold winter's night, and so perished.

It probably was not the great American novel. Or even the great American Catholic novel. But it helped me prove to myself that my dream of a different life wasn't so unrealistic. Like most young people, I naively supposed that having *talent* was enough for success. We get that idea from the movies.

Meanwhile, I had kept in touch with Karl Meyer through personal letters and through his letters to the Catholic Worker paper in New York. Karl and a dozen other pacifists climbed the fence outside the missile base near Omaha Nebraska in the summer of 1959. When they persisted, they were given six months in a federal prison.

This militant direct action marked a new level of pacifist activity. Among others arrested were Ammon Hennacy of the New York Catholic Worker and A.J. Muste of the War Resisters League.

Ed Morin, who had been Karl's original partner in the Chicago Catholic Worker, had taken over the responsibility while Karl was in prison. But he was due back in school in September and he needed some one to relieve him until Karl got back.

So I volunteered. I was through with the novel. I didn't want to go back to school. And somehow I felt ready for this new adventure. Ed accepted my offer, and, in September of 1959 I was headed back to Chicago for what turned out to be a kind of baptism under fire into the new world--the new world of the slums, and the new world of the Movement.

III OAK STREET SEPTEMBER 1959 THE NEW WORLD

It was a very bright and sunny September--or so it seemed to me--when I set off for Chicago to take over the Catholic Worker house. I had acquired an old Plymouth coupe, 1946 vintage, and part of the adventure was seeing whether the old car would make it the 1000 miles to Chicago. My friend Jim Cramer rode with me. He was headed for the University of Chicago to take up the kind of life I was trying to get away from.

I was hardly prepared for what awaited me at Karl's place on Oak Street. It had changed dramatically from the place I had visited the year before. But, in a more basic way, I was prepared as it turned out. I had achieved a kind of spiritual toughness that was sufficient to carry me through the winter ahead.

When Karl was sent to prison in June, his establishment was still a small personal venture, one that he could manage while giving most of his free time to the peace movement. There were still only a few men living there and he supported the whole thing himself from the wages he made as a book store clerk.

Ed Morin also worked to pay the rent and utilities out of his own pocket, as I did when I took it over. But he energetically expanded the operation into something more like other Catholic Worker operations. The main thing he did was to start a soup line. Then, using a letter from the Catholic chaplain at the University of Chicago Newman Club, he set up a network of places that would give him waste or surplus food to supply the soup line.

The chaplain was Father Thomas McDonough. Very few Catholic priests would have given any kind of endorsement to the Catholic Worker at that time because of its radicalism.

Ed was glad to see me--I was his relief. I don't think he realized that he had created something of a monster by expanding the house. He stayed on for more than a week to show me the various routines, and then he went off to school.

I liked Ed, but I was relieved when he left for two reasons. One was that I could now have the little room off the kitchen--the only privacy that the house provided except for the toilet closet. I was used to having a clean and private room of my own and my first ordeal at the house had been sharing a room with several of the men, who were a step away from sleeping in alleys. I was too tender a young man to take to this kind of situation without going through some restless nights. It wasn't just my room mates but being exposed to the noise and dirt and drunkenness of the rest of the house.

My second reason is harder to explain, because, slightly insane as it might seem, I really did want to have the full responsibility of running the house by myself. I was afraid of it, but some basic instinct was pushing me to do it just as I had wanted to drive the family car all by myself when I was first learning to drive.

So began one of the strangest experiences of my life, one that crystallized my character--so I felt it at the time. And I still think it did. Seldom has so much been put upon one so green. But I suppose that is why it suited me.

MORE TO COME

FREEDOM RIDES JUNE 1961

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT ST. LOUIS SUMMER OF 1963

JOE HILL HOUSE SALT LAKE CITY SPRING 1965

ANTI VIETNAM WAR MOVEMENT NEW YORK CITY FALL 1965

CHICAGO 1968