

DANGEROUS GROUNDS:
THE AMERICAN GI COFFEEHOUSE MOVEMENT, 1967-1972

by
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Abstract

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The 1960s witnessed an unprecedented level of antiwar organization in the United States, as a movement to end the war in Vietnam grew to include millions of Americans who participated in a wide range of protest activities. Beginning in 1967, antiwar activists opened GI coffeehouses in the cities and towns outside U.S. military bases, designed to serve as off-base refuges for the growing number of active-duty soldiers resisting the war. This dissertation examines three representative coffeehouses (the UFO coffeehouse in Columbia, South Carolina; the Oleo Strut coffeehouse in Killeen, Texas; and the Shelter Half coffeehouse in Tacoma, Washington) as nodal points of culture and politics that provide a fresh perspective on the complex relationship between the civilian antiwar movement and U.S. soldiers during the Vietnam era. The coffeehouse story reveals soldiers and activists working together, planning antiwar actions, printing underground newspapers and, more often than not, defending the coffeehouses themselves from unsympathetic citizens and concerned military authorities. Using radical publications, Congressional testimony, private letters, organizational records,

military and government archives, and oral histories from key participants, this study analyzes a unique and thinly researched component of the antiwar movement and situates it within the larger history of late twentieth century American politics.

The GI coffeehouse movement constituted an important institutional component of the GI movement and the wider landscape of antiwar resistance and political activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As fundamentally cultural institutions with explicit political goals, GI coffeehouses bridged the often wide gap between the civilian antiwar movement and the American military, and in doing so ignited a significant amount of controversy that included many incidents of violent retaliation. The study concludes by examining the deep shifts in military policy that took place during the period immediately following the Vietnam War, contextualizing the impact of the era's social, political, and cultural turmoil on both the nation's military and the society it serves.

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I would also like to thank several figures from the coffeehouse movement who were kind enough to share their experiences with me. Barbara Garson, Josh Gould, Howard Levy, and Stephanie Coontz were all generous with their time and patient with my many questions. David Zeiger, a filmmaker and dedicated historian of the GI movement, shared his impressive collection of underground newspapers and related ephemera, located on the website for his film *Sir! No Sir!*, a collection that became one of the foundational sources for my investigation. Most of all, I would like to thank Fred Gardner, the creator of the GI coffeehouse concept, for an amazing day shared in Alameda, California, in January 2010, during which he opened his home (and garage full of primary sources) to me. His friendly participation and unique perspective was enormously helpful for this project.

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Finally, I can say with confidence and eternal gratitude that I could never have seen this project to completion without the inspiration and love of my wife, Claudia.

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INTRODUCTION

Although the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a tremendous diversity of political activity and organization aimed at a wide set of issues in American life, the movement to end the war in Vietnam has endured as a singularly misunderstood and oft-maligned part of the era's history. While popular memory typically reduces the antiwar movement to a fringe network of long-haired hippies and student radicals demonstrating in the streets, the people who resisted the Vietnam War, and the forms that resistance took, were in fact much more diverse and innovative than such depictions suggest. Of the many different groups that resisted the war, veterans of the war and members of the military itself, collectively referred to as the GI movement, have been subjected to perhaps the most historical myth-making and stereotype. Recovering the actual experiences of military men and women who participated in the antiwar movement is a necessary step in breaking through these significantly ahistorical images and ideas which, even four decades later, continue to function in American political discourse.

In a 1971 *Armed Forces Journal* article titled "The Collapse of the Armed Forces," former Vietnam commander and frequent military critic Colonel Robert Heinl warned of a deepening crisis in the American military. In addition to his report of a host of disturbing phenomenon (racial unrest, drug use, violence against officers, among many others), Heinl described a particular set of establishments that had begun opening near military bases throughout the country in 1967: "GI coffeehouses." Heinl depicted GI coffeehouses as places that "ply GIs with rock music, lukewarm coffee, antiwar literature, how-to-do-it tips on desertion, and

similar disruptive counsels” and feared that as many as 26 of them were then in operation (all of which, according to Heint, funded by “a communist-front organization”).¹ As a historian and researcher interested in the GI movement, I became intrigued by Heint's angry condemnation and sensational description of these institutions, which made them seem like important components of the history of antiwar activism among American soldiers.

I had first been made aware of the existence of GI coffeehouses by a 2005 documentary, *Sir! No Sir!*, directed by David Zeiger. A short section of the film is dedicated to the GI coffeehouse phenomenon, depicting them as integral links between the civilian antiwar movement and antiwar GIs stationed at bases around the country. The film contains footage taken at several different GI coffeehouses, some showing active-duty soldiers engaged in intense conversations about the Vietnam War. Intrigued by the unique mixture of antiwar politics, counterculture, and the American military present at these coffeehouses, I began researching the literature of the Vietnam-era GI antiwar movement for references to GI coffeehouses.

The wider literature of resistance in the American military during the Vietnam War contains many references to specific GI coffeehouses, often depicting them as sites of significant events and flashpoints for the larger movement, but to date there is no book-length study of the subject. Yet even the briefest mentions of GI coffeehouses suggest the political, social, and cultural complexity of these spaces,

¹ Robert D. Heint, Jr., "The Collapse of the Armed Forces," *Armed Forces Journal* 108, June 7, 1971, 35. Heint's article created significant controversy in military circles and contributed to a sense of urgency among military officials about the growing "morale crisis" related to the Vietnam War's unpopularity.

relaying a sense of the unique confluence of people and ideas that inhabited them.

Folk singer Barbara Dane, who sang at many GI coffeehouses, offered the following description of a “typical” day in the Oleo Strut, a coffeehouse that opened in Killeen, Texas (outside of Fort Hood), in 1968:

[I]n one corner were two in a tight head shot, talking intensely, four playing cards over there, in the back room a skinny Texan painting a "psychedelic poster . . . not too many people around here know what it is," another knocking out a poem on the ancient typewriter, others lounging around with copies of everything from *Avant Gard*, *Ramparts*, *Green Lantern Comics*, *Camus*, the *Austin Rag* (one of the country's best underground papers) and the *Guardian to the Area Handbook for South Vietnam* which was published by the U.S. Government in 1967. Others are eating chocolate cake, drinking cider, and listening to folk-rock on the hi fi machine.²

Actress Jane Fonda, a prominent antiwar activist and the GI movement's most vocal and famous supporter, credits her experience in a GI coffeehouse as having catalyzed her public identification as a feminist.³

What was a GI coffeehouse? What was its purpose? According to the above description, coffeehouses were much more than just political protest centers; they seemed to embody many of the social and aesthetic elements of American youth culture during the late 1960s: psychedelia, underground literature and, of course, rock music. Occupying such territory in the small, military-oriented towns located outside military bases made coffeehouses ripe targets for reactionary backlash, military investigation, police harassment, and government surveillance, further locating the GI coffeehouse network as a focal point for some of the most significant and divisive issues to emerge from the Vietnam era. The story of the GI coffeehouse movement casts light on the history of the antiwar movement, the 1960s

² Barbara Dane, “The Oleo Strut,” *Guardian*, July 30, 1968.

³ Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far* (New York: Random House, 2005), 243.

counterculture, and the behavior of military and government institutions when presented with an unprecedented degree of internal dissent.

David Cortright's 1975 *Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance During the Vietnam War* remains the most comprehensive academic history of the GI movement. Cortright's detailed analysis includes countless charts, graphs, and statistics, documenting the range of antiwar activities engaged in by American soldiers, particularly after the politically (if not militarily) disastrous Tet Offensive of January 1968. As he demonstrates, soldiers after 1968 became disaffected with the war and military life *en masse*, and began to make real trouble for officials through acts of resistance that varied from recreational drug use to the publication and distribution of radical literature (usually in the form of underground newspapers). What emerges from Cortright's narrative is a picture of the U.S. military not far from the analysis of Col. Heinl's headline screaming, "collapse!" Cortright's work mentions several specific coffeehouse projects and offers some examples of the harassment and intimidation they often faced at the hands of angry locals.⁴ In 1970, a coffeehouse at Fort Dix, for instance, was damaged by a grenade that injured three, while the "Green Machine" coffeehouse near Camp Pendleton, California, was peppered by .45 caliber machine gun fire, wounding a Marine.⁵

Another important history of the GI movement, Richard Moser's *The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam War* similarly contains a few brief stories about GI coffeehouses. Moser's evidence illuminates the unique

⁴ David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance During the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Anchor Press, 1975), 53-54.

⁵ Ibid, 54.

place that GI coffeehouses often occupied, as physical institutions that supported antiwar soldiers in decidedly unfriendly territory. When the Oleo Strut coffeehouse opened in Killeen, Texas, it set off an extraordinary battle between local vigilantes and antiwar soldiers and veterans. Dave Cline, a key figure in the coffeehouse movement, recalls a group of employees at the Oleo Strut confronting KKK members who had shot at their cars with automatic weapons: "I guess they thought we were going to get intimidated and quit. We went back and got our guns."⁶ Brief, tantalizing stories like these appear throughout the literature of the GI movement, suggesting that GI coffeehouses are a significant, but scarcely researched, part of the wider history of the Vietnam War era.

Sources and Methodology

My initial research made it clear that GI coffeehouses constituted an important institutional component of the GI movement and the larger story of antiwar resistance and political activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In order to reconstruct a more comprehensive history of the coffeehouse movement, I consulted a wide selection of primary and secondary sources that provided a deeper perspective on what proved to be a complex story. By far the most important of these sources is the GI underground press, which produced hundreds of newspapers in the 1960s and 1970s, many of which exist in archives located around the country. James Lewes, a researcher and historian of the GI movement, is in possession of a large number of these papers, which he is in the process of scanning, digitizing, and archiving on a site called "The GI Press Project," a digital repository of

⁶ Richard Moser, *The New Winter Soldiers: GI Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam War* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 99.

GI movement-related material that was immensely useful for my investigation.⁷ Lewes also pointed me to a number of other archives, including Swarthmore College's Peace Collection and New York University's Tamiment Library, both of which house large collections of GI-produced underground antiwar newspapers. These newspapers present the framework for the types of political and cultural activities engaged in by GI coffeehouses, which often served as publishing and distribution centers. In addition to providing practical data (dates, names, key events, etc.), the newspapers themselves are important cultural artifacts, reflecting an innovative development of a specifically countercultural aesthetic and writing style that became the hallmark of the American underground press. The GI press is a significant source for historians interested in describing the kinds of large-scale cultural and political shifts that took place throughout what is called "the sixties," and as such play a vital role in my research.

A website associated with the film *Sir! No Sir!* holds an enormous digital collection of primary source material related to the GI movement. In addition to scanned copies of GI newspapers, the site has stored hundreds of photographs, promotional flyers, political pamphlets, trial transcripts, mainstream press clippings, and oral histories, many of which refer directly to GI coffeehouses. The site served as an invaluable resource, organizing many complicated strands of activism and resistance into a searchable archive that testifies to the depth and breadth of the GI movement. *Sir! No Sir!*'s director, David Zeiger, who worked as a

⁷ See also James Lewes, *Protest and Survive: Underground GI Newspapers during the Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003). Lewes' book documents hundreds of papers produced by GIs, and was particularly useful as a reference for tracking down specific publishing histories.

civilian activist at the Oleo Strut coffeehouse in Killeen, Texas, for several years, also allowed me to interview him for this project and shared some of his own collection of underground newspapers and GI movement ephemera.

Material produced by the GI movement itself only tells part of this story, however. To construct a more complete narrative of the GI coffeehouse movement, I also looked at local sources, from the communities in which coffeehouses existed, in order to document how these areas reacted to the antiwar movement's presence in their towns. These sources include editorials and letters in local newspapers, legal documents, trial transcripts, and material available in local libraries and historical societies. My research into the small towns that surround military bases ("base towns") revealed another angle to the GI coffeehouse story, as local politics and economic interest clashed with a rising nationally-coordinated antiwar movement in often surprising ways. Base towns have historically occupied a unique space in the American landscape, and the Vietnam War placed them in an even more extraordinary social position, as the primary domestic bases of an increasingly unpopular military campaign. A local perspective on the coffeehouse movement offers a window into a critical moment in the development of three representative base towns.

Since GI coffeehouses, and the GI movement they were a part of, generated an incredible amount of interest among government officials, law enforcement, politicians, and military leaders, government documents are also integral to the coffeehouse story. A series of congressional investigations produced hundreds of pages of transcripts, in which key participants in the coffeehouse movement testify

about their involvement. The National Archives also contains many files related to the military's handling of the "morale crisis" of which coffeehouses were one symptom. Military documents, particularly those of Army Chief of Staff William Westmoreland, who ordered an investigation of the coffeehouse network in 1968, shed light on the coffeehouse movement's impact on the thinking of military officials, and its relationship to the wider policy changes instituted by the U.S. military in the final years of the Vietnam War.⁸ Finally, a group of government-sponsored studies and reports on the GI movement and the larger crisis it seemed to signal demonstrates the seriousness with which the government responded to unprecedented internal dissent.

I also conducted interviews with a few participants in the coffeehouse movement, including the originator of the coffeehouse concept, activist Fred Gardner. Gardner described his background as a student journalist at Harvard, the impetus behind his coffeehouse idea, and his involvement in its execution and evolution. He also shared material from his own collection of GI movement and antiwar newspapers, posters, and photographs. Activist and playwright Barbara Garson, who worked at the Shelter Half coffeehouse in Tacoma, Washington, also spoke with me about her experiences, offering the perspective of a single mother who traveled hundreds of miles to volunteer at a political project aimed at young military men. Howard Levy, an Army doctor who resigned in protest over the Vietnam War, served three years in prison as a result, and emerged in 1971 as a

⁸ With the official end of the draft in 1973, and the conversion the the "All-Volunteer Force," the military initiated a period of intense transformation that was in large part an attempt to deal with the crisis of morale and enlistment brought on by the Vietnam War.

activist in the GI movement, told me about the creation of the United States Servicemen's Fund (USSF), an organization that funded GI coffeehouses and related antiwar projects throughout the early 1970s. Levy also created and helped produce the "FTA Show," an alternative antiwar revue that entertained American troops at GI coffeehouses and other locations in base towns in 1972. As a dedicated antiwar activist whose stand against participation in the Vietnam War made him a well-known figure within the GI movement, Levy's perspective helped contextualize the coffeehouse movement's place within the range of activities meant to build a movement of GIs against the war.

When the primary source material I collected for this project is considered alongside mainstream press reports and secondary historical sources, the GI coffeehouse movement emerges as a unique and important story of resistance to one of the most powerful institutions in American life, the U.S. military. As fundamentally cultural establishments with explicit political goals, GI coffeehouses attempted to bridge the often wide gap between the civilian antiwar movement and the American military, and in doing so ignited a significant amount of controversy and attention from both local and national authorities. This project investigates the ways in which GI coffeehouses sought to employ culture and politics to create a space of concentrated opposition, a place where men indoctrinated to the goals and values of the American military could openly interrogate, challenge, and overturn those ideals, finding a supportive environment for a range of political and cultural alternatives.

In telling the story of Vietnam era GI coffeehouses, I hope to place them appropriately within the larger narrative of the GI movement and cast light on the interplay between antiwar soldiers and the civilian peace movement. The GI coffeehouse story reveals not only that the image of antiwar radicals spitting on or otherwise antagonizing American soldiers is a crude distortion of history, but that soldiers and peace activists often worked together against their perceived common enemies, which included local authorities, reactionary vigilante groups, and the military establishment itself. It is also critical to contextualize the significance of the GI movement deriving, perhaps paradoxically, from the intense, regimented, and often brutal military experience from which many young men emerged, often hungry for outlets to express their frustrations and beliefs.

In Christian Appy's *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam*, a detailed social history that describes the social and cultural landscape that existed for draft-age men in the Cold War era, the author argues that one of the central factors determining a young man's attitude toward military service was that man's access to "complete or thoughtful criticism of the war" and "alternative political and cultural perspectives."⁹ According to Appy, this access was much more available to middle class men more likely to go to college or to have friends and family members in college. Particularly in the later years of the Vietnam War, though, many places outside of academia had developed to provide the kinds of access to alternative perspectives for working-class men that, earlier in the war, had largely been confined to college campuses. Churches, the alternative press,

⁹ Christian Appy, *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 51.

philanthropic organizations, and even labor unions were often sites of heated debates about the war and the larger social issues that it uncovered. GI coffeehouses took these efforts a step further. Representing conscious attempts to provide access to fully formed critiques of the war, GI coffeehouses sought to create institutions that would counter the often overwhelming onslaught of pro-war, patriotic perspectives available in the mainstream media and within the military. As such, the coffeehouses serve as important sources to explore the successes and failures of institutions that, in many ways, attempted to counter the indoctrination and propaganda that permeated American society throughout the Cold War. For men who faced enormous social and cultural pressure to internalize the goals and ethos of the American military, GI coffeehouses were often the only public place where those goals were being discussed critically.

At their cores, GI coffeehouse projects were about the intentional creation of space, a space in which oppositional thought could be encouraged, developed, and organized. Arriving at a time not long after the “Beat Generation” of the 1950s, with its development of a distinctly American coffeehouse culture that included poetry readings, folk music, and radical politics, the GI coffeehouse movement continued and built on a cultural tradition of public discussion and engagement. Of course, this phenomenon is just one part of a much larger and more important development in twentieth century American life, sometimes referred to as the “counterculture” but encompassing much more complexity than that word has historically been ascribed. One way to further our understanding of the American counterculture is to uncover the history of institutions like GI coffeehouses, unique in their conception as cultural

and political sanctuaries within environments unfriendly to deviations from culturally proscribed normalcy.

The Cold War often set rigid social and political terms that, in hindsight, inadvertently helped provoke a sustained and lasting shift in values that continues to express itself in American society. The GI movement played a critical role in challenging the American military, the centerpiece of Cold War culture and object of unquestioned reverence. In the end, it was the military that was forced to adjust its policies, perhaps permanently, in response to the movement's influence. To explore GI coffeehouses is thus to uncover a moment in history in which ordinary Americans consciously, cooperatively, and often quite effectively, confronted a deeply felt set of cultural assumptions and made an impact in affecting their evolution.

Chapter Outline

While various accounts of the GI coffeehouse movement contend that approximately twenty coffeehouses were opened between 1967 and 1972, a prominent few were the center of most GI and public attention. The three coffeehouses I have chosen are historically significant for several reasons and will allow for the most complete picture of the movement's place within the political and cultural developments of the era.

Chapter One: The UFO Coffeehouse (Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina)

The UFO coffeehouse was not only the first GI coffeehouse, established by Army reservist and antiwar activist Fred Gardner in the summer of 1967, but it was also one of Columbia, South Carolina's first racially integrated public establishments. Located outside of Fort Jackson, the UFO began primarily as a countercultural

escape for young soldiers with little such outlets in Columbia and its surrounding areas. Within months, more than six hundred GIs were visiting the place each week, and with them came increased political activism.¹⁰ The coffeehouse ultimately became the center of several important GI rights cases, including the 1969 case of the “Fort Jackson 8” that revealed significant racial problems in (particularly southern) military towns.¹¹

Chapter Two: The Oleo Strut (Fort Hood, Killeen, Texas)

The Oleo Strut was easily the most famous GI coffeehouse, attracting antiwar celebrities like Jane Fonda, Phil Ochs, and Country Joe McDonald. Remaining open for over four years, the Strut was also the most fully developed coffeehouse project, in both a material and theoretical sense. A widely circulated underground newspaper, *Fatigue Press*, was published out of the coffeehouse, and several important political rallies were planned and executed with its sponsorship. This chapter demonstrates the significant interplay between the civilian antiwar movement, the GI movement, and the countercultural elements that permeated the entire project and often provided its organizing ethos.

Chapter Three: The Shelter Half (Fort Lewis, Tacoma, Washington)

Located outside Fort Lewis, one of the main bases for soldiers headed to, or returning from, Vietnam, the Shelter Half was the longest running Vietnam era coffeehouse, operating for over six years (1968-1974) and serving as a functional operations center for a wide range of resistance activities. Its proximity to Seattle allows for an exploration of the GI movement’s impact in a more urban setting,

¹⁰ Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 53.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

where a significant pre-existing radical community came to support the coffeehouse and its mission. The Shelter Half also published a long running and widely read underground newspaper, *Fed Up!*, which serves as a critical source in reconstructing the coffeehouse's political and cultural impact in the Pacific Northwest region.¹²

Chapter Four: The National GI Coffeehouse Movement

This chapter surveys the entire GI coffeehouse movement from a national perspective, focusing on the common experiences of coffeehouse projects around the nation. The coffeehouse network's relationship to major antiwar organizations, its experiences with repression and harassment, the role of drugs and counterculture, and the movement's unique engagement of radical left politics are all given more detailed attention. This chapter also contains a larger consideration of the GI underground press and the special role it played in the history of the GI movement.

Chapter Five: Coffeehouse and Military Policy

GI coffeehouses were part of an institutional crisis for the U.S. military during the later years of the Vietnam War. This chapter describes the military's various attempts to get a handle on this crisis, a story that contains several reversals in strategy and ends with a near-total realignment of the role of military service in American society. I conclude by arguing that the existence of GI coffeehouses demonstrated, to military officials and federal authorities, that the deep social and cultural changes in American society necessitated a serious reappraisal of traditional military policy.

¹² Ibid., 55.

**CHAPTER ONE:
THE UFO COFFEEHOUSE (FORT JACKSON, COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA)**

As American military engagement in Vietnam accelerated in the mid-1960s, increasing instances of opposition to the war emerged at military bases across the country, with soldiers themselves resisting service in an unpopular and seemingly endless war. This opposition took infinite forms throughout the war's duration, ultimately creating a significant crisis for military officials unsure of how to quell the dissent. By 1971, as dissident soldiers joined with veterans and antiwar civilians to create the actions and organizations that are collectively referred to as the GI movement, resistance from the soldier rank-and-file was so widespread that some military leaders feared the "collapse of the armed forces."¹

Fort Jackson, located outside Columbia, South Carolina, was the site of some of the most significant events of the GI movement, including the opening of the nation's first antiwar GI coffeehouse, the UFO, in late 1967. As one of the U.S. Army's largest training bases, Fort Jackson was notable for housing huge numbers of the military's youngest recruits. During the Vietnam War, the base had a transient population of roughly 20,000 young men, the majority of whom were either recent draftees or "draft-motivated volunteers" who had joined the Army under some duress.² As the war became more and more unpopular, particularly among young people like the thousands stationed at Fort Jackson, the base began to experience a

¹ Robert D. Heinl, Jr., "The Collapse of the Armed Forces," *Armed Forces Journal*, June 7, 1971, 35.

² Christian Appy, *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 51. "Draft-motivated volunteers" refers to those soldiers who joined the armed forces voluntarily with the (oftentimes vain) perception that, by volunteering, they would obtain more favorable terms of service, such as choice of branch and avoidance of combat, than if they waited to be drafted.

sharp increase in cases of dissent and insubordination. Fort Jackson's massive population of young GIs proved a ripe breeding ground for political activism; in 1967, the base made national headlines with the trial of Howard Levy, an Army doctor who refused his assignment to train military dermatologists at Fort Jackson because of his political opposition to the Vietnam War.³

Dr. Levy was ultimately convicted of disobedience and making disloyal statements about U.S. policy in Vietnam; as a result, he was dishonorably discharged, and incarcerated in military prison for three years. Many in the antiwar movement, however, considered him a hero for what they saw as a principled stand against participation in an immoral war.⁴ One such admirer was Fred Gardner, a former Army reservist turned antiwar activist who had followed Levy's trial with interest, sensing that it could be the seed for a growing antiwar movement within the American military.⁵ He imagined that Columbia, South Carolina, teeming with young soldiers being trained at Fort Jackson, might be the perfect place to nurture such a movement. As he later explained: "By 1967 the Army was filling up with people who would rather be making love to the music of Jimi Hendrix than war to the lies of Lyndon Johnson. People were serving because they'd been drafted. Or

³ David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance During the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Anchor Press, 1975), 52; "Antiwar Sentiment is Deep at Ft. Jackson Army Base," *The Militant*, March 18, 1968.

⁴ Andrew H. Myers, *Black, White, and Olive Drab: Racial Integration at Fort Jackson, South Carolina* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 189-204. For more on the Levy case, see Andrew Kopkind, "The Trial of Captain Levy," *New York Review of Books*, April 11, 1968; Ira Glasser, "Justice and Captain Levy," *Columbia Forum*, Spring 1969, 46-49; Douglas E. Kneeland, "War Stirs GI Dissent," *The New York Times*, June 21, 1970.

⁵ Fred Gardner, "Hollywood Confidential, Part II," *The Vietnam Generation Journal and Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 3, November 1991). Gardner mentions his admiration for Levy, specifically for his refusal to serve and the resulting Fort Jackson court martial.

they 'volunteered' because they'd gotten in trouble with the law, or been told they needed an honorable discharge in order to get a job. Almost everybody went in ambivalent about whether the war was worth it--the risk, the interruption to their lives."⁶ Gardner began to imagine a population of unwilling soldiers, many of whom embraced the rock music and rebellious spirit of the nation's rising youth counterculture, as the foundation for a powerful political movement within the U.S. military.

Gardner had begun his career as a writer and editor at the *Harvard Crimson* in the early 1960s, writing articles on arts, culture, and politics, though rarely with a radical bent (the notable exception perhaps being the positive review he wrote for a Pete Seeger record).⁷ In early 1967, he was living in San Francisco, recently divorced, and searching for an outlet for some of the political and cultural energy he had accumulated from his experience with the American military. Most of all, Gardner abhorred the Vietnam War ("the war drove me completely crazy. I was just dying of embarrassment," he later explained), wanted to take action, but felt alienated from the both the strategies and personalities of major New Left organizations like Students for a Democratic Society.⁸ Gardner was the type of antiwar activist who saw revolutionary potential in the rise of youth counterculture, and hoped to find a project that could integrate the popularity of sex, drugs, and

⁶ Myers, *Black, White, and Olive Drab: Racial Integration at Fort Jackson, South Carolina*, 4.

⁷ "Frederick H. Gardner Writer Profile," *Harvard Crimson* website, accessed July 11, 2010, http://www.thecrimson.com/writer/5771/Frederick_H_Gardner/. The site contains an archive of all of Gardner's writings, from 1961-1963. According to Gardner, the Kennedy administration regularly read three newspapers: *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Harvard Crimson*. "For a brief time, I felt like I had a pipeline directly to the White House."

⁸ Fred Gardner, interview with author, January 15, 2011.

rock and roll with his antiwar politics. Recalling his time at Fort Polk near Leesville, Louisiana, a few years earlier (1963-64), he remembered something about the post's nearby town that many GIs of the era would complain about: that there were no "hip" establishments, no local hangouts that reflected the vibrant youth culture embraced by many of the soldiers stationed at bases around the world.

Although many small towns in the United States of the mid-1960s might be described as socially and politically "conservative," so-called "base towns" had specific economic and political ties to the U.S. military, and thus were often more interested in maintaining an outwardly patriotic environment that frequently expressed its alignment with military values. Columbia, South Carolina, was no exception, and actually held some distinction as one of the most pro-military, "America first" military base towns in the nation. A radical journalist, visiting Columbia in 1968, described the environment's omnipresent tone of deference to military authority:

"Columbia," states the Fort Jackson public relations brochure, "is a good Army town." Officers seem to agree. Many of them settle there upon retirement. The Fort, of course, is a good source of income for the local businessmen, so the symbiotic relationship between them and the brass naturally gives the place a hawkish flavor.⁹

Over the course of several decades, the existence of Fort Jackson came to be seen as critical to Columbia's economic health, and the city itself became much more directly concerned with projecting a pro-military image so as to encourage further military development in the area.¹⁰

⁹ Fred Halstead, *GIs Speak Out Against the War: The Case of the Ft. Jackson 8* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 15.

¹⁰ John Hammond Moore, *Columbia and Richland County: A South Carolina Community*,

The specific history of Columbia and the larger Richland County area of South Carolina reveals this long-gestating symbiotic relationship with the American military. "Camp Jackson," as it was first called, was established in 1917 as the First World War demanded a dramatic expansion of troop levels and training bases. After the war, however, the population of military personnel that had turned Columbia into a bustling base town (with an attendant explosion of local businesses catering to military needs) declined rapidly, and city leaders began to actively lobby the federal government for a more permanent military presence in Columbia. As World War II accelerated, Fort Jackson was finally converted into a permanent Army installation, and in 1968 local officials successfully lobbied the Pentagon to officially annex Fort Jackson into the city proper. It was during the height of the Vietnam War, then, that Columbia's leaders explicitly worked to reinforce the city's total alignment with military goals and values; in both an operational and ideological sense, Columbia and Fort Jackson became a single entity.¹¹

The economic value of a permanent military base in Columbia was evident by the booming businesses of the 1940s and 1950s, when hundreds of thousands of military men and women moved to the area, creating a ready-made consumer base. A historian of the region notes, "[S]oldiers, civilians, wives, and sweethearts (real, potential, and alleged) poured into the Midlands. Rents soared, restaurants and beer joints boomed, and, for all practical purposes, the Great Depression became a distant memory."¹² While there existed some controversy among city leaders

1740-1990 (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 359.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 393.

(particularly the clergy) about the influx of bars, nightclubs, and pool halls bringing a certain brand of moral decline to the area, signified perhaps most plainly by the exponential rise in cases of prostitution, for the most part Columbia's business and political community embraced the city's conversion to one of the nation's largest military base towns.

Despite an overall emphasis on patriotic, military values, many base towns like Columbia also fostered institutions and pastimes that exploited soldiers, often through crass, misleading sales pitches offering opportunities for cheap thrills. To Fred Gardner, base towns like Columbia created a "violent, venal atmosphere. . . ringed by strips of bars, whorehouses, jewelry emporiums, and pawnshops," and as such contributed to a complacent, demoralized group of soldiers who would more easily accept their fates as cannon fodder for the military's illegal war in Vietnam.¹³ In his own experience at Fort Polk in Louisiana, Gardner had also witnessed the combination of crass economics and Southern racism that alienated increasing numbers of young soldiers in the late 1960s. In the small town of Leesville (which many soldiers called "Diseaseville"), "the only places to hang out . . . were seedy, segregated bars serving watered-down drinks for a dollar a shot, a rip-off."¹⁴

Of course, Gardner had more in mind than just cultural alternatives. Sensing that many young soldiers were at best ambivalent about their military service, and that "hip" soldiers in particular may even be against the war in Vietnam, he thought that a counterculture coffeehouse, staffed by young civilian radicals, could provide a

¹³ Fred Gardner, "Case Study in Opportunism: The GI Movement," *Second Page Supplement*, October 1971, 2.

¹⁴ Fred Gardner, "Hollywood Confidential, Part I," *The Vietnam Generation Journal and Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 3, November 1991.

gateway to a more concentrated antiwar activism on the part of the soldiers themselves:

I figured that people working at the coffeehouses, just by listening to GIs gripes, taking them seriously and maybe distributing them in leaflet form, would help soldiers see that their problems weren't "merely" personal but widespread and historical. In time, there would develop a network of organizers in the towns and in the Army itself whom soldiers would consider politically trustworthy--because they had a record of telling the truth about conditions.¹⁵

Gardner was reluctant to proselytize directly to active-duty soldiers; rather, he envisioned the role of coffeehouse staff as essentially supporting and nurturing antiwar sentiment among GIs, offering them a safe environment and organizational skills to foster the development of their own political activities. The coffeehouses would thus serve mainly as support institutions for empowering disaffected soldiers to channel their energy into political action. Since coffeehouses were meant to de-condition soldiers from the hierarchical, rigid leadership structures of military service, Gardner sought to limit the political role played by the civilian staff.¹⁶ After spending the summer of 1967 attempting (unsuccessfully) to convince radical activists to open a coffeehouse based on his idea, Gardner chose instead to open a coffeehouse himself in Columbia, the town that, in more ways than one, supported Fort Jackson.

The UFO Lands in Columbia

To Gardner, Columbia, South Carolina seemed a perfect environment for his dream of attracting dissident young people to his coffeehouse. Not only was Fort Jackson the main basic training camp for the U.S. Army, and thus a major stopping

¹⁵ Gardner, "Case Study in Opportunism: The GI Movement," 2.

¹⁶ Ibid., 2-4.

point for young soldiers and recent draftees headed to Vietnam, but Columbia was also home to a college campus, the University of South Carolina (USC), whose student body had had a reputation for political passivity until the mid-1960s, with small but increasing instances of student activism in both civil rights and antiwar protests in the later years of the 1960s.¹⁷

The generational tensions of the postwar period, present on many college campuses throughout the 1960s and 1970s, were powerful at USC, and took on a particularly potent racial element both on campus and in the town of Columbia itself. Much of this tension stemmed from the increased interaction between white and black students, as many local residents associated racial integration with the larger (and largely unwelcome) cultural changes of the era. In 1961, for example, in the aftermath of a small "riot" at the University's annual Homecoming Dance, which had featured black performers in a "rock and roll orchestra," USC president Robert L. Sumwalt blamed the raucous behavior of white students on the lascivious influence of rock music, directly connecting racial integration to rising youth culture: "The Rock and Roll music provided for the students at this dance was in response to the students' wishes. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to obtain white orchestras who play the kind of music students want."¹⁸ After the university admitted its first black students in 1963, the "generation gap" signified by the Homecoming Dance scandal only widened, both at USC and in the surrounding

¹⁷ Andrew Grose, "Voices of Southern Protest during the Vietnam War Era: The University of South Carolina as a Case Study," *Peace and Change* (April 2007): 155.

¹⁸ Henry H. Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina, 1940-2000* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 195. Students apparently began throwing cups of beer at staff and police after the music performance was cut short.

community. By the late 1960s, letters to the local newspaper, *The State*, frequently bemoaned the "disrespect" and "contempt for authority" exhibited by Columbia's youth, with USC often singled out as the source of this dissident behavior. In a classic expression of the "town and gown" phenomenon, many Columbia residents resented the college's perceived influence on the town's image, as the sight of hippies and radicals in Columbia's once-idyllic downtown was, to them, a signal of a serious moral crisis.

Arriving in September 1967, Gardner and a business partner, Donna Mickleson, were aware that their operation would be controversial in Columbia, and took steps to conceal their political and cultural ambitions for as long as possible. While renting a house, which Gardner hoped to turn into a crash pad for "soldiers and organizers, smoking grass and listening to *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*," he hid these intentions by fabricating a cover story that he and Mickleson were a married couple whose children would be arriving soon.¹⁹ After securing a place to live, the pair went in search of a venue for their coffeehouse, eventually renting the space at 1732 Main Street, in the center of downtown Columbia. They immediately went to work transforming what had been a tropical-themed "Hawaiian" bar into a counterculture coffeehouse, replacing tiki torches and plastic flamingoes with rock posters donated by San Francisco concert promoter Bill Graham.

From the moment Mickleson hung a psychedelic hand-painted sign reading "UFO" on the outside of the building, officially opening the coffeehouse for business

¹⁹ Gardner, "Hollywood Confidential, Part I," 4.

in January 1968, it stood out as a radical oasis in a conservative desert. From a cultural standpoint, the owners made no effort to conceal their hip, sardonic orientation, with the aforementioned posters including one of a cannabis plant and another of President Lyndon Johnson awkwardly holding his pet beagle by its ears.²⁰ The interior of the UFO was "modestly furnished with wooden tables and folding chairs, an area for a band, and displays of reading material featuring alternative newspapers from around the country, such as the *Berkeley Barb*, *The Village Voice* (New York), *The Great Speckled Bird* (Atlanta), and numerous pamphlets, as well as mainstream newspapers and periodicals."²¹

The UFO coffeehouse was instantly popular, particularly among young people, attracting high school and college students who weren't yet old enough to legally go to bars and pool halls. Most important to Gardner and Mickleson, however, was the fact that, within two months, more than six hundred soldiers from Fort Jackson were also visiting the UFO every week, some of whom were eager to organize political activity on base.²² During daytime hours the UFO operated as any other coffeehouse, serving the usual coffee, tea, and soft drinks, in addition to fresh fruit and locally baked pastries in a quiet atmosphere, with most customers reading or chatting in groups of two or three (fig. 1). In the evenings, however, the lights dimmed and rock music played from the UFO's hi-fi sound system (on nights when live rock and folk acts weren't onstage). According to one journalist, the smoky mood and psychedelic decor of the UFO resembled establishments in "Greenwich

²⁰ Ibid, 5.

²¹ William Shepard McAninch, "The UFO," *South Carolina Law Review*, Winter 1995, 1.

²² David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: The American Military Today* (New York: Anchor Press, 1975), 53.

Village or Chicago's Old Town," notorious enclaves of beat and hippie counterculture in 1960s America. The patrons of the UFO were an odd mix of students and young people wearing "miniskirts, Nehru jackets, and beads," alongside clean-cut GIs from Fort Jackson. Blacks and whites mingled together freely at the coffeehouse, a kind of public interaction not unheard of but certainly rare in Columbia at the time.²³

Racial mixing was one element among many that raised eyebrows in Columbia in the weeks following the UFO's opening. An official from the Chamber of Commerce, Thomas Fitzpatrick, said in an interview, "the so-called coffeehouse is a sore spot in our craw," capturing the visceral distaste with which many of Columbia's citizens regarded the UFO. Fitzpatrick, like many city authorities, also noted that Columbia had twice been designated an "All America City" and that the city wished to maintain its reputation.²⁴ Local police were initially employed to this end (later to be joined by military intelligence officers, the FBI, and other government agencies), making nightly visits to the UFO to search for evidence of drugs, to ticket vehicles, and to generally harass its patrons and staff. Chief of Detectives Harry T. Snipes explained, "We just feel like we don't want it in town. We feel it is a bad influence on our youngsters. There are people with whiskers. Some wear sandals. We check it at least once a night, especially to see if there are drugs or addicts in there." To city police, the UFO seemed to represent the enemy camp in the

²³ Donald Janson, "Antiwar Coffeehouses Delight G.I.'s but Not Army," *The New York Times*, August 12, 1968.

²⁴ The "All America City Award" is a program, still in existence, begun in 1949, sponsored by the National Civic League. The Award is "the oldest community recognition program in the nation, [and] recognizes communities whose citizens work together to identify and tackle community-wide challenges and achieve uncommon results."

culture war, and they did everything in their power to disrupt its existence (fig. 2).²⁵

Local police were just one part of a group of organizations and leaders who viewed the UFO coffeehouse as a threat to the town's important relationship with Fort Jackson and the U.S. military. South Carolina's political and economic leaders were obviously deeply invested in impressing the military establishment that had bestowed so much on the state since the 1940s. During the period in question, that leadership was made up mainly of Democrats, who controlled a majority of the state's major offices, from governor to senator, and whose close relationship to the U.S. military was revealed most plainly in Columbia, the state's capital and Fort Jackson's adjacent city. L. Mendel Rivers, congressman from Charleston, was actively involved in Fort Jackson's affairs as chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. In his work on the economic development of Southern ("Sunbelt") U.S. cities in the decades after World War II, historian Bruce Schulman credits Rivers in particular for exploiting Columbia's military connections to win massive federal support for the city's further expansion:

Into his district, Rivers, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, poured an air force base, a naval base, a Polaris missile maintenance center, a naval shipyard, a submarine training station, a naval hospital, a mine warfare center, and the Sixth Naval District Headquarters. As if that was not enough, defense contractors like McDonnell-Douglas, Avco, GE, and Lockheed established factories in the area. One of the congressmen's colleagues joked, "You put anything else down there in your district, Mendel, it's going to sink."²⁶

Along with Senator J. Strom Thurmond, who had been a two-star general in the Army Reserve, and who was widely known for his concern with military matters,

²⁵ Janson, "Antiwar Coffeehouses Delight G.I.'s but Not Army." All quotations from Columbia police derive from this article.

²⁶ Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (Duke University Press, 1994), 146-149.

Rivers ensured that Columbia's economic fate was powerfully connected to the U.S. military.²⁷ These men provided a link from the local affairs of Fort Jackson to the upper echelons of the federal government, and their allegiance to the military's strong presence in Columbia made them see the UFO coffeehouse as an affront to both local and national values.

The UFO's location, on Main Street in the heart of downtown Columbia, dramatically increased its visibility to the city's leaders. The coffeehouse was directly across the street from Columbia's city hall and, perhaps more importantly, next door to the Elite Epicurean Restaurant, the city's popular gathering spot for local politicians. The contrast between the UFO and the Elite could not have been more stark. As the owner of the Elite put it, "we catered to the establishment, and they were the anti-establishment."²⁸ While this location certainly helped the UFO to gain both local and national publicity, the Elite's powerful connections also caused significant trouble for its staff and owners once the coffeehouse became a more vocal political presence in Columbia in February 1968.

Soldiers at Fort Jackson, reacting to the sickening escalation of violence in Vietnam known as the Tet Offensive, translated their frustrated conversations at the coffeehouse into the first major organized action against the Vietnam War on an American military base. The organizers, led by Army Specialist Martin Blumsack, had received permission from Fort Jackson's Post Chaplain to use the base chapel for an "hour of meditation" to express "grave concern" about the war.²⁹ The pray-in,

²⁷ Myers, *Black, White, and Olive Drab: Racial Integration at Fort Jackson, South Carolina*, 3.

²⁸ McAninch, "The UFO," 2.

²⁹ "No Praying on the Chapel Steps," *Vietnam GI* (April 1968), 8.

as it came to be known, was initiated and planned by soldiers at the UFO coffeehouse, who used the space to hold meetings and distribute information. The UFO's quick popularity among antiwar soldiers, who almost instantly began to use it as an organizing center for political activity, revealed an already-developing antiwar movement among Fort Jackson soldiers prior to the coffeehouse opening, but one whose ability to organize had been stifled by repression on base. The UFO, for a brief period, answered the need for a safe space for Fort Jackson's political dissidents.³⁰

In the days leading up to the planned pray-in, Blumsack and other soldiers distributed leaflets at bus stops, on base, and at the UFO, encouraging GIs to assemble at Chapel #1 to express their doubts about the war and to pray for peace. Word of the demonstration spread rapidly on base, and Blumsack was told by his commanding officer to cancel the event after Army authorities objected to the word "doubt" printed on the flyers. The following day, Tuesday, February 13, 1968, more than 35 GIs showed up at the chapel, unaware that the meeting had been canceled. Military police closed the base, surrounded the chapel, and ordered the crowd to disperse. Two soldiers kneeling in prayer were detained and charged with disturbing the peace.³¹

Although official charges against the meeting leaders and participants were eventually dropped, the Army found other ways to discipline the soldiers who had dared express antiwar views on base. In an act of clear retaliation, just a week after the pray-in two of the men were sent to combat in Vietnam. Another was sent to

³⁰ Gardner, "Case Study in Opportunism: The GI Movement," 2-3.

³¹ "No Praying on the Chapel Steps," *Vietnam GI*, April 1968, 8.

Korea. Blumsack himself was arrested two weeks after the chapel meeting, charged with a variety of driving violations and, apparently because he was too short to legally send into combat, eventually demoted to a lower pay grade.³² The Army authorities at Fort Jackson had sent a strong message that antiwar activity would be met with severe retribution, and that the military leadership had the seemingly infinite power to disrupt the lives of soldiers who spoke out against its policies.

Enter the New Left

Because of the attention it gained in both the mainstream and alternative press, the pray-in action and its fallout had a dramatic impact on the life of the UFO coffeehouse.³³ Leaders of national antiwar organizations were impressed by the GI coffeehouse concept and became interested in helping it develop into a larger project, hoping to harness the energy of antiwar soldiers. At the time, the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam was one of the country's more well-funded and visible antiwar organizations. The "Mobe," as it was known, was a loose coalition of more than 150 antiwar groups from around the country, whose leadership organized an impressive action on October 21, 1967, that brought more than 100,000 protestors to the Lincoln Memorial in the nation's capital. In one of the more memorable antiwar demonstrations of the Vietnam era, about 30,000 of these protestors made their way across the Potomac for a memorable march on the

³² Ibid.

³³ "Two at Ft. Jackson May Face Charges," *Columbia State*, February 22, 1968; "Two at Fort Jackson Court-Martial Over War Doubts," *The New York Times*, February 22, 1968, 10; Douglas Robinson, "Leaflets Bombard Fort Jackson G.I.'s Off-Post," *The New York Times*, February 24, 1968; "Two GIs Face Trial For 'Pray-In' on War," *The Militant*, February 26, 1968, Vol. 32, No. 9, 1.

Pentagon later in the afternoon.³⁴

After the Pentagon action, Mobe leaders like Dave Dellinger, Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden sought to link their civilian antiwar activities with the rapidly-developing GI movement. The UFO coffeehouse, in the news because of the chapel pray-in, seemed the perfect way to unite their antiwar principles with their desire to more directly engage with the military itself.³⁵ Mobe representatives visited the UFO coffeehouse in Columbia shortly after the pray-in made national headlines. They told Fred Gardner that they wanted to create a network of antiwar coffeehouses outside military bases around the country, and that these efforts would be kicked off by a "Summer of Support" (SOS) campaign to help provide the publicity, fundraising, and staff needed to sustain what they imagined would be a major support structure for a developing antiwar movement in the U.S. military. Gardner helped them draft a press release that outlined the Mobe's ambitious plan to expand his original coffeehouse idea:

This summer, students and veterans will bring a new kind of support to GIs. By June 12, Summer of Support (SOS) plans to open coffeehouses, USOs for Peace, near all nine major US Army posts with training programs.

The coffeehouses will be similar to the one in Columbia S.C, where Ft. Jackson GIs met and planned the Feb 13 pray-in at the base chapel. They will provide a place where anti-war GIs can get together, relax and talk about activities not reported in the Army - a place where they can air their gripes, plan and organize.

In addition, SOS will offer day care centers for children of military personnel, legal counseling, theater, newspapers, rock concerts and academic programs.

³⁴ Norman Mailer's *Armies of the Night* (New York: New American Library, 1968) undoubtedly provides the most compelling account of the 1967 March of the Pentagon, though less historically "novelized" narratives can be found in Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 254-255, and in Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 336-340.

³⁵ Gardner, "Hollywood Confidential, Part I," 4.

Entertainers like Judy Collins, the Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe and the Fish and Phil Ochs will be invited to participate.

SOS is being sponsored by a group of veterans, students, journalists and entertainers who believe the US should withdraw from Vietnam. They feel that "it is the soldier who suffers most directly from the war and who has the most to gain from it coming to a fast, unambiguous end."³⁶

The press release was published in antiwar newspapers and sent out as a fundraising letter to New Left organizations and activists around the country, explicitly promoting the UFO coffeehouse as a model for the off-base support of antiwar soldiers. It shows the authors' perception of the primary function that youth culture played in the coffeehouse's overall purpose. The only proper names mentioned in the coffeehouse press release are not names of political figures or activist leaders, but names of popular rock and folk acts. Perhaps more importantly, though, the June 1968 press release marked the official end of Gardner's direct control of the GI coffeehouse project he had initiated in Columbia, South Carolina, a few months earlier. The next phase of the coffeehouse phenomenon brought financial and material support from the organized antiwar movement, the effects of which were felt at the UFO almost immediately after Gardner relinquished management to a new Mobe-trained staff in the spring of 1968.³⁷

The UFO and the "Fort Jackson Eight"

With a promise from Mobe leaders that funding and staff would flow to the UFO coffeehouse in his absence, Gardner left Columbia in March 1968 to focus his efforts on opening another GI coffeehouse ("Mad Anthony's") near Fort Leonard

³⁶ "USOs for Peace are Coming," *The Ally*, no. 5 (June 1968).

³⁷ Gardner, "Case Study in Opportunism: The GI Movement," 4.

Wood in Waynesville, Missouri.³⁸ He soon realized, however, that the infusion of activists who replaced him at the UFO brought several complicating factors to the project, not the least of which was an acceleration of the coffeehouse's explicit radical politics. While there is no doubt that he considered himself an antiwar activist, Gardner had paid much more attention to what he called the "restaurant end of things," insisting that the UFO existed, first and foremost, as a place of relaxation, entertainment, and escape from the doldrums of base life for young GIs. As far as political activity was concerned, Gardner clearly envisioned the UFO, and GI coffeehouses in general, as safe, comfortable meeting places for GIs to organize their own movement, not as recruiting centers that urged them to join the one already in progress (fig. 3).

This distinction was critical, and reflects a larger struggle within the antiwar movement to define the appropriate relationships and boundaries between civilian activists and antiwar GIs. At the UFO coffeehouse, this clash of ideas came into sharp relief with the arrival of SDS-trained activist and recent Berkeley graduate Leni Zeiger, who essentially replaced Gardner as the UFO's on-site manager leading into the summer of 1968. Zeiger had a drastically different vision of the coffeehouse's overall purpose, believing that the civilian staff's role was to directly engage soldiers, and the UFO's other customers, in political discussion. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Zeiger stated that she had encouraged the UFO staff to be more open in discussing their political ideas with military men, and

³⁸ Gardner, "Hollywood Confidential, Part I," 7. More detail on the history of Mad Anthony's can be found in Chapter 2.

boasted about her willingness to speak directly to soldiers at the coffeehouse: "I tell them I'm for peace. I say I don't like the way the Army is run. I say I am angry."³⁹ Zeiger's stated goal of using the UFO to "educate" GIs virtually reversed Gardner's original strategy for the coffeehouse and was just one element of the UFO's rapid transformation under new management.

The Mobe's early tenure at the UFO, led by Zeiger, provides a fascinating perspective on the complicated relationship between counterculture and political activism that permeated the antiwar movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁴⁰ The new Mobe-influenced staff felt that posters of Marilyn Monroe and Jimi Hendrix promoted apolitical celebrity worship, and replaced them with portraits of serious political revolutionaries like Stokely Carmichael and Eldridge Cleaver. Believing that the coffeehouse should try harder to appeal to the "white working class," they also removed the UFO's hi-fi stereo system and soldier-curated collection of rock records, replacing them with a jukebox that played exclusively country music.⁴¹ Within (and often, on) the walls of the UFO coffeehouse, the typically left-versus-right culture war played out among antiwar activists themselves, who each had drastically different ideas of how the space's visual aesthetic and musical choices

³⁹ Donald Janson, "Antiwar Coffeehouses Delight G.I.'s but Not Army," *The New York Times*, August 12, 1968.

⁴⁰ Doug Rossinow, "The Revolution is about Our Lives: The New Left's Counterculture," in Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 101-103. Substantial discussions of the role of counterculture in the antiwar movement can also be found in Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 214-235; James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 278; and Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 189.

⁴¹ Gardner, "Case Study in Opportunism: The GI Movement," 5-6.

should be employed for their specific political purposes.

Regardless of the abrupt changes of decor and political strategy at the UFO coffeehouse, the GI movement at Fort Jackson continued to gain momentum on base throughout 1968. The movement's main events suggest that antiwar soldiers in Columbia, while deeply influenced by the era's radical politics, were focused on building a movement with wide appeal to military men, regardless of race, class, or political ideology. Specifically, much of their efforts centered on the need for a physical space like the UFO coffeehouse, on the grounds of Fort Jackson, in which they could talk freely about war policy without fear of harassment. In a sequence of events that came to be known as the case of the "Fort Jackson Eight" when it gained national media attention in March 1969, antiwar soldiers on base challenged the military's right to restrict the constitutional liberties of active-duty soldiers. The story of the Fort Jackson Eight illustrates how the GI movement began to find specific focus and momentum in early 1969, insisting that a soldier's freedom of speech included the right to oppose war policies. The UFO coffeehouse played a key role in the case, providing both an organizational base and material support for the soldiers in their struggle against Fort Jackson authorities.⁴²

The Fort Jackson Eight case was initiated when a young black activist named Joe Miles was drafted and sent for training at Fort Jackson, arriving in January 1969. At his draft induction, Miles had made clear that he was an activist in the antiwar

⁴² The most detailed source on the Fort Jackson Eight case is found in Fred Halstead, *GIs Speak Out Against the War: The Case of the Ft. Jackson 8* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970). See also "Army Urged to Free 8 Protesting War," *The New York Times*, April 12, 1969.

movement and a member of the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA),⁴³ writing a letter indicating that he would obey all orders and regulations of the Army, while simultaneously using every legal opportunity to express his political views. True to his word, Miles began organizing black GIs at Fort Jackson the same week he arrived, forming a group called GIs United Against the War in Vietnam. The group's early meetings often consisted of listening to Malcolm X speeches and discussing how black revolutionary ideas could be melded with socialist ideology to build a broad-based, racially-inclusive political movement within the Army.

During the first few months of 1969, GIs United Against the War in Vietnam became highly visible at Fort Jackson and in Columbia. They held regular meetings at the UFO coffeehouse, finding its space especially suitable for holding the kinds of large group gatherings that were virtually impossible to sustain on base.⁴⁴ The main thrust of their activity was to circulate letters and petitions, hoping to demonstrate wide on-base opposition to the war and support for the individual GI's right to express that opposition. The group's "Statement of Aims," which was distributed at Fort Jackson and other Army training posts, captures the organization's efforts to appeal to a wide constituency:

Do citizens in uniform have the protection of the First Amendment? Can they meet and discuss the war in Vietnam, even take positions on it? Others, even Congressmen and Senators, oppose the war; can the men required to fight it not

⁴³ Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 63. Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) was a Trotskyist youth group, a wing of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the U.S. The YSA was founded in 1960, and was active in antiwar demonstrations and other forms of radical activism through the early 1990s. See also Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (New York: Monad Press, 1978). Halstead's comprehensive history covers the group's trajectory through the 1960s and early 1970s.

⁴⁴ Douglas E. Kneeland, "War Stirs GI Dissent," *The New York Times*, June 21, 1970.

legally do the same?⁴⁵

In their public pronouncements, GIs United articulated a straightforward civil liberties-centered position that proved extremely effective in winning the support of a large number of soldiers at Fort Jackson.

It was at an on-base gathering of such soldiers that the case of the Fort Jackson Eight began. On March 20, 1969, little more than a year after the chapel pray-in had brought together 35 antiwar soldiers at Fort Jackson, GIs United held a meeting outside a barracks that included nearly two hundred soldiers. Organization members Jose Rudder and Andrew Pulley addressed the crowd, which included soldiers leaning out of dormitory windows to raise clenched fists and shout words of support. The increasingly raucous assembly eventually dispersed without major incident, but the following day Fort Jackson authorities labeled it a "riot," and arrested nine leaders of GIs United, bringing them up on charges that included disrespect, holding an illegal demonstration, and disobeying orders.⁴⁶ The group was reduced to eight after it was revealed that GIs United member Private John Huffman had been working as an Army informer. Placing an informer in GIs United indicated the level of concern the Fort Jackson group had created within the military establishment.⁴⁷ This revelation, along with the significant media publicity given the movement at Fort Jackson (including a live on-base interview of GIs United members featured on NBC's *Huntley-Brinkley Report*), led to a public relations and legal embarrassment for Army officials, who in June dropped all charges against the

⁴⁵ GIs United Against the War in Vietnam, "Statement of Aims," in Halstead, *GIs Speak Out Against the War*, 97.

⁴⁶ Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 59-60.

⁴⁷ "GI War 'Dissident' is Army Informer," *The New York Times*, April 9, 1969.

remaining defendants and instead attempted to hasten their quiet exits from the military.⁴⁸

The fact that the Army dropped all charges against the Fort Jackson Eight was a significant victory for the GI movement, its civilian supporters, and the soldiers themselves. It also signaled an important shift in how the military handled internal dissent. Just two years earlier, in 1966, the average GI activist convicted in military court was sentenced to forty-five months of hard labor (recall Howard Levy's three-year sentence for refusal to train medical staff).⁴⁹ The case of the Fort Jackson Eight was a major landmark in a continuum of events throughout 1967 and 1968 in which the GI movement, together with civilian antiwar activists including those at the UFO coffeehouse, cleverly engaged the national media, creating public and legal pressure for the Army to reduce the harassment and imprisonment of antiwar soldiers.

The experience of the Fort Jackson Eight showed that the most effective way to build support for GI dissent was to focus on broad issues of free speech and civil rights that affected all GIs. In attempting to explain the group's success at gaining widespread public support, one contemporary observer noted that the Fort Jackson Eight had paid "careful attention to what ordinary Americans would think of their actions, getting news out to the massive antiwar movement, and appealing to the civil-liberties traditions which are taken seriously by millions of Americans."⁵⁰ By

⁴⁸ Ben A. Franklin, "Army Bars Trial 3 Antiwar GIs; Drops Fort Jackson Case--Discharges are Set," *The New York Times*, May 21, 1969.

⁴⁹ James Lewes, *Protest and Survive: Underground GI Newspapers during the Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 97.

⁵⁰ Halstead, *GIs Speak Out Against the War*, 6.

centering their defense on one issue, the war in Vietnam and their right as American citizens to discuss it, the Fort Jackson Eight won sympathy from the growing number of Americans who opposed the war but did not identify with leftists or radicals. An underground newspaper produced by antiwar GIs at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, agreed that simplicity was critical to the victory, concluding that keeping demands "simple, clear, and reasonable" is "essential if you want your cause to grow. When a long list of purposes or demands is raised it only confuses and turns guys off."⁵¹

The Fort Jackson Eight case also proved that a physical "safe house," like a coffeehouse, could be critical to a group's success, providing not only literal shelter but a nurturing, politically open environment that encouraged discussion and organization. The UFO was clearly used and appreciated as a safe place for GIs United to hold Sunday meetings, and was instrumental in providing a space in which soldiers could talk with each other, disseminate literature, and generally avoid the harassment of base authorities. Without the UFO's existence, it would have been much more difficult for a group like GIs United to meet and talk freely in Columbia, much less gain access to necessary equipment like mimeograph machines and networks of civilian supporters.

It is also important to note, however, that most of the soldiers active in GIs United had developed their specific political perspectives long before ever stepping foot in the UFO coffeehouse; Joe Miles, Jose Rudder, Andrew Pulley, and the other core leaders of GIs United did not rely on the UFO staff for political programs or

⁵¹ "Fort Jackson GIs Win Victory!," *Dull Brass*, Vol.1, No. 2, May 1969.

information about the war in Vietnam. They mainly viewed the coffeehouse, and the civilian antiwar movement that it represented, as helpful allies capable of providing specific material support rather than as sources of political education or inspiration. Whether the posters were of Marilyn Monroe or Eldridge Cleaver did not seem to make as significant an impact on the Fort Jackson Eight's case as the UFO coffeehouse's protected environment and its staff's access to funds, lawyers, and media outlets, all of which unquestionably helped the group's efforts to avoid military prison.⁵²

After the Fort Jackson Eight case, the military establishment began to re-examine its policies on dissent, concluding that a more subtle approach might be more effective in avoiding the kind of embarrassing negative publicity that accompanied the Fort Jackson Eight case. Once officials at the Pentagon realized that jailing or dishonorably discharging every political dissident in the armed forces was impossible, unnecessary, and counterproductive, they began instead sending GI activists to distant "safe" bases in an attempt to isolate and neutralize radicals.⁵³ Joe Miles, for example, was shipped, on three hours notice, to North Carolina's Fort Bragg in early 1969, where he frustrated military authorities by establishing another chapter of GIs United before finally being re-deployed in October to Anchorage, Alaska, the most remote Army base in North America.⁵⁴

Repression, Infiltration, Prosecution: The UFO on Trial

In the wake of increased activism at Fort Jackson, concerned military officials

⁵² Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 59-61.

⁵³ "Fort Jackson GIs Win Victory!," in *Dull Brass*, Vol.1, No. 2, May 1969, 98.

⁵⁴ Halstead, *GIs Speak Out Against the War*, 9.

in Washington issued the first federal guidelines on dissent during the Vietnam era. In May 1969, shortly after all of the Fort Jackson Eight had been released from stockade, commanders at Army bases around the country received an official directive, referred to as a "Guidance on Dissent," that specifically addressed antiwar activity among soldiers and how best to handle it. In categorizing the different manifestations of dissent found on and around Army bases, the directive listed the two most significant threats as (1) "possession and distribution of political materials" and (2) "coffeehouses."⁵⁵ In keeping with its overall strategy of quiet containment, the directive acknowledged that soldiers were technically permitted to visit coffeehouses and other "off-post gathering places," as they were entitled to constitutional protections that included freedom of speech and association. "Severe disciplinary action in response to a relatively insignificant manifestation of dissent," the directive continued, "can have a counter productive effect on other members of the Command, because the reaction appears out of proportion to the threat which the dissent represents. Thus, such disproportionate actions may stimulate further breaches of discipline."⁵⁶ Nonetheless, the directive also left a clear opening for base commanders to declare coffeehouses "off-limits" if they decided that "the activities taking place there include counseling members to refuse to perform duty or to desert, or otherwise involve acts with a significant adverse effect on soldier health, morale, welfare."⁵⁷

With the vague wording of this directive, the U.S. government, while publicly

⁵⁵ "Guidance on Dissent," U.S. Army Directive, May 27, 1969.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

acknowledging soldiers' constitutional rights to visit off-base coffeehouses, simultaneously engaged in a campaign to legally destroy them and their operators using every branch of law enforcement at its disposal. At the UFO coffeehouse, this meant a noticeable increase in harassment by undercover FBI agents, local police, and civilians after the national media attention on Fort Jackson in May 1969. Staff members observed an increase in "straight people trying to act real cool," and were well aware that, in the UFO, they were often surrounded by undercover police and government plants.⁵⁸ Often agents would show up at the UFO dressed in rather obvious "radical" garb, attempting to infiltrate the staff by volunteering for work and sometimes unconvincingly mouthing leftist political rhetoric. As one staff member later recalled, "They [undercover infiltrators] were so eager to be useful and accepted that whenever we had a really nasty chore, we'd just give it to one of them. I used to think I was really popular. It was only later that I learned all those guys were being paid to be my friends."⁵⁹

In the final year of its existence in Columbia, the UFO coffeehouse was aggressively investigated by all levels of state, local, and federal government. The FBI supplied local police with information on social activities engaged in by UFO staff, hoping to arrest them on drug charges.⁶⁰ Federal agents collected detailed profiles on the staff's political beliefs, sexual preferences, and travel plans, and attacked the coffeehouse's finances, sending information to the IRS that taxes had

⁵⁸ Craig Mury Keeney, "Resistance: A History of Anti-Vietnam War Protests in Two Southern Universities, 1966-1970," Master's Thesis, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, 2003, 58.

⁵⁹ McAninch, "The UFO," 7.

⁶⁰ Andrew Grose, "Voices of Southern Protest during the Vietnam War Era," 158.

not been paid on admission fees for live performances.⁶¹ In addition to the undercover infiltrators on volunteer duty, several plain clothes agents (a mixture of local police, Army intelligence, and FBI) visited the coffeehouse daily,⁶² and a rotating group of military police officers stood guard outside the UFO's doors, ostensibly to observe and take note of the coffeehouse's patrons.⁶³ The UFO's constant, nearly-comic endurance of government surveillance and infiltration was even noted by visiting writer Norman Mailer, who began his August 1969 lecture at the coffeehouse by sarcastically asking any undercover agents in the audience to stand and identify themselves.⁶⁴

This intense law enforcement campaign eventually took its toll on the UFO coffeehouse and its staff. The close relationship between authorities at Fort Jackson and local police allowed for a nearly endless variety of legal harassment. Colonel Angelo Perri was acting chief of staff at Fort Jackson during the height of the Army's concern with the UFO problem. He later explained, "[we] just called the police department, the chief, and he closed the coffeehouse. And the way they did it. . .the fire department went in, and said, 'Ah! Fire hazard here, fire hazard there, you know, gotta be closed. Whether it was true or not, you know, you could go to court and sue them to reopen it."⁶⁵ In addition to being shut down for "fire hazards" and other violations, the coffeehouse's staff members were often personally cited on

⁶¹ Lee Bandy, "FBI Files Tell of Work Against USC Left, UFO," *The State*, December 16, 1977, A-1.

⁶² McAninch, "The UFO," 7.

⁶³ Doris B. Giles, "The Antiwar Movement in Columbia, South Carolina 1965-1972," seminar paper, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, 1987, 13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁵ Myers, *Black, White, and Olive Drab*, 203.

similarly minor charges that nonetheless carried costly fines.

Robert Duane Ferré, a former Air Force officer and native of Rochester, New York, was manager of the UFO coffeehouse during this period of intense scrutiny and harassment in the latter half of 1969. Ferré had served a year in prison for refusing to go to Vietnam, and joined the antiwar movement after his release, arriving in Columbia, South Carolina, after the Fort Jackson Eight case. In addition to his work at the UFO, he involved himself in antiwar activities at locations throughout Columbia, hoping to reach those soldiers from Fort Jackson who might not visit the coffeehouse. On August 1, 1969, Ferré and another UFO staff member, Chris Hannafan, went to Jimmy's Drive-In, a local movie spot popular among GIs, to hand out antiwar leaflets. During their visit they spoke with two AWOL soldiers, who wanted advice on gaining status as conscientious objectors. The manager of the drive-in called military police, who arrested the two soldiers. Ferré and Hannafan were themselves charged with disorderly conduct, each fined \$100 and sentenced to thirty days in Columbia jail.⁶⁶

These kinds of incidents made the rotating group of civilian activists who staffed the UFO coffeehouse hyper-aware of the police and government surveillance, and they made substantial, if often futile, efforts to adhere to the letter of the law in every respect possible. Because of the UFO's counterculture reputation, some customers inevitably had drugs like marijuana and LSD on their persons, either for sale or for personal use. Ferré and the UFO's other managers personally removed drug offenders whenever they saw them, and posted "NO HOLDING" posters

⁶⁶ *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), Aug 2, 1969.

throughout the premises in an attempt to discourage drug possession, thwart arrests, and avoid negative attention.⁶⁷ While the coffeehouse never backed away from its radical politics in the face of law enforcement pressure, the staff consciously tried to keep their operation free of alcohol, drugs, and other illegal activity, knowing that even the slightest infraction could invite police harassment and undermine the UFO's larger purpose.

Despite these attempts, the coffeehouse continued to upset some of Columbia's most influential groups and individuals, from Army authorities at Fort Jackson to the business establishments that surrounded it along Main Street. In addition to the Elite Epicurean Restaurant's obvious animosity toward the UFO's existence, many other local merchants regularly complained to police about the coffeehouse's loud music, sidewalks blocked by hippies, and "obscene" posters facing the street. One of the latter featured "grinning American soldiers admiring severed human heads and was captioned, in part, 'the Army can really fuck over your mind if you let it.'"⁶⁸ In late 1969 these merchants began circulating a petition stating that the UFO coffeehouse was a public nuisance whose hostile atmosphere intimidated their customers and damaged long-standing businesses.⁶⁹

The petition process itself revealed the many different forces in Columbia that were actively seeking the UFO's demise. The owner of the Elite Restaurant, patriarch of Columbia's wealthy and politically-connected Manos family, had died in early 1969, and his widow was left in charge of tending the business. Ms. Manos

⁶⁷ McAninch, "The UFO," 5-6. "Holding" was slang for drug possession.

⁶⁸ Transcript of Testimony at 125, State v. Hannafan, Court of General Sessions, Indictment No. 240, Fifth Judicial Circuit of South Carolina (April 15, 1970 through April 28, 1970).

⁶⁹ McAninch, "The UFO," 7.

was initially reluctant to sign the petition, mainly fearing that she would have to testify in court. She was nevertheless subjected to pressure from several different merchants as well as the minister of a nearby church, all of whom urged her to help close the UFO. The Chief of Police and several police captains, who regularly had their morning coffee at the Elite, also persistently advised Ms. Manos that the coffeehouse was a potentially dangerous nuisance and that shutting it down would be in the city's (not to mention the Elite Restaurant's) best interest. In January 1970, she relented and signed the petition.⁷⁰

Unlike the many antiwar and civil rights petitions that had been circulated in Columbia and at Fort Jackson over the preceding years, the petition to close the UFO coffeehouse had the support of the city's prominent businesses, church leaders, military authorities, and City Hall, and thus carried considerably more weight despite its comparatively scant twelve signatures. Shortly after gaining the Elite Restaurant's apparently powerful signature of support, a grand jury issued an indictment and Judge Harry T. Agnew wrote an injunction calling for the UFO coffeehouse to be forcibly shut down. On January 13, 1970, Columbia police put a chain and padlocks across the UFO's front doors and arrested Duane Ferré, his wife Merle Ferré (then eight months pregnant), and fellow UFO staff members Leonard Cohen and William Balk. The indictment accused the coffeehouse of being "a disorderly, ill-governed place, where fighting, cursing, and loud noises generate a public nuisance, marijuana and other drugs have been bought, sold, or used on the

⁷⁰ Ibid.

premises, obscene material has been displayed, and minors have been corrupted."⁷¹

The closing of the UFO coffeehouse and the ensuing trial of its staff caused a significant furor in Columbia, as the defendants received support from the city's increasingly vocal antiwar and counterculture community. The Reverend Gonzalo Leon, a local eccentric known for his bare feet, flowing hair, and stewardship of a New Age spiritual center called the Universal Life Church, became one of the coffeehouse's biggest champions, leading a series of rallies throughout the spring of 1970 in defiance of the city's attempt to shut it down. While Leon undoubtedly had a vested interest in cultivating safe zones for Columbia's freaks and outsiders, other supporters raised constitutional arguments against the UFO's forced closure. Jon Kraus, an instructor at the University of South Carolina's Department of International Studies and president of the state's chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, led a rally on January 18, 1970, five days after the UFO's closing, expressing his outrage at what he called a "a blatant attempt at political repression."⁷² Dr. Howard Levy, recently released after serving thirty-two months in federal prison for his defiance at Fort Jackson three years earlier, also spoke at the same rally, which began on the university campus before sending more than three hundred people marching down Main Street to assemble in front of City Hall and the locked doors of the UFO coffeehouse. The rally literally bridged the three main branches of antiwar activism in Columbia, bringing together dissident Fort Jackson GIs, civilian radicals, and activist students from USC. In their attempt to contain the city's antiwar activity by closing the UFO coffeehouse, authorities

⁷¹ *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), Jan 14, 1970.

⁷² *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), Jan 18, 1970.

inadvertently helped unite these often disparate groups into "one of the loudest, if not the largest, protest marches ever held in the city."⁷³

The occasionally bizarre proceedings of the trial of the three UFO staff members (Merle Ferré was not charged due to her pregnancy) showcased conservative Columbia's official disgust with the coffeehouse and the people who inhabited it. That revulsion was represented by the city's lead prosecutor, 5th Circuit Solicitor John Foard, a physical embodiment of Columbia's authority and its connections to state, federal, and military leadership. Foard, a decorated World War II veteran who had been a prominent city prosecutor for eighteen years, gaining a reputation as something of a showman, was one of the city's most visible and colorful public characters. His arguments at trial often turned into fiery sermons, with Foard singing hymns and dropping to his knees to beg juries for guilty verdicts.⁷⁴ His biblical righteousness, when aimed at the UFO coffeehouse, resulted in a sometimes humorous trial that epitomized the culture war of the late 1960s. In Foard's opening remarks to the jury, he read aloud several passages from the *Berkeley Barb*, an underground newspaper found among many others at the UFO. He highlighted profane language and comic images depicting nudity, concluding that any establishment that would distribute such material was a "cesspool of evil."⁷⁵

Throughout the trial, the coffeehouse and its staff were painted as dangerous agitators from outside Columbia, bent on destroying the city's way of life.

Specifically, the UFO was accused of being "detrimental to the peace, happiness,

⁷³ "Students and Soldiers Protest Closing of Antiwar Coffeehouse," *The New York Times*, January 19, 1970, 4.

⁷⁴ McAninch, "The UFO," 4.

⁷⁵ Giles, "The Antiwar Movement in Columbia, South Carolina 1965-1972," 19.

lives, safety and good morals of the people of the State of South Carolina" by promoting drug use, loud music, and anti-establishment values.⁷⁶ Perhaps unsurprisingly, Foard sang a few verses from "The Old Rugged Cross" in his closing argument which, while certainly melodramatic, seemed to accurately reflect much of the Columbia community's horrified perspective on the UFO coffeehouse. Several editorials in the city's leading newspaper, *The State*, expressed disgust with the UFO's patrons and staff. One citizen called them "immature rabble . . . self-proclaimed redeemers of social and political ills who mock democracy and its freedoms and who chant slogans dedicated to our destruction," and stated that such persons forfeit their constitutional liberties.⁷⁷ But the coffeehouse was not without its supporters; *The State* also printed many letters that defended the UFO and assailed the police department and Foard himself for unfairly singling out the coffeehouse when several bars and restaurants around town were known for loud, drunken fights and easily-obtainable marijuana. Why would soldiers be barred from a coffeehouse while still permitted to visit bars and brothels? The trial, these supporters suggested, was clearly politically-motivated.⁷⁸

On April 27, 1970, the three defendants were convicted of operating a public nuisance, a misdemeanor offense that typically carried a sentence of no more than ninety days.⁷⁹ In delivering his sentence, however, Judge Harry T. Agnew used the opportunity to set an example for the state of South Carolina, fining the UFO coffeehouse \$10,000 and ordering Duane Ferré, Leonard Cohen, and William Balk

⁷⁶ United States Servicemen's Fund (USSF) newsletter, January 24, 1970.

⁷⁷ *The Columbia State* (Columbia, S.C.), March 4, 1970.

⁷⁸ *The Columbia State* (Columbia, S.C.), February 2, 1970 and February 5, 1970.

⁷⁹ Giles, "The Antiwar Movement in Columbia, South Carolina 1965-1972," 19.

each to serve six years in prison. He defended the unusually harsh sentence in a statement that captured how deeply the UFO coffeehouse had offended the conservative leadership of Columbia:

As I understand it, two of the defendants came from great distances to this community. I have wondered where we are headed in this country, and what the future holds for my own children. It concerns me. I certainly hope that they won't come under the influence of persons who will guide them in the direction that I feel individuals who frequented the UFO would guide them. A great number of young people from all over South Carolina were exposed to the teachings of the defendants and the people of South Carolina are not accustomed to teachings of people from New York and San Francisco, who rebel against our form of life.⁸⁰

Despite his apparent disgust with the UFO staff, Agnew released them pending appeal, and a year later the sentences were reduced in exchange for their acceptance of lifetime banishment from the state of South Carolina.⁸¹ John Foard himself agreed to the lighter treatment for the staff, later explaining that he had accomplished his main goal: the permanent closure of the UFO coffeehouse.⁸²

The UFO in Exile

The demise of the UFO coffeehouse in Columbia initiated what would turn out to be the city's final explosion of antiwar demonstrations during the Vietnam era, and showed how the coffeehouse had become more than a hangout for bored GIs; it had also evolved into an important icon for many of Columbia's young people. Student activists at the University of South Carolina (USC), outraged at what they interpreted as a political assault, formed a group called the "UFO in Exile," meeting weekly in a Student Union building on campus called Russell House, organizing student support for the coffeehouse and its staff while the trial progressed. After

⁸⁰ McAninch, "The UFO," 7.

⁸¹ Myers, *Black, White, and Olive Drab*, 203.

⁸² Giles, "The Antiwar Movement in Columbia, South Carolina 1965-1972," 19.

Judge Agnew delivered the six-year sentences on April 27, Solicitor Foard publicly announced his intent to extend his campaign to the university campus, declaring an unofficial war on drugs and dissidents at USC and specifically targeting the UFO in Exile. He used his connections on the university board of trustees to instigate a series of campus drug raids, investigate the student newspaper for obscenity and, most troubling to students, restrict access to the Russell House political meeting center while dozens of city police officers patrolled the campus, performing random searches and asking students for identification.⁸³

Foard's campaign, fueled by his seemingly personal grudge against the UFO coffeehouse and its sympathizers, had a chilling effect on academic freedom in Columbia.⁸⁴ Several college professors had testified in court on the UFO's behalf, and Foard sent letters to their respective departments, claiming that because of their testimony they "don't belong at the university."⁸⁵ Foard's recommendations were heeded by the city's various colleges. History professor Seldon Smith was subjected to an extensive fitness hearing at which his involvement with the UFO figured prominently; but Smith had tenure and was ultimately retained by Columbia College. Other professors, however, did not fare so well. Ray Moore, a Methodist minister and untenured English instructor at Columbia College, was terminated based on the UFO trial transcript provided by Foard, as was prominent UFO supporter and untenured USC professor Jon Kraus. Several other instructors and professors were questioned and/or investigated in the wake of the coffeehouse

⁸³ John D. Spade, "USC Group Says Foard 'Threatens Freedom,'" *The Columbia State* (Columbia, S.C.), May 1, 1970.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ McAninch, "The UFO," 8.

trial.⁸⁶

Foard's heavy-handed effort to "clean up" the university in the wake of the coffeehouse trial coincided with the weeks of outrage on college campuses across the country over President Nixon's invasion of Cambodia and the subsequent killing of four students at Kent State on May 4. The confluence of national and local pressures was explosive in Columbia. Students at USC clashed with police and National Guard throughout the first weeks of May 1970, with the demonstrations focused particularly on the city's repressive policies toward the UFO coffeehouse and its supporters at the college.⁸⁷ Russell House was the center of the storm on campus, as the building became, much like the UFO coffeehouse itself, a physical symbol for the students' struggle against authority. A series of escalating confrontations at Russell House eventually devolved into violence, with hundreds of students tear-gassed and beaten by National Guard on May 11 and 12.

While coinciding national events like Kent State and the Vietnam War undoubtedly fueled the fire of student anger at USC, the perceived assault on their personal liberties on campus, represented by the attack on Russell House and generalized police harassment, pushed a massive number of students into action. While antiwar rallies at USC had historically drawn very small crowds on campus, the demonstrations in 1970 against Foard and the police brought thousands of students to Columbia's streets. Even traditionally conservative campus institutions like fraternities and sororities joined in protests against police harassment after

⁸⁶ For more on the John Foard saga, including details on his political connections and power over the university, see Henry H. Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina, 1940-2000* (Columbia, S.C. : University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 221-236.

⁸⁷ Giles, "The Antiwar Movement in Columbia, South Carolina 1965-1972," 26-29.

Governor Robert McNair asserted that "dorms are not sanctuaries," and authorized police to enter student housing buildings to search for drugs.⁸⁸ Just as in the Fort Jackson Eight case, the majority of student demonstrators and their sympathizers were not hardcore radicals, or even necessarily antiwar in orientation. Rather, they saw the attack on the UFO coffeehouse and police occupation of the university as parts of a disturbing trend in Columbia that directly threatened its citizens' constitutional liberties. At both Fort Jackson and the USC campus, the unpopularity of the war in Vietnam provided a backdrop for soldiers and students to assert their civil liberties against the aggressive intrusions of the powerful institutions in which they were respectively embedded.

The UFO's Impact

As one historian notes, "the antiwar movement in Columbia peaked and collapsed during the first part of 1970."⁸⁹ The UFO coffeehouse was a significant factor in that peak and collapse. During its two years of existence in Columbia, it came to be identified, for better or worse, as the center of the city's developing counterculture and antiwar movements. The coffeehouse's evolution through several different distinct phases reflects the chaotic landscape of political and cultural possibilities that defined the era. The severe repression it faced, and the specific shape that repression took in Columbia, demonstrates how city, state, and federal authorities saw the coffeehouse's presence as extremely threatening. Its final collapse in a public trial helped trigger the largest student insurrection in the city's history.

⁸⁸ *Charlotte Observer*, June 8, 1970.

⁸⁹ Myers, *Black, White, and Olive Drab*, 204.

When Fred Gardner opened the UFO in January 1968, just two years earlier, he certainly anticipated that an explicitly antiwar, counterculture coffeehouse would cause a stir in traditionally conservative Columbia. That was, of course, part of its intended purpose. Arriving in town around the same time that the Orangeburg massacre brought national media attention to South Carolina's racial conditions, the coffeehouse quickly became popular among civil rights activists, dissident college students, and antiwar soldiers from Fort Jackson, who immediately employed the space as a safe house for political discussion and organization.⁹⁰ The chapel pray-in action, the formation of GIs United Against the War in Vietnam, and the defense of the Fort Jackson Eight case were all centrally planned at, and supported by, the UFO coffeehouse. In this way the UFO served a critical support function for the growing GI movement at Fort Jackson.

Besides establishing itself as a political operations center in Columbia, the UFO coffeehouse also became a significant cultural battleground, its visual aesthetic and customer base exhibiting the kinds of overt references to sex, drugs, and rock music that were commonplace in major American cities in 1968 but rarely seen in Columbia before the UFO's arrival. A sizable portion of the community was disturbed by the coffeehouse, viewing it as a gathering place for unwelcome agitators and drug pushers. The petition that ultimately closed the UFO down,

⁹⁰ Jack Bass and Jack Nelson, *The Orangeburg Massacre* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1970). On February 8, 1968, local police opened fire on a crowd of (largely black) students at the University of South Carolina, Orangeburg, just 45 miles south of Columbia. The crowd was protesting the continued segregation at a local bowling alley. The incident preceded both the Jackson State and Kent State shootings later in the era, and produced a flood of civil rights activism in the area. In Columbia, the UFO coffeehouse became a natural meeting place for activists in the wake of the Orangeburg shooting.

though signed by a small number of local merchants, seemed to represent a broad consensus of Columbia's mainstream.

Of course, the UFO's closing and the prosecution of its staff were the result of forces much larger than the merchant-signed petition. The entire episode, including the ensuing police crackdown at USC, revealed the extensive cooperation of the state police (South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, or "SLED"), military authorities at Fort Jackson, and the federal government as represented by the FBI and other agencies.⁹¹ Ultimately the UFO coffeehouse became the favorite target of Columbia's most flamboyant prosecutor, Solicitor John Foard, whose public crusade against drugs and youthful radicalism helped him win re-election in the fall of 1970, in a campaign that promoted his closing of the UFO as one of the landmark events in his tenure.⁹² Although Foard adamantly denied that his prosecution of the UFO was politically-motivated and that he had never cooperated with federal authorities, a Freedom of Information Act Request in 1994 revealed Foard's close relationship with military authorities at Fort Jackson, as well as substantial contact between Foard's office and the Internal Security subcommittee of the United States Senate Judiciary Committee, which at the time was charged with investigating subversion within the armed forces.⁹³ It is clear that the closing of the UFO coffeehouse served different purposes for different groups; nevertheless, the structures of power in

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Henry H. Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina, 1940-2000* (Columbia, S.C. : University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 235.

⁹³ McAninch, "The UFO," 7. McAninch details his discovery of Solicitor Foard's correspondences within a file that included the UFO trial transcript located at the Southern Regional Office of the ACLU in Atlanta, Georgia. The letters were sent to the office after Foard's death.

Columbia, South Carolina, including the U.S. military at Fort Jackson, worked together to achieve the common goal of shutting down the UFO.

The academic repression that followed the UFO's trial proved too much to take for Columbia's student population, many of whom loudly rebelled throughout the tumultuous spring of 1970. The aggressive tactics, both by Foard himself and the city police he indirectly controlled, were met with increasing outrage from students and professors who saw the UFO's closing and the attack on its campus support center, Russell House, as part of a concerted effort to limit their constitutional freedoms of speech and assembly. The harsh approach taken by authorities provoked a dangerous situation that ended up uniting more students than ever against their perceived oppressors at the university and in the surrounding community. However upset the student body at USC may have been, though, the aggressive tactics of repression were roundly applauded by the off-campus community, whose rage at unruly college students could be easily exploited by local politicians.

While Columbia's city authorities, like those in many college towns during the antiwar upheavals of 1970, chose to take a hard line on student protestors, the incident also compelled authorities at the federal level (particularly in the military) to re-evaluate their strategies in dealing with political dissent.⁹⁴ Ultimately, the media attention (both favorable and unfavorable) given to the UFO coffeehouse and

⁹⁴ Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago*, 310-311. Miller and many other historians have documented the fresh explosion of antiwar activism that swept college campuses in early 1970, following Nixon's "secret" invasion of Cambodia. The Kent State and Jackson State shootings both took place while students demonstrated against the Cambodia invasion and the larger expansion of the Vietnam War it seemed to signal.

the Fort Jackson Eight case helped convince military authorities to take a more subtle approach in dealing with the morale and discipline problems that were plaguing every branch of the armed forces by the late 1960s. After releasing or transferring the Fort Jackson Eight, the military began quietly dismissing radicals from military service before finally, in 1971, announcing that any soldier with less than six months service left, in addition to any recent Vietnam returnee, could ask for and immediately receive an honorable discharge. These two groups of soldiers, "short-timers" and Vietnam veterans, were the most likely to engage in political organization, and the military's softened strategy of allowing them to exit the military without negative consequence proved much more effective in purging the ranks of potential political resisters. According to historian David Cortright, "for many disgruntled soldiers the offer was like a dream come true, and tens of thousands rushed to take advantage of the program."⁹⁵

At Fort Jackson, the military's more subtle approach to containing dissent and insubordination took a somewhat comic turn that nonetheless reflected the UFO coffeehouse's lasting impact on base life. In 1968, at nearly the same moment that the UFO gained popularity, military officials at Fort Jackson consciously attempted to offset its appeal. In the basement of a recreation center, the Army opened its own "counterculture" coffeehouse, decorated with posters of Hollywood stars (including Sophia Loren) and folk singers performing live.⁹⁶ The Army essentially copied the counterculture elements that had made the UFO so popular, eliminated the political

⁹⁵ Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 91.

⁹⁶ Donald Janson, "Antiwar Coffeehouses Delight G.I.'s but Not Army," *The New York Times*, 12 Aug 1968.

activism, and hoped that soldiers would be placated enough to stop the kinds of activities that had been planned at the UFO. In their obvious attempt to duplicate the UFO's cultural appeal, Army officials at Fort Jackson implicitly conceded their worry over the threat that coffeehouses posed to their authority and foreshadowed the military's later efforts to co-opt the counterculture image.

As the stories of the nation's other major GI coffeehouses similarly demonstrate, however, officials in the American military had a seemingly infinite arsenal of strategies by which to confront the coffeehouse phenomenon and the larger institutional crisis that it ominously signaled. As was the case in Columbia, South Carolina, the military often discovered that its most loyal allies were "base towns" themselves, whose natural support for the nation's armed forces had deep economic and cultural roots, and whose shared revulsion at the very idea of "counterculture coffeehouses" could be mobilized to justify the actions deemed necessary to make them, like the UFO, disappear forever.

CHAPTER TWO: THE OLEO STRUT (FORT HOOD, KILLEEN, TEXAS)

As the title of one local history suggests, the story of Killeen, Texas, is a "tale of two cities," one a tiny rural community oriented mainly toward agriculture, the other a bustling base town serving the needs of one of the largest military bases in the country. When Killeen was first settled in 1882, it functioned as a railroad depot just forty miles north of rapidly-expanding Austin. A conglomerate of railroad companies sponsored a national media campaign, promoting Killeen as a central shipping point for goods like cotton, wool, and grain, attracting local farmers, small businessmen, and their families. By the turn of the twentieth century, the town had grown from a small shipping outpost to include six general stores, three cotton gins, three blacksmiths, two hardware stores, and a jeweler.¹

Killeen sustained a small population, never more than two thousand people, for the first sixty years of its existence. The virtually homogenous white Protestant community specifically discouraged settlement by blacks and Catholics, and Killeen remained a relatively insulated rural town until the Great Depression initiated a process of rapid evolution. Various New Deal public works projects expanded Killeen's physical infrastructure, and as roads, sewage systems, and larger highways were constructed, the city's population naturally increased. Perhaps more importantly for Killeen's future, though, the New Deal projects also cemented the city's friendly relationship with the federal government, a relationship that grew closer through the twentieth century. In 1942, Killeen became the site of a new

¹ Bell County Historical Commission, *Story of Bell County, Texas* (2 vols., Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1988), 34.

Army training base constructed to serve the demands of World War II. The hardship of the Depression made the idea of a new Army camp attractive to many Killeen residents, who saw an opportunity for economic growth and stability.

The arrival of the U.S. Army dramatically transformed Killeen, Texas, ultimately initiating a wholly new chapter in the region's history. The construction of Camp Hood, as it was first called, "hit Killeen like a bolt of lightning,"² as the government purchased over half of the area's farms and trading centers, and virtually overnight a small agricultural economy became a military economy. The need for farm service businesses like cotton gins, grain warehouses, and corn weighers was severely reduced, replaced by businesses that supported an exploding population of soldiers, construction workers, government employees, and their families that flooded into the city by the thousands through the 1940s and 1950s. By 1955 a population of 24,000 compelled the building of new schools, a hospital, and nearly three hundred local businesses.³

Along with this dramatic expansion came an equally dramatic shift in Killeen's economic and cultural orientation. The town's fortunes, for better or worse, became inextricably tied to the presence of the military. As a local historian described the relationship, "the complete economic foundation of the town, its very reason for existence," had been "replaced by an economy dependent upon the federal government."⁴ In the early years of Fort Hood's existence, this fact was starkly demonstrated by a series of economic recessions that coincided with troop

² Gra'Delle Duncan, *Killeen: A Tale of Two Cities* (Austin, TX: Eakin Publications, 1984), 94.

³ Bell County Historical Commission, *Story of Bell County, Texas*, 46-49.

⁴ Duncan, *Killeen: A Tale of Two Cities*, 94.

cutbacks during peacetime. The mid-1950s, for example, saw difficult times in Killeen, as the end of the Korean War hastened a severe downturn in military activity at Fort Hood. Business boomed again, however, in 1959, when the First Armored Division returned permanently to the base. The increased tensions of the Cold War indirectly provided Killeen with a lasting economic stability, which became even stronger as the Vietnam War developed through the 1960s.

Killeen's Army-sponsored population explosion also brought significant cultural changes to what had been a historically conservative, racially-exclusive farming community. The influx changed the city's racial, ethnic, and religious character, and the transition was not without its difficulties. In 1950, the city built a subdivision called Marlboro Heights in an effort to segregate a growing black population. Two all-black schools were opened in 1954 only after the NAACP filed federal suits, and Jim Crow laws were enforced well into the 1960s. Killeen's first resident Catholic priest was assigned to the St. Joseph's parish in 1954, and the city's Jews worshipped in a small synagogue built on base.⁵ Few would describe Killeen as cosmopolitan; nevertheless, by the mid-1960s the diversity of the city's residents had expanded dramatically as a result of Fort Hood's presence.

During the height of the Vietnam War, Fort Hood housed a rotating population of more than 40,000 soldiers, and Killeen itself grew to include nearly 35,000 permanent residents. Killeen's small downtown commercial district increasingly oriented itself to serve the needs of Fort Hood GIs, as rows of dry cleaners (for uniforms), jewelry stores, pawn shops, and bookstores sprang up next

⁵ Ibid., 102.

to a movie theater, several pool halls, and a pinball arcade.⁶ It was in this area of town that antiwar organizers decided, in 1968, to open Killeen's first counterculture coffeehouse based on the model created by Fred Gardner in Columbia, South Carolina.

The Oleo Strut Opens Its Doors

Josh Gould was twenty-three years old when he arrived in Killeen in the summer of 1968. As a civil rights and peace activist, he had been traveling around the country for several years, mainly working with college-oriented organizations like SNCC and SDS. After briefly working at the UFO coffeehouse in Columbia, in the spring, Gould had joined with twenty-one year old activist Janet ("Jay") Lockard in attempting to open a similar GI coffeehouse in Leesville, Louisiana, outside Fort Polk. The tiny town proved, for a variety of reasons, extremely unreceptive to the idea, and Gould and Lockard finally made their way, in June 1968, to Killeen, where they had heard that Gardner and a small group of friends had rented a storefront in hopes of turning it into another off-base counterculture and antiwar coffeehouse for soldiers stationed at Fort Hood.⁷

The project in Killeen was the first major campaign in the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam ("Mobe")-sponsored "Summer of Support," which intended to help build a network of coffeehouses outside military bases throughout the country in an effort to initiate greater contact and solidarity between civilian activists and American soldiers. Gardner's experiment at the UFO was only a few months old, and had already achieved some success in helping

⁶ "Fort Hood GI Haven," *Space City News*, Fall 1970.

⁷ Josh Gould, interview with author, January 25, 2010.

soldiers organize a peace action in front of one of Fort Jackson's chapels. Mobe leaders were excited about the prospect of using the UFO coffeehouse model to support further activism and resistance among soldiers, and began fundraising and recruiting staff with the goal of opening several coffeehouses by June 1968.

A letter dated April 30, 1968, signed by Mobe leader Rennie Davis, was distributed to antiwar movement organizations throughout the spring. The letter was meant to serve as a recruiting tool for coffeehouse staff, explaining the political and cultural impetus behind the coffeehouse idea. "The coffeehouses represent an attempt to work out a new way of reaching soldiers without haranguing them. . . [B]ecause of the cultural and class basis of our movement. . . those soldiers most likely to be turned off by the army are also those most likely to be turned off by bars and whorehouses; most likely to welcome a coffeehouse." Davis and his fellow antiwar activists in the Mobe organization, following the direction set by Fred Gardner (who is quoted in the letter as the "originator" of the concept), believed that the coffeehouse's role as a countercultural alternative could be a powerful tool for bringing political dissidents together under one roof: "The coffeehouses come on as strictly commercial ventures—'psychedelic painting' on the windows, personality posters on the wall, flashing colored lights, folk singers, or a hi-fi playing with Judy Collins, The Mothers, etc."⁸

Davis' recruitment letter contains some of the civilian antiwar movement's most direct articulations of their position on the coffeehouse network's appropriate

⁸ "Subversive Involvement in Disruption of 1968 Democratic Party National Convention," *Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security, House of Representatives, 90th Congress, Second Session, Part 2* (Dec 2, 1968), 2667-8.

relationship to GIs, underlining Gardner's original vision of a primarily cultural institution that specifically avoids direct political engagement with soldiers and other customers:

The coffee-houses are not designed to organize soldiers; they are designed to provide soldiers with a resource institution through which they can organize themselves, when they are ready. The qualities needed in coffee-house staff are not those of a political activist; they are those of friend and soda-jerk. Warmth, friendliness, openness, and a willingness to listen are the qualities needed to make soldiers feel at home and unthreatened in the coffeehouse. The coffeehouses give movement people an opportunity to make their rhetoric of fraternity real—but nothing more.⁹

Perhaps sensing the resistance that coffeehouses could face in military towns, Davis warned prospective staff that "any explicit proselytizing by movement people who worked there would be inappropriate and even threatening to the coffeehouse's continued existence." Besides, he argued, proselytizing wasn't necessary; soldiers were the last group of Americans who needed to be educated on the impact of the war.

Despite Davis' warning against direct political organization of soldiers, everyone involved in the Summer of Support understood that the coffeehouses were clearly political institutions; the staff was expected to help develop an environment conducive to political activity, and the entire endeavor explicitly aimed to support a developing GI antiwar movement. To activists like Josh Gould and Jay Lockard, the Mobe's Summer of Support campaign seemed like the perfect opportunity to get away from organizing in cities and on college campuses, bringing their political work to areas of the country that they felt had been neglected by the antiwar movement. The idea of going to small towns to "organize the working class" was a

⁹ Ibid., 2667.

significant trend in the antiwar movement of the late 1960s; Gould and Lockard were part of a growing number of antiwar activists who were convinced that grassroots organizational work was the key to achieving their political goals. The GI coffeehouse movement offered such activists a way to make direct contact with the working class of American soldiers, uniting their political tactics with their antiwar ideals.¹⁰

When Gould and Lockard arrived in Killeen, Texas, Fred Gardner and his friends had yet to open a coffeehouse in the space they had rented, an old TV repair shop at 101 Avenue D in the center of the commercial district. Gardner hoped that the new arrivals would take over the project, freeing him to move on to other military towns to repeat the same pattern of organizing the coffeehouse's practical elements (securing space, business licenses, etc.) before giving the coffeehouse over to a staff of volunteer antiwar activists. Within a week, Gould and Lockard were put in charge of designing, staffing, and managing the coffeehouse project in Killeen. After decorating the place with the apparently requisite "spinning colored lights," personality posters of celebrities like Raquel Welch, and a stage for live performances, the Killeen group decided on a name for the coffeehouse: "The Oleo Strut," referring to the vertical shock absorber on the underside of a helicopter. The Strut, as it came to be known, hoped to absorb the shock of service in the Vietnam-

¹⁰ Josh Gould, interview with author, January 25, 2010. The left's attempt to reach out to the "working class" of GIs is documented in Andy Stapp, *Up Against the Brass* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970); "Exclusive!: The Plot to Unionize the U.S. Army," *Esquire*, August 1968; United States. Credit for this strategy can be placed largely with the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and its youth wing, Young Socialist Alliance, with which Gould and many other GI coffeehouse staff members were involved. See also "Free Speech for GIs: The Case of Pfc. Howard Petrick," pamphlet, April 1967; "See Here, Pvt. Glover: A Socialist Soldier Gives the Army Fits," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 20, 1969.

era American military.¹¹ The name was particularly appropriate for an establishment near Fort Hood, where 65% of the base's 40,000 soldiers were recent returnees from service in Vietnam.¹² Often referred to as "short-timers," these veterans had completed their required 13-month tours in Vietnam, but still had months left in their overall service requirement, and spent their remaining time hanging around American bases with little to keep them occupied. As the Army itself soon recognized, short-timers were the soldiers most likely to engage in political activism against the war, and the staff of the Oleo Strut coffeehouse hoped to use these veteran's war experiences and ample free time to stimulate a more vigorous antiwar discourse at Fort Hood.

The Oleo Strut coffeehouse's grand opening celebration, held in Killeen's Condor Park on July 5, 1968, captured the project's unique balance of radical counterculture and radical politics. Strut organizers, along with activists from the University of Texas Veterans' Committee (an Austin-based antiwar group), held a "love-in" that included folk and rock performances, antiwar speeches, and copious amounts of marijuana. Approximately eight hundred people attended the event, among them more than two hundred soldiers from Fort Hood. By the end of the day, Killeen police arrived in riot gear and broke up the party, but the Oleo Strut coffeehouse and its organizers had succeeded in making a highly visible entrance onto the town's historically staid cultural scene.¹³ A few weeks after the Oleo Strut's opening festivities, an editorial titled "The Big Smear" appeared in the town's one

¹¹ David Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 3.

¹² Barbara Dane, "The Oleo Strut," *The Guardian*, July 30, 1968.

¹³ David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: The American Military Today* (New York: Anchor Press, 1975), 56.

local newspaper, the *Killeen Daily Herald*. The paper's staff disputed the coffeehouse's assumption that Fort Hood was teeming with dissident GIs, and reminded citizens of the community's historical connection to the military base and wider ideological alignment with U.S. foreign policy:

We must not forget that this Central Texas fortress during World War II, the Korean War, and now the Vietnam War, has a proud record of achievement. The training instilled in thousands of troops has helped bring battlefield victories in the highest military tradition, and in the end, will help win the final battle. We must always remember that Fort Hood and Killeen are inseparable, and that the happiness, the sorrow, or the mission of one becomes that of the other.¹⁴

By registering its disgust with the coffeehouse from the moment it opened, pitting it against the community's traditions and long-term interests, the town's newspaper helped ensure that the Oleo Strut would become a subject of significant local controversy.

That two hundred soldiers would show up to an event as clearly "hip" in orientation as a love-in was a testament to Fort Hood's special status among soldiers of the era, many of whom were aware of the base's notoriety for extensive drug use and insubordination. One reason for the base's unusually high levels of marijuana use was a case of environmental serendipity: the intoxicating plant grew naturally in large amounts throughout the area. As one GI reported, "It grows wild all around the base, so when you go out on tank maneuvers you just reach out and grab all you want, dry it, and start smoking."¹⁵ The base was so well-known among the military's growing number of regular pot-smokers that in hip circles it earned the

¹⁴ "The Big Smear," Editorial comment, *The Killeen Daily Herald*, July 25, 1968.

¹⁵ Barbara Dane, "The Oleo Strut," *The Guardian*, July 30, 1968. Nicholas von Hoffman's reporting on Fort Hood in *The Washington Post* throughout 1968 also details the post's intense explosion of drug use and countercultural expression among soldiers, which included a prolonged battle over allowable hair length.

nickname "Fort Head."¹⁶ The staff of the Oleo Strut coffeehouse recognized the counterculture developing among soldiers at Fort Hood, and initially hoped that the undirected anti-authority attitude it seemed to represent could be, at the coffeehouse, channeled into a more coherent challenge to the base's leadership and the larger military establishment.

Countercultural events like the Strut-sponsored love-in may have attracted a large crowd of soldiers and young people, but a sizable group of Killeen residents were deeply offended by such public displays, and small bands of local vigilantes (often joined or supported by city police) regularly attacked the coffeehouse and its organizers in the early days of the Oleo Strut. These groups were mainly comprised of teenaged males, many of whom were Killeen high school students, who wreaked often alcohol-fueled havoc throughout town. The locals referred to them as "cowboys" or "goat-ropers." Kicking off their campaign of terror against the Strut by smashing musical equipment at the love-in, the goat-ropers repeatedly broke the coffeehouse's front windows, stole the Strut's sign, and generally menaced the staff in the first weeks of the coffeehouse's existence. The activists working at the Strut, informed by their personal political philosophies, initially took a nonviolent approach to the aggression, until local GIs convinced them to stock the store with baseball bats and a shotgun for self-defense. The goat-ropers only relented in their harassment after the staff threatened violent physical retaliation.¹⁷

Political activity, organized by Fort Hood GIs, began developing at the Oleo Strut coffeehouse throughout the summer of 1968, despite the goat-ropers and

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 2.

other dangers. Private Bruce "Gypsy" Peterson began regularly leaving his post at Fort Hood to spend time at the coffeehouse, eventually founding and editing an underground antiwar newspaper for GIs, *Fatigue Press*, out of an office at the Strut. *Fatigue Press* formed a vital link between activists at the coffeehouse and soldiers at Fort Hood; Peterson, with the help of Strut staff, mimeographed hundreds of copies of the paper before smuggling them on base to covertly distribute them to fellow soldiers. Peterson's work as an underground newspaper editor caught the attention of base leadership, and he soon discovered that his actions had provoked military and city authorities to wage their own campaign of repression against him.

In the first weeks of August 1968, just two months after the first hand-drawn issues of *Fatigue Press* had been brought on base, Peterson began to find small bags of marijuana planted in his base locker. He threw them away, disturbed by the sense that he was being set up. Over the course of the next month, Killeen city police arrested Peterson for marijuana possession three different times. The final arrest occurred as Peterson stood in front of the Oleo Strut coffeehouse, where police claimed to have found a microscopic amount of marijuana, mixed in with Peterson's pocket lint. Despite the lab technician later admitting that the evidence was completely destroyed upon examination, Peterson was convicted in military court¹⁸ and sentenced to eight years of hard labor at Leavenworth federal penitentiary.¹⁹ The severe sentence failed in its intent to quell dissent at Fort Hood, however. *Fatigue Press* continued in Peterson's absence (he was released on appeal

¹⁸ At the time, when Killeen city police arrested Fort Hood GIs, they regularly transferred them to the custody of military police.

¹⁹ "Frame-up at Ft Head," *Vietnam GI*, September 1968.

two years later), delivering monthly antiwar movement news to Fort Hood GIs, edited and published by volunteer soldiers at the Oleo Strut coffeehouse.²⁰

"Riot Control? Hell No!": The Fort Hood 43 and Richard Chase

Political energy among soldiers at Fort Hood was not limited to the activism coming out of the Oleo Strut coffeehouse. A significant portion of the base's population of black soldiers began organizing their own movement in the summer of 1968, reacting to national events with increasing anger and resistance. While they were similarly opposed to the war in Vietnam, most of the rebellious black GIs at Fort Hood shared little affinity for the "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" lifestyle embraced by the Oleo Strut and the overwhelmingly white soldiers who frequented the coffeehouse.

Black soldiers at Fort Hood were under a particular and immediate set of pressures that summer. Riots had erupted in black communities in more than 120 American cities in the wake of the twin assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy in the spring. Thousands of American troops were dispatched to quell the violence throughout the year, with Fort Hood becoming the main training and deployment base for riot control duty.²¹ Black soldiers, many of whom had

²⁰ James Lewes, *Protest and Survive: Underground GI Newspapers during the Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 176.

²¹ John Kifner, "Thousands of U.S. Troops Mobilized for Guard Duty at Democratic Convention," *The New York Times*, August 25, 1968; J. Anthony Lukas, "Chicago is Prague," *The New York Times*, August 25, 1968. See also Interview with Haywood T. "The Kid" Kirkland (Ari Sesu Merretazon) in Wallace Terry, *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War* (New York: Random House, 1984), 100. In the interview, one of several conversations Terry had with black GIs who refused riot duty at Chicago, Merretazon expresses a common sentiment: "I told them I'm not going there holding no weapon in front of my brothers and sisters."; "GI Black Panther Lists Motivation," *The Overseas Weekly-Pacific Edition*, May 3, 1969.

recently returned from Vietnam, were especially angry at having to re-deploy into the streets of their own neighborhoods, and increasing numbers began to resent their role in what the Army called "civil disturbance control."²²

The resentment felt by many black soldiers at Fort Hood first peaked in late August 1968, as the base made preparations to send soldiers to Chicago during the Democratic Party's national convention. After the violence of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam in January had laid waste to his constant claim of "victory around the corner," Lyndon B. Johnson made the decision not to pursue another presidential term, throwing the party into disarray over the war issue. Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley, imagining massive numbers of marauding antiwar protestors descending on the city, promised to keep order by any means necessary, and Illinois governor Samuel H. Shapiro promised his support in that effort. In addition to troops from the Illinois National Guard, soldiers from Fort Hood were to be mobilized and sent to Chicago for riot control duty (fig. 4).

In the days leading up to the convention, black soldiers at Fort Hood expressed opposition to these orders, and began to organize. A group of sixty black soldiers assembled at Fort Hood on the night of August 23, drew up a list of grievances and discussed, but did not decide on, whether they should refuse their orders to deploy to Chicago. Private Guy Smith, a Vietnam combat veteran, described the mood of the gathering: "A lot of black GIs knew what the thing [Chicago] was going to be about and they weren't going to go and fight their own people."²³ The meeting went on through the night, to the consternation of base authorities, and when forty three

²² "Remember the Fort Hood 43!," *Vietnam GI*, August 1969.

²³ *Ibid.*

men remained in the morning, all of them were arrested by military police.²⁴

The Oleo Strut coffeehouse immediately leapt into action to support the arrested soldiers, helping mount the group's defense and media strategy. In addition to providing a safe meeting space, the coffeehouse staff raised funds to hire a civilian lawyer, and publicized the group's situation in *Fatigue Press* and as many other outlets as possible. The case of the Fort Hood 43, as it became known, was another instance in which Army authorities were caught off guard by the amount of publicity and sympathy given the defendants.²⁵ While many of the soldiers involved still faced dishonorable discharges and (in some cases) prison time, the case was prominent in the mainstream press for over a year as the various courts-martial progressed. Moreover, the publicity brought further attention to the growing resentment toward riot control duty expressed by American soldiers and helped reveal the military's significant internal problems with morale and insubordination.²⁶

For Josh Gould and the staff of the Oleo Strut, the lead-up to the highly-anticipated Chicago convention provided an opportunity to express solidarity with black soldiers who had resisted riot control deployment. A group of white soldiers who regularly visited the Strut, and who were among the 6,000 Fort Hood troops ordered to Chicago, had the idea to wear stickers on their helmets that would show that they were on the "side" of the demonstrators, despite their service in the

²⁴ Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 3.

²⁵ John Kifner, "Thousands of U.S. Troops Mobilized for Guard Duty at Democratic Convention," *The New York Times*, August 25, 1968.

²⁶ "3 More Convicted in Protest at Fort," *The New York Times*, September 29, 1968; Fred P. Graham, "Testing the Issue of Soldiers' Rights," *The New York Times*, March 23, 1969.

military. The sticker itself, which depicted a white hand giving the peace sign, backed by a clenched black fist, employed the specific political iconography of the era while simultaneously hinting at some of the underlying tension and division within the antiwar movement.²⁷ Gould himself planned to drive to Chicago to help distribute the stickers and spread word to antiwar demonstrators about their symbolic significance.

Circumstances ultimately prevented Gould's intended activism at the 1968 convention. Three hours before his plane left for Chicago, Gould drove to the Oleo Strut for a final visit. On the way, he was pulled over by Killeen police for making an illegal right turn. The police searched his car and claimed to find "grains" of marijuana in the vehicle's floor carpets, and arrested Gould. He was held in the Killeen city jail for eight days, through the duration of the convention in Chicago, until the police admitted that no marijuana was found in the car after all. Gould was released the day after the convention concluded, and assumed (though could not prove) that his arrest had been orchestrated to disrupt his political activities.²⁸

Despite the Strut staff's attempts to reach out to radical black soldiers at Fort Hood through the summer of 1968, significant racial problems among soldiers continued to pose barriers to the kind of unity they hoped to build. Physical altercations between black and white soldiers were commonplace on base, both in the barracks and in the stockade. A series of fights at Fort Hood in the spring of 1969 eventually escalated into what authorities characterized as "race riots" in April. Amidst the increased racial animosity and violence, the coffeehouse staff

²⁷ Josh Gould, interview with author, January 25, 2010.

²⁸ Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 3.

redoubled its efforts to promote solidarity among soldiers of different races, inviting a group of black soldiers to the Strut in hopes of brokering some kind of racial peace. As one staff member explained, "We talked about bringing together a large group of EMs (200-300), black brown and white to sign a peace treaty amongst themselves, which would recognize the hostilities and would serve to focus attention on a common enemy."²⁹ A meeting at the coffeehouse in July 1969 was eventually agreed upon.

The black soldiers who came to the meeting were part of a group who identified with the "5%" movement, a radical black Islamic organization that had begun in Harlem in 1964.³⁰ According to Oleo Strut staff, the Five Percenters, as they referred to themselves, had a drastically different perspective on the racial situation at Fort Hood, seeing the increased racial violence on base as a positive development in an ongoing political revolution. "The specific group of blacks we talked to made it clear to us that because of the anti-white feelings of most blacks on post (which did not distinguish between EM and sergeant, between individual racism and institutional racism) that there could be no cooperation or alliance between black and white. In fact, the riot that we [Strut staff] and most whites dreaded was viewed as beneficial by the blacks, their first chance to strike back."³¹ While it is difficult to determine the Five Percenters' exact level of influence on base, it is clear that racial tensions were often a barrier to the achievement of political

²⁹ "A Report from the Oleo Strut," *New SOS News*, vol. 1, no. 4, July 1969. "EM" is a common Army term meaning enlisted man (or men).

³⁰ Wakeel Allah, *In the Name of Allah: a History of Clarence 13X and the Five Percenters*. (Atlanta: A-Team Publishing, 2007).

³¹ "A Report from the Oleo Strut," *New SOS News*, vol. 1, no. 4, July 1969.

solidarity. After the July 1969 meeting, the staff and GI activists at the Oleo Strut recognized that organizing black and white soldiers into a single, unified movement would be a difficult, if not impossible, undertaking. "We finally dropped the idea," a follow-up report stated, "and concentrated on 1) serving as a resource place for the black organizers - literature, books etc.; 2) continuing to talk to white guys on a one to one basis, mainly about racism. We are also intending to start a literature campaign on fort. The forthcoming issue of the *Fatigue Press* is going to be a special Racism issue."³² Facing the seemingly insurmountable racial animosity that plagued many military bases during the Vietnam era, the (mainly white) activists at the Oleo Strut decided to take a step backward, directing most of their political energy toward the mainly white GIs who frequented the coffeehouse.

One such white GI was twenty-six year-old Private Richard Chase, who had been drafted and assigned to the 2nd Armored Division at Fort Hood in January 1969. Chase was ordered to participate in "Operation Garden Plot," Fort Hood's training program for urban riot control. Before beginning his training, he wrote a letter to his commanding officer (CO) and first sergeant, explaining his personal and political objections to riot control duty: "Riot control is the way guys in the Army are used by the government against people struggling for valid demands. I refuse to be used against people I support."³³ Although Chase was not granted official conscientious objector status, after reading his letter authorities pulled him from training in Operation Garden Plot and gave him a job as an office clerk. In June, Chase began to regularly visit the Oleo Strut, quickly becoming one of the

³² Ibid.

³³ GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee, "Free Richard Chase" pamphlet, December 20, 1969.

coffeehouse's most active GI organizers.

Chase began talking to other GIs, both on base and at the Oleo Strut, about the Vietnam War and the soldiers' right to dissent. He organized petitions, assisted with the operation of the coffeehouse, and helped write, publish, and distribute *Fatigue Press*.³⁴ As his earlier letter indicated, Chase did not hide his antiwar orientation, and over the summer of 1969 base authorities at Fort Hood began to pay closer attention to his activities. On September 11, Chase received direct orders to report to riot control training. According to Chase, "I was given the order by my commanding officer, who knew that I wouldn't comply because of my beliefs and political activity. The order was given to try to end my involvement in the GI movement."³⁵ When he rejected the order, Chase's CO read him court-martial charges for refusing duty and sentenced him to "pre-trial confinement" in Fort Hood's stockade. Chase's stay in the Army's prison, while he awaited trial, was a particularly brutal experience; he was beaten by guards on four separate occasions and repeatedly placed in solitary confinement.³⁶ Antiwar activists at the Oleo Strut made much of the comparatively luxurious treatment afforded to Lieutenant William Calley, then on trial for the murder of more than one hundred civilians in the My Lai Massacre in Vietnam, who was allowed house arrest in a private residence at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia.³⁷

³⁴ "Free All Political Prisoners," *Left Face*, no. 5, January 1970.

³⁵ Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 7.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 559. According to Perlstein, Calley's light treatment was protested by more than just antiwar activists. Melvin Laird, the Secretary of Defense, as well as the government's own prosecutor, Aubrey Daniel, made public statements expressing their

In the months leading up to his trial, GI and civilian activists organized support for Chase, forming the Richard Chase Defense Committee to raise funds for legal defense and to publicize his case. The Oleo Strut coffeehouse was the center of the "Free Richard Chase" campaign, as organizers saw the case as another chance to unite white and black soldiers against the deeply unpopular program of riot control training at Fort Hood. Strut staff members created and circulated a petition demanding Chase's release and the end of riot control training at Fort Hood. More than one hundred soldiers (both black and white), a majority of Chase's company at Fort Hood, signed the petition.

The Chase trial, and the issue of riot control, created a significant amount of political momentum and media attention for the growing GI movement at Fort Hood. The Defense Committee sponsored several local rallies and events to demonstrate support for Chase and activist GIs, with prominent antiwar veterans speaking at the Oleo Strut along with folk and rock musical performances. Many Fort Hood GIs were present in the courtroom throughout Chase's trial, and showed their support with clenched fists and peace signs. The court-martial was covered in both underground and mainstream national media, as the case became another event in a continuing history of resistance to riot control duty at Fort Hood, of which the "Fort Hood 43" case was the most widely known recent example. Richard Chase's act of resistance and the attendant press coverage revealed that riot control training was not just hated by a small group of radical black soldiers, but was in fact

revulsion. Daniel wrote of the leniency, "The greatest tragedy of all will be if political expedience dictates the compromise of such a fundamental moral principle as the inherent unlawfulness of the murder of innocent persons."

unpopular among a wide section of soldiers on base.³⁸

Despite concerted efforts, led by the Oleo Strut coffeehouse, to have charges against him dropped, Richard Chase was convicted in military court on December 20, 1969, and sentenced to two years of hard labor at Leavenworth.³⁹ Although the Defense Committee and other antiwar activists (both civilian and military) failed to achieve their specific objectives (freeing Chase and ending riot control training), the case was a significant milestone in the development of antiwar activism at Fort Hood and provided activists with an organizational base from which they hoped to build an even larger movement. Perhaps most importantly, the case stimulated greater unity among different races at Fort Hood, as soldiers of all colors began to question being part of the government's first line of defense against the unrest breaking out in American cities. A staff member of the Oleo Strut explained that, even long after the trial was over, Chase's imprisonment continued to resonate with GIs as a symbol of the fight to end programs like Operation Garden Plot. Over the next few years, "when a GI demanded 'free Richard Chase' he was in essence demanding an end to riot control."⁴⁰

The Strut Takes Off

Throughout 1969 and into 1970, with the momentum from the Chase trial, the Oleo Strut coffeehouse continued to attract more GIs from Fort Hood, many of

³⁸ "Political Prisoner at Fort Hood," *The Black Panther*, December 27, 1969; "Free Richard Chase," *GI Press Service*, vol. 1, no. 13; "Free Richard Chase," GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee pamphlet, December 20, 1969; "Free All Political Prisoners," *Left Face*, no. 5, December 1969; "Riot Control," *Aboveground*, vol. 1, no. 6, December 1969; "No to Riot Control: GI Gets Two Years Hard Labor," *The Black Panther*, January 10, 1970

³⁹ "Richard Chase Sentenced" *GI Press Service*, vol. 2, no. 1, January 21, 1970.

⁴⁰ Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 7.

whom became involved in the publication of Fort Hood's increasingly popular underground GI newspaper. A July 1970 issue of *Fatigue Press* lists the names of ten active-duty Fort Hood soldiers as just "some of the GIs" working on newspaper staff. That anonymous attribution was not an affectation. For the active-duty soldiers who allied themselves with the Oleo Strut coffeehouse and the *Fatigue Press* office it supported, their activism made them extremely vulnerable to institutional harassment of all kinds, and they took steps to minimize the dangers. Because the GI movement had, by 1970, existed for several years, organizers had developed a more sophisticated approach to publication and distribution of underground literature, learning from their fellow activists' experience with military repression. The lessons in survival came "at the cost of considerable harassment, courts-martial, and transfers to Vietnam," but over time organizers became much savvier about their activities. In 1970, the pacifist *WIN* magazine published a guide for GIs working on newspaper projects. The author, a Marine Lance-Corporal, stressed that *writing* antiwar articles is protected by free speech, but that *distribution* was specifically forbidden by military law. Thus, any GI *distributing* literature exposed himself to prosecution. *WIN* magazine urged GIs to either distribute newspapers covertly, or to employ civilian support networks (such as coffeehouses) for distribution.⁴¹ Despite these warnings, GIs personally smuggled hundreds of copies of *Fatigue Press* and other underground publications from the Oleo Strut office to the Army base at Fort Hood throughout the later years of the Vietnam War.

Dave Cline (fig. 6), stationed at Fort Hood after being wounded in Vietnam,

⁴¹ Martin Oppenheimer (ed.), *The American Military* (Transaction, Inc., 1971), 100; "G.I. Press," *WIN*, December 1, 1969, 22-25.

became one of *Fatigue Press's* most active promoters on base. He describes the sometimes harrowing experience of bringing antiwar newspapers into what he considered enemy territory:

The way we would distribute literature is: We'd go on hits through the base and go through the barracks late at night and put them on wall lockers, put the papers on bunks, and stuff like that. We'd do hits and do an area and get through quick. We handed them out at gates and in the town. I was questioned by military authorities on a number of occasions. They would do wall locker searches. You could have anything you wanted in your locker. I had all sorts of shit . . . *LA Free Press*, underground papers, a book on Buddhism, radical books, stuff like that. [But] if they found more than one piece of literature in your wall locker, they could charge you with distribution of literature.⁴²

On one occasion, Cline's commanding officer entered the barracks and demanded to search his locker. The CO carried a shotgun with a bayonet attached to the barrel, and pointed the weapon at Cline as military police dug through his belongings. The tense confrontation reflects the vicious, personal tone of division among soldiers on base, with the Vietnam War serving as the fulcrum of a whole set of tensions and frustrations:

I'm standing at attention and he's telling me shit like he hopes he sees me when he gets out of the service. I was responding, but in a way that I couldn't get in trouble. I said "I hope I see you too, sir." He started talking about the Vietcong. I said, "I fought the Vietcong, sir. I was wounded on several occasions." He's waving the bayonet in my face. I knew he wasn't going to stab me, because there were witnesses. He eventually turned and stormed out because they couldn't find more than one copy of any of the literature. We were careful about that. We were organizers.⁴³

The dangers for activist soldiers at Fort Hood were not limited to overzealous COs. As the Oleo Strut coffeehouse became more widely known in Killeen as a gathering place for antiwar radicals and local hippies, some Killeen residents directed increasing aggression and anger at its staff and customers. Much of this harassment

⁴² Richard Stacewicz, *Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), 222-226.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

came from the previously-mentioned "goat-ropers" and took the form of obnoxious but relatively minor juvenile delinquent pranks: broken windows, stolen property, and thrown beer bottles.⁴⁴ On a few occasions, however, the threat of physical violence was much more immediate.

On October 3, 1969, a group of more than twenty Fort Hood GIs piled into six separate cars and headed to Houston (a five hour drive), to participate in a peace rally in the city's Hermann Park. Shortly after leaving Killeen city limits, a vehicle pulled alongside the caravan's lead car and opened fire with automatic weapons, blowing out the tires and damaging the engine before speeding off. The shaken soldiers, determined to attend the rally, returned to Killeen, informed Texas Rangers of their situation, and obtained permission to carry one weapon per vehicle for self-defense on their way to Houston. When they returned to the Oleo Strut coffeehouse the following day, the GIs found that a sticker had been placed on the front window, reading, "the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan are watching you."⁴⁵

Although the opposition, both official and unofficial, faced by activist GIs in Killeen often came with a disturbing tone of intimidation, if not physical violence, public antiwar activism by Fort Hood soldiers continued to grow in the fall of 1969. On November 9, a month after the Klan shooting incident, two busloads of soldiers

⁴⁴ David Zeiger, interview with author, January 10, 2010.

⁴⁵ Richard Moser, *Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent during the Vietnam Era* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 99. The story of the shooting is recounted in detail by Dave Cline in Stacewicz, *Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War*, 222-226. See also Seymour V. Connor and Mark Odintz, "Bell County," *Handbook of Texas Online*. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb06>, accessed April 17, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Association. This article details the Ku Klux Klan's presence in Bell County, Texas (including Killeen), beginning during the Reconstruction period and reappearing in waves throughout the 20th century.

went to Houston for a large antiwar demonstration. The soldiers, many in uniform and all clean-cut, stood out in the crowd of colorfully-attired peace activists, and their presence created a considerable amount of publicity, as their numbers seemed to indicate a significant rise in antiwar sentiment among active-duty GIs at Fort Hood. This increased activism was felt at the Oleo Strut coffeehouse as well, where an average of thirty to sixty soldiers visited each night to "sip coffee and Cokes, read underground newspapers, listen to music, [and] rap with the long-haired and bearded Strut staff."⁴⁶ By the fall of 1969, a little more than a year after opening in Killeen, the Oleo Strut was gaining national recognition as the home base for a rising antiwar movement among soldiers at Fort Hood.

Nationwide, the GI movement had also evolved dramatically, from a few isolated cases in the mid-1960s to a larger and more organized national phenomenon in the late 1960s, and mainstream media coverage accompanied this growth. In 1968, major national publications like *Look*, *LIFE*, and *Esquire* magazines featured cover stories on soldier antiwar activism, with headlines that warned, "Protest in the Ranks! The Military's New Dilemma," and "Antiwar GIs and Army Head for Clash Over Vietnam."⁴⁷ Because of the increased publicity, there was a growing public awareness of dissent within the American military, and the GI movement became one of many widely-recognized social and political movements that sprang up within the landscape of late 1960s activism. Accompanying this

⁴⁶ Martin Dreyer, "War and Peace at the Oleo Strut," *The Houston Chronicle*, July 12, 1970.

⁴⁷ Christopher S. Wren, "Protest in the Ranks! The Military's New Dilemma," *Look*, Vol. 32, No. 21, October 15, 1968; Ben A. Franklin, "Antiwar G.I.'s and Army Head for Clash Over Vietnam," *New York Times*, April 28, 1969, 22; "Exclusive!: The Plot to Unionize the U.S. Army," *Esquire*, August 1968; "Extraordinary Military," *Life*, May 23, 1969.

development, ever larger numbers of sympathetic civilians became attracted to participation in the GI movement's various projects.

One of these civilians was actress Jane Fonda, whose personal trajectory from apolitical Hollywood starlet to outspoken antiwar radical had begun just a few years earlier and deepened with her involvement in the GI movement. She had met American GI activists and their civilian support network while living in Paris in the mid-1960s, and returned to the United States in late 1969 with a desire to become more directly involved in organizing GIs:

[I had] a commitment to ending the war, and I sensed that working with antiwar soldiers was the best way I could do that. The movement of antiwar soldiers and returned Vietnam veterans was potent, because these men and women were from America's heartland. They had enlisted as patriots; they returned as patriots. They had *been* there, and this made them more believable to Middle Americans than other groups in the antiwar movement. It was GI resisters, after all, who had brought *me* into the antiwar movement. I became even more committed to making these new heroes, the new warriors, the focus of my efforts.⁴⁸

At a party in San Francisco for the 1970 film *Zabriskie Point*, Fonda met a veteran and GI activist who told her about a network of GI coffeehouses near military bases around the country. The activist turned out to be Fred Gardner, who had co-written the film in a flurry of late-1960s political and artistic output that had included his founding of the original GI coffeehouse in Columbia, South Carolina. Fonda decided to spend the following several months driving around the country, visiting GI coffeehouses and other movement centers, educating herself and spreading awareness of the political issues that concerned her.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far* (New York: Random House, 2006), 258.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* *Zabriskie Point* was Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni's second English-language film, and was noted for its American counterculture aesthetic, setting, and themes. Fred Gardner was one of several writers hired to bring a young, countercultural sensibility to the screenplay, which attempted a kind of avant-garde coming of age story for the hippie

Fonda arrived, unannounced, at the Oleo Strut coffeehouse on the morning of May 11, 1970. She spoke with several GI organizers and civilian staff members, who informed her of the Army's rules against distribution of antiwar literature, and the inherent difficulties of getting their message out in decidedly hostile territory. Taking a stack of *Fatigue Press* papers and some anti-riot control pamphlets, Fonda drove to the gates of Fort Hood and began handing out the material to stunned GIs, who immediately recognized her as the actress perhaps best known for starring in 1968's campy sci-fi sex comedy *Barbarella* (as well as for being the daughter of actor Henry Fonda). Fonda's visit to Fort Hood, one of her first public political actions, was intended to directly challenge the Army regulations she had heard about at the coffeehouse. In that sense, Fonda got exactly what she wanted when military police lieutenant John T. Hoffman approached her, telling her that she was under arrest for breaking base regulations. After taking her by car to a Fort Hood police office, Hoffman gave Fonda a letter warning her that if she returned to the base, she would face six months imprisonment. Upon her release later that afternoon, Fonda immediately returned to the Oleo Strut coffeehouse, where a number of journalists and media figures had assembled, having caught word of a celebrity's presence in town.⁵⁰

The Oleo Strut became the setting for an informal press conference that afternoon, as reporters questioned Fonda about her intentions at Fort Hood. Speaking with clarity and confidence, Fonda proved an articulate spokesperson for

generation. The film has been called "one of the most extraordinary disasters in modern cinematic history."

⁵⁰ Nat Henderson, "Actress Barred from Ft. Hood," *Killeen Daily Herald*, May 12, 1970, 1.

the basic goals of the GI movement:

I'm not here as a movie star—as a publicity stunt. I am a person who is fighting against the war and for GI rights. I went on Fort Hood because GIs aren't allowed to distribute literature there. I think it's appalling that men who are sent overseas to fight and die for their country are denied the constitutional rights which they are supposed to be defending.⁵¹

Photographs of Fonda sitting with Dave Cline and other Oleo Strut staff appeared in both underground and mainstream newspapers (Fig. 7). The story of her arrest and coffeehouse visit helped publicize the GI movement, introducing its ideas to a larger section of the American public than ever before. As biographer Mary Hershberger points out, in joining the antiwar movement, Fonda's voice "cut across political categories: she helped connect the antiwar movement to the cultural mainstream."⁵²

At the time of Fonda's visit, the GI activists and their civilian supporters were mobilizing for what they hoped would be a series of nationally-coordinated antiwar demonstrations near military bases around the country. Organizers had chosen the date of May 16, the military's Armed Forces Day, to mark their day of protest.⁵³ Armed Forces Day was a traditionally sacred day in Killeen, when citizens publicly expressed their patriotism and support for Fort Hood and the American military in general. In particular, Killeen's business community made a point to come out strongly on Armed Forces Day, sponsoring local parades and other events to mark their appreciation for the military's presence in Killeen (see fig. 8). Activists at the

⁵¹ Martin Dreyer, "War and Peace at the Oleo Strut," *The Houston Chronicle*, July 12, 1970.

⁵² Mary Hershberger, *Jane Fonda's War: A Political Biography of an Antiwar Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 17.

⁵³ Armed Forces Day was created in 1949 as a national holiday to honor all military branches, an action stemming from the unification of all the branches under the Department of Defense in the wake of World War II.

Oleo Strut, however, viewed the day as a chance to express organized opposition to the war. Leaflets and articles in GI newspapers promoted the march as "Armed *Farces* Day." Resistance was particularly urgent, according to the event promoters, in the wake of President Nixon's bombing of Cambodia and the shooting of students at Kent State just days earlier.

The Oleo Strut staff initially did not believe it was possible to organize a large demonstration of GIs in Killeen, and instead planned to offer "Nine Days in May," an alternative week of educational programs and guest speakers at the coffeehouse. As the national event approached, and it became clear that many base towns would be holding large public demonstrations, the staff changed their minds. On May 10, they decided to attempt to organize an Armed *Farces* Day parade through the center of downtown Killeen. The May 16 Parade Committee, composed of Oleo Strut staff and Fort Hood GIs, applied to Killeen City Hall for a parade permit and were denied, but a constitutional lawyer hired by the committee sent a letter threatening legal action that convinced the city to grant the permit. Killeen would soon have its first officially-sanctioned antiwar demonstration.⁵⁴

The Armed *Farces* Day march ended up being a much larger event than anyone anticipated. Several hundred GIs, many in uniform, assembled at the Oleo Strut before marching fifteen blocks (almost the entire length of the town) to a rally at nearby Condor Park. A significant number of counter-demonstrators waved American flags and jeered the parade, until Killeen police intervened to separate the two groups. At the rally, speakers included veteran Dave Cline, who talked about

⁵⁴ Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 8.

the spiritual and political transformation he had experienced after killing a young Vietnamese soldier at close range. A group of black soldiers spoke of racism at Fort Hood and their efforts to organize resistance, and Oleo Strut staff members promoted the coffeehouse as the support center for the growing antiwar movement in Killeen.

As Cline later recalled, the large demonstration shocked the Killeen community, which had been relatively insulated from the radical political activism of the era: "The day of the march, all the stores in Killeen closed up and boarded up their windows because they thought there was going to be a riot. The whole fucking town shut down. I'd never seen a whole military town shut down. It was unbelievable."⁵⁵ Local media accounts estimated that more than one thousand GIs and other activists were in the streets of Killeen for the Armed Forces Day event.⁵⁶ Despite some reports that the majority of the demonstrators were radical civilians "from out of town," photographs from the event show large numbers of uniformed GIs raising fists, carrying antiwar placards, and flashing peace signs.⁵⁷ (fig. 9)

On a national level, the 1970 Armed Forces Day event was a tremendous success for its organizers, and a significant embarrassment for the military. In anticipation of the day, authorities at over forty military installations cancelled their official celebrations.⁵⁸ It was clear that the GI movement had become a serious disruption to the normal operation of the U.S. armed forces, and staff members at

⁵⁵ Stacewicz, *Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War*, 225.

⁵⁶ "1,000 GIs March in Killeen," *Fatigue Press*, no. 23, August 1970; "Armed Forces Day, May 20," *Off the Brass*, vol. 1, no. 3, May 1970.

⁵⁷ Duncan, *Killeen: A Tale of Two Cities*, 151.

⁵⁸ "Armed Forces Day," *A Four Year Bummer*, vol. 2, no. 4, June 1970.

the Oleo Strut were excited about the local possibilities suggested by the surprisingly massive turnout for the parade. As *Fatigue Press* proudly reported, "Everyone understood that May 16 was the first time GIs at Fort Hood had stood together and that a process had been set in motion which could well prove to be unstoppable."⁵⁹

Ironically, the success of the May 16 parade and rally marked the beginning of a period of steep decline for the Oleo Strut coffeehouse. As one staff member put it, there was "a complete emptiness after the march. [We had] extremely low spirits and a lack of understanding as to what went wrong." Through most of 1970, the Oleo Strut staff struggled with a growing set of political, financial, and personal crises that ultimately paralyzed the operation of the coffeehouse. In the spring, the staff had decided to be more "upfront" about its radical politics, creating educational programs on Marxism that cast the GI movement as part of a worldwide revolution of the working class. The Oleo Strut was transformed from a coffeehouse to a "movement center," a space that was exclusively reserved for political activity. In an attempt to express a more pure anti-capitalist ethos, the staff stopped selling coffee and pastries, and replaced the small "head shop" in the back of the store with tables of radical literature.

Part of the motivation for the change was financial. Even at the peak of its popularity, the coffeehouse never made enough money to support its staff, who lived collectively in a single rented house. By closing down the operation of the Oleo Strut as a money-making enterprise, the staff hoped to free up time for part-time

⁵⁹ "1,000 GIs March in Killeen," *Fatigue Press*, August 1970.

jobs in Killeen to support themselves and their political work. However, as they soon discovered, jobs in Killeen were scarce and low-paying, and by the end of the summer several staff members had dropped out of the project completely and left town, while the remaining few (among them Josh Gould, Jay Lockard, Terry Davis, and David Zeiger) were increasingly demoralized and financially challenged.⁶⁰

Compounding these problems, in September the Oleo Strut was subjected to an IRS investigation that demanded its owners produce two years of detailed financial records; since the coffeehouse's records were in total disarray, the project took months to complete, and the coffeehouse was shuttered as the staff sorted through the mess of paperwork.⁶¹

The attempt to convert the Oleo Strut into a radical political movement center proved disastrous. As staff member David Zeiger put it, "In a sense, the Strut was being turned into a place that only a communist could want to have anything to do with, and as such it was on a road that was doomed to failure."⁶² By eliminating most of the cultural elements that had first attracted customers, the coffeehouse unintentionally sabotaged its ability to reach large numbers of people. Gone were the rock posters and records, cheap espresso, and psychedelic atmosphere, replaced with ill-attended nightly political education programs. The only "entertainment" featured during this period were political documentaries intended to promote discussion and activism (fig. 10). Perhaps the most fitting symbol of the Oleo Strut's unsuccessful experiment was the set of colored spinning lights that had proven so

⁶⁰ "Strut Staff Raps," *Space City News*, October 1970.

⁶¹ Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 9.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 10.

popular among Killeen's small but vocal population of psychedelic enthusiasts. Hoping to create an environment more conducive to serious political work, the staff removed the lights and, in an indication of the sometimes self-parodic mixture of culture and politics at the Strut, a short-lived "Spinning Light Committee" formed to protest the injustice.⁶³

By November 1970, the Oleo Strut's remaining staff members were broke, demoralized, and uncertain of the coffeehouse's future in Killeen. They drafted and sent a letter to the United States Servicemen's Fund (USSF), one of a few small national organizations then raising money to support coffeehouses and other GI movement projects. The letter summarizes the coffeehouse's financial troubles and describes the bleak state of the GI movement at Fort Hood in the months after the seemingly promising Armed Forces Day event:

During this time, more importantly, the situation on Ft. Hood among those guys who were still active (which due to ETS's, transfers, and the stockade, and lack of active support from the coffeehouse had dwindled to about five guys), we more or less decided that the next couple of months would be spent trying to rebuild ourselves and the struggle on base.⁶⁴

In order to move forward as an effective tool for political organization in Killeen, the staff argued, the coffeehouse needed a permanent source of income and a coherent new political strategy. The letter paints a picture of the Oleo Strut struggling to survive.

⁶³ "Fort Hood GI Haven," *Space City News*, Fall 1970.

⁶⁴ "The Oleo Strut," Staff Report, November 1, 1970.

http://sirnosir.com/archives_and_resources/library/pamphlets_publications/oleo_strut/staff_report/page_1.html, accessed May 26, 2010. "ETS" stands for "Expiration of Term of Service." Since Fort Hood was one of the main return bases for soldiers back from Vietnam, many soldiers were discharged from the military and left Killeen, Texas as a result. Some ETS's, as they were called, stayed in town, such as Dave Cline, who remained in Texas after his discharge to continue his activism against the war.

Back to Basics

Despite its generally pessimistic tone, the November 1970 letter also indicates that the activists at the Oleo Strut were learning from their mistakes and arriving at some important conclusions about the possibilities of their endeavor in Killeen. After a period of uncertainty as to whether the coffeehouse was a money-making enterprise or a political movement center, pragmatism led them to decide that it could be both. They acknowledged the necessity of a "restaurant end of things" to support their political work and help get their message to a larger number of Fort Hood soldiers: "In some ways we are going to do some back-stepping towards the days of a less political honest-to-john coffeehouse in order to make the place more popular and raise ourselves from the dead somewhat; like bands on the weekends, more comfort, and a bigger thing with the counter sales."⁶⁵ Although it is unclear whether "more comfort" referred to the return of the spinning colored lights, it is obvious that the Oleo Strut staff had concluded, by the fall of 1970, that the counterculture was a critical element of the coffeehouse's overall success. Despite their misgivings about the counterculture's impact on effective political organization, the staff realized that, without any customers in the coffeehouse, there would be *no* political organization. According to Zeiger, "What's the use of a movement center if you don't even have a movement?"⁶⁶

The Oleo Strut's new plan of action required significant funding, to pay overdue bills and to make the necessary physical changes to the coffeehouse. As it happened, a new USSF office had opened in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that fall, and

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 10.

had begun aggressively fundraising with some success. The office started sending out vital movement information in the form of newsletters and, more importantly, monthly stipends to the GI coffeehouse projects. By the end of 1970, the Oleo Strut was beginning to experience a financial turnaround. On December 10, Jane Fonda returned to the Killeen area to help raise money for the coffeehouse, speaking at three area colleges and donating proceeds from the events. With the combined income from Fonda's appearances and a series of "emergency fundraisers" at the coffeehouse, the Oleo Strut was in a position to enact its new strategy in the first months of 1971.

The re-invention of the Oleo Strut consisted of several changes and additions, all based on one newly-clarified mission: to draw crowds, turn a profit, and help build the GI movement at Fort Hood. The first major change was the creation of a political bookstore in the back of the Oleo Strut. The bookstore was intended to answer the particular demand of black GIs, who at the time were organizing reading groups on base to discuss radical literature. A letter to the USSF in February reported, "We see the bookstore as an economic venture with an important political usefulness. We believe there's a strong political need for a broad range of revolutionary books that are easily accessible to GIs." The store also featured a counter selling a variety of small items like beaded jewelry, records, and postcards. The Strut staff, composed entirely of radical anti-capitalists, was disappointed in having to engage in the "business" of running the coffeehouse, but reconciled their distaste with the desperate financial times they faced: "It's quite a contradiction to our politics, to become a capitalist business and all, but it's a necessary one. If we

can do this then we would only need enough regular money to keep the paper going, pay for the cost of literature and actions, and pay the staff bills (food and house)."⁶⁷

By far the most successful element of the Oleo Strut's new strategy was a renewed focus on live entertainment, most often in the form of rock bands imported from nearby Austin's popular music scene. As the Oleo Strut became known as a hip place to see live music, the coffeehouse began regularly filling up with GIs and other locals. On performance nights, it was not uncommon to see more than one hundred Fort Hood soldiers packed into the Oleo Strut. A staff member recalls that, "Almost overnight, the Strut became just about the most popular place in town."⁶⁸

To capitalize on the coffeehouse's newfound popularity, the Strut staff worked to expand the kinds of political support and services they could offer to Fort Hood GIs. The goal was to transform the space into a resource center that could serve a wide variety of GI needs, a "kind of living, vibrant, organizational source."⁶⁹ The most visible component of this expansion was the opening of a military counseling office in the building's upstairs office, which was rented with a grant from the Civil Liberties Legal Defense Fund, an organization then raising money for GI movement projects. David Zeiger spent a month in Los Angeles taking a counseling course offered by Ken Cloke, an attorney active in antiwar and civil liberties causes, and returned to Killeen in January 1971 to head the Oleo Strut's legal support campaign. Zeiger helped produce a pamphlet, "GI Legal Self Defense," that aimed to provide a straightforward summary of a soldier's rights within military law. The pamphlet's

⁶⁷ "The Oleo Strut," Staff Report, Nov 1, 1970.

⁶⁸ Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 11.

⁶⁹ David Zeiger, interview with author, January 10, 2010.

wide distribution on base helped promote the Oleo Strut's new legal counseling center, which quickly became a focus of political activity at the coffeehouse.⁷⁰

The counseling center attempted to offer three major services: assistance with discharges and applications for conscientious objector (C.O.) status; general education on GI rights, filing harassment complaints, and military law; and direct legal aid for specific cases. A group of Fort Hood GIs began to regularly visit the Oleo Strut counseling office soon after it opened, inquiring about their legal options against a particularly antagonistic commanding officer, who had torn a soldier's antiwar posters from his personal locker. Together with activists at the Oleo Strut, the group formed the "Spring Offensive Committee" (or "GI-SOC") to organize actions protesting conditions at Fort Hood. In April 1971, GI-SOC circulated a series of on-base petitions that resulted in official investigations and the transfer of several commanding officers. Just a few months into the Oleo Strut's expansion efforts, and in part due to the coffeehouse's increased focus on legal counseling and education, activist soldiers at Fort Hood were making substantive progress in their campaign to address harassment and racism on base.⁷¹

The spring and summer of 1971 were, as one activist characterized it, the "heyday," of the Oleo Strut, when the political and cultural energy they had hoped to

⁷⁰ "GI Legal Self Defense," Pamphlet, Spring 1971.

http://sirnosir.com/archives_and_resources/library/pamphlets_publications/gi_legal_self_defense/cover.html, accessed March 22, 2011. The pamphlet's entire sixteen-page contents are scanned on the SNSDA. Originally produced by the "People's House," a GI coffeehouse and movement center in Clarksville, Tennessee, outside Fort Campbell, the GI Legal Self Defense pamphlet was reproduced in various forms and distributed around military bases throughout the country and overseas. In addition to relevant citations from the UCMJ, the pamphlet offered GIs tips on avoiding harassment and protecting their civil liberties.

⁷¹ Jay Dorman, "The Strut Limp Along," *The Houston Post*, April 12, 1971; Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 67.

create was at a peak. The Spring Offensive Committee, made up of at least twenty Fort Hood soldiers, met regularly at the coffeehouse to discuss their plans for continued actions. As May approached, the group coalesced around the idea of a "second annual" Armed Farces Day parade, building on the success of the previous year's demonstration. Recalling the drop-off in political activity following that earlier event, GI-SOC was careful to structure the parade and rally as the kick-off for an ongoing program of activism and events at Fort Hood and in the larger GI movement. In keeping with the Oleo Strut's new mission to become a "vibrant organizational source," GI-SOC attempted to transform the Armed Farces Day event from an isolated demonstration to the beginnings of a more advanced political movement.⁷²

The Armed Farces Day event that took place in Killeen on May 15, 1971 was notable for both its size (more than one thousand GIs were in the streets) and for the relatively diplomatic relationship that had been struck between city authorities and demonstrators in the weeks leading up to the march. The Killeen City Council had granted a permit for a parade and rally, perhaps wishing to avoid the legal fiasco from the previous year. A city police detective visited the Oleo Strut the week before the Armed Farces Day event and asked the staff to lay out a specific parade route. When a staff member inquired if the "goat-ropers" would be allowed to encircle and harass them as they had in the past, the detective replied that the goat-ropers would have to apply for their own parade permit and, if they assembled without one, would be arrested. The Killeen police had apparently decided to take a

⁷² Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 12.

more accommodating approach to the antiwar activism that had developed in their town, and the 1971 Armed Farces Day event turned out to be the largest public demonstration in the city's history.⁷³

For the marchers themselves, it was "the most spirited day in the history of the GI movement at Fort Hood."⁷⁴ After parading through Killeen, they assembled at Condor Park to hear guest speakers and a performance from folk singer Pete Seeger. While the goat-ropers generally kept away from the rally, the day was not without tension. Roughly two hundred city police, in riot gear, surrounded the marchers at all times. When one of the guest speakers, a GI from Fort Hood, referred to the police as "motherfuckers," he was pulled from the stage and handcuffed. The large crowd immediately began loudly chanting "motherfuckers!" in unison, prompting the police to release the soldier, who re-mounted the stage to triumphant cheers. Overall, Armed Farces Day lived up to its name, creating a sometimes raucous scene that seemed to encapsulate some of the political and cultural forces at work in Killeen, Texas, in the early 1970s.

Confronting Economic Exploitation: The Tyrrell's Boycott

Perhaps the most significant aspect of 1971's Armed Farces Day in Killeen was its initiation of a new strategy in the GI movement's arsenal: the economic boycott. The Spring Offensive Committee had decided to target one of the city's local stores, hoping to stop the sometimes predatory sales practices of a number of downtown businesses that depended on GIs for their customer base. To organizers at the Oleo

⁷³ Tom Butler, "Protest March , Rally Held in Orderly Manner," *Killeen Daily Herald*, May 16, 1971; Duncan, *Killeen: A Tale of Two Cities*, 151.

⁷⁴ Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeeshouse, 1968-1972*, 13.

Strut, the most egregious offender was Tyrrell's Jewelry, part of a national chain of jewelry stores that had cut out a niche in military towns throughout the South and Midwest. According to a pamphlet handed out at the rally, though, Tyrrell's business depended on the exploitation of a vulnerable population:

Their philosophy is simple: GIs are there for the taking. Their practice is less simple: it involves psychological warfare playing on guilt, homesickness, love of family, fear of death, and other exploitable emotions shared by most servicemen who are away from home and possibly headed for overseas assignment. Tyrrell's is one of the most vicious examples of the base town business community: people whose livelihood rests on the exploitation and fleecing of GIs who are trapped in that community.⁷⁵

GIs at the Oleo Strut were particularly offended by the store's macabre "Vietnam Honor Roll" program, which offered to place a soldier's name on the store's wall if he happened to be killed in Vietnam; the store would also cover any remaining payments owed by the dead soldier. Dave Cline explained that the Honor Roll's employment of war as a sales strategy was just one component of an "outrageous" business practice that "tugged on a lonely GI's heartstrings" to sell jewelry.⁷⁶ A boycott, the organizers hoped, would draw attention to the economic exploitation of soldiers by Tyrrell's and other local businesses.

The boycott was first announced at the Armed Farces Day event, and the following weeks saw larger and larger crowds of GIs at the Oleo Strut's GI-SOC meetings. GIs began standing outside the jewelry store on a daily basis, handing out leaflets that detailed Tyrrell's sales tactics and discouraged GIs from entering the shop. The soldiers consulted with Killeen's city attorney, who ensured them that as long as they did not block entry to the store, their actions were within the law. In

⁷⁵ "We Don't Want Your Rip Off Store," *Camp News*, vol. 2, no. 8, 1971.

⁷⁶ Dave Cline, interview in *Sir! No Sir!*, Displaced Films, 2005. Cline's detailed description of the Tyrrell's boycott in Killeen casts the action as one of the high points of the GI movement.

the first weeks of summer, the crowd of soldiers outside Tyrrell's grew, the leafleting turned to picketing, and few, if any, customers walked through the shop's doors (fig. 11).⁷⁷

The management at Tyrrell's, understandably concerned for the health of their business, regularly called city police, who on several occasions cited picketers for "disturbing the peace." Other local business owners demonstrated their support for Tyrrell's. Ted Connell, owner of Killeen's Connell Chevrolet auto dealership, showed up at the Oleo Strut one evening after he had witnessed activists picketing the jewelry store earlier in the day. He called police from the coffeehouse to make a "noise complaint," his local prominence no doubt contributing to the subsequent arrest of a Strut staff member. Tensions between police and picketers escalated over the following days, until police finally arrested eight GIs and two civilians for "aiding and abetting an illegal secondary boycott" and "parading without a permit." The ten were held in jail for three days on \$2,500 bail, until attorney Cam Cunningham was able to lower their bail and win their release three days later.⁷⁸

The coalition of activists at the Oleo Strut, with the assistance of Cunningham, filed a suit in Federal Court demanding that all charges be dropped and that Killeen's "secondary boycott" law be declared unconstitutional.⁷⁹ News of the organizers' arrests and the ensuing federal lawsuit spread through both the

⁷⁷ "2 of 10 Post Bonds in Store Picketing," *Killeen Daily Herald*, June 3, 1971; "Great Lakes: MDM Wins First Round of Jewelry Store Boycott," *Camp News*, vol. 2, no. 8, 1971.

⁷⁸ "Analysis: The Tyrrell's Boycott in Killeen," Staff Report, *GI News and Discussion Bulletin*, No. 7, July 1971. Cam Cunningham was an Austin attorney who defended the Oleo Strut's staff, as well as Fort Hood GIs, on several occasions from 1970-1972.

⁷⁹ "Boycott in Killeen Advances," *GI News and Discussion Bulletin*, No. 6, June 1971. Farmworkers' organizations in Texas were, at the time, involved in a similar court fight challenging the constitutionality of secondary boycott laws.

underground and mainstream media, and by June 1971 Tyrrell's Jewelry Stores were being boycotted, picketed, and generally maligned by GIs at military bases around the country. GI activists in Killeen called for a return of the boycott and demonstration outside the store, regardless of the status of the lawsuit, on June 30, an Army payday and the beginning of a three-day weekend—prime selling time for Tyrrell's. As the demonstrators assembled, though, the store's managers removed all the jewelry, locked the doors, and placed a sign in the window indicating that the store would be closed for the weekend. The following week, representatives from Tyrrell's corporate office came to the Oleo Strut coffeehouse to negotiate an end to the (now national) GI boycott of their stores. While no formal agreement was reached, Tyrrell's ended their "Vietnam Honor Roll" program at all locations, and promised to develop a more "respectful" sales approach. The company's concession to the demands of a group of GI and civilian activists operating out of a counterculture coffeehouse was a remarkable demonstration of the Fort Hood GI movement's employment of sophisticated political, economic, and legal tactics to effect change on a national level.⁸⁰

Getting Together: The Fort Hood United Front

The Tyrrell's boycott helped sustain the energy created at Killeen's Armed Farces Day event and led directly to the formation of a permanent GI activist group stationed at the Oleo Strut: the Fort Hood United Front. The idea was to unite all

⁸⁰ Terry H. Anderson, "The GI Movement and the Response from the Brass," in *Give Peace a Chance : Exploring the Vietnam Antiwar Movement*, ed. Melvin Small et al. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 110. Anderson states, "The [Tyrrell's] boycott spread to eleven bases, significantly reducing sales. The chain store ended the action by negotiating new sales procedures with GI organizations."

GIs at Fort Hood under one organization that sought to address a wide variety of common concerns. The group's politics and structure were loose enough to include anyone who wanted to participate in the struggle "against the war, racism, economic exploitation of GIs and their dependents, and the institutionalized injustice of the [Uniform Code of Military Justice]." The main purpose of the Fort Hood United Front was to provide a continuum of activism in Killeen that could withstand the frequent turnover of soldiers at Fort Hood. By establishing a permanent organization, GI activists hoped to avoid the drop-off in activism due to transfers and service terminations, maintaining a consistent network of resources and support.⁸¹

The Fort Hood United Front became the dominant force in Killeen's GI movement, organizing rallies, distributing petitions, and providing legal advice, all out of the Oleo Strut's expanded upstairs office. In the summer of 1971 the Front focused much of its activity on a campaign that sought to win the release of Fort Hood privates Kelvin Harvey and John Priest. The soldiers were being held in the stockade on charges stemming from a prison insurrection more than six months earlier; the Front argued that the soldiers were struggling against the notoriously harsh conditions and overt racism of the Fort Hood stockade, and that their prosecution was an attempt to squash their protest.⁸² The case was particularly important to the Front because of its potential to unite races at Fort Hood; Harvey was black and Priest was white. More than one thousand soldiers signed a petition

⁸¹ James E. Westheider, *Brothers in Arms: The African American Experience in Vietnam* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 141-144; "We Don't Want Your Rip Off Store," *Camp News*, vol. 2, no. 8, 1971.

⁸² "Petition to Free Harvey and Priest," Fort Hood United Front, http://sirnosir.com/archives_and_resources/library/pamphlets_publications/petitions/harvey_priest.html, accessed June 1, 2010.

circulated on base by Front members, and flyers promoted a "Free Harvey and Priest" gathering and picnic at Killeen's Stillhouse Lake on September 12, 1971.⁸³

Roughly seventy-five GIs came to the Stillhouse Lake event, which was watched closely by military authorities and local police. At the conclusion of the picnic, the GIs and other activists piled into a group of cars and headed back to the Oleo Strut. On the way, police pulled over the entire caravan and arrested thirty demonstrators for disorderly conduct and other charges. The mass arrest resulted in even more negative publicity for police and military authorities and, three days later, all charges against Harvey and Priest were dropped. The pair's military-appointed lawyer, who was in close contact with the Front and the Oleo Strut staff, later told them that the Army had backed off of prosecution because they "didn't want to deal" with the Fort Hood United Front.⁸⁴ In the fall of 1971, GI activists in Killeen were riding a wave of political momentum that was having a real impact on soldiers' lives at Fort Hood. In less than a year, the Oleo Strut coffeehouse had emerged from paralyzing political and financial crises to become the undisputed center of a movement that, at least for the moment, had military authorities on the defensive (Fig. 12).

The Fort Hood United Front gained a reputation for addressing a wide set of soldier grievances, and this openness led to a larger number of black soldiers participating in antiwar activities at the Oleo Strut. One of these soldiers was Private Wes Williams, a Black Panther from Oakland, California, who had been

⁸³ Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 84. Activists chose Stillhouse Lake because groups were not required to obtain permits for picnics, barbecues, and other recreational activities.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; Zeiger, interview with author, January 10, 2010.

drafted and stationed at Fort Hood in January 1971. Williams first came to the coffeehouse for a screening of a film about Bobby Seale, and became involved with the Front as a way to address the racism that he felt permeated Fort Hood. After Williams organized a particularly successful black-white antiwar rally on October 25, 1971, he and other Front members were contacted by the office of U.S. Representative Ron Dellums (D-California), a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, then conducting an official investigation of racism in the armed forces. Dellums' office informed the activists that another representative, Louis Stokes of Cleveland, would soon visit Fort Hood to hold congressional hearings, and that the Front should gather as many soldiers as possible who would be willing to testify.⁸⁵

Williams embarked on his mission with an energy and efficiency that impressed even the seasoned activists at the Oleo Strut. He personally walked through the Fort Hood barracks, visiting with hundreds of soldiers in the weeks leading up to the hearings, urging them to testify about base conditions. With the assistance of Front members in companies throughout the base, Williams was able to direct the distribution of more than two thousand leaflets over the course of a few days, spreading word to GIs of the rare opportunity to express their grievances directly to the federal government. The Army itself made no effort to publicize the congressman's visit, and authorities initially insisted on private testimony until GIs demanded and won (with Rep. Stokes' support) a public hearing on base.⁸⁶

During Stokes' visit in November 1971, about two hundred black soldiers

⁸⁵ "Black Organization Grows from Hearing on Racism," Fort Hood United Front pamphlet, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University.

⁸⁶ Derrick Morrison, "Black Caucus Exposes Military Racism," *The Militant*, December 3, 1971.

volunteered to testify about racial conditions at Fort Hood. GIs Wes Williams and Bob Paucher (an Oleo Strut staff member) served as Stokes' unofficial base guides, even leading the congressman through an impromptu tour of the prison stockade against the wishes of military authorities, who were struggling to keep up appearances. For two days, the atmosphere at Fort Hood changed dramatically. One activist described Fort Hood as "liberated territory—you could do or say anything on the base while the hearings were going on. We were all over that base."⁸⁷ Political discussions, particularly among black GIs, were held openly in barracks while the hearings progressed. One report of the congressman's visit described the atmosphere of anger and tension among black GIs:

Brother after Brother testified about the racism that is part of everyday life on Ft. Hood. The fact that blacks are given infantry and artillery jobs; the fact that blacks are prosecuted for 5 minutes AWOL; the fact that blacks are thrown into the stockade arbitrarily and with little reason. Anger was high during the hearing, showing the extent and depth of racism on Ft. Hood, the military, and American society as a whole. A number of times Stokes was asked just what he was going to do with the information gathered. "Since racism is necessary to the military, what are you planning to do to combat it?" one Brother asked. "Are you just here to bullshit for awhile, to pacify us and go back and tell your boss what's happening?"⁸⁸

The meeting revealed that many black GIs at Fort Hood shared the conclusion that Rep. Stokes, and the federal government in general, could provide "no immediate relief" for the persistent racial problems on base. On the evening the congressman left Killeen, Wes Williams led a raucous meeting of black soldiers at the Oleo Strut, which was used as a safe discussion space despite many black GIs

⁸⁷ Zeiger, interview with author, January 10, 2010.

⁸⁸ "Black Organization Grows from Hearing on Racism," Fort Hood United Front pamphlet, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University. See also "Military Race Relations Held Explosive," *The New York Times*, November 18, 1971; Honorable Louis Stokes, "Racism in the Military: A New System for Rewards and Punishment," Congressional Black Caucus Report, *Congressional Record*, 92nd Congress, 2nd Session, October 14, 1972.

having reservations about the coffeehouse's reputation as a primarily white hangout. Out of this meeting, a separate black GI organization, the People's Justice Committee (PJC), was formed. While standing in front of a mixed crowd of white and black GIs at the Oleo Strut, Williams explained the need for a black-only organization, and promised that the PJC would work closely with both the coffeehouse and the Fort Hood United Front to maintain consistent pressure on military authorities to address the policies that concerned both black and white soldiers on base.⁸⁹

Williams' charismatic leadership and shrewd political skills were admired by activists at the Oleo Strut, and well-known to military authorities at Fort Hood. Shortly after the formation of the PJC, Williams was approached by a base commander, General George Seneff, who wanted him to lead a "racial harmony team" on base as part of the military's renewed efforts to address racial issues on base. Shortly after Williams refused, he was handed court-martial papers by military police for possession of marijuana. The PJC launched an extensive leafleting and petition campaign that helped lead to Williams' acquittal and quiet discharge several weeks later.⁹⁰

Williams' exit from the military, and subsequent return to Oakland, left a vacuum of political leadership at Fort Hood, and activism once again slowed considerably at the end of 1971. The Oleo Strut coffeehouse again confronted declining morale and lower overall interest in political work among GIs on base. The fragile racial unity that had been created around issues like riot control and the

⁸⁹ Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 88-89.

⁹⁰ Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 20-21.

"Free Harvey and Priest" campaign in the past proved unsustainable. By the time the Oleo Strut began planning for the 1972 Armed Forces Day event, the PJC had separated completely from the coffeehouse and the white GIs that made up the Fort Hood United Front. The racial animosity that had been previously overcome, if only tenuously, began to seriously erode the possibility of further racial cooperation within Fort Hood's GI movement. At the Oleo Strut, staff members faced a now-familiar set of problems: a stagnant political situation accompanied by bitter infighting and persistent financial difficulties. The coffeehouse's ability to remain open in Killeen was once again in question.⁹¹

As the months wore on in 1972, antiwar activism in Killeen came to a near standstill. The Oleo Strut staff attempted to re-group, but the drop-off in interest had little to do with the operation of the coffeehouses: national events were rapidly changing the landscape of political possibilities for the antiwar movement. In short, the war was in its apparent final stages. Richard Nixon's Vietnamization strategy had pulled 400,000 combat troops from Vietnam by the end of 1971, effectively ending the ground war and drastically shifting operations at American military bases around the world.⁹² At Fort Hood, the immediate threat of being sent to Vietnam, which had provided a real sense of urgency to the local GI movement, was suddenly gone, and the activists at the Oleo Strut found themselves in a consistently empty coffeehouse. Zeiger recalled that, "There was an almost instantaneous shift

⁹¹ Ibid., 22.

⁹² Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 230-240.

in the mood at Fort Hood; suddenly, there was just no one around."⁹³ While the Strut staff was still committed to continued antiwar activism, with the onset of Vietnamization the war was "winding down" in the minds of many Americans, including GIs at Fort Hood, and the coffeehouse project was unable to sustain the political and cultural energy it had created so effectively in the past. The Oleo Strut finally closed its doors, permanently, in the summer of 1972.

The Strut and Killeen

The Oleo Strut's tenure in Killeen, Texas, coincided with, and contributed to, a period of intense political and cultural turmoil at Fort Hood. The coffeehouse's original mission, to act as a loose support network for dissident American soldiers, allowed for a framework that proved remarkably flexible in responding to rapidly-shifting circumstances. For four years, the coffeehouse stood in Killeen as a physical reminder of the unrest at Fort Hood and the larger crisis faced by the Vietnam-era U.S. military.

The coffeehouse staff, of course, had hoped that their efforts would lead to a more dramatic revolution from within the armed forces, imagining the Oleo Strut as the headquarters for a massive, war-stopping rebellion of the rank and file. In reality, the coffeehouse ended up serving a more modest, but nonetheless significant, set of purposes for the soldiers and activists who gathered there. In the often hostile environment of Fort Hood and Killeen, it offered a safe space for discussion of politically unpopular ideas. In offering such a space, the Oleo Strut made possible conversations that perhaps could not have transpired anywhere else

⁹³ Zeiger, interview with author, January 10, 2010.

in the vicinity, connecting people who otherwise may never have met each other. In this sense it contributed powerfully to the development of political activism at Fort Hood.

The Oleo Strut clearly benefited from the unique political and logistical circumstances present at Fort Hood in the late 1960s. The base's major role in the Vietnam War exacerbated underlying tensions among soldiers stationed there, and by the time the Oleo Strut opened its doors in the summer of 1968, Fort Hood had already experienced several significant instances of racial violence, insubordination, and politically-motivated acts of resistance. For a brief period, the Oleo Strut was able to amplify and direct this energy, helping dissident Fort Hood GIs focus their alienation and anger into a series of concentrated political campaigns. The coffeehouse arrived at the perfect time to complement a rising, but undirected, GI movement at Fort Hood, and the interaction of GIs and civilian activists that occurred within its walls helped support a substantial intervention in military policies at Fort Hood that eventually captured the attention of the federal government.⁹⁴

The presence of youth counterculture in the armed forces, particularly at Fort Hood, also helped nurture the Oleo Strut's operation in Killeen. The area's underground reputation as a haven for hippie-leaning GIs ("Fort Head") meant that the coffeehouse had a ready-made customer base (fig. 12). Although the vast majority of these customers were white soldiers attracted to the rock and roll lifestyle on display at the Strut, inadvertently repeating the same racial and cultural

⁹⁴ The federal government's response to the GI coffeehouse phenomenon is discussed in Chapter 5.

divisions then plaguing Fort Hood, the coffeehouse nevertheless provided an outlet for those soldiers wishing to escape the sometimes stifling atmosphere on base and in Killeen. A soldier interviewed in the coffeehouse for a short film on the GI movement explained the simple pleasures that a place like the Oleo Strut could afford: "Being in the Army, I can get over here and I can sit down, and I can write poetry. And I can sit here and listen, and I can forget I'm in the Army for about 15 minutes to an hour."⁹⁵ The unique interaction of counterculture and radical politics at the coffeehouse was often complex, but it is clear that a great deal of the Oleo Strut's popularity was due to its hip orientation in a town that historically lacked such alternative cultural establishments.

As popular as the Oleo Strut eventually became among Fort Hood's various outcasts, to most of the citizens of Killeen, the coffeehouse was never more than an anomaly, one more sign that the turmoil over the Vietnam War had spread to their own backyards. With the exception of a handful of local youths, Killeen residents rarely frequented the place, limiting its wider impact. The staff never recruited a single activist from the city proper, reinforcing popular charges of "outside agitation" and preventing the project from becoming integrated into the Killeen community. The Oleo Strut did not meet with as much organized community resistance as faced by the UFO coffeehouse in Columbia, South Carolina, but the Killeen coffeehouse did provoke its share of negative reactions during the course of its operation. Frequent harassment by the town's teenaged "goat-ropers," coupled

⁹⁵ Newsreel Film Archives, "*Summer '68*." This short film, produced by the New York City-based radical filmmaking collective Newsreel, contains footage of several GI movement projects, including interviews with GIs and activists inside the Oleo Strut.

with more serious incidents of possibly Klan-related violence made it clear that the Oleo Strut coffeehouse existed far outside the local cultural mainstream, and this outsider status led to frequent physical attacks from various self-appointed protectors of the status quo.

Opening a counterculture antiwar coffeehouse, operated by political radicals, in a small Army town in 1960s Texas was, from the beginning, a dangerous proposition. Unlike the UFO coffeehouse in Columbia, the Oleo Strut was not located next to a large university, and thus lacked a natural population of young supporters and sympathetic professors. The Strut staff, in their reports to national antiwar organizations, repeatedly emphasized their feelings of isolation and alienation from the Killeen community, which often expressed open hostility to the coffeehouse's presence.

The Oleo Strut was a frequent topic of discussion on the *Killeen Daily Herald's* editorial page, which seemed to delight in printing venomous letters from local citizens voicing animosity toward everything the coffeehouse stood for. A particularly lively exchange of letters occurred in May 1971, after a local minister, Reverend Daniel Deutsch of Trinity Lutheran Church, wrote to defend the Oleo Strut, arguing that the arrest of ten activists outside the coffeehouse represented an assault on individual liberties: "It is with deep regret that we are now witnessing here in Killeen the repression of individual freedom and expression that is pervading our country. It is tragic that people cannot dress differently, wear their hair differently, or hold and express unpopular views without being harassed and even arrested for simply being different. I would willingly wager a good sum that

ten well-dressed, well-groomed businessmen standing in front of a business establishment in the same area would not even have received a passing glance from the arresting officers."⁹⁶

For several weeks, the *Herald* printed responses from outraged Killeen citizens to Deutsch's support of the Oleo Strut. "If Brother Deutsch will stroll by the Oleo Strut almost any evening, he will hear some of the most obscene language and absolute profanity he will ever hear. He will also see signs displayed that are not very decent, if not absolutely obscene and anti-Godly and anti-American," declared Pastor Don Scott of Northside Baptist Church. Killeen resident Coy W. Hilbert asked, "Is it really an issue of hair and dress? Wouldn't it be more a matter of morals? Does God condone filth, adultery, stealing, slander, willfully breaking laws, etc.? Killeen has been plagued with all of these . . . Freedom and the rights of good moral people are suffering due to the acts of so-called 'freedom marchers.'"⁹⁷ Some writers aimed their anger directly at antiwar GIs themselves, blaming them for disrupting the war effort and, somewhat prophetically, calling for changes to military policy in order to eliminate dissent in the future. As one of these writers, who signed her letter, "Mrs. Marion Jones, Army wife, and proud of it," angrily declared, "The whole damned bunch of these soldiers do not rate the privilege of shining the boots of one serious-minded, well-behaved American soldier. The sooner we get an all volunteer Army and can dispose of this garbage, the sooner the whole Army will begin to be respected by the civilian population again."⁹⁸

⁹⁶ "Letter to the Editor," *The Killeen Daily Herald*, May 18, 1971.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, May 23, 1971.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, October 28, 1971.

For their part, the editors of the *Killeen Daily Herald* often took the opportunity to reinforce the contempt for the Oleo Strut expressed by numerous letter-writers, characterizing antiwar and counterculture activities as anomalies in an otherwise loyal, patriotic base town:

The sight of police dragging antiwar protestors to the city jail on charges of violating the parade ordinance is a new experience for this military community . . . The pictures of bearded youths laying on the sidewalks and being dragged to jail by police are a sorry spectacle. We have watched these conflicts in other cities, but it brings special embarrassment when they happen in Killeen, where men in uniform have learned that peace cannot always be won by collapsing on the ground.⁹⁹

As the town's most widely-read news source, the *Killeen Daily Herald* had a strong influence on local opinion. That the Oleo Strut was able to survive in Killeen for four years despite relentlessly negative coverage by the beloved town paper is a remarkable feat in and of itself.

But the Oleo Strut did more than just stay alive. From 1968 to 1972, the coffeehouse and its hybrid civilian/GI staff was able to publish and distribute thousands of underground newspapers, lead several large antiwar marches in a town that had never experienced a political rally, initiate a national boycott of a major jewelry corporation, instigate a series of congressional investigations, open a military counseling center, and provide legal support to dozens of soldiers facing prosecution, all the while offering high-quality espresso and regular rock entertainment in a psychedelic setting. The Oleo Strut's brief history demonstrates that under the right conditions a physical space, no matter how small or marginalized, can become a potent force for generating political and cultural

⁹⁹ Ibid.

activity.¹⁰⁰ While on the surface not much different from any number of bohemian coffeehouses then operating around the country, the specific location, timing, and consciously political tone of the Oleo Strut project helped it evolve into the central institution of Fort Hood's influential GI antiwar movement.

Although all of the GI coffeehouse projects were located in the small cities outside major military bases around the country, there was a great deal of variation in the specific socioeconomic, cultural, and political conditions present in these locations, and these variations help account for the very different receptions and experiences each project faced in their respective communities. The UFO coffeehouse, for example, was subjected to political prosecution by a district attorney running for re-election, while simultaneously defended as an important symbol of free speech by a wide section of Columbia residents. The Oleo Strut never enjoyed such local support; according to one local history, the coffeehouse was "viewed by most with all the abhorrence accorded a coiled rattlesnake."¹⁰¹ While it never faced official prosecution, many incidents underlined its outsider status in Killeen, and the coffeehouse depended instead on a robust movement of locally-stationed soldiers.

The story of the third major Summer of Support GI coffeehouse, the Shelter Half outside Fort Lewis in Tacoma, Washington, similarly demonstrates the

¹⁰⁰ Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007). Enke's history of second-wave feminism re-visions the movement as primarily concerned with the "liberation" of public space (like bars, coffeehouses, restaurants, and bookstores), and traces several women's projects that, not unlike GI coffeehouses, sought to create physical spaces that embodied a revolutionary politics.

¹⁰¹ Duncan, *Killeen: A Tale of Two Cities*, 132.

centrality of local conditions in determining a coffeehouse project's level of impact. Tacoma's more urban environment, diverse economy, and history of radical left-wing politics made for a dramatically different experience compared to the UFO and Oleo Strut projects. The Shelter Half remained open longer than any other coffeehouse (1968-1974), and became involved in a wide variety of important local and national movements around the Pacific Northwest throughout the early 1970s. Its specific history, placed within the local context of the Tacoma and Seattle political scene, helps further situate the GI coffeehouse phenomenon and its relationship to the larger shifts in military culture it seemed to signal.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SHELTER HALF (FORT LEWIS, TACOMA, WASHINGTON)

Despite often being remembered as an aggressive Cold War hawk, Richard Nixon's successful 1968 presidential campaign hinged to a large degree on his promise to de-escalate the nation's military involvement in Vietnam. Pledging that he had a plan to win "peace with honor," Nixon was responding to the war's deep unpopularity with the American public while simultaneously appealing to the revulsion with antiwar protests, racial unrest, and hippie counterculture that was felt by the more traditionally-minded Americans who composed Nixon's "silent majority."¹ Of course, there is often a wide gap between campaign promises and presidential reality, and Nixon's eventual policy of Vietnamization looked less and less like de-escalation as his presidency progressed through the early 1970s. Achieving "peace with honor" eventually cost an additional 26,000 American lives and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian casualties as the agonizing process of American withdrawal dragged on for seven more years.² During this transitional process, the Nixon administration often took pains to promote each phase of its withdrawal efforts as part of the strategy to achieve (albeit gradually) the president's earlier campaign pledge to end the costly and unpopular war.

As part of these efforts, the administration announced in June 1969, just a few months into Nixon's first term, that 25,000 troops would return from Vietnam

¹ Garry Wills, *Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self-Made Man* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969), 191.

² Robert D. Schulzinger, *A Companion to American Foreign Relations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 413.

by the end of August. To emphasize this point, the Department of Defense staged a "homecoming" ceremony in Tacoma, Washington, where Fort Lewis and its connected bases had been serving as the nation's main processing center for troops both going to and arriving from the Vietnam War. On July 8, 1969, when 814 American GIs arrived from Southeast Asia at nearby McChord Air Force base, they were greeted by a group of dignitaries that included Army Chief of Staff (and former commanding general of the war in Vietnam³) William Westmoreland, ambassador to South Vietnam Bui Diem, and Tacoma Mayor A.L. Rasmussen. Adding a festive touch to the occasion was a brass band and a group of beauty queens and princesses from the Washington state area. The war-weary soldiers of the Third Battalion, 60th Infantry, Ninth Infantry Division listened to a speech by Westmoreland before being bussed to nearby Fort Lewis for the traditional post-war steak dinner.⁴ The group of GIs were then informed that in the morning they would begin training for their appearance in a larger "homecoming parade" to be held in downtown Seattle just two days later. The parade's utility as state propaganda was not lost on even mainstream media sources like the *New York Times*, which noted that, on the same day that the Third Battalion landed at McChord, 1,000 fresh troops were on the same tarmac boarding planes bound for the war zone, and an additional 10,000 soldiers would follow them in the month of July alone.

The local and national media were not the only ones to call attention to the cruel irony of the Nixon administration's Seattle parade promoting de-escalation.

³ Westmoreland's official title was Deputy Commander of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), the military's generic name for all operations in Vietnam.

⁴ Steven V. Roberts, "Girls, Bands, and Ticker Tape Greet Troops from Vietnam in Seattle," *The New York Times*, July 11, 1969.

The parade itself was in fact marked by the presence of a significant number of antiwar activists, many of whom held signs bearing slogans like "Welcome Home! We'll Stay in the Streets Until ALL of the GIs are Home!" and "Bring All the GIs Home Now!" A group of young women handed flowers to passing soldiers, many of whom accepted the tokens and flashed peace signs in return. Later in the evening, when the troops left the Seattle Center after a dinner of salmon and beer, antiwar activists waiting outside distributed leaflets and GI underground newspapers that urged soldiers to consider how the parade had employed them as political pawns.⁵

Both the administration's staged parade and the antiwar movement's demonstrations against it were signs of the Pacific Northwest's unique position in the overall narrative of the Vietnam War. The history of the Shelter Half coffeehouse's presence in Tacoma, Washington, from 1968-1974, captures the particular social, political, and cultural elements that made the Pacific Northwest region's experience of war different than in other areas of the country. More than any other GI coffeehouse, the Shelter Half's story reveals how important the surrounding environment was to a political project's overall impact. Because Tacoma's physical location had strategic value to both military planners and the New Left's antiwar movement, over the course of six years the Shelter Half coffeehouse often found itself at the center of the Vietnam era's military crisis.

⁵ "Royal Welcome Set for Vietnam Vets," *The Tacoma News Tribune*, July 6, 1969, A2; "Cheers, Anti-War Chants Greet Returning Soldiers," *The Seattle Times*, July 10, 1969, 1; "Token Pullout Met With Demand: Bring All the Troops Home Now!," *The Militant*, July 25, 1969, 1; "Seattle Demonstrators: 'Bring 'em All Home!'," *The Militant*, July 25, 1969, 10.

Tacoma: Location, Location, Location

Tacoma's Fort Lewis Army base served a central role in the Pacific theater of World War II, and later evolved into a critical training and processing center for American troops as the United States escalated its military campaign in Southeast Asia through the 1960s. In May 1966, military officials established a \$6.3 million "Army Personnel Center" at Fort Lewis that ultimately handled the induction of more than 2.3 million soldiers before closing in 1972. In addition to initial processing of new recruits, the base was also transformed into the Army's central training grounds for Vietnam combat, with GIs participating in simulated war games on a meticulously constructed 15,000 acre "Vietnam Village" complex featuring thatched-roof "hootches" and American soldiers role-playing as the Vietcong.⁶

Though Fort Lewis developed into one of the U.S. Army's most important domestic bases of operations throughout the Vietnam War, the entire Washington state area in fact played a critical role in the military's overall war effort. The region's natural, human, and economic resources made an ideal location for military activity of all kinds. The Puget Sound area, which included both Tacoma and nearby Seattle, held particular strategic value, and during the 1960s all four branches of the military had active bases that took advantage of the region's deepwater bays and vast swaths of undeveloped land. In addition to Fort Lewis, the area housed McChord Air Force Base, Fort Lawton Army base, Pier 91 Naval Station, Sand Point Naval Air Station, and the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. All of these bases

⁶ Ken Swarner, *The Evergreen Post: A History of Fort Lewis* (Tacoma, WA: Ranger Publishing Company, 1993), 54–55; Archie Satterfield, "Fort Lewis 'Search, Destroy Mission,'" *Seattle Times Sunday Magazine*, August 25, 1969, 28–29.

contributed to a ubiquitous military presence in Washington, a presence that became even more pronounced as the Vietnam War brought an influx of military personnel to the state beginning in 1964.⁷ The impact of the Vietnam War on Tacoma's Fort Lewis is reflected most strikingly by the losses sustained by Fort Lewis' Fourth Infantry Division, a group of more than 70,000 soldiers that had been stationed, in rotation, at the Lewis base beginning in 1956. The Fourth Infantry was called to combat duty in Vietnam in July 1966, and over the course of four years the Tacoma-based division lost 16,844 men to death and injury before being relieved of service during Nixon's initial withdrawal in early 1970.⁸

Tacoma's deep involvement in the operation of the Vietnam War, including the Fourth Infantry's losses, made for a strong local connection to military issues. In many ways, the war itself became a kind of hometown story, as local newspapers promoted Fort Lewis' commitment to the war effort as a point of particular strength and pride. As was true of other American "base towns," Tacoma's business community directly benefitted from the region's identification with nearby military bases. This identification was frequently celebrated and reinforced by Congressman Floyd V. Hicks, who represented Kitsap, King, and Pierce counties (which included Tacoma) and served on the House Armed Services Committee from 1964 to 1975. Hicks was a tireless promoter of the military's presence in the Tacoma area, and his efforts to convince the federal government to expand military allocations to Fort Lewis contributed to the local economy's dependence on the Army base. Even

⁷ Swarner, *The Evergreen Post*, 55; Leaflet, Fort Lewis Military Museum, U.S. Army Museum System, Center of Military History.

⁸ Ibid.

though the Vietnam War would ultimately inflict heavy casualties on the men and women who passed through Fort Lewis, Tacoma's business and political elite often viewed the war as an important opportunity for increased profit and local prestige.⁹

The town of Tacoma itself was not unlike many of the small base towns in which GI coffeehouses established themselves throughout the 1960s. With a population of less than 150,000, Tacoma owed its existence almost entirely to Commencement Bay, a large inlet off the Puget Sound that made the area a prime seaport for international trade. After the Northern Pacific Railway, the first transcontinental railroad in the northern United States, decided to locate its Western terminus at Commencement Bay in 1873, Tacoma quickly grew into a small but booming port town. Fort Lewis' construction in 1917 secured the region as a permanent military installation and helped continue Tacoma's rapid expansion. Due to its high concentration of working-class residents (beginning with the railroad workers of the nineteenth century and continuing with the longshoremen of the twentieth), Tacoma had a long history of blue-collar labor organizing, contributing to its image as the West's "Grit City."¹⁰

What separated Tacoma from other base towns was its proximity to a major urban center, Seattle, where a growing progressive community often proved significantly more sympathetic to New Left causes than citizens in more isolated rural military towns. The Shelter Half coffeehouse undoubtedly benefitted from the generally more liberal environment that surrounded Tacoma. *A New York Times*

⁹ "Military Pay Raise Bill Seen Benefit to Area," *The Tacoma News Tribune*, April 29, 1966, A1.

¹⁰ Caroline Gallacci and Ron Karabaich, *Tacoma's Waterfront* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 4-8.

reporter, after visiting the Shelter Half in 1969, highlighted Tacoma's convenient location along a corridor of West Coast highways well-traveled by young radical activists, noting that the coffeehouse's "operators are drawn from the virtually endless supply of New Politics leftists around San Francisco Bay."¹¹

While the *Times* writer was correct in asserting the importance of the San Francisco Bay area's close relationship to the Shelter Half coffeehouse, particularly in regard to civilian staff, a more important center of local activism existed even closer to Tacoma, at the University of Washington's Seattle campus. During the 1960s, UW-Seattle experienced significant growth in both its physical infrastructure and its faculty and student composition; the tenure of university President Charles Odegaard contributed to a dramatic expansion of the institution's operating budget and national prestige, and by the end of his term, the student population had more than doubled, from 16,000 in 1958 to more than 34,000 in 1973. The influx of new students also helped bring about a rising level of political activism, most notably the establishment of a large chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which often stood at the center of a lively youth antiwar movement in and around the Washington state area.¹²

In addition to SDS, other radical organizations more closely associated with the "Old Left" maintained a significant presence in the Pacific Northwest in the late 1960s, and it was the influence of these groups, most prominently the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and its youth corollary, the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA),

¹¹ Wallace Turner, "GI Coffeehouse Under Coast Fire," *The New York Times*, February 16, 1969.

¹² Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

that initiated a more direct relationship between the antiwar movement and American soldiers. In Seattle, the YSA's relatively small membership nevertheless aggressively promoted GI activism as part of the Socialist Workers Party's larger political strategy. To YSA members, students could more effectively stimulate revolutionary social change by directing their movement toward the military's working class: "Our work in support of GI antiwar fighting will give our movement an avenue to real POWER for the first time."¹³

Inspired by the growing antiwar resistance from within the military, evidenced in well-publicized cases, such as the trial of the "Fort Jackson Eight," the small but active Socialist Workers Party chapters in Seattle helped lay the groundwork for the Shelter Half coffeehouse's later campaigns oriented toward Fort Lewis. In the fall of 1968, student activists at the University of Washington, working directly with the YSA and other antiwar organizations, initiated one of the country's first direct campaigns to link the civilian left with the varied acts of resistance then permeating the armed forces. By forming the GI-Civilian Alliance for Peace (GI-CAP), young antiwar organizers hoped to demonstrate their solidarity with young GIs alienated from military authority and the war in Vietnam, in the process breaking down some of the perceived barriers between the youth antiwar movement and soldiers. The formation of the GI-CAP group caught the attention of Fred Gardner and other national organizers of the GI coffeehouse movement, who in fall 1968 were beginning their own "Summer of Support" campaign of antiwar

¹³ "Statement of the University of Washington Young Socialist Alliance," March 6, 1969, SDS papers, Accession 1080-4, Box 1, University of Washington, Seattle, Special Collections, Suzzallo Library.

outreach at American military installations. Because of the early activities of GI-CAP (which included the creation of a GI underground newspaper, *Counterpoint*, and a near-constant presence outside the gates of Fort Lewis), in addition to the robust antiwar movement taking place at the nearby University of Washington, Tacoma was, more than any other base town in the country, primed for the creation of an antiwar coffeehouse. Though the opening of the Shelter Half coffeehouse in October 1968 undoubtedly created significant controversy in and around the area, in retrospect its establishment can be viewed as a foreseeable outgrowth of local political developments.¹⁴

The Shelter Half Makes a Splash

The direct impetus for the opening of a GI coffeehouse in Tacoma came from a small group of local activists: LeRoy Annis, a professor of English at the University of Puget Sound, Leonard Holden, an official from the Tacoma School District, and Jim Morley, a student at the University of Washington.¹⁵ The three men established a non-profit corporation, Northwest Associates, in order to channel funds from national coffeehouse support organizations like the United States Servicemen's Fund (USSF) and Support Our Soldiers (SOS) to Tacoma's small antiwar movement. Northwest Associates used these funds to obtain a lease on a defunct "hip" bakery ("The Electric Bakery") located at 5437 South Tacoma Way, less than a mile from

¹⁴ Edd Jeffords, "Coffeehouse Achieves Goal of Getting People Together," *Tacoma News Tribune*, October 13, 1968.

¹⁵ "Investigation of Attempts to Subvert the United States Armed Services," *Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security, House of Representatives, 92nd Congress, 1st and 2nd Sessions*, vol. 1, 6410. The University of Puget Sound is a small liberal arts college located in downtown Tacoma, Washington.

Fort Lewis' main gates (fig. 13). The owners of the property, who lived above the bakery-turned-coffeehouse, were members of the International Order of Odd Fellows, and over the course of the Shelter Half's existence, members of the fraternal organization often walked through the coffeehouse in full sword-clanking regalia, their appearance adding another bizarre element to the already admittedly unconventional setting.¹⁶

The Shelter Half coffeehouse was modeled after the other "Summer of Support" coffeehouses then establishing their own roots in Columbia, South Carolina (the UFO), and Killeen, Texas (the Oleo Strut). Each of these coffeehouses co-opted a military term for their business' name, a practice of linguistic subversion common to the 1960s counterculture that helped establish the institution's rebellious political and cultural orientation. In the case of the Shelter Half, the name derived from an Army term that referred to a small piece of sticky canvas (a "shelter half"), carried by all soldiers, which was effectively useless unless two soldiers joined them together to form a two-man tent. By naming the coffeehouse after this particular piece of equipment, its organizers hoped to invoke a sense of strength through solidarity and cooperation. Of course, the coffeehouse would also serve as a literal "shelter" from the particular military culture at Fort Lewis, and, like other GI coffeehouses, the organizers covered its walls with personality posters of counterculture celebrities such as Allen Ginsberg, Muhammad Ali, Che Guevara, and even Charlie Chaplin. Serving coffee, soft drinks, and inexpensive meals made from a

¹⁶ "A Report from Tacoma," *New SOS News*, vol. 1, no. 4, July 27, 1969.

small kitchen, the Shelter Half initially presented itself as a hip environment where military men were welcome to relax, listen to music, and talk with friends (fig. 14).

Like most other GI coffeehouses, the Shelter Half was initially envisioned as an institution in which soldiers and antiwar civilians could get to know one another outside of the restrictive environment of the military establishment. The civilian activists who opened the coffeehouse in Tacoma knew that, before moving forward with organized political activism, they would need to become friendly with the young men on base, and in its early months the Shelter Half went out of its way to project a GI-friendly atmosphere. This effort included an elaborate free Christmas dinner, advertised by leaflets at Fort Lewis's gates and in the local underground press. According to organizers at the Shelter Half, the dinner was a success; about twenty GIs from base came to share a meal and conversation with their radical civilian hosts. In a handwritten letter to the Shelter Half staff, a GI later expressed his gratitude for the feast, explaining that he and a friend had been driving aimlessly around Tacoma on Christmas Day, tired and hungry, when they stumbled upon the coffeehouse:

Here waiting for us [at the Shelter Half] we find free coffee, good music, something to read & heat too . . . Wow! Q: What else could a G.I. want? A: Not have to ride back to Ft. Lewis and eat their shit. And their food too. Well we didn't have to, the great people at the Shelter Half solved the problem by serving a Christmas dinner that couldn't be beat. Wine, fruit, nuts the whole bit. Gratis, free, on the house, on the good half. For all this, all I can offer is our thanks.¹⁷

With the holiday dinner serving as a kind of formal introduction to Tacoma's military community, the Shelter Half project entered the new year (1969) with a

¹⁷ Letter to Shelter Half Staff, April 21, 1969, SDS papers, Accession 1080-4, Box 1, University of Washington, Seattle Special Collections, Suzzallo Library. The GI and friend did not include their names in the letter.

certain amount of local word-of-mouth, and a growing number of curious servicemen showing up to sample the atmosphere. This burst of popularity led directly to increased political activism in Tacoma. After visiting the coffeehouse and learning that it supported a local branch of GIs United, an Air Force pilot identified only as "W.R." felt compelled to offer his financial contribution, however small:

Peace Brothers—

Wandered into the coffee house last night and I heard you just formed a GIs United. So am sending \$10.00 to help out and plan to attend your next meeting. Hope you can use the money to put out some more copies of leaflets or such. We really need to spread the word. I'm on McChord and I just found out about you guys this week. I'm sure I know many more guys who would dig a group like yours, so I'll spread the word. Keep up the good work.¹⁸

Within the first few months of business in Tacoma, the Shelter Half gained the attention of its target audience of GIs, servicemen, and military veterans from throughout the Tacoma area, and its organizers discovered that a significant portion of this population was willing to lend its support, in various ways, to the operation of the coffeehouse itself.

Stan Anderson, then a twenty-two year-old Army veteran who had been stationed at Fort Lewis, became the Shelter Half's first manager and unofficial spokesperson in 1968. When a local newspaper reporter visited the coffeehouse during its first week of operation in Tacoma, Anderson explained the establishment's function in terms that echoed Fred Gardner's original vision of coffeehouses as open discussion spaces: "We want to provide a free atmosphere where military personnel can associate with students and other civilians. The Shelter Half will provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas, free from any

¹⁸ Letter, *Counterpoint*, September 20, 1969.

restrictions on political or ideological discussion . . . [T]he direction we take locally will be decided by the people who use the place." Anderson acknowledged that the coffeehouse had an undeniable "peace orientation," and stressed that, since the expression of antiwar opinions by active-duty personnel was often met with severe harassment and reprimand, the coffeehouse could offer a safe space for those soldiers alienated by the sometimes narrow cultural and political environment both on base and in the string of local bars that dotted Tacoma's downtown. In Anderson's view, the Shelter Half coffeehouse could begin to address the alienation many young soldiers (such as Anderson himself) experienced in the small base town. That alienation, Anderson pointed out, was often exacerbated by the Vietnam War's deep unpopularity among young people throughout the nation:

When I was at Fort Lewis, there were few activities that brought me into contact with members of the local community. It really boiled down to a choice of staying on the post or making the bar rounds . . . I felt the people of Tacoma were interested in soldiers only because of the money they spend here. I had nothing here I could relate to and felt like a second-class citizen. The war, though, has resulted in the drafting of many students and college graduates who understand and want the sort of dialogue that a coffeehouse can offer. We want to give these people a place where they can feel at home.¹⁹

Like the other GI coffeehouses opened during 1968's "Summer of Support," the Shelter Half's original operators cast the project mainly as a refuge for alienated young soldiers rather than a political operations center.

Along with the opportunity to speak with active-duty soldiers about the war in Vietnam, it was this notion of "background support" that most appealed to playwright and antiwar activist Barbara Garson when she heard about the GI

¹⁹ Edd Jeffords, "Coffeehouse Achieves Goal of Getting People Together," *Tacoma News Tribune*, October 13, 1968.

coffeehouse concept from friend and fellow activist Fred Gardner in Berkeley, California, in 1968. Garson had just come off a recent success with the countercultural satire *MacBird!*, a controversial play in verse that cast the Johnson presidency in a subversive adaptation of Shakespeare's *MacBeth*. After overseeing a successful year-long run of *MacBird* at the Village Gate Theater in New York City in 1967, Garson returned to the San Francisco Bay area, eager to find new ways to contribute to the antiwar effort. Learning from Gardner of the Shelter Half's need for new staff members, Garson moved up the Pacific Coast to Tacoma in early 1969 to work at the coffeehouse and help build the GI movement at Fort Lewis.

Though Garson was solidly opposed to the Vietnam War, and wanted to work to stop it, for most of the 1960s she felt largely alienated from the organized antiwar movement, and was particularly wary of sectarian radicals, who she felt harbored unrealistic revolutionary fantasies. Like Gardner, Garson envisioned herself as providing material and spiritual support for a movement led and organized by GIs rather than civilians, later recalling her distaste for the way civilian left-wing activists often approached GI organizing:

The last thing they were interested in was stories about GIs standing up for themselves. And that's what I was there for: the American people would be standing up for themselves. I actually thought that that [direct kind of] antiwar work was a step back. I thought the best way to be involved in the antiwar effort was to be involved with American people fighting for themselves.²⁰

Perhaps the most appealing aspect of working at the Shelter Half, to Garson, was that the coffeehouse provided an ideal environment in which to simultaneously work and raise her young daughter. "It was a very good place to work with a child.

²⁰ Barbara Garson, interview with author, April 30, 2011.

You could be in political work, doing important things, and yet be separated less from your child than if you were a stay-at-home mother. And for my daughter, it was like being in Mom and Dad's candy store."²¹

Garson may have characterized the Shelter Half as an unthreatening "candy store," but to many of Tacoma's more traditionally-minded citizens the coffeehouse's intentions could not have appeared more sinister. Among these citizens was the director of the city's Department of Tax and License, D.H. McLellan, who began investigating the Shelter Half almost immediately after it opened its doors on October 4, 1968. Over the course of its first months in business, local police visited the coffeehouse on several occasions, presumably inspecting for various code violations. On February 6, 1969, two Tacoma police officers physically removed a pair of young boys (aged 15 and 11) for playing a coin-operated foosball machine set up in the Shelter Half's recreation room. Stan Anderson and another member of the coffeehouse staff, Miranda Bergman, were arrested and charged with "contributing to the delinquency of a minor." The next day, McLellan drafted a letter to the Shelter Half staff that announced his intentions to revoke the coffeehouse's business license. Defending his decision to a *New York Times* reporter, McLellan insisted that the city had the right to deny licenses to "any person believed to desire such license to enable him to practice some dishonest or immoral act." While McLellan did not itemize the Shelter Half's perceived "dishonest" or "immoral" acts, he evidently spoke for many Tacoma officials and residents when he insisted that

²¹ Ibid.

the Shelter Half's operators "think different than some of us."²² When Anderson and Bergman returned to the coffeehouse after being released from city jail, they discovered that their car had been set on fire, the wreckage left smoldering in its parking space in front of the coffeehouse. Though the coffeehouse staff never discovered the precise circumstances behind the car's burning, the sight of the destroyed vehicle seemed like one more sign that, only months after arriving in town, the Shelter Half had made some determined enemies in Tacoma.

A Year of Confrontation

Although Tacoma city officials, for unknown reasons, ultimately backed off their plans to revoke the Shelter Half's business license over the foosball machine incident, 1969 marked a year of intense attention directed toward the coffeehouse as it became a more active political presence in town and among GIs at Fort Lewis. Almost from the moment it opened its doors, the coffeehouse was used as a meeting space by a variety of antiwar groups that began to plan more brazen public actions against the war. Over the course of its first year in Tacoma, the Shelter Half became the undisputed center of local antiwar activity, and as these civilian forces mingled with the growing GI movement at Fort Lewis, military officials began searching for ways to limit the coffeehouse's impact.

The GI-Civilian Alliance for Peace, until 1969 a small local organization dedicated to bridging the gap between civilian antiwar activists and their counterparts in the military, grew exponentially in public visibility if not actual

²² Wallace Turner, "GI Coffeehouse Under Coast Fire: Antiwar Sponsors Opposed at 'Refuge' in Tacoma," *The New York Times*, Feb 16, 1969.

membership after the Shelter Half established roots in Tacoma. The coffeehouse offered a safe, public space in which the alliance GI-CAP hoped to build could be more effectively forged, and the organization unquestionably benefited from use of the Shelter Half's facilities. Through the winter of 1968-69, GI-CAP meetings increasingly packed the coffeehouse, as active-duty soldiers worked alongside local activists to plan a large antiwar demonstration in downtown Seattle for February 16. The group used the coffeehouse's mimeograph machine to print a GI newspaper, *Counterpoint*, which was covertly distributed by GIs at Fort Lewis in the weeks leading up to the rally. Civilian GI-CAP members also printed and distributed leaflets outside the base's main gates, creating a small barrage of grassroots publicity that, it would seem, based on the foosball incident, led to the Shelter Half's initial confrontations with town authorities.²³

The scale of the GI-CAP-sponsored antiwar demonstration on February 16 surprised even its organizers. Led by about 300 GIs, nearly a thousand activists representing a diverse range of local and national antiwar organizations paraded through Seattle's downtown, gathering at local landmark Eagles Auditorium to listen to a series of speakers on military issues. All of the day's speakers reinforced the idea that the GI movement was seeking to address issues beyond just the Vietnam War; that actions taken by soldiers around the country were aimed at winning rights and improving conditions for all soldiers regardless of their political orientation: Army veteran and SWP member Andy Stapp described his efforts to organize GIs into an institution modeled on labor unions, the American

²³ Ibid.; Letter, *Counterpoint*, September 20, 1969, 4.

Servicemen's Union (ASU)²⁴; veteran and SWP organizer Howard Petrick described working with GIs at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to win the right to hold meetings on racism and living conditions on base; and labor leader and political activist Sidney Lens, then co-chairman of the National Mobilization Committee, addressed the importance of the civilian antiwar movement's support for dissenting American soldiers.²⁵ The entire event marked a kind of coming-out party for the Pacific Northwest's growing movement of active-duty GIs and veterans against the war and, just as the members of GI-CAP had hoped, reflected an increasing amount of political and organizational cooperation between civilians and soldiers.

The February 16th event in Seattle was also intended to promote a much larger, nationally-coordinated series of antiwar demonstrations planned for Easter weekend, 1969. The demonstrations, under the umbrella guidance of the National Mobilization Committee, were to take place in major cities (among them, San Francisco, New York, and Chicago) and were intended to counter a common media image that cast antiwar protestors as enemies of loyal American soldiers. Much like at the smaller Seattle event, GI-CAP hoped to provide visual evidence of antiwar sentiment among active-duty GIs, and to show the antiwar movement's support for the rights of individual soldiers. Collectively, the Easter events showcased some of the largest numbers of GIs and veterans at any of the antiwar demonstrations

²⁴ Committee on Internal Security, House of Representatives, *The Workers World Party and Its Front Organizations* (Washington: United States Congress, 1974), 21. The HISC report refers to the ASU as one of the (Socialist) Workers World Party's primary American front organizations. Before forming the ASU, Stapp had been court-martialed in the late 1960s for his antiwar activities. The ASU evolved into a forceful presence within the Vietnam era GI movement before dissolving in the years after the war.

²⁵ "Report on the March and Rally," *Counterpoint*, vol. 2, no.1, February 24, 1969; "Report on Antiwar Actions," *Counterpoint*, vol. 2, no. 8, April 14, 1969.

during the Vietnam War era, as thousands of civilian activists joined hundreds of GIs in seven cities to express their solidarity. In Seattle, where the GI-CAP had promoted the event as "Antiwar Basic Training Days," the weekend took the form of a rally and teach-in, during which activists from Seattle's diverse left organizations, including the Black Panthers, the American Indian Movement, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Young Socialist Alliance, connected their group's struggle for peace and justice to the battles being waged by GIs against the war in Vietnam. Planned to occur near the one-year anniversary of Martin Luther King's assassination, the GI-CAP-sponsored Easter demonstrations helped raise public consciousness of the antiwar movement's concerted effort to collaborate with dissident soldiers, and particularly highlighted the Pacific Northwest's rising influence on the growth and direction of this collaboration. In a special issue of *Counterpoint* celebrating the march's success, an organizer for GI-CAP boasted, "One of the most gratifying things about the actions for us in GI-CAP was the number of telegrams we received saying that they had been given inspiration and valuable lessons by the highly successful GI-Civilian peace march that we held here on Feb. 16."²⁶

As radical groups throughout the Seattle-Tacoma area increasingly focused their energies toward the GI movement, the Shelter Half coffeehouse began playing a more instrumental role in the practical support of these organizations. In addition to providing a neutral meeting space, the coffeehouse also became a clearinghouse for antiwar information, mainly by allowing free use of its in-house typewriters,

²⁶ "Report on Antiwar Actions," *Counterpoint*, vol. 2, no. 8, April 14, 1969.

mimeograph machines, and other printing equipment. GI-CAP made use of this equipment to produce hundreds of issues of *Counterpoint* through 1968 and 1969, but GI-CAP was just one organization among many that took advantage of the Shelter Half's facilities and helped it evolve into one of the most active antiwar underground printing presses in the Pacific Northwest region.²⁷ Within a relatively brief period, the coffeehouse helped produce and distribute six different underground newspapers and countless leaflets, posters, and pamphlets. Several of these newspapers, including *Vietnam GI*, *Fed Up!* and *Bottom* gained national recognition on military bases around the country (and indeed, throughout the world), despite their questionable legal status and entirely improvised underground system of distribution. These newspapers were often smuggled onto bases by GIs willing to risk serious repercussions in order to disseminate alternative viewpoints on the Vietnam War and other military issues.²⁸

Because soldiers' access to these alternative views was usually severely limited, the civilian antiwar movement often saw itself as an independent news service, waging a kind of information war with military authorities. At Fort Lewis, this effort largely took the form of leafleting outside the base's gates, along with the production and distribution of antiwar GI newspapers. In the summer of 1969, however, as a diverse collection of antiwar groups coalesced in and around the Shelter Half coffeehouse, civilian activists (along with a number of active-duty GIs)

²⁷ Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 12-14.

²⁸ "Investigation of Attempts to Subvert the United States Armed Services," *Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security, House of Representatives, 92nd Congress, 1st and 2nd Sessions*, vol. 1, 6411.

hatched a plan to dramatically alert the larger Tacoma community about the growing GI movement. The resulting spectacle, dubbed "The Aquatic Invasion of Fort Lewis," ended up being one of the more bizarre antiwar demonstrations of the Vietnam era, and its details reveal the particular strategic orientation of both the Shelter Half coffeehouse and the many local antiwar forces it helped unleash.

Though the actual invasion ultimately included members of GI-CAP, the SWP, the YSA, and the University of Washington's chapter of SDS, its main organizer was UW-Seattle student and YSA member Stephanie Coontz (fig. 15). Beginning in 1967, Coontz had become one of the campus's most vocal and charismatic antiwar activists. Before the Shelter Half coffeehouse became the center of the Tacoma antiwar movement's efforts to join forces with GIs at Fort Lewis, Coontz and other UW students had been prodding the local antiwar movement to more directly engage with military matters. The major result of these efforts was the formation of GI-CAP in fall of 1968, but in the months prior Coontz had been involved in a series of draft resistance and military counseling actions aimed at the college's Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program. Coontz quickly became a regular at the Shelter Half coffeehouse during its first year in Tacoma.

At the Shelter Half, Coontz discovered that the relationships she forged with antiwar GIs could help bridge the wide gaps in class, culture and politics that existed between active-duty GIs and radical college students. According to Coontz, even though the Vietnam War was wildly unpopular at Fort Lewis, the vast majority GIs did not, for a variety of reasons, identify with antiwar college students:

There was a tremendous resentment of the war on base. Inchoate in many ways, not sure who to resent. The rich white kids who didn't have to go, who they saw as

yelling at them? Or, the army brass who they hated no matter what their politics were? A lot of it was trying to find common ground to talk to them to make it clear you weren't the press caricature of someone who thinks they're bad guys . . . You had to move very quickly into a discussion of "We believe that the best way to support our boys is to bring them home. We believe that the people who tell you they support you and then want to leave you there in a war you didn't start, those are not people who support you." And that was so obvious to a lot of GIs, you'd get these conversations started.²⁹

Whenever Coontz and other antiwar activists leafleted at the gates of Fort Lewis (a weekly activity), they would pair up with GIs from the Shelter Half before approaching groups of servicemen. In this way, the coffeehouse helped legitimize college students who otherwise may have been met with resentment or indifference by soldiers on base.

At meetings held in the coffeehouse, Coontz developed the idea for a grand public gesture demonstrating the civilian antiwar movement's support for disaffected GIs at Fort Lewis. The plan was to stage a "mock invasion" of the Army base, employing guerilla theater as a means of ridiculing military authority and promoting solidarity with young soldiers. The tongue-in-cheek spectacle, which took place in July 1969, was designed to coincide with the Nixon administration's media campaign promoting American "withdrawal" from Vietnam, a campaign that used Fort Lewis GIs as evidence of de-escalation. By scheduling its own publicity stunt in Tacoma on the weekend immediately following the official "Welcome Home" parade in Seattle, Coontz and other antiwar activists intended to subvert the administration's public celebration of "peace with honor" and lampoon the government's own propaganda efforts. "The Aquatic Invasion of Fort Lewis," as it

²⁹ Jessie Kindig, "Demilitarized Zone: The GI Movement and the Reorganization of the Military at Fort Lewis during the Vietnam War" (Master's Thesis, University of Washington, Seattle, 2008), 16.

was later dubbed in underground press accounts, was an act of irreverent public satire that blurred the lines of politics, theater, and reality, and engaged a form of countercultural humor that has since become common in politically-themed popular culture from *Saturday Night Live* and *The Onion* to *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report*.³⁰

As an event designed mainly for the media attention it would generate in its aftermath, Coontz spent a significant amount of time making sure that a number of press outlets would cover the mock invasion. Prior to the staged event, she shared her plans with Don McGavin, a television reporter for Seattle's local NBC affiliate, KOMO, who agreed to send a camera crew.³¹ On July 13, 1969, a group of fifty civilians met on the public side of American Lake in Tacoma, a body of water that shared its shores with the heavily-guarded Fort Lewis property. Coontz, wearing a military uniform and hipster sunglasses, led a flotilla of small inflatable rafts, most of them emblazoned with the GI movement's well-known "FTA" sign (fig. 16). Upon reaching the Fort Lewis side of American Lake, the boats were halted by several confused MPs, who announced, to no one's shock, that the group would not be allowed access to the base. Instead, Coontz and her cohorts assembled on the small beach, handing out leaflets to a group of GIs as Coontz delivered a tongue-in-cheek "victory speech." The scene culminated when a "frogman" emerged from the water

³⁰ Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Throughout his work, Frank discusses the wider co-optation of a hip, counterculture style of humor and visual aesthetic by the advertising industry in the decades since the 1960s, in doing so elucidating some of the major stylistic trends developed by countercultural institutions.

³¹ "Investigation of Attempts to Subvert the United States Armed Services," *Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security, House of Representatives, 92nd Congress, 1st and 2nd Sessions*, vol. 1, 6414.

in a peace-sign decorated Navy Seal wetsuit, and dragged a round "negotiation table" onto the sand. After being held for a brief period, all of the activists (including the frogman, who was rumored to be an active-duty Air Force cadet) were released by base authorities.³²

Although it is impossible to determine the invasion stunt's impact on the consciousness of GIs at Fort Lewis, the event illustrates the Pacific Northwest civilian antiwar movement's willingness to experiment with theatricality and parody in their campaigns during this period. Coontz's statement, and the leaflets handed out on base, were meticulously designed to mimic the U.S. government's own notorious statements on Vietnam, employing hyperbolic clichés reminiscent of military public relations statements to highlight their hypocrisy. "If we don't fight them on the shores of Ft. Lewis," Coontz declared, "we will have to fight them on the shores of American Lake. Our honor is at stake. We must bring freedom to the peace-loving EMs at Fort Lewis. And if it becomes necessary to destroy Ft. Lewis in order to save it, we shall not shrink from that task."³³ The fact that the FTA group was denied access to the base played directly into Coontz's ironic subversion of government doublespeak on the concept of "victory": "We were at least as successful today as the United States army has been in Vietnam, and with far fewer

³² "Woman Leads 'Invasion' at Coast's Fort Lewis," *The Pittsburgh Press*, July 14, 1969; "Fort Invaders Given Warning," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, July 14, 1969; "Peace Invaders," *Ellensburg Daily Record*, July 12, 1969; "Fort Lewis 'Liberation' Falls Flat; 7 Arrested," *Lodi News-Sentinel*, July 14, 1969.

³³ Peter Arnett, "Major Describes Move," *The New York Times*, February 8, 1968. Coontz was referring to one of the most famous quotes of the Vietnam War, from an article by AP correspondent Peter Arnett. Writing about the provincial capital, Bến Tre, on February 7, 1968, Arnett reported: "'It became necessary to destroy the town to save it,' a United States major said today. He was talking about the decision by allied commanders to bomb and shell the town regardless of civilian casualties, to rout the Vietcong."

casualties. Therefore we are going to declare this a victory and withdraw all our troops—and we suggest that President Nixon do the same thing in Vietnam." The FTA's leaflets declared the base "liberated territory" and spoke directly to GIs: "You all know this invasion is a joke. But your Constitutional rights are not a joke."³⁴

But, at the Shelter Half coffeehouse, the invasion also illuminated some of the underlying disagreements over strategy within the civilian wing of the GI antiwar movement. Coontz and GI-CAP had used the coffeehouse extensively in the run-up to their publicity stunt. The coffeehouse staff generally abstained from participation in the "aquatic invasion," and one staff member, Judy Olasov, explained her position in an article printed in several different underground papers the following month. Describing it as "stylistically a gassy thing," Olasov expressed appreciation for the clever wordplay and audacity of the invasion while asserting that, ultimately, the stunt was "politically and strategically . . . way off." In Olasov's view, confrontational pranks like the invasion only "served to fortify the brass' uneasiness" about antiwar activity at Fort Lewis.³⁵ Olasov's cautious approach to dealing with base authorities reflected the general position of the wider coffeehouse network, which favored cultural and political support rather than direct action. For staff members at the Shelter Half, the "Aquatic Invasion of Fort Lewis" specifically underlined the diverse nature of the antiwar scene in Tacoma and Seattle, which produced conflicting ideas about the appropriate relationship between civilian organizers and local GIs.

National Attention

The fall of 1969 witnessed a marked increase in national antiwar events, most

³⁴ "The Great Invasion," *Counterpoint*, vol. 2, no. 14, August 7, 1969.

³⁵ "A Report from Tacoma," *New SOS News*, vol. 1, no. 4, July 27, 1969.

notably the "October Moratorium" action on October 15, during which millions of Americans took the day off school or work to participate in local antiwar demonstrations, and hundreds of thousands participated in two massive peace assemblies in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco on November 15.³⁶ At Fort Lewis and the surrounding areas, as active-duty soldiers increasingly interacted with the vibrant civilian antiwar scene that existed in Seattle and Tacoma, tensions with military authorities naturally increased. July's aquatic invasion had been a nuisance to them, but base officials had been able to dismiss the demonstration as the work of outside agitators, radical civilians rather than enlisted men. It was when soldiers themselves began organizing that Fort Lewis initiated its first official campaign to squash growing on-base dissent.

In early October 1969, in part to promote local participation in the national Moratorium, the first issues of *Fed Up!* were printed at the Shelter Half and distributed on base. The newspaper's opening editorial put its unabashed radical politics up front:

FED UP! is written and edited by a group of Fort Lewis GIs who can no longer stand the oppression of the US military services. Not just the oppression we all feel as members of the military, but the oppression the US uses to try to control the people of Nam, Korea, Latin America, and the United States. We're also sick and tired of the lies and half truths the military uses to support their imperialistic actions both abroad and at home. That's why we decided to get together and print the truth.³⁷

Though the content found on the pages of *Fed Up!* was created entirely by GIs, its production was helped immensely by the printing facilities and civilian staff at the Shelter Half, who ensured that more than 5,000 copies of the paper's inaugural issue

³⁶ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 379.

³⁷ Staff Editorial, *Fed Up!*, vol. 1, no. 1, October 1969.

made their way to base.³⁸ In its first months of publication, *Fed Up!* became extremely popular at Fort Lewis and on bases around the country. The fact that GIs themselves were producing the material, rather than civilian activists or "outside agitators," alerted military authorities to the existence of increasingly organized dissent among active-duty GIs.

On October 20, 1969, just five days after the Moratorium demonstrations, a group of nearly fifty GIs, and several civilians, gathered in the Cascadian Service Club room at Post 35 on the grounds of Fort Lewis. The group discussed the formation of a local American Servicemen's Union (ASU) chapter, with ASU founder Andy Stapp present along with a number of civilian organizers. At a certain point during the meeting, military police burst into the room and arrested thirty-five soldiers and three civilians, including Stapp. The men were detained on base for "conducting an unauthorized meeting of a political nature on the post."³⁹ Although ultimately released, according to organizers at the Shelter Half, many of the soldiers present at the meeting endured subsequent recrimination and harassment, including shipment to Vietnam.⁴⁰ Seventeen of these soldiers filed a suit in federal court on October 29, "asking the court to guarantee their rights of free speech and assembly under the First Amendment."⁴¹ Stapp and the other civilian organizers filed a similar suit, backed by the Seattle branch of the American Civil Liberties

³⁸ James Lewes, *Protest and Survive: Underground GI Newspapers during the Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 46.

³⁹ *The Seattle Times*, October 21, 1969, 6.

⁴⁰ Matthew Rinaldi, "The Olive-Drab Rebels: Military Organizing During the Vietnam Era," *Radical America* 8, May-June 1974, 37-38.

⁴¹ Steven V. Roberts, "17 G.I.'s Sue to Clarify Speech and Assembly Rights," *The New York Times*, October 29, 1969.

Union. Fort Lewis became a focus of national media attention as its soldiers increasingly expressed opposition to the Vietnam War along with an apparent willingness to test the boundaries of that expression while on base.⁴²

In December 1969, after receiving free legal counsel at the Shelter Half coffeehouse, six Fort Lewis GIs filed for conscientious objector status, effectively refusing their orders for service in Vietnam.⁴³ This unprecedented incident of resistance, combined with the previous months of rising insubordination, finally caused the military to take an extraordinary step, intervening directly on the operation of the coffeehouse. In a letter dated December 11, 1969, addressed to the "Proprietor" of the Shelter Half, the President of the Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Board, Western Washington-Oregon Area, Navy Captain H.W. Stauffacher, notified the coffeehouse that he had initiated action to place it "OFF LIMITS" for all military personnel. "The board took this action after receiving information that the Shelter Half is a source of dissident counseling and literature and other activities inimical to the good morale, order and discipline within the Armed Services," Stauffacher stated, adding that the coffeehouse would have an opportunity to defend itself at a hearing scheduled for January 22, 1970.⁴⁴ One of the few instances in which the modern military declared a public establishment within the United States "off limits," the Disciplinary Board's action against the Shelter Half revealed that

⁴² Andy Stapp, *Up Against the Brass* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 88-90.

⁴³ "GIs Refuse Vietnam Duty," *A Four Year Bummer*, vol. 2, no. 6, August 1970.

⁴⁴ "Hands Off the Shelter Half," *Fed Up!*, vol. 1, no. 3, January 16, 1970; Capt. H.W. Stauffacher, letter on behalf of Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Board, to Proprietor of Shelter Half Coffeehouse, December 11, 1969, reprinted in Larry G. Waterhouse and Mariann G. Wizard, *Turning the Guns Around: Notes on the GI Movement* (New York: Praeger, 1971), 78-79..

military officials were intensely concerned with the interaction of Fort Lewis soldiers and antiwar civilians that the coffeehouse had made possible.

"Off Limits" and the "Trial of the Army"

A critical component of the military's argument for the coffeehouse's restricted status was that its staff members directly counseled soldiers to commit crimes (specifically, going AWOL or otherwise refusing duty). In the weeks leading up to the scheduled hearing, a number of undercover agents (of unknown origin) visited the coffeehouse and attempted to engage staff members in various criminal activities, from drug dealing to promoting armed insurrection on base. Well accustomed to these kinds of tactics, the staff eventually held a press conference in early January 1970 to emphasize that the coffeehouse did not promote desertion, and in fact encouraged disaffected GIs to explore the military's available legal channels.⁴⁵

To the operators of the Shelter Half, the military's aggressive campaign against the coffeehouse was obviously political in nature, intended to blunt the impact of the antiwar movement's efforts to work with soldiers at Fort Lewis. Matthew Rinaldi, a civilian organizer who worked at the Shelter Half during its first two years in town, pointed out to the *Tacoma News Tribune* that the military's "off limits" designation marked a significant change in policy. Historically, the military had only deemed businesses to be "off limits" in the case of houses of prostitution, homosexual bars, and places of known narcotic activity. By attempting to ban soldiers from going to the Shelter Half, military officials widened their definition of potentially "harmful"

⁴⁵ "Politics are Off Limits at Fort Lewis," *Black Panther Party Newspaper*, January 17, 1970.

establishments to include politically-themed coffeehouses. "The military is blatantly and admittedly moving for political reasons in this case. We consider this a test case because if the government is successful here it could move against the moratoriums and political meetings and the entire anti-war movement," Rinaldi explained, echoing a widely-held suspicion, among coffeehouse organizers and others in the GI movement, that the federal government (specifically, the Nixon White House) was behind the more aggressive military attacks against their organizations and members.⁴⁶

In the month leading up to the scheduled "off limits" hearing, organizers at the Shelter Half, along with the growing number of soldiers from Fort Lewis who regularly visited the coffeehouse, initiated a publicity campaign and demonstrations to call attention to the military's escalating policies. In special issues of locally-produced GI newspapers, both GIs and civilians defended the coffeehouse's right to exist and reminded Fort Lewis soldiers that the Shelter Half would remain open to them regardless of the military's designation. GI writers cast the coffeehouse's struggles in the context of the larger GI movement, asserting that the military's campaign against the coffeehouse was part of an effort to silence dissent among soldiers and limit their access to critiques of the war:

The brass are trying to tell us who we can talk with and what we can read. The Shelter Half is one of the links between the GI movement and the civilian movement. They provide material and moral support for our struggle. Now the military wants to keep us from our meeting place. They're afraid of what will happen when we will no longer be used as robots and slaves. But they can't stop us from getting together. The Shelter Half is ours.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ "Coffeehouse to Fight Off-Limits Designation," *Tacoma News Tribune*, December 18, 1969.

⁴⁷ "Hands Off the Shelter Half," *Fed Up!*, January 16, 1970. Other popular Fort Lewis-area GI antiwar publications included *B Troop News* and *Lewis-McChord Free Press*.

By threatening to ban soldiers from visiting the coffeehouse, military officials at Fort Lewis inadvertently helped call attention, for many soldiers, to the Shelter Half's important role in the local GI movement. In more ways than one, the coffeehouse's fight against military authority echoed the local GI movement's own efforts to secure civil liberties for enlisted men.

As the Shelter Half's January 22nd hearing approached, its operators continued to mount their publicity campaign to defend the coffeehouse, and their efforts helped mobilize the Seattle-Tacoma area's robust antiwar community. A group of activist attorneys volunteered their pro-bono legal services, and the American Servicemen's Union held regular meetings at the coffeehouse to discuss the defense strategy. In concert with these actions, a large group of students at the University of Washington, Seattle, helped organize an on-campus event to publicize the coffeehouse's fight and bring attention to the harassment faced by dissident soldiers. This event, billed as "the Trial of the Army," ended up becoming, for several reasons, one of the most successful and important public demonstrations in the history of the GI movement.⁴⁸

Held on January 21, 1970 (one day before the military hearing), the mock trial was, at its heart, an act of guerilla theater that represented one of the New Left's most favored forms of public satire. The Trial of the Army applied this tactic to the military's proposed "off limits" order toward the Shelter Half, using the coffeehouse's persecution as a springboard to point out the military's hypocrisy. On the stage of the Husky Ballroom at the center of the university campus, a "jury" of

⁴⁸ Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 76-77.

thirteen active-duty servicemen listened to testimony from a wide variety of witnesses who spoke about daily life in the Vietnam War-era U.S. Army, conditions in prison stockades, racism, harassment, and, of course, the experience of the war itself.⁴⁹ Hundreds of civilians, students, and soldiers crowded into the space, raising their fists and chanting revolutionary slogans in response to each of the speakers. Perhaps the most electrifying moment occurred when an AWOL GI, who had escaped from an armed guard at Fort Lewis a week earlier and was at that moment a fugitive, took the stage surrounded by ten uniformed GI "bodyguards" and told the crowd of his terror at being hunted by military police for not wanting to go to Vietnam.⁵⁰

In all, more than fifty local GIs risked punishment and harassment to speak at the Shelter Half-sponsored "Trial of the Army." One of these soldiers, Private Wade Carson, went to extraordinary lengths to participate in the event. In the days leading up to the trial, Carson was arrested on base and held in "pre-trial confinement" after an officer witnessed him handing a single copy of *Fed Up!* to another Fort Lewis GI. Unlike other GIs then being punished for various crimes, Carson was not confined to stockade, but was rather issued an order that he could not leave the base, even during off-duty hours. He was also assigned a "personal guard" by base officials, who ordered the guard to make sure Carson did not speak to any other soldiers. Despite being held under these conditions, Carson was able to

⁴⁹ "'Trial' Finds Army Guilty," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, January 22, 1970; "Trial of the Army," *Fed Up!*, February 26, 1970.

⁵⁰ "From the Shelter Half," pamphlet, February 1970, http://sirnosir.com/archives_and_resources/library/pamphlets_publications/repression/shelter_half/page1.html, accessed July 19, 2010.

arrange a visit with a Shelter Half attorney, who helped him to covertly record a politically-charged statement on audiotape. The tape was played as the first "witness" during the mock trial just days later, and Carson's disembodied voice served as a stark reminder of the treatment often given to political dissidents within the armed forces.⁵¹ Carson's perceived deception in recording the message only added to the ire directed at him from base authorities, who confined him in the base stockade after learning of the tape's existence. Though the details of Carson's case were extraordinary, most of the soldiers who participated in the Shelter Half's mock trial reported some form of official or unofficial recrimination in the weeks following the demonstration.⁵²

The Shelter Half's "Trial of the Army" marked the apex of a month-long media campaign by coffeehouse organizers and supporters, and the resulting publicity seemed to have some impact on the official military position toward GI coffeehouses. A few days before the planned hearing, the Armed Forces Disciplinary Board delivered a letter to the Shelter Half, reporting that the "off limits" hearing had been "indefinitely postponed." Rinaldi later surmised that the letter had been the result of pressure from Washington to "slow down" on local efforts to eradicate GI dissent. Whatever the case, the Shelter Half's seeming victory marked an important moment for the GI coffeehouse movement as military authorities backed off the aggressive tactics taken towards off-base meeting places, of which the Shelter

⁵¹ "Coffeehouse Claims GI Held in 'Reprisal,'" *Tacoma News Tribune*, January 26, 1970.

⁵² "On Limits," *Fed Up!*, February 26, 1970.

Half's proposed "off limits" designation was only one example.⁵³

Perhaps most importantly, the Shelter Half's brief experience with official military repression contributed to an outburst of political organizing and demonstrations throughout the Pacific Northwest that reflected the particular strength and diversity of the region's radical communities. The "Trial of the Army" showcased this diverse local presence, as groups representing a wide range of left-oriented interests came together to show support for a threatened institution. In the GI underground press and at the mock trial itself, the coffeehouse's struggle, and the challenges faced by the GI movement, were explicitly connected to working class and related liberation movements. At the event, a representative from the United Farm Workers, Dale Van Pelt, spoke at length about the national grape boycott, comparing poor agricultural laborers to the exploited "grunts" of a working class army, and proposing that a union model of labor organization, like that being built by the ASU, could help ameliorate these shared injustices.⁵⁴ Another speaker announced the formation of an all-Indian GI organization, Hew-Kekaw-Na-Yo ("to resist"); the group went on to publish a widely-read, if briefly produced, GI newspaper called *Yah-Hoh* throughout 1970.⁵⁵ *Yah-Hoh* called attention to the specific issues faced by Native American soldiers and contributed to a surge of specialized GI publications covering an expansive set of ethnic, racial, and cultural

⁵³ Lee, Sam J. "Fed Up at Fort Lewis: A Regional History of the GI Protest Movement Against the War in Vietnam," Master's Thesis (Washington State University, 1997), 21-23

⁵⁴ "From the Shelter Half," pamphlet, February 1970.

⁵⁵ David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 174.

categories characteristic of the American political landscape in the early 1970s.⁵⁶

The Shelter Half's comparatively small battle with military authorities had sparked an intense local reaction that situated and articulated the coffeehouse's predicament as part of a range of critical issues facing American society during the Vietnam War era.

A Changing War and a Changing Army

The controversy and publicity surrounding the Shelter Half's threatened "off limits" designation helped establish the coffeehouse as a fixture of the region's left-wing community. The Shelter Half survived as an institution for several years after most other GI coffeehouse projects in base towns around the country had closed their doors. The coffeehouse undoubtedly benefitted from a strong network of local radical organizations, as well as a surrounding community that was notably more accommodating than many other base towns around the country. But this long-term endurance can also be explained by the coffeehouse's conscious adaptation to changing political circumstances, both in terms of the Vietnam War itself and in the material conditions of military life at the Seattle-Tacoma area's numerous bases. As the Shelter Half made the transition from a specifically antiwar, military-oriented establishment to a more broad-based community organizing center, it remained a consistent source of support for the GI movement during a period of rapid transition.

As the Nixon administration withdrew large numbers of ground troops from

⁵⁶ Other "identity"-based GI antiwar publications included *Black Unity* (Camp Pendleton, California), and the Native American-focused *Broken Arrow* (Selfridge Air Force Base, Michigan).

Vietnam, and increasingly relied on the Air Force and Navy to bombard Southeast Asia from above, the force and direction of political resistance among active-duty soldiers shifted from the Army to these other branches. Underground newspapers began appearing in unprecedented numbers at Air Force and Navy bases around the country in 1970, suggesting that the increased burden of fighting the war was being felt powerfully by servicemen in these newly-mobilized branches. In the Seattle-Tacoma area, both the *Lewis-McChord Free Press* and the *Puget Sound Sound-Off* addressed the specific needs and concerns of men in the Navy and Air Force. Civilian organizers at the Shelter Half were aware of this shift and began to consciously orient their support activities towards the more active, non-Army bases.⁵⁷

Although by 1970 the Fort Lewis Army base was playing a smaller and smaller role in the actual operation of the Vietnam War, its prominent position in the Army's dramatic re-structuring process ensured that support structures like the Shelter Half coffeehouse would remain in demand. One organizer later explained, "We have seen that changes in U.S. military strategy have created an even greater demand than ever for [our] work."⁵⁸ To activists at the Shelter Half, the Army's program of conversion from a draft system to the modern "all-volunteer force," commonly referred to as VOLAR, only served to exacerbate the problems already faced by

⁵⁷ Activity at other Western Air Force and Navy bases included the creation of the Covered Wagon coffeehouse in Mountain Home, Idaho, discussed in Chapter Four.

⁵⁸ "Pacific Counseling Service," 1973 pamphlet, http://sirnosir.com/archives_and_resources/library/pamphlets_publications/repression/shelter_half/page1.html, accessed July 19, 2010.

GIs.⁵⁹ Perhaps most of all, as the VOLAR experiment came to Fort Lewis (one of three domestic bases chosen as test cases), coffeehouse organizers realized that antiwar demonstrations no longer constituted the main thrust of their activism, and that their support services could be more effectively directed toward the new issues raised by the Army's dramatic transformation.⁶⁰

The changing direction of civilian support for the GI movement was embodied most clearly in the Pacific Counseling Service (PCS), a network of activists and lawyers created in 1969 to serve the country's West Coast and Pacific military bases. The PCS became an important force in the evolving focus of military-related civilian activism, creating a model that favored counseling and education over direct political engagement. The organization ultimately helped build a bridge from the New Left-style antiwar demonstrations of the late 1960s to the more legally-centered, though nonetheless radical, GI support functions taken on by the movement as the war began to fade from public attention.⁶¹

In the Spring of 1970, representatives from the PCS met with organizers at the Shelter Half, initiating a relationship that sustained a constant presence in the area for nearly four years. The PCS began running most of its operations from the coffeehouse, deeply influencing both the overall tone of the coffeehouse itself and the various newspapers and publications that it helped produce. *Fed Up!* in

⁵⁹ The VOLAR experiment and its impact on military life are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

⁶⁰ Matthew Rinaldi, "The Olive-Drab Rebels: Military Organizing During the Vietnam Era," 45-46.

⁶¹ "Pacific Counseling Center," Box 3 Folder 7, United States Servicemen's Fund Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society. The PCS ultimately opened offices at U.S. military installations in Japan, Hawaii, the Philippines, and Korea.

particular began to promote a more overt solidarity with working class interests, especially as GIs were expressing heightened identification with labor struggles outside of the military. In early 1971, Cesar Chavez's lettuce boycott, initiated in California, became a rallying cry for activist soldiers around the country when the Department of Defense tripled its order of non-union lettuce in a clear attempt to break the boycott.⁶² *Fed Up!* and other GI papers publicized the lettuce issue and connected the exploitation and inequality experienced by agricultural workers directly to their own struggles against military injustice.

Organizers from the PCS, along with groups from bases around the Seattle-Tacoma region, played a central role in promoting the heightened cross-movement identification among GIs and American labor. This strategy corresponded with the military's experiments with an all-volunteer force, which, as many activists pointed out, would only serve to make the burden of military service on the working class even more pronounced. The GI-Alliance, a Seattle-based organization of veterans and active-duty soldiers who met frequently at the Shelter Half, stressed the importance of working class consciousness as the military shifted to a more economically-driven system of employment:

GIs, especially in the Army, have always been predominantly from working class backgrounds. This will become increasingly true as the military moves away from the draft system. We feel that our task in the GI movement is to forge deep links between GIs and their class brothers and sisters, promote working class consciousness among GIs, and draw a clear line between them . . . and their class enemies . . . [A]s GIs begin to move in active opposition to the military, a working class outlook will be crucial in

⁶² Terry H. Anderson, "The GI Movement and the Response from the Brass," in *Give Peace a Chance : Exploring the Vietnam Antiwar Movement*, ed. Melvin Small et al. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 110. "GIs for Peace Moves Ahead," *Camp News*, vol.1 , no. 7, January 15, 1971; "Farm Workers Press Lettuce Boycott," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 13, 1970. Playing on young GIs resentment of military authority, underground GI newspapers during this period frequently employed the slogan "Lifers Eat Lettuce."

terms of building the understanding that the entire capitalist system is their enemy, not just their particular branch of service.⁶³

The 1971 lettuce boycott was just one example of the GI movement's stronger connection to labor struggles in the early years of the 1970s. This connection was strongest along the West Coast in general and specifically at Fort Lewis in Tacoma, where a local tradition of labor organizing complemented the efforts of civilians at the Shelter Half in forging direct links between different wings of progressive activism. During the first few months of 1971, a constant picket line of servicemen and civilians distributed literature about the lettuce issue outside Fort Lewis's gates on a near-daily basis⁶⁴, and in the ensuing years soldiers from both Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force base participated in support of union strikes involving Farah Manufacturing Company and several canneries in California.⁶⁵

As the GI movement expanded its focus in the 1970s, its planners found themselves dealing with a host of new issues associated with the end of the war and the transition to an all-volunteer force. One of most prominent of these issues was the increased presence of women in the military, which brought unexpected but not unfamiliar challenges to civilian and GI activists accustomed to confronting unequal, unjust working conditions.⁶⁶ From the beginning of the VOLAR experiment,

⁶³ "Strategies and Tactics for GI Organizing," GI Alliance pamphlet, 1971, http://sirnosir.com/archives_and_resources/library/pamphlets_publications/repression/shelter_half/page1.html, accessed July 19, 2010.

⁶⁴ "We Are One!" *Fed Up!*, March 1971.

⁶⁵ "La Prensa Libre: Workers Strike Farah Co.," *Lewis-McChord Free Press* (Tillicum, WA), July 1972, 7; "Cannery Workers," *Lewis-McChord Free Press* (Tillicum, WA), July 1972, 7. The University of Washington maintains an extensive website, "The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project," at <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/>, accessed June 19, 2011. The site contains numerous articles and primary sources that details the Pacific Northwest's history of radical labor and civil rights organizing.

⁶⁶ Robert K. Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974*

organizers at the Shelter Half coffeehouse published pamphlets and articles in GI papers that pointed out the rising struggle for women's rights in the military.

"Another [difficult] aspect of VOLAR," one pamphlet noted,

is the increased recruitment of women to fulfill any of the more menial and clerical jobs once performed by men. By 1976 the Pentagon plans to triple the number of women in uniform. But the military holds similar contradictions for women as for Blacks and other minorities. Although a few reforms have been made in order to allow women to occupy certain jobs, women continue to occupy an expressly inferior position in the military.⁶⁷

The work done by the PCS and other GI organizers to increase awareness of gender issues in the military was groundbreaking in its own way, and presaged the continued efforts, in later decades, to address harassment, sexual violence, and other forms of injustice experienced by women in the armed forces.⁶⁸

Spreading awareness about important issues facing soldiers in the "New Army," mainly through articles in the underground press, was just one part of the support system developed at the Shelter Half coffeehouse as VOLAR came to the Tacoma area. Beyond these publicity efforts, the coffeehouse offered free legal advice and, when necessary, representation, to GIs in need. Legal services were provided most often by lawyers from the PCS who, according to a report distributed to national GI organizers, "provide servicemen and women with counseling and

(Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1997), 190-193. Griffith's study describes how the Army explicitly sought to expand the number of women in non-combat positions in the early 1970s, mainly as a way to fill personnel gaps in the absence of a draft system.

⁶⁷ "Pacific Counseling Service," 1973 pamphlet, http://sirnosir.com/archives_and_resources/library/pamphlets_publications/pacific_counseling_service/cover.html, accessed July 19, 2010.

⁶⁸ Nancy Goldman, "The Changing Role of Women in the Armed Forces," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 78, No. 4, January 1973. See also Melissa S. Herbert, *Camouflage Isn't Only for Combat: Gender, Sexuality, and Women in the Military* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

reference materials on GI rights, dependent rights, discharge policies, legal defense, and ways to file grievances and submit petitions. Much of the legal counseling deals with redress of grievances for manifestations of military repression such as illegal imprisonment, bad living and working conditions, and beatings in the brig."⁶⁹ By providing practical, material assistance to soldiers engaged in a variety of disputes, the services offered at the Shelter Half aimed to ameliorate some of the major points of dissatisfaction among GIs in a transitioning military, and laid the groundwork for the kind of extra-military resource networks that would characterize civilian-GI relations in ensuing decades.⁷⁰

In September 1971, after battling with landlords over the coffeehouse's lease, the Shelter Half moved to a different building at 1902 Tacoma Avenue. The new location was much further toward the north end of the city, placing it closer to McChord Air Force base. Greater proximity to McChord seemed like a logical step to the Shelter Half's owners, who recognized that the momentum for antiwar organizing and other GI movement activities was shifting quickly to the Air Force and Navy. From its second location, the Shelter Half became involved in a series of important resistance campaigns during the Vietnam War's final years. In particular, the coffeehouse provided publicity and support for "Project Air War," the first large-

⁶⁹ "Pacific Counseling Service," 1973 pamphlet.

⁷⁰ Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974*, 234. Griffith explains how military officials were worried that, in their rush to make military service more attractive to the general public, they had produced expectations about living and working conditions that the Army was not prepared to meet. In a survey of sixty-four Army generals in 1972, the Army received reports of widespread unhappiness within the ranks, and grouped the generals' suggestions into four major categories: "increased job satisfaction, better personnel management and leadership, improved living and working conditions, and improvement in the Army's public image."

scale antiwar demonstration by airmen at McChord in the base's history, in May 1972.⁷¹

The Shelter Half's final years were also marked by a continued broadening of the regional GI movement that increasingly turned its attention to issues of community development and employment conditions. In late 1971, coffeehouse staff and organizers from the GI Alliance launched a campaign to improve off-base housing conditions for GIs and their families, focusing specifically on the tiny, economically ravaged community of Tillicum, just outside Fort Lewis's main gates. Civilian organizers helped form the Tillicum Tenants' Committee, which pressured landlords through public demonstrations, leafleting, and the publication of articles exposing landlord abuse in both the *Fort Lewis Free Press* and the committee's own newsletter, the *Tillicum News and World Report*.⁷² By the spring of 1972, military officials responded to the controversy, and the Fort Lewis housing referral office began making significant improvements and ceased working with the realty offices singled out by GI organizers. The Shelter Half-sponsored effort to secure more equitable housing conditions in Tacoma reflected the changing nature of military service, which created more permanent off-base residents in need of housing for themselves and their families. By lending its support to the housing struggle, the coffeehouse signaled that its services were not necessarily limited to antiwar activism, and that civilian organizers were prepared to assist GIs with the new

⁷¹ Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 58. Chapter 4 provides more detail on the GI antiwar movement's shift in concentration to the Navy and Air Force in the later years of the Vietnam War.

⁷² "Tenants Survey," *Lewis-McChord Free Press*, December 1971, 8; "Tenants Win Improvements," *Lewis-McChord Free Press*, January 1972.

needs created by a changing military. In its later years the coffeehouse also participated in several other GI-led campaigns to improve the community, which often targeted stores and car dealerships for overcharging and otherwise exploiting naive young soldiers.⁷³

* * *

The Shelter Half coffeehouse remained open in Tacoma until the summer of 1974, years after virtually every other civilian-sponsored GI project had disappeared. The coffeehouse's viability owed much to the flexibility of the project, which moved from its roots as a psychedelic refuge for war-weary local GIs to a robust community organizing center designed to ease the difficulties of the postwar transition to an all-volunteer force. The Shelter Half's success can also be attributed to the strong antiwar and radical community that existed in and around Seattle, Tacoma, and the Pacific Northwest, which helped sustain the coffeehouse and provided a constant stream of material support and activist energy. In 1974 the coffeehouse was still hosting popular free dinners on Sunday (a remnant of the New Left's communal impulses), along with daily "fifty-cent lunches" designed to serve Tacoma's low-income community. The Shelter Half had evolved, over the course of six years, from being a "GI coffeehouse" born out of the chaos of the Vietnam War, to a resource center focused on a wide variety of local issues.⁷⁴

Throughout its various phases, though, the Shelter Half directed a consistent radical voice toward local military affairs, raising concerns about life in the armed

⁷³ "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," *Lewis-McChord Free Press*, February 1972, 7.

⁷⁴ Sam J. Lee, "Fed Up at Fort Lewis: A Regional History of the GI Protest Movement Against the War in Vietnam," 21-23.

forces that continue to resonate in the twenty-first century. Perhaps most presciently, the Shelter Half regularly called attention to the complicated dynamics of gender and sexuality present in a post-1960s military. While nearly every GI coffeehouse around the country expressed some level of political feminism, the Shelter Half staff took its gender orientation to another level. In addition to leading groundbreaking campaigns focused on women in the armed forces, staff members at the Shelter Half also worked to raise awareness about the treatment of gays in the military. During the coffeehouse's final years, a gay male staff member wrote a series of articles for the *Lewis-McChord Free Press* that argued for drastic changes to official military policy regarding homosexuality, and predicted that the fight for gay rights would become a critical component of future progressive efforts aimed at the armed forces.⁷⁵

Though the Shelter Half project, like the GI movement itself, eventually ended along with the official close of the Vietnam War, its history offers an example of how the original "GI coffeehouse" model could be flexible enough to survive the drastic political shifts that marked the early 1970s. Even after the Vietnam War no longer constituted the major focus of GI and activist concern, the coffeehouse was still providing an off-base source of comfort and support for troubled soldiers. Aided immeasurably by a strong surrounding community of radical activists, the Shelter Half helped shine a light on the problems experienced by soldiers stationed

⁷⁵ "Fort Lewis Collective," 1974 pamphlet, accessed July 19, 2010, http://sirnosir.com/archives_and_resources/library/pamphlets_publications/repression/shelter_half/page1.html.

throughout the Pacific Northwest during the Vietnam era, and foreshadowed some of the central issues of American military life faced by future generations.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE NATIONAL GI COFFEEHOUSE MOVEMENT

While detailed histories of specific coffeehouses shed light on their impact on particular American communities, a wider, national perspective helps situate the GI coffeehouse movement's place within the larger historical developments of the Vietnam War era. The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the rise of a national coffeehouse network supported by various antiwar organizations. During a relatively short period of time, these coffeehouses established themselves as the center of a complicated interaction between antiwar GIs and civilian peace activists. Occurring during the later years of the war, as Nixon's Vietnamization program attempted to draw the conflict to an end, the coffeehouse phenomenon encompassed a set of unique trends that then characterized the post-1968 antiwar movement. A story that includes radical sectarianism, second-wave feminism, Black Power, communal living, vegetarianism, drugs, counterculture, underground newspapers, and the electric presence of radical celebrities such as Jane Fonda, the GI coffeehouse movement shows that, despite the common perception of antiwar activity dropping off in the years after 1968, peace activists in fact persisted in building dynamic institutions that sought to address the war's continuing effect on American life.¹

¹ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 379. Gitlin and other historians of the era frequently cite 1968 (in particular, the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August) as the "peak" of the era's antiwar activism, though, of course, the following years witnessed continued intense antiwar actions, especially on college campuses.

Enter the Antiwar Movement

The GI coffeehouse concept first caught the attention of national antiwar movement organizers in spring 1968, when representatives of the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam ("Mobe"), then one of the largest antiwar organizations in the country, visited South Carolina to explore the possibility of a national coffeehouse campaign based on Gardner's UFO coffeehouse. Mobe leaders Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden were, at the time, looking for a project that would demonstrate the antiwar movement's solidarity with dissident soldiers. After meeting with Gardner, the Mobe pledged to provide funding and staff for several coffeehouses through a "Summer of Support" campaign designed to publicize the antiwar movement's attempt to reach out to active-duty soldiers. The organization's initial efforts to expand the coffeehouse concept at base towns across the country brought national attention to the nascent GI movement.²

The Mobe's involvement with the GI coffeehouse movement, like the Mobe itself, was short-lived. After the chaotic 1968 Chicago convention, the organization splintered into several smaller groups, and support of the coffeehouse network was coordinated by a host of different groups over the next several years. Of these, the most prominent organization was the United States Servicemen's Fund (USSF), which spent millions of dollars over a period of six years in support of various GI coffeehouse projects. The USSF's history demonstrates the myriad ways civilian

² Fred Gardner, "Case Study in Opportunism: The GI Movement," *Second Page Supplement*, October 1971, 2; Fred Gardner, "Hollywood Confidential, Part I," *The Vietnam Generation Journal and Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 3, November 1991.

activists attempted to make contact and develop political relationships with active-duty GIs opposed to the war.³

The United States Servicemen's Fund was created in the last months of 1968 by activists that included Fred Gardner, Howard Levy, Dr. Benjamin Spock, Noam Chomsky, and many other nationally known figures in the antiwar movement. As the main umbrella organization gathering civilian support for the GI movement, the USSF exerted major influence on the direction of the coffeehouse network it intended to build, providing political direction, cultural support and, perhaps most importantly, fundraising for GI coffeehouses around the country.⁴

The USSF focused its early efforts on one branch of the American military, the Army, for a number of strategic reasons. During the Vietnam era, nearly ninety five percent of all draftees were sent to the Army; as the war became more and more unpopular after the disastrous, demoralizing Tet Offensive in January 1968, the Army's massive pool of draftees seemed a natural breeding ground for antipathy toward the war and military service in general. Indeed, the Army was the first military branch to begin feeling the effects of war fatigue within the ranks, experiencing a dramatic rise in rates of AWOLs, desertions, general insubordination, and drug abuse as early as 1967.⁵ In addition to these somewhat apolitical symptoms of discontent, the Army was also the site of the earliest direct political

³ The United States Servicemen's Fund Collection, located in the archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, contains newsletters, correspondence and pamphlets that demonstrate the powerful role the organization played in supporting the coffeehouse and GI movements.

⁴ "Introduction to USSF," *About Face! The U.S. Servicemen's Fund Newsletter*, vol. 2, no. 4, January 1969.

⁵ David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance During the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Anchor Press, 1975), 12-13.

actions, engaged in by soldiers themselves, in opposition to the war. "The Fort Hood Three," the Howard Levy case, and the Fort Jackson Chapel Pray-In (which led directly to the opening of the first GI coffeehouse), were all highly public actions initiated by active-duty soldiers in the U.S. Army. If the civilian antiwar movement was looking to connect with a population of demoralized, alienated soldiers, by 1968 the Army was clearly the most likely place to find it. The USSF's first major expansion of the GI coffeehouse network, in late 1968, thus concentrated on opening projects near all nine major Army training posts within the United States.⁶

In terms of political strategy, one of the most significant questions facing the USSF, upon its formation, was how to judge the appropriate level of direct political engagement with soldiers. From the moment the first GI coffeehouse opened in 1967, the nature of the civilian-GI relationship had been the subject of intense debate within the New Left. Fred Gardner, originator of the coffeehouse concept, held notoriously strong opinions on the subject. He felt that *any* political organizing on the part of civilian coffeehouse staff would be a major mistake. Anticipating that the GI movement would be accused of being a creation of "outside agitators," Gardner thought it was vital that political activities arise organically from GIs themselves. Coffeehouses would provide a safe space for meeting and discussion, along with an inviting cultural atmosphere, but nothing more: "Coffeehouses [should be] places for GIs to take it easy (as opposed to bases for proselytizing)."⁷

⁶ "Subversive Involvement in Disruption of 1968 Democratic Party National Convention," *Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security, House of Representatives, 90th Congress, Second Session, Part 2, December 2, 1968, 2667.*

⁷ Fred Gardner, "Hollywood Confidential, Part II," *The Vietnam Generation Journal and Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 3, November 1991.

While the civilian organizers at the USSF eventually took a more aggressive role in making direct political contact with GIs at coffeehouses than Gardner intended, once it became involved with the coffeehouse project, the organization was deeply aware of the many complicating factors inherent in their attempt to organize active-duty GIs.

The most obvious difficulty facing the USSF was the fact that political work was extremely dangerous for soldiers. GIs exposed themselves to significant risks by becoming active against the war, with far more serious consequences than those faced by their counterparts in the civilian antiwar movement. The military environment of the late 1960s was particularly restrictive when it came to antiwar activity in the ranks. At American military bases throughout the world, regulations specifically forbade virtually all forms of political expression, including public assembly, distribution of literature, and the wearing of political symbols. The Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) provided for several degrees of official punishment, including arrest and imprisonment, for those soldiers whose political activities were deemed "breaches of law and order."⁸ Beyond these formal regulations, though, an informal system of harassment and intimidation further

⁸ The UCMJ's Article 88, part of a section of articles dealing with dissent, reads: "Any commissioned officer who uses contemptuous words against the President, the Vice President, Congress, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of a military department, the Secretary of Transportation, or the Governor or legislature of any State, Territory, Commonwealth, or possession in which he is on duty or present shall be punished as a court-martial may direct." The final article of the UCMJ's "punitive" section, article 134, reads: "Though not specifically mentioned in this chapter, all disorders and neglects to the prejudice of good order and discipline in the armed forces, all conduct of a nature to bring discredit upon the armed forces, and crimes and offenses not capital, of which persons subject to this chapter may be guilty, shall be taken cognizance of by a general, special, or summary court-martial, according to the nature and degree of the offense, and shall be punished at the discretion of that court."

reinforced the military's intolerant attitude toward political expression, particularly of the antiwar variety, among the soldier rank-and-file.⁹ GI activist and historian David Cortright pointed out the many different ways local bases dealt with dissent: "It would probably be safe to assert . . . that nearly every serviceman seriously attempting to resist war and injustice has suffered some sort of privation. Whether it be the loss of a security clearance, removal from a job, transfer to an isolated post, discharge under less than honorable conditions, or outright imprisonment, GI activists have paid a stiff price for their commitment. The certain knowledge of such consequences has deterred many would-be participants."¹⁰

The USSF's mission was further complicated by the transitory nature of service in the armed forces, particularly among the population of young soldiers most likely to engage in antiwar activities. Individuals in the armed forces rarely stay in one location for an extended period of time. The high degree of turnover made the task of creating lasting political institutions a difficult one. Even if active-duty soldiers were willing and able to take the risk of becoming politically active, the likelihood of their impending transfer or discharge meant that their effectiveness had a time limit.¹¹ This political impermanence was one of the key factors that groups like the USSF hoped to address by using civilian activists located in off-base coffeehouses to provide stability for a transient population of soldiers. In this way,

⁹ John Rechy, "Conduct Unbecoming: Lieutenant on the Peace Line," *The Nation*, February 21, 1966, 204-8; Alice Lynd (ed.), *We Won't Go: Personal Accounts of War Objectors* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 181-202.

¹⁰ Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 51.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 53-55.

the coffeehouse movement attempted to overcome some of the substantial barriers then impeding the development of antiwar activism in the military.

No one could be more aware of the difficulties and risks involved with GI political activism than Dr. Howard Levy, who served three years in military prison for his refusal to train Green Berets for service in Vietnam. Despite being incarcerated between 1967 and 1970, Levy remained politically engaged and active in the GI movement, even holding covert meetings behind bars with antiwar organizers. Levy was instrumental in the formation of the USSF, helping raise funds for the opening of two "Support Our Soldiers" field offices in Oakland, California, and New York City in late 1968. He became an articulate spokesman for the civilian wing of the GI movement, penning numerous USSF newsletters and other communications, his comments appearing often in interviews throughout the underground and alternative press. Levy frequently emphasized, like Gardner, the importance of soldiers organizing themselves, with the civilian antiwar movement offering material and ideological support. "The GI's are taking the risks. We therefore feel that they should be running their own programs. It's our job to lend them support."¹² In contrast to Gardner, though, Levy had a wider definition of what "civilian support" meant, and his strong voice within the USSF helped guide the national coffeehouse movement to embrace a wide variety of strategies in its relationship to soldiers.

Newsletters were the primary mode through which the USSF delivered information and suggested organizational strategies to the dozens of coffeehouse

¹² Paul Eberle, "Dr. Levy on GI Repression," *The Los Angeles Free Press*, May 15, 1970.

projects that opened (or attempted to open) through the early 1970s. They provide an outline of how the USSF's approach to GI political organization evolved over a brief period in response to a rapidly shifting set of political, cultural, and economic conditions. They demonstrate that, on a national level, the GI coffeehouse movement grappled with some of the fundamental issues raised by the burgeoning relationship between the civilian and military wings of the antiwar movement.

By mid-1969, the USSF had settled on a loose blueprint for the overall direction and purpose of the GI coffeehouse network. A USSF mission statement summed up the primary function of the coffeehouses: "[E]ducating GIs about the war and the nature of American society, bringing together GIs who are opposed or become opposed to the war and the brass and helping them form more cohesive political organizations and serving as a base out of which these organizations can operate."¹³ As a specific organizational strategy, the USSF consciously developed a youth-oriented, alternative culture at GI coffeehouses. Viewing culture as an integral component of the entire project, the statement asserted that "a prerequisite to this kind of political organizing has been to provide the kind of music and general atmosphere in the coffeehouses which would attract the constituency in which the potential political GI's could be found."¹⁴ Hopefully, a counterculture coffeehouse would attract the kind of young, disaffected soldiers who could, with direction and support, become more active and informed antiwar GIs.

¹³ United States Servicemen's Fund, Organizational Letter, Fall 1969, Swarthmore Peace Collection, GI Movement Archive, Swarthmore College.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Civilian coffeehouse staff would play an integral role in this transformation. In addition to scheduling political presentations (usually in the form of guest speakers and films), the staff was expected to encourage and promote discussions among soldiers and other patrons afterwards. These discussions were designed to duplicate the kinds of "rap sessions" that were nearly impossible for soldiers to hold on base, and were meant to help GIs discover that they were not alone in their concerns and grievances. Coffeehouse staff members, as envisioned by the USSF, could help provide coherence to the ostensibly unfocused frustrations of soldiers from the local base. While the organization often underlined how vital it was that "soldiers be encouraged to develop their own thinking," it was clear that the USSF envisioned coffeehouse staff members as more than passive sources of information and coordinators of cultural activities; civilian staff were to serve as active political organizers working directly with GIs to build an antiwar movement within the military.¹⁵

Recognizing that local conditions at each military base town were unique, the USSF allowed civilian organizers a great deal of autonomy in determining the precise nature of their coffeehouse project. The organization's role in day-to-day operations was minimal; its main responsibility was providing financial and material backing for coffeehouses and other GI projects. As detailed throughout the USSF's fundraising letters, though, the high cost of opening and sustaining GI coffeehouses around the country was a complicated financial and logistical undertaking. In addition to opening costs (which included the purchase of furniture,

¹⁵ "Introduction to USSF," *About Face! United States Servicemen's Fund Newsletter*, vol. 2, no. 4, May 1969.

legal and licensing fees, and security deposits), the USSF helped provide coffeehouses with paid entertainers, films, projectors, typewriters, mimeograph machines, and a near-constant supply of radical books and periodicals. By far the largest expense incurred by the USSF, however, was the "extraordinary costs of responding to harassment."¹⁶

Repression and Harassment

Without exception, every GI coffeehouse was subjected to some form of official or unofficial harassment, intimidation, or investigation, and as the coffeehouse network's chief source of financial support, the USSF found itself expending a great deal of its resources and funds defending the coffeehouses from these attacks. Costs could range from the relatively small expense of replacing the broken windows and smashed stereo equipment at the Oleo Strut in Killeen, Texas, to the considerably larger sums required to defend the owners of the UFO coffeehouse in Columbia, South Carolina, from criminal prosecution in 1970. In the case of the USSF's attempt to open a coffeehouse in Muldraugh, Kentucky, outside Fort Knox, in 1969, the price of responding to harassment became prohibitive to the entire project, and provided a stark lesson on the confluence of repressive forces, both public and private, then rising in opposition to the antiwar movement's activity within the military.

At Fort Knox, an antiwar movement had been growing among GIs since July 1968, when four soldiers produced and distributed the first issue of *Fun Travel Adventure*, an underground antiwar newspaper whose name referenced the Army's

¹⁶ Ibid.

official recruiting pitch, but whose initials "FTA," were also known to stand for "Fuck The Army." By mid-1969, dozens of Fort Knox GIs were meeting with a growing number of civilians at several off-base locations, and as the group became larger they recognized the need for a stable meeting place; a GI coffeehouse seemed the logical extension of the GI-civilian alliance forming in Muldraugh and nearby Louisville, Kentucky, as a result of their efforts. On August 30, 1969, the Fort Knox Coffeehouse opened in tiny Muldraugh, and was immediately set upon by city authorities. The day after opening, local police raided the coffeehouse and took the names of every person inside. The following day, the city of Muldraugh passed a law requiring new businesses to be subjected to a "detailed police investigation" in order to obtain an operating license. By September 5th, 1969, the city attorney had convinced the building's landlord to revoke the coffeehouse's lease, and the coffeehouse was officially shuttered just six days after opening its doors.¹⁷ Authorities in Muldraugh were quick in establishing their official opposition to the coffeehouse's attempt to gain a foothold in the tiny Army town.¹⁸

The tenacious organizers of the Fort Knox Coffeehouse refused to back down, and the coffeehouse reopened less than a month later after a large rally of GIs and civilians took place in downtown Muldraugh. The coffeehouse's tenure in Muldraugh was never without its difficulties, though, as the town's various forces of authority waged a relentless battle to drive its organizers away. Over the final months of 1969 and into 1970, extralegal intimidation, including physical violence,

¹⁷ "Council May Use New Ordinance to Bar Coffeehouse in Muldraugh," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, September 24, 1969; Frank Ashley, "Muldraugh Coffeehouse Scene of Quiet Protest," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, October 16, 1969.

combined with a concerted campaign of police harassment made operation of the coffeehouse virtually impossible. On two separate occasions, unknown parties lobbed firebombs through the coffeehouse windows (there was minimal damage), and both civilian and GI coffeehouse staff were routinely arrested when distributing leaflets and newspapers near base or in town. In March 1970, a group of antiwar civilians and GIs, who had been leafleting in the parking lot of a local burger restaurant, were attacked by several men with bats and clubs; after the men stole a camera, beat a civilian organizer and vandalized the car of a coffeehouse staff member, the police arrived to quell the violence. The men with clubs fled, and police arrested the three bloodied GI organizers for disorderly conduct.¹⁹ In the town of Muldraugh, which was entirely encompassed by Fort Knox, it was clear that antiwar activists, whether civilians or soldiers, would find few allies.

The relentless arrests took a substantial toll on the Fort Knox coffeehouse's financial resources. In the fall of 1969, when six coffeehouse organizers were indicted in city court for "operating a common nuisance where evil and ill disposed people frequent," their bail was set at \$1500 each, a large amount for the time. Authorities were surprised when the activists were able to pay the considerable sum, perhaps explaining why city police arrested four additional staff members the following day and collected another set of comparable bonds, further undermining the coffeehouse's chances of survival in Muldraugh. The seemingly unfair treatment had the inadvertent effect of strengthening solidarity among the GIs and civilians who frequented the coffeehouse; when the entire civilian staff was in jail on

¹⁹ "Fact Sheet on GI Coffeehouse," *Fun Travel Adventure*, no. 16, September 1969.

October 30, 1969, twenty active-duty soldiers risked their own arrests by taking over its operation for the evening.²⁰

After the campaign of arrests and intimidation of civilian staff, GIs at Fort Knox took a more dominant role in the coffeehouse's everyday operation and, perhaps more importantly, in the coordination of antiwar activities in town and on base. Ultimately, though, defending the coffeehouse from harassment drained the resources and energy of GI and civilian antiwar organizers at Fort Knox. By April 1970, the coffeehouse was closed completely, with those civilian organizers not in city jail moving on to work at other GI projects around the country.²¹ At Fort Knox, antiwar GIs would continue their activism against the war, most notably by continuing to publish *Fun Travel Adventure*, but without the support of an off-base coffeehouse and its staff of civilian activists.

The repression and harassment of local GI projects was unsurprising to GI organizers and their supporters, who were well aware of the deep animosity toward antiwar and countercultural activities that then existed at military bases and, often, seemed to permeate the base towns that surrounded them. Indeed, anticipating resistance was a major part of the coffeehouse organizers' overall strategy. Nevertheless, they were still taken aback by the degree of hostility and hatred some of the local GI projects apparently provoked. In rural Mountain Home, Idaho, for example, where soldiers from nearby Mountain Home Air Force Base began meeting in early 1971 at a converted theater called the Covered Wagon, the public campaign

²⁰ "Fort Knox Coffeehouse Report," Supplement to USSF Newsletter, December 1969.

²¹ Bill Peterson, "Viet Veteran Defends Coffeehouse as Muldraugh Eviction Trial Ends," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, September 26, 1969; Bill Peterson, "Exiles by Choice," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, September 23, 1971.

against the coffeehouse seemed to come from every level of the local population and contain every form of intimidation. Mark Lane, one of the Covered Wagon's civilian organizers, described the overall mood in Mountain Home in the months after the coffeehouse opened:

During the past year, hostility from some quarters toward the Wagon grew so intense that the local newspaper published letters urging physical attacks upon the Wagon and its members. A number of members were subsequently attacked, the doors and windows of the coffeehouse were smashed on 20 different occasions, a member of the City Council, speaking at a council meeting, voiced approval for the attackers, insisting they were "just doing their thing." My own life has been threatened . . . One minister prayed at a regular Sunday morning service for God to destroy the Covered Wagon. Not a single church has opened its doors to our members in Mountain Home, and some have literally slammed their doors in the faces of GIs.²²

In the fall of 1971, the intimidation of the Covered Wagon became even more intense. In November, a patron was beaten by a group of men inside the coffeehouse. Days later, the premises were broken into overnight, the walls spray-painted with the words "This is just a warning." Finally, on November 21, 1971, six months after opening, the Covered Wagon was burned to the ground, an act of arson that was never investigated by town authorities.²³

As was the case with many such attacks, however, the burning of the Covered Wagon strengthened the will of civilian and GI organizers in Mountain Home, who increasingly depended upon each other to navigate the hostile local environment. The incident also produced an outpouring of support from national antiwar

²² Mark Lane, "The Covered Wagon: Finding the Power to Affect our Destinies," *Helping Hand*, no. 10, May 1972.

²³ "The Covered Wagon," letter to *The New York Review of Books*, Dec 30, 1971. The letter was signed by a number of the USSF's most visible public supporters, including Noam Chomsky, Faye Dunaway, Jane Fonda, Dick Gregory, and Arthur Miller.

organizations, most notably the USSF, which helped raise funds to rebuild the burned-out theater building. In letters asking for support, which appeared in national newspapers and magazines, the USSF depicted the Covered Wagon as a vital resource for antiwar GIs in the region, highlighting the diverse services offered by the coffeehouse and stressing the importance of civilian support of the GI movement:

The Covered Wagon was an old theater which GIs converted, with many hours of hard work, into a meeting place for their off-base activities. These include publication of their newspaper, *The Helping Hand*, military counseling on GI rights, women's meetings, political education sessions, music groups, and work with local people, such as The Idaho Migrants Program. In short, the project, which offers an alternative to the daily abuses of the military system, used the coffeehouse as its center . . . We feel the GI Movement must have the support of all people who desire a quick end to the war in Indochina.²⁴

The USSF's fundraising campaign helped contribute to the Covered Wagon's reopening in another location just weeks after the theater was destroyed, and the Mountain Home GI movement continued to gain momentum over the next several years despite the early and violent signs that its activities were not welcome.²⁵

Perhaps the most frightening incident of violence in the entire GI coffeehouse movement occurred at the Fort Dix coffeehouse in Wrightstown, New Jersey, in early 1970. On February 8, six men in military uniforms, including a captain and a sergeant first class, entered the off-base coffeehouse and proceeded to "harass the hell out of the GIs," ripping newspapers out of their hands and tossing them on the floor, preventing phone calls from being made, and attempting to provoke fights.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Visit From A Former P.O.W. George Smith," *Helping Hand*, no. 8, February 1972.

After being evicted by coffeehouse staff, the men replied, "We will return."²⁶ One week later, the coffeehouse was celebrating Valentine's Day, with a crowd of GIs and their dates numbering around thirty. At approximately 8:45 pm, the coffeehouse door opened and what appeared to be a metal canister rolled into the center of the floor. Several GIs recognized the canister as a grenade, and attempted to throw it out the door. Before they could, though, the grenade exploded, seriously injuring two Fort Dix soldiers, Privates Donald Hutchinson and James Shoening, and one civilian, nineteen year old Mildred Baker.²⁷ No one was ever arrested for the grenade attack.

As more and more coffeehouses were the focus of assaults and intimidation, the leadership of the USSF began publicizing these incidents as a conscious strategy to elicit public sympathy. In a 1970 *Los Angeles Times* interview, Howard Levy was asked what he thought civilians could do to support antiwar GIs. "I think civilians must appreciate the fact that within the past two weeks, the MDM (Movement for a Democratic Military) office in Oceanside, California, had twelve rounds of .45 caliber bullets fired into it. One GI was hurt, but he's doing fine now. Recently, the Fort Dix Coffeehouse in New Jersey was subjected to a hand grenade attack. The coffeehouse at Fort Knox, Kentucky, was firebombed three times." By delineating the details of these attacks, Levy and the USSF sought to convince civilians of the significance of GI activism within a larger movement for social justice, linking the violence to which it was subjected to that experienced by other revolutionary groups, such as the Black

²⁶ "Fort Dix Coffeehouse Bombing," USSF transcription of phone call from Leroy Townley. Townley was a member of the Fort Dix Coffeehouse collective and a witness to the incident.

²⁷ "Soldier is Still Hospitalized After Bombing at Fort Dix," *The New York Times*, February 17, 1970.

Panthers in Oakland, California. "[T]here's an enormous amount of repression coming down on the GI movement and the civilians who support that movement. That repression is exceeded only by the repression that's coming down on the Black Panthers. It is therefore of extreme importance that civilians, in any way possible, demonstrate their solidarity, their support for the GI movement."²⁸ The wing of the antiwar movement that included organizations like the USSF was positioning itself, by the early 1970s, as the supporters and protectors of American soldiers, who were under direct attack because of their political views. The coffeehouse network was promoted as the most vital institutional resource for this mission, and the fact that coffeehouses were so often subjected to attack was further evidence of the desperate need for civilian-supported "safe spaces" for those antiwar soldiers who had become targets of all manner of harassment.

While extralegal assaults on coffeehouses were the subject of sensational headlines, it was official harassment, in the form of constant arrests, which proved far more financially taxing for coffeehouse supporters. By a large margin, bail money and legal defense accounted for the most substantial portion of the USSF's budget, as coffeehouse organizers around the country, including GIs, were routinely thrown in jail by local and military police. The arrests were so frequent, and carried such high bonds for relatively minor infractions (most frequently for violations like trespassing, loitering, or being a public nuisance) that there often seemed to be a

²⁸ Paul Eberle, "Dr. Levy on GI Repression," *The Los Angeles Free Press*, May 15, 1970.

coordinated effort on the part of local and military authorities to make life nearly impossible for anyone associated with the coffeehouse.²⁹

Indeed, as declassified records later revealed, suspicions of a conspiracy were sometimes well-founded. Federal authorities had their eye on the coffeehouse phenomenon from the moment it first appeared in Columbia, South Carolina, and took immediate action to disrupt its effectiveness. At the time, the FBI's notorious counterintelligence program (COINTELPRO) was operating around the country, under Director J. Edgar Hoover's orders to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize" subversive political organizations. In July 1968, the director issued a letter to all FBI field offices entitled "Disruption of the New Left," that included specific plans by which FBI agents could undermine the activities of antiwar groups. Hoover singled out the GI coffeehouse movement as a target for special attention: "New Left groups are attempting to open coffeehouses near military bases in order to influence members of the Armed Forces. Wherever these coffeehouses are, friendly news media should be alerted to them and their purpose. In addition, various drugs, such as marijuana, will probably be utilized by individuals running the coffeehouses or frequenting them. Local law enforcement authorities should be promptly advised whenever you receive an indication that this is being done."³⁰ Federal agents thus became one part of a coordinated effort to harass antiwar activists at coffeehouse locations around the country.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Letter dated July 5, 1968, <http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/cointelpro/director5july1968.htm>, digital scan accessed July 17, 2010. For more on COINTELPRO's specific targeting of New Left groups, see James Kirkpatrick Davis, *Assault on the Left: The FBI and the Sixties Antiwar Movement* (Westport,

Drugs and Counterculture at GI Coffeehouses

National coffeehouse organizers were well aware that their activities were under constant surveillance by law enforcement and other unknown entities, and took steps to eliminate the possibility of arrest by running as "clean" an operation as possible. In reality, this meant keeping drugs away from the coffeehouses at all costs. USSF newsletters consistently underlined the importance of a strict "no drugs" policy at all coffeehouse projects. It is impossible to know exactly how much these policies were adhered to, but it is clear that most GI coffeehouses went out of their way to warn their staff and patrons, both verbally and in print, that the coffeehouses were deceptively "safe" environments, where possession of ("holding") drugs came with a significantly elevated risk of getting arrested.

Before a rock concert at the Oleo Strut in Killeen, Texas, in 1968, for example, coffeehouse manager Josh Gould announced the rules to a packed house, and in characteristic 1960s counterculture slang, slyly made reference to the assumed presence of undercover agents: "Rule one: We got no holding in the place. If you're holding, it's a bad place to be. The sign over there says that the Man is welcome, and always remember, the Man *is* welcome here. But it's not so much that he's welcome, it's just that he's *here*."³¹ In newspaper articles announcing the opening of the Fort Knox Coffeehouse, the organizers similarly discouraged drugs based on the obvious dangers of arrest: "There is only one rule at the Coffee House: No drugs, liquor or

CT: Praeger, 1997); Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The FBI: A History* (Yale University Press, 2008); and David Cunningham, *There's Something Happening Here: The New Left, the Klan, and FBI Counterintelligence* (University of California Press, 2004).

³¹ Gould's monologue was featured in the Newsreel-produced film *Summer '68*, which profiled the Oleo Strut along with a number of other New Left projects. Footage from *Summer '68* can also be seen in *Sir! No Sir!* (dir. David Zeiger, Displaced Films, 2005).

fighters. The brass would like nothing better than to close us down, declare the place off-limits, or attempt to harass people. These would give them and the local police the opportunity to do so, let's not give them that chance."³² And in characteristically blunt terms, the activists at the Covered Wagon in Mountain Home, Idaho, articulated the coffeehouse's drug policy by explaining how it related to their larger mission: "There is one firm rule at the Wagon. NO DOPE IS ALLOWED. If you want to get ripped before coming that is your business and your responsibility. But we don't intend to violate any small laws. A dope bust interferes with our effort to change the entire system and build instead, something that is responsive to human needs."³³

Though most GI coffeehouses maintained a zero-tolerance drug policy, staff members themselves had a decidedly more ambivalent attitude towards drugs, reflecting a common thread among radicals of the era. On the one hand, drug culture had been, for many activists, an entry into an alternative mode of thought and behavior that had led them directly to political activism. Drugs like marijuana and LSD, prominent in the youth counterculture of the late 1960s, were viewed by many young people as useful tools of revolution, liberating minds on the way to developing a new, more humane, American society. But the drug counterculture's vision of how to make social change created significant conflict within the antiwar movement, particularly in early New Left organizations like SDS, whose leaders fretted that the counterculture's narcotic escapism would siphon energy from important political activities. By the late 1960s, though, most antiwar activists (with notable exceptions of "old left" organizations like the SWP and YSA) had come to

³² "GI Coffeehouse Opens," *Fun Travel Adventure*, no. 10, August 1969.

³³ "Covered Wagon Rolls," *Helping Hand*, no. 10, September 1969.

accept that culture, including drug culture, was an integral component of the overall political change they hoped to affect.³⁴ Regardless of personal attitudes towards drug use, it was clear that drugs were inextricably tied to the wider social discontent that was fueling antiwar sentiment in the United States, and as such the peace movement, including coffeehouse organizers, could never fully repudiate drug culture.

For a variety of reasons unique to their situations, the drug issue posed a particularly tricky problem for organizers at GI coffeehouses. At the time, heroin addiction among GIs was a major problem within the American military, another distressing symptom of the toll the Vietnam War was taking on morale in the armed forces. While radicals often held conflicting opinions about the positive potential of drugs like marijuana and LSD, there was little disagreement in the antiwar movement over the toxic physical and psychological effects of heroin and opiate addiction, and coffeehouse organizers struggled (as would the military itself) to address this complicated crisis. At the Haymarket Square Coffeehouse in Fayetteville, North Carolina, outside Fort Bragg, the staff reported in 1971 that "drugs have been a constant hassle," since the coffeehouse became the favorite hangout of a large group of "street people." Young, homeless, and often addicted to

³⁴ Doug Rossinow, "The Revolution is about Our Lives: The New Left's Counterculture," in Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 101-103. Substantial discussions of drugs and the antiwar movement can also be found in Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 214-235; James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 278; and Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 189.

harder drugs like heroin ("skag"), their presence created a significant conflict among the Haymarket's civilian organizers. Since they were the only group of people in Fayetteville who seemed to identify and sympathize with the coffeehouse's outsider status and political mission, some staff members were hesitant to alienate them, feeling that their natural anti-authoritarianism could be channeled into serious political action. Others at the coffeehouse disagreed, arguing that the young people hanging out at the Haymarket were hard, manipulative, insincere, isolated individuals who drained resources from the coffeehouse's mission of organizing GIs.³⁵

While the activists at the Haymarket Square Coffeehouse never reached a consensus on how to employ the local drug culture within their wider political strategy, their ambivalence points to a common problem within the GI coffeehouse movement: how to capitalize on the popularity of a drug-inspired counterculture, using it to attract antiwar-leaning GIs, while simultaneously discouraging actual drug use. It was a difficult balance to strike, leading to many admittedly comical disagreements, like the "Spinning Light Committee," which formed at the Oleo Strut coffeehouse to agitate for the return of a psychedelic display that had been removed by the staff in an effort to discourage drug-induced hypnotic escapism.³⁶ The Strut staff, like the organizers at the Haymarket, recognized the "dual nature" of drug culture and similarly failed to find a clear solution: "You could say that a majority of

³⁵ "Haymarket Square," Project Report, *GI News and Discussion Bulletin*, no. 10, January 1972, 21. For more information on heroin abuse in the Vietnam era U.S. military, see Av Westin and Stephanie Shaffer, *Heroes and Heroin: The Shocking Story of Drug Addiction in the Military* (New York: Pocket Books Div. of Simon & Schuster, 1972).

³⁶ "Fort Hood GI Haven," *Space City News*, Fall 1970.

GIs [at Fort Hood] 'relate' to dope and the culture, or pseudo-culture, that goes with it. What you could also say, though, is that the reason there is so much dope on Hood is because it is also one of the most oppressive bases in the country, and that dope serves to pacify GIs and prevent them from fighting back. The argument between these two theories has come up time and time again at the Strut, and the rule against dope has been consistently broken."³⁷

The struggle over the drug issue highlighted a larger question for coffeehouse organizers: Did the coffeehouse's employment of a counterculture aesthetic and lifestyle actually help further their political goals? On this issue, many organizers discovered stark contradictions in their overall approach to GI organizing, finding that an overly-enthusiastic embrace of the counterculture's "lifestyle as politics" could stand in the way of effective political work with soldiers. At the Oleo Strut, for example, the civilian staff, usually a group of ten or more, resided communally in a rented house in Killeen, and self-consciously attempted to live out their politics of personal liberation, with mixed results. David Zeiger, reporting to the USSF, observed some of the basic conflicts this lifestyle created:

The staff did not work, day to day, with the people it was organizing--it was set apart from them, living some kind of completely different life, which gave the appearance to a lot of people of a hippie commune--no set hours, no need to face the Man every day, a real easy type life. It's impossible to live such a unique life from the people you are trying to build a movement with and still work with them on a close basis A question that has never been reconciled at the Strut is the conflict between "personal" life and "political" life.³⁸

Communal living arrangements, which were often formed as much out of financial necessity as political orientation, nevertheless seemed to cause problems at several

³⁷ David Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse, 1968-1972*, 26.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

coffeehouses, directly affecting the relationship between civilians and GIs.

Organizers at the Haymarket Square coffeehouse reported in 1971 that, "Collective living does tend to put us off from working people, by being such an oddity."

By 1972, national GI coffeehouse support organizations like the USSF reached a consensus on the issue of "staff collectives." Based on the negative experiences of several coffeehouses around the nation, civilian activists concluded that their attempts to live out their politics in counterculture communes was actually hindering their larger mission of organizing antiwar soldiers:

There was general agreement that the living collective is not a good form for several reasons: in most base towns it is so foreign to the local community that local residents tend to freak and respond negatively; GIs seem put off by it, because it is mostly different from their own experience; it creates a cliquish kind of exclusivity; and the appearance of sexual freedom offers a contradiction between the daily life of staff vs. that of GIs which is counterproductive Although strong economic motives exist for establishing a living collective, there are strong drawbacks for such an arrangement, including the inability of working people to relate to collectives . . . and the tendency for such groups to be isolated from others in the project, especially GIs.³⁹

After some experimentation, coffeehouse organizers realized that integrating the youth counterculture into their political project was a complicated undertaking; rather than promoting solidarity among civilians and soldiers, the lifestyle of sex, drugs, and rock and roll could often serve inadvertently to highlight the differences between them.

Race and Radical Politics

The trajectory of the GI coffeehouse movement was also shaped profoundly by the turbulent internal politics of the New Left in the later years of the Vietnam War, much of which concerned the rising tide of Black Power, black nationalism, and

³⁹ *GI News and Discussion Bulletin*, no. 10, January 1972, 50.

Third World solidarity that challenged white left organizations to re-shape their foundational ideologies and organizational strategies. The New Left had found its early inspiration in the civil rights movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s, as northern whites sought to join the cause of racial integration with their own liberal vision of "participatory democracy." But by 1966, after Stokely Carmichael's electrifying coinage of the phrase "Black Power" at a Mississippi civil rights march led by the vanguard Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), white and black radicals increasingly viewed each other from across a racial divide. Less than a week after Carmichael's Black Power speech, SDS president Todd Gitlin issued a statement affirming the leading student activist organization's support for Black Power, which essentially asserted that white radicals, rather than pursuing integration, should seek to "organize their own communities" and address racism at its source.⁴⁰ Though generally sympathetic to surging black radicalism, many of these organizations found themselves increasingly paralyzed by fierce internal battles in the late 1960s, unable to agree on the precise nature of the revolution they hoped to effect.

The American military campaign in Vietnam, and the movement against it, were similarly challenged by racial developments. In 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered one of his most iconic antiwar speeches, "Beyond Vietnam," in which he connected the miserable social and economic situation of blacks in America to the suffering of Vietnamese peasants at the hands of the U.S. military. While he stopped

⁴⁰ David Barber, *A Hard Rain Fell: SDS and Why it Failed* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 15-19. For more on Black Power's impact on the New Left, see Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006).

short of urging black soldiers to defect, King nevertheless made it clear that service in Vietnam was especially insulting for young black men. According to King, the war was taking men "who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem."⁴¹ King's powerful words pointed out a "cruel irony" that found potent expression among young black GIs in the Vietnam era armed services.

Perhaps no other figure could more powerfully represent the black experience of Vietnam than heavyweight champion boxer and international celebrity Muhammad Ali, whose principled stand against service in the war inspired countless young black men to find their own paths of resistance. His notorious retort, "I ain't got no quarrel with the Vietcong. No Vietcong ever called me Nigger," seemed to cut right to the heart of the matter, and strengthened the notion that, for black men, fighting in the war represented a serious betrayal of racial and class identity. Employing similar logic as King and other black leaders, Ali pointed out, with his signature bravado, "Why should they ask me to put on a uniform and go ten thousand miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on brown people in Vietnam while so-called Negro people in Louisville are treated like dogs and denied simple human rights?"⁴² As this attitude became more and more prominent among young black GIs, the military itself became one more front in the battle to confront

⁴¹ Howard Zinn, *The Power of Nonviolence: Writings by Advocates of Peace* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2002), 39.

⁴² Jeffrey Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2009), 27.

institutionalized racism.⁴³ The work of antiwar civilians, who hoped to build support for GI activism in the later years of the war, was thus complicated by the particular racial tensions then coursing through the U.S. military.

The powerful influence of racial ideology was felt at GI coffeehouses around the nation, with several GI projects confronting the same set of complex racial issues that challenged many radical groups during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Movement for a Democratic Military (MDM), for example, quickly rose to become one of the largest coffeehouse-initiated GI projects in the country, until it was unable to sustain itself in the face of significant racial division. The MDM was founded in 1970 in a popular GI coffeehouse called the Green Machine, located near Camp Pendleton, the major West Coast base of the U.S. Marine Corps, in San Diego, California. The group published an important and widely-read GI newspaper, *Attitude Check*, which spelled out a basic list of revolutionary demands that became common political positions among GI movement activists around the country, even well after the MDM disintegrated. These demands included the recognition of constitutional rights for all soldiers, the right to collective bargaining, freedom for all political prisoners, an end to institutional racism, a complete overhaul of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and, of course, an immediate and total withdrawal

⁴³ Halstead, *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War*, 260-291. Halstead's internal history sheds light on the complicated racial dynamics within radical organizations of the late 1960s and early 1970s. For a military-specific perspective on race, see also Halstead, *GIs Speak Out Against the War: The Case of the Ft. Jackson 8* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970); and James Westheider, *Brothers in Arms: The African American Experience in Vietnam* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

of American troops from Vietnam.⁴⁴ Six different military bases established MDM chapters in the early months of 1970, prompting Marine Commandant General Leonard Chapman, in an interview with a military affairs magazine, to label the organization "a serious threat to the defense of this country."⁴⁵

A power struggle for control of the MDM in San Diego resulted in its total collapse after little more than a year of activity. The MDM's disintegration was the result almost entirely of racial issues; black editors at *Attitude Check* split from the MDM to form their own GI paper, *Black Unity*. In its first issue, the editors delivered a concise statement of the difficulties that plagued the GI movement as factionalism of all sorts increasingly disrupted efforts to create a unified mass movement of soldiers:

The reason why MDM separated and Attitude Check won't be around anymore is because we weren't getting the full support of people. Third World people (black, brown, red, yellow) couldn't relate to it because they thought it was a white organization. White people couldn't relate to it because they thought it was a black struggle. We are all struggling to reach the same goals, but we each have to organize our own people first. Once we organize among ourselves, then we can unite. Until all of us are free, none will be free.⁴⁶

Like many radical organizations during this period, the members of MDM were united in their opposition to the Vietnam War and shared many of the same political objectives, but were unable to overcome the bitter racial barriers that divided their movement.

The Oleo Strut coffeehouse similarly experienced significant racial difficulties

⁴⁴ "Investigation of Attempts to Subvert the United States Armed Services," *Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security*, House of Representatives, 92nd Congress, 1st and 2nd Sessions, vol. 3, 7264-7271.

⁴⁵ *Marine Corps Gazette*, January 1971, 46.

⁴⁶ *Black Unity*, vol. 1, no. 1, August 1970.

in the later years of its existence. Managers were initially elated at the formation of the Fort Hood United Front, an organization of black and white GIs working together on antiwar activities on base and in the surrounding community. However, because of the uniquely potent racial hostilities at Fort Hood, and in the spirit of self-determination then permeating the black movement, a group of radical black soldiers decided that it was necessary to create an all-black GI organization. When in the fall of 1971 this group split off from the United Front to form the People's Justice Committee (PJC), racial tensions at the coffeehouse came bubbling to the surface. The PJC held some early meetings at the Oleo Strut, initially expressing hope of working together with Strut activists, but after several black GIs objected to the Strut for being, among other things, "dominated by whites," the group stopped frequenting the coffeehouse, and began meeting instead at a local USO office.⁴⁷ Since so much of the antiwar and radical energy at Fort Hood was located within its population of young black soldiers, most of whose political sensibilities were deeply informed by Black Power and similar ideologies, the Oleo Strut's reputation as a meeting place for primarily white activists directly affected its ability to build solidarity with one of the most active wings of the local GI movement.

In late 1971, national GI movement organizations held a five-day conference in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, to discuss their progress and to attempt to chart a course through the political and racial divisions that seemed to be hindering the development of many GI projects. During a period in which many radicals were concluding that the coming revolution should be led by a vanguard of the black

⁴⁷ David Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse*, 22.

underclass, the stereotypical image of coffeehouses as hangouts for white, middle class peace activists presented a distinct challenge for GI organizers. At a workshop on "Racism and Third World Struggles," representatives from several different coffeehouses reported significant racial problems, echoing the experiences of the Oleo Strut and Green Machine projects. There was consensus among the participants that civilian-sponsored GI projects, in base towns around the country, had difficulties sustaining relationships with "non-white" soldiers, despite black soldiers' particularly strong antiwar and radical sentiments. "It seemed clear that while there had been working alliances between the projects and the black groups at their bases, that there had been no continuous ongoing black participation in the projects."⁴⁸

The activists at the conference seemed well aware of racial disparities at GI coffeehouses, but simultaneously were unsure as to how to address those issues. A strong indication of the problem could be seen in the composition of the conference itself; a published summary later admitted that "similar to early conferences . . . the organizers were, again, overwhelmingly white." At the workshop devoted specifically to racial issues, only one black activist was present in a room that contained more than two dozen white organizers. According to the meeting minutes, the lone black activist "spoke for a long time about the different things that make it difficult for blacks and other minorities to relate to white organizers and organizations. Among these were class and race problems. There was a strong feeling that our relations with black and third world brothers and sisters hadn't

⁴⁸ *GI News and Discussion Bulletin*, no. 10, January 1972, 61.

been satisfactory to us or them either on a personal or a political level."⁴⁹ Though the racism workshop ended with a series of vague resolutions ("Never tolerate racism" among them) and promises to encourage racial unity, it was clear to organizers that the coffeehouse movement had been unable to escape the organizational infighting and divisive racial politics that fractured the antiwar movement and the New Left in the later years of the Vietnam War.

The FTA Show

As a central organizer for the USSF, Howard Levy attempted to keep the organization out of the sectarian battles that took place at many of the GI coffeehouses it supported. Levy's pragmatic radicalism made the USSF a relatively neutral organization that steered clear of political dogmatism, focusing its efforts instead on fundraising, material support, and publicity for the GI movement. Like Fred Gardner, Levy thought the USSF should support projects that served primarily as countercultural alternatives for disaffected young soldiers, providing a space for those GIs that were alienated by the dominant, pro-war culture that surrounded them in the military.

At the time, nothing could more perfectly encapsulate this military culture than Bob Hope's USO Show, historically the most popular, and most officially-sanctioned, of the different kinds of entertainment offered to GIs at military bases around the world. The United Service Organizations (USO) was chartered in 1941 in coordination with the Department of Defense, with a mission to provide "morale,

⁴⁹ Ibid., 61.

recreation, and entertainment" services to American troops serving overseas.⁵⁰

Though not officially a part of the government, USO shows and related recreational events bring celebrities and other public figures into the war zone as a means of elevating morale. For a period of nearly fifty years, Bob Hope was the USO's central entertainer, a ubiquitous presence on the scene of virtually every American military campaign of the era (fig. 17). Hope, a vaudeville comedian who became a Hollywood film star in the 1940s, first signed on to the USO show during World War II, and over the course of fifty years, evolved into the USO's most tireless performer (and, ultimately, a symbol of the USO itself).⁵¹ Hope's performances blended comedy routines with musical acts and the obligatory scantily clad appearances by Miss USA and other pinup girls. With his signature golf club, faux bachelor persona, and obvious affection for military men and women, Hope served as the popular, smiling face of the American home front, sent to bring good cheer to soldiers and support staff in the heat of battle.

By the late 1960s, though, many of Hope's old-fashioned jokes began to fall flat for audiences of young GIs. In particular, soldiers who embraced the long hair, drugs, and rock music of the youth counterculture often found Hope's show corny at best, offensive at worst. And for the significant portion of those soldiers who were opposed to the war, the government-sponsored USO show represented a form of cultural propaganda that reinforced many of the values that had created the Vietnam War in the first place. In an attempt to win over the increasingly

⁵⁰ Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 86-88.

⁵¹ William Robert Faith, *Bob Hope: A Life in Comedy* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003), xxii.

unreceptive crowds (particularly in Vietnam itself), in 1970 Hope introduced jokes about marijuana into his act and even claimed that he himself was antiwar (joking that he was "a hawk who's now turned chicken").⁵² Many GIs saw through Hope's bid for cultural and political relevance, however. At one USO show performance in Saigon in 1970, a group of musically inclined soldiers employed their own countercultural form of expression, acid rock, to voice their disapproval. The GIs had been booked to play a set of songs before Hope came on stage. To the roar of the crowd, the soldiers announced "We'd like to dedicate this to our childhood idol, Mr. Bob Hope," and immediately began playing their first song: Black Sabbath's "War Pigs."⁵³

In the fall of 1971, Howard Levy began formulating an idea for an antiwar alternative to Hope's USO show. He envisioned a kind of counterculture comedy revue that would reflect the political and cultural values of young soldiers who were turned off by the military's official entertainment. The show would serve as a highly visible demonstration of the civilian antiwar movement's support for dissident soldiers. Most of all, Levy hoped the show would bring mainstream publicity to the GI movement, and for this reason wanted as much radical star power as the USSF could muster. At the time, Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland were filming director Alan J. Pakula's *Klute* in New York City, where Levy maintained the USSF's main base of operations. Fonda, of course, had been deeply involved in supporting the GI

⁵² Alvin Shuster, "GIs in Vietnam High on Hope's Marijuana Jokes," *New York Times*, December 23, 1970.

⁵³ "Bob Hope Versus FTA," *Camp News*, vol. 3, no. 1, September 1971.

movement since her tour of coffeehouses the previous year, and Levy was eager to enlist her support for his antiwar road show.

A meeting with Fonda and Sutherland proved successful. Fonda loved Levy's idea, thinking that the show would be a perfect opportunity to combine her acting talents and Hollywood connections with her newly formed radical politics. The actors agreed to help the USSF sponsor a series of performances near military bases around the country, enlisting the support of their friends in Hollywood to create a separate organization, Entertainment Industry for Peace and Justice, which would assemble talent and coordinate resources for the show.⁵⁴ Radical writers and activists Jules Feiffer, Barbara Garson, and Herb Gardner were charged with writing and developing a series of songs and skits that would communicate an antiwar message with a countercultural sensibility. Taking on the popular underground acronym found scrawled on the walls of military barracks around the world, the show would be called, simply, "FTA."⁵⁵

The FTA troupe planned to take their tour to major military bases around the United States, using GI coffeehouses as local bases of operation. Original coffeehouse founder Fred Gardner was asked to join the FTA show as a stage manager and liaison to the coffeehouse staff, and despite having abandoned political activism years earlier, Gardner accepted the position, seeing an opportunity to

⁵⁴ Howard Levy, interview with author, January 30, 2010. Levy confirmed many details of the FTA show's conception also found in Gardner, "Hollywood Confidential, Part II," *The Vietnam Generation Journal and Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 3, November 1991. The FTA show is also discussed in Jules Feiffer, *Backing into Forward: A Memoir* (New York: Doubleday, 2010).

⁵⁵ Though most GIs would recognize the acronym as meaning "Fuck the Army," the FTA show performers usually referred to the show's name (and overall message) as "Free the Army." The FTA show was also often referred to as the "USSF Show."

reassert his original concept at GI coffeehouses along the tour. Like Levy, Gardner had little patience for the political "heaviness" that was then paralyzing so many GI projects, and hoped that he could reinforce the idea of coffeehouses as countercultural escapes rather than political organizations.⁵⁶

The FTA show's original planners envisioned a slyly subversive comedy show with broad appeal. The material would have an undeniably serious antiwar subtext, but politics was always to take a back seat to entertainment. According to Levy, the goal was to create a series of performances that "could arguably be shown on base" as officially-sponsored entertainment for troops, and FTA writers worked hard to fashion a "mainstream" show that avoided direct political provocation in favor of comedic barbs and light satire. By the spring of 1971, the troupe had developed a complete three-hour program, and rehearsed in New York City for a few weeks before taking the show on the road.⁵⁷

Before leaving New York in February, Jane Fonda and Howard Levy held a press conference announcing their intentions to kick off the FTA tour in Fayetteville, North Carolina, near Fort Bragg. They explained that Fort Bragg had been chosen as the first stop on the tour because its commanding officer, Lieutenant General John J. Tolson, played a significant role in the Army's recently-instituted experiments in "social liberalization," which allowed GIs to wear longer hair and mustaches in an attempt to ameliorate generational and cultural tensions within the military

⁵⁶ Fred Gardner, "Hollywood Confidential, Part II," *The Vietnam Generation Journal and Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 3, November 1991.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

hierarchy.⁵⁸ The organizers saw the FTA show as the perfect opportunity to test the limits of Fort Bragg's newfound cultural permissiveness. Howard Levy appealed directly to Tolson: "If General Tolson is really serious about the Army's so-called liberalization policy, and believes in the Army's 'new mod look,' he'll let our show on the base. If not, he will ban it, and let the public know it's the same old fashioned, repressive Army." Because Tolson was the "key architect of the Army's new look," Levy added with tongue partially in cheek, "we expect his full cooperation."⁵⁹

After USSF organizers sent Tolson a script of the FTA show, he refused to allow it on base, describing the show's contents as "detrimental to discipline and morale." GIs at Fort Bragg reacted to the show's rejection by drawing up a petition to Congress, signed by more than 2,000 soldiers in a matter of days.⁶⁰ The ensuing publicity, largely the result of the involvement of antiwar celebrities, was an embarrassment for Tolson. When reporters asked him if he had banned Fonda and company from the base because of their antiwar politics, he replied that the FTA show was "not so much antiwar as poorly done."⁶¹ Unsurprisingly, the show was subsequently banned from military bases across the nation; the search for usable performance space became a significant logistical hurdle for the national FTA tour.

Since the whole point of the FTA show was to bring the maximum amount of publicity to the GI movement, its planners wanted to make each show a major event

⁵⁸ The U.S. military's many attempts at "repressive tolerance" throughout the Vietnam era are discussed in Chapter Five.

⁵⁹ Lacey Fosburgh, "Antiwar Troupe Formed to Tour Bases," *New York Times*, February 17, 1971.

⁶⁰ "Left Face," *New Republic*, March 13, 1971, 9.

⁶¹ Michael Kernan, "GI Movement: A Show to Call Its Own," *Washington Post*, March 15, 1971.

for the military towns in which they intended to perform. Although GI coffeehouses seemed like the logical venues for FTA performances, with a ready-made staff of sympathetic civilians and GIs, organizers initially felt that the coffeehouses were far too small to accommodate the kinds of massive crowds they hoped to attract, and instead attempted to book the show in large public venues like high school auditoriums, civic centers, and performing arts halls. They soon learned, however, that in many military towns around the country, the show's association with the antiwar movement made local leaders reluctant to offer their public institutions for such subversive purposes. As the tour made its stops in cities across the country, GI coffeehouses often turned out to be the only spaces willing to accommodate Fonda and her traveling antiwar show.

In Fayetteville, for example, resistance to the FTA show was not limited to military leaders at Fort Bragg. When the show's planners submitted an application to use the city's 2500-seat municipal auditorium, city officials initially rejected the proposal until a federal judge agreed with USSF lawyers and overruled the decision. The city then demanded \$150,000 in insurance for the performance, a prohibitive expense for the USSF, and the first FTA show was finally held instead at the Haymarket Square coffeehouse on March 14, 1971.⁶² Since the coffeehouse only had room for fewer than five hundred people, the troupe put on a series of performances, to packed houses of GIs, over the course of two days and nights.

By most media accounts, the FTA show's premiere in Fayetteville was a huge hit among the soldiers who crowded into the coffeehouse. The performers included

⁶² James T. Wooten, "500 G.I.'s at Debut of Antiwar Show," *New York Times*, March 15, 1971.

Fonda and fellow actors Donald Sutherland, Peter Boyle, and Elliot Gould, comedian Dick Gregory, folk singers Len Chandler and Barbara Dane, and rock acts Swamp Dogg and Johnny Rivers. The show itself embodied the anti-establishment, anti-authority attitude of the youth counterculture, with each song, comic routine, skit or reading focusing on a different aspect of the Vietnam War and the GI experience. Gregory set the tone of the evening with his first joke, in which he suggested that GIs vote as a bloc to raise the draft age to seventy-five, to "send all them older cats to Vietnam with John Wayne leading 'em." Throughout the first performances at the Haymarket coffeehouse, hundreds of GIs clapped, sang along, and cheered loudly in response to the unique combination of Hollywood showmanship and antiwar politics (figs. 18-19).⁶³

Although the material was undeniably subversive, in general the FTA show trod lightly when it came to radical political statements. Many of the jokes, about the unfairness of military hierarchy and the everyday annoyances of Army life, would not be out of place in a *Beetle Bailey* comic strip or even in Bob Hope's ostensibly "pro-war" USO show. What made the FTA show different, and historically significant, was that its performers were clearly understood to be representatives of the civilian antiwar movement and the show itself was recognized as an explicitly political act. The performances were meant to demonstrate support for the varied forms of antiwar activism then being expressed by growing numbers of active-duty GIs on bases around the country. During the show's more serious moments, such as when Sutherland dramatically read from

⁶³ "Antiwar Show for GIs Has Receptive Audience," *Camp News*, vol. 2, no. 2, March 1971.

Dalton Trumbo's 1938 antiwar novel *Johnny Got His Gun*, the FTA troupe consistently underlined the horrors of war, the specific injustice of Vietnam, and the responsibilities of citizen-soldiers to challenge the military power structure. But the show stopped short of proselytizing, aiming instead to demonstrate a kind of abstract solidarity and support of soldiers who questioned the war. Fonda explained that the show would simply reinforce "what the soldiers already know. *They know that the war is insane. They know what GIs have to contend with better than we do. We're simply saying, 'We know what you're up against and we support you.'*"⁶⁴

While the FTA troupe saw their show as a simple, relatively uncontroversial statement of support, military and local authorities often viewed Fonda's arrival as a significant, dangerous threat to morale and security. On the weekend the show debuted in Fayetteville, Fort Bragg went into high alert, mobilizing fifty jeeps and trucks behind barracks and using military police to block access points to the base's stockade (where nearly half of the 173rd Airborne Brigade was confined).⁶⁵ The Haymarket Square coffeehouse was inundated with plain-clothes and undercover agents, many of them wearing "counterculture" disguises that were apparently easy to spot; Gregory joked that GIs should be on the lookout for "spit-shine sandals." Groups of photographers, presumed to be police or federal agents, surrounded the coffeehouse throughout the performances, using infrared cameras to photograph of

⁶⁴ Mary Hershberger, *Jane Fonda's War: A Political Biography of an Antiwar Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 45; Roger Greenspun, "Jane Fonda's 'F.T.A.' Show Now a Film," *The New York Times*, July 22, 1972.

⁶⁵ "Antiwar Show for GIs Has Receptive Audience," *Camp News*, March 1971.

soldiers in the crowd, coffeehouse staff, and, of course, Hollywood celebrities.⁶⁶ It was clear that authorities in Fayetteville were alarmed by the FTA show's presence, unsure of its intentions, and undeniably hostile to its political message. The pattern of resistance displayed in Fayetteville, from its refusal to allow the use of its public facilities to the mobilization of its police force, was repeated in military towns throughout the FTA show's fall 1971 tour.

Organizers at the USSF, increasingly aware of the hostility the show faced in military towns, relied on local coffeehouse staff to survey the situation and help establish possible friendly venues for performances. In Killeen, Texas, staff members of the Oleo Strut were alerted during the summer that the FTA show would be stopping by to entertain Fort Hood GIs in September, and set to work looking for available spaces. Killeen's high school auditorium was one of the town's few venues capable of accommodating more than a thousand people. Although the Strut staff had witnessed the auditorium hosting a number of religious and right-wing political events during their years in Killeen, the school board denied their request on the basis of the show's political content; a federal suit filed by USSF lawyers, similar to the one filed in Fayetteville, was unsuccessful. Killeen's movie theaters also refused to rent out their facilities. After the *Killeen Daily Herald* issued an editorial stating that Jane Fonda and her troupe should be legally barred from even stepping foot in town, the manager of the Oleo Strut reported that "looking for an alternative place to have the show . . . was like trying to find a Cuban cigar in

⁶⁶ Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far* (New York: Random House, 2006), 273.

Selma, Alabama."⁶⁷ When the show finally rolled into town, the Oleo Strut coffeehouse was quite literally the only place in Killeen, Texas, that would welcome Fonda and the FTA group. They staged five performances in the cramped coffeehouse, for audiences of 250 GIs at each show. On Sunday, the troupe held a picnic in Killeen's Condor Park, where performers talked with soldiers and other activists for several hours before moving on to their next stop.⁶⁸

Despite intense local efforts to suppress the show, more than 15,000 GIs were ultimately able to see the FTA show during its fall 1971 tour of U.S. military towns. The involvement of antiwar celebrities like Fonda and Sutherland created an unprecedented amount of publicity and media attention for the GI movement, and helped reveal how widespread GI discontent had become. When the FTA tour stopped at a number of Air Force bases, the massive crowds of airmen suggested that antiwar sentiment had spread beyond the Army. At the time, Nixon's policy of Vietnamization was turning the conflict into an air war, placing much more of the burden of fighting on the Air Force, with the majority of Army and Marine ground troops being called home. As the stress of fighting an unpopular war fell increasingly on the pilots and other airmen and women, the Air Force began witnessing a dramatic rise in the kinds of phenomena then paralyzing the Army: in 1971, Air Force desertion rates doubled, and in the summer five different Air Force bases experienced incidents of organized insubordination. By the time the FTA show arrived in Mountain Home, Idaho, in the fall of 1971, a robust local antiwar movement was already underway amongst airmen and women from Mountain

⁶⁷ David Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse*, 18.

⁶⁸ "Fonda Brings Antiwar Show to Hood," *Killeen Daily Herald*, September 22, 1971.

Home Air Force Base. Together with USSF-sponsored civilian activists, they had re-opened an antiwar coffeehouse, the Covered Wagon, after the original was burned to the ground. The Covered Wagon was unquestionably the center of antiwar activity in the tiny town of fewer than 10,000. The FTA show's packed performances at the coffeehouse demonstrated that antiwar sentiment was as powerful among Air Force personnel in 1971 as it had been in the Army in 1968; wherever the burden of war shifted, it seemed, desertion, insubordination, and antiwar activism among soldiers followed.⁶⁹ After the troupe performed at the Covered Wagon, a reporter asked Fonda if her show encouraged Air Force servicemen to revolt. She responded, "No, they're ahead of us on that."⁷⁰

While coffeehouses proved to be the only consistently reliable venues to hold performances throughout the FTA show's domestic tour, local coffeehouse staff often greeted the show's arrival with trepidation. Several coffeehouse organizers were skeptical of the show's intentions and overall value to the movement. David Zeiger, who managed the Oleo Strut coffeehouse during the FTA show's visit, later explained that GI projects were protective of the local movements they had been building, and resented the FTA show's perceived arrogance: "The leadership of the show considered itself fully capable of passing judgment on projects that had been working and organizing for years; they also presented the picture of seeing the show as the most important thing going. The result was that there was some heavy conflict between the show and some of the projects."⁷¹

⁶⁹ Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 127-133.

⁷⁰ Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far*, 274.

⁷¹ David Zeiger, *History of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse*, 18.

Fred Gardner, in his role as liaison to the coffeehouses, often found himself in the middle of the inevitable tensions that arose between local radical activists and the FTA show's entourage of celebrities, press photographers, agents, lawyers, and support staff. At each coffeehouse stop, Gardner attempted to exert his influence on the staff, urging them to view the FTA show, like the coffeehouses themselves, as an opportunity to provide GIs with a pleasant escape from the burden of military service. Radical political squabbles, he argued, would only get in the way of what should have been their main mission, to demonstrate support for a persecuted population of antiwar GIs. But after Gardner witnessed the staff of the Haymarket coffeehouse hold a serious meeting in which they questioned the purity of Donald Sutherland's Marxist credentials, he realized that "it was a mistake to think I could breeze into town with the FTA show and influence the way the GI coffeehouses were being run. In fact, the staff honchos seemed more uptight than ever."⁷² As Gardner saw it, the bitter feuds between humorless radicals and self-important "Hollywood types" were further proof of how far the civilian wing of the GI movement had drifted from its original purpose. Concluding that coffeehouses, the FTA show, and other civilian-sponsored GI projects "no longer served the interests of GIs," Gardner bitterly resigned from his position with the FTA show after the fall 1971 tour.⁷³

Despite Gardner's pessimistic assessment of the show's value to the GI movement, the FTA tour represented an important moment in the history of GI

⁷² Fred Gardner, "Hollywood Confidential, Part II," *The Vietnam Generation Journal and Newsletter*, November 1991, 10.

⁷³ Fred Gardner, "Case Study in Opportunism: The GI Movement," *Second Page Supplement*, October 1971, 7.

resistance during the Vietnam War. Thousands of dissident soldiers were able to get a sense of their numbers, as performances were invariably packed beyond capacity, disregarding significant official and unofficial intimidation. The show's central objective—to raise public awareness of the existence of GI dissent—was seemingly accomplished, with major coverage of the FTA show appearing in the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Life*, and on the three major American television networks. Jane Fonda, who had become a lightning rod for political controversy and media attention, helped direct some of that mainstream attention onto the thousands of GIs who showed up at FTA performances, providing visual evidence of the Vietnam War's unpopularity among a significant minority of American soldiers. Even the FBI, in reports from undercover agents present at coffeehouse shows, somewhat begrudgingly acknowledged that Fonda's FTA show struck a chord with the crowd of active-duty GIs: "[T]hroughout the political and military-oriented entertainment there was continuous, spontaneous and interrupting applause. The audience was captivated."⁷⁴

More than any other single event, the FTA show made it clear that GI coffeehouses had become vital institutions in military towns across the country. Without the presence of coffeehouses, the show would have been prevented from performing in most locations. The tour's managers discovered what GI coffeehouse organizers had known for years: that the idea of public space was powerfully

⁷⁴ Mary Hershberger, *Jane Fonda's War: A Political Biography of an Antiwar Icon*, 46. The quote comes from Fonda's FBI file, LA 157-5089, 20. For more on the FTA show's impact on bases, see "Jane Fonda Antiwar Show Stage Near Fort Bragg," *The New York Times*, March 14, 1973; Leticia Kent, "It's Not Just 'Fonda and Company,'" *The New York Times*, March 21, 1971; "4,000 See 'Free the Army,'" *Honolulu Advertiser*, November 26, 1971; and Gary Arnold, "FTA: The Fonda Way," *Washington Post*, June 28, 1972

circumscribed in towns and cities with strong military ties. The near non-stop harassment, intimidation, and covert surveillance experienced by coffeehouses demonstrated that many "base towns" created an extremely repressive political atmosphere, particularly when it came to the antiwar movement. Within environments so openly hostile to radical politics, where community leaders often seemed determined to keep antiwar ideas from spreading to the local military population, GI coffeehouses became the only institutions in town where these ideas could be openly discussed. In this way, coffeehouses served an important function, creating a kind of local "free speech zone" that allowed a rare public interaction between civilian antiwar activists and active-duty soldiers. As the FTA show's 1971 tour seemed to confirm, coffeehouses had evolved into critical tools in the civilian antiwar movement's support of domestically-stationed GIs. By providing a space that amplified the sound of soldier dissent, coffeehouses helped give public voice to a population whose opportunities for speaking out were significantly limited.

The GI Press and the Legacy of GI Coffeehouses

As the FTA show's tour so clearly demonstrated, GI coffeehouses could be potent political spaces, where GIs made direct contact with the civilian antiwar movement, often in communities where such interactions were virtually impossible to have anywhere else. This interaction helped produce the GI movement's most visible manifestation of dissent, the GI underground press. Beginning in 1967, a handful of GI-produced antiwar newspapers began appearing on bases and in military towns. By 1972, the Department of Defense estimated that 245 different antiwar newspapers were being distributed on bases. The most prominent of these

GI papers, such as the *Fatigue Press* out of Killeen, Texas, and *Bragg Briefs* out of Fayetteville, North Carolina, which each had circulations of more than five thousand, were invariably supported by GI coffeehouses and civilian antiwar organizations.⁷⁵ Coffeehouses served as the organizational bases and publishing centers for a loose national network of antiwar, military-oriented newspapers that formed, in the words of one historian of the GI movement, "the fundamental expression of political opposition within the armed forces" during the Vietnam War era.⁷⁶

The GI underground press was part of the larger history of newspaper printing, which underwent significant changes in the mid-twentieth century that deeply affected the New Left and antiwar movements of the 1960s. The introduction of new technologies, like cheap offset printing and mimeograph machines, helped make possible an unprecedented expansion of alternative media. Underground publications like the *L.A. Free Press*, the *Berkeley Barb*, and the *Chicago Seed* became significant agents in the promotion of a youth-oriented, antiwar counterculture that ran parallel to the so-called "mainstream" media. For most editors and producers of underground newspapers, the paper's physical production was itself a political act; to possess a printing press in the 1960s was to possess a new and powerful weapon in the movement's arsenal. The spaces where underground newspapers were produced, in which independent editors and writers gathered to discuss articles, exchange information, and physically print the newspaper, often became local centers of political organizing activity. More often

⁷⁵ Terry H. Anderson, "The GI Movement and the Response from the Brass," in *Give Peace a Chance: Exploring the Vietnam Antiwar Movement*, ed. Melvin Small and William D. Hoover (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 98.

⁷⁶ Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 55.

than not, underground newspaper offices functioned as simultaneous publishing houses and de facto movement centers.⁷⁷

Access to physical space and printing technology was a critical element in the explosion of social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, but it was especially critical in the development of the GI movement and its underground press network. The Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), whose rules applied in all branches of the military, stated that GIs could express their opinions in print only if they did so "off post, on their own time, with their own money and equipment." Further, soldiers were restricted from preparing or distributing literature that included criticism of superior officers, or members of government including the president, vice president, and Congress. As the number of GI antiwar newspapers showing up on U.S. military bases increased dramatically in 1968, military leadership issued even stricter policies limiting soldiers' ability to produce antiwar literature. The Department of the Army's "Guidance on Dissent" also contained a token affirmation of GIs' "rights

⁷⁷ Christopher Daly, *Covering America: A Narrative History of a Nation's Journalism* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2012); Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Mass Communication* (New York: Basic Books, 2005). The rise of the underground press in the 1960s occurred within a longer historical period of corporate consolidation in the newspaper industry, which replaced the rich landscape of urban newspapers that had arisen in the 19th century with a relatively tiny group of elite media sources owned by multinational business interests. In New York City, for example, there were more than fifteen major news publications in circulation in 1900, yet by 1967 only three major newspapers (The *New York Times*, *New York Post*, and the *New York Daily News*) remained. Though "counterculture" media's existence was not entirely a reaction to this larger phenomenon, the increasingly closed-off nature of mainstream print journalism undoubtedly contributed to the popularity and appeal of alternative news sources in the 1960s and 1970s.

to free expression," but further limited those rights by stipulating that all printed materials be submitted to base commanders for approval before distribution.⁷⁸

Paul Cox, an active-duty Marine stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and two other soldiers started a small underground paper called *Rage* after returning to the base from Vietnam in 1969. Cox's recollections indicate that, because of base restrictions, the success of a GI press was dependent on several related factors: the availability of an off-base work space, access to printing technology, and financial support from civilians:

There were three of us. We started writing letters to everyone we could find, asking for help. Two hundred forty-three letters. We got two responses. One was from *Bragg Briefs* in Fayetteville and one was from *Up Against the Bulkhead* in San Francisco. We got a visit from the people in Fayetteville, who recruited two guys to move into town. They got some money from somewhere and bought a house--they figured no one would rent to us--and opened a bookstore to support our work putting out this paper. There was a movement that was intent on assisting with the awakening of GIs. The U.S. Servicemen's Fund--we would send them a completed paper and they would send us \$100. The first one, we mimeographed five hundred. Then we found a printer and went to tabloid, printing a thousand."⁷⁹

Rage was one of many GI newspapers that benefited greatly from the material support of antiwar civilians, who were often able to provide the essential tools needed to make up for the severe limitations placed on soldiers' political expression.

At the Oleo Strut coffeehouse, where the *Fatigue Press* offices took up nearly half the space, the staff worked to create an atmosphere that would stimulate work on the newspaper (fig. 20). Vietnam veteran and *Fatigue Press* editor Dave Cline later explained that the coffeehouse staff encouraged visiting GIs to express their opinions in writing, regardless of their training or skills. "We started writing the

⁷⁸ James Lewes, *Protest and Survive: Underground GI Newspapers during the Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 83.

⁷⁹ Bob Ostertag, *People's Movement, People's Press: The Journalism of Social Justice Movements* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 141.

paper, and the idea was for people just to write their ideas. When you would go in the coffeehouse, they would say, 'Why don't you write an article?' It was mimeographed, and the production was piss poor, but the idea was that we were putting something out."⁸⁰ The *Fatigue Press* ultimately became one of the country's most widely circulated GI papers, largely because of strong financial support from the USSF and other antiwar organizations, that considered the Oleo Strut's role as an underground publishing center to be one of its most important functions. The value of an independent GI press had been made clear in August 1968, when the *Fatigue Press's* coverage of Operation Garden Plot, Fort Hood's training operation for quelling urban riots, helped stir outrage among GIs on base and led to some of the GI movement's most effective early political actions.

GI newspapers were often the products of direct collaboration between active-duty soldiers and civilian antiwar activists at coffeehouses and other off-base GI projects. This collaboration resulted in a cross-pollination of political ideas, in which soldiers influenced the issues taken up by civilian activists, and vice versa. This hybrid civilian-soldier antiwar consciousness, on display most prominently in the pages of GI newspapers, was by far the most unique aspect of the GI coffeehouse phenomenon. Coffeehouses provided the space and resources for an interaction that publicized some of the most critical issues faced by the Vietnam-era military. By the time the war ended, the GI press, together with the coffeehouses in which so many were produced, had significantly raised awareness about a host of specific

⁸⁰ Ibid., 144.

concerns, many of which have dominated U.S. military policy discussions in the decades that followed (fig. 21).

The interaction of GIs and civilian activists in the GI movement also helped introduce a series of ideas that continue to resonate within the American military. The political program developed by soldiers and civilians at the 1971 Williams Bay conference, for example, went far beyond simple antiwar sloganeering; radical politics influenced GI movement organizers to embrace a wide set of issues and strategies that aimed to transform the nature of military service itself. The most important of these was the idea of counseling services for active-duty military personnel. After the formation of a GI newspaper, coffeehouse organizers considered the development of an off-base GI counseling center to be one of their most important functions.

Military counseling by civilians had been an important part of the antiwar movement since the beginnings of campus antiwar activism in 1964. Taking the cue from pacifist organizations that had been organizing around draft resistance and conscientious objector ("C.O") issues on college campuses since World War One, SDS opened off-campus draft counseling centers near universities throughout the country.⁸¹ At GI coffeehouses, antiwar activists converted the counseling strategy to suit the needs of active-duty soldiers seeking advice and information from sources other than military authorities. This unique service focused mainly on helping soldiers exit the military by filing for conscientious objector status, but at various coffeehouses also grew to include legal counseling, help with psychological issues,

⁸¹ Jeffrey C. Alexander, "HPC Opening Its Offices To SDS Draft Counselors," *Harvard Crimson*, December 7, 1967.

and assistance in receiving health care. Coffeehouses also encouraged and hosted GI "rap groups," in which dissident soldiers could discuss their problems in a sympathetic environment. All of the different types of counseling services developed at antiwar GI coffeehouse turned a spotlight on the specific difficulties of military service, laying the foundation for future, non-political campaigns aimed at addressing persistent problems like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), access to health care for veterans, and obtaining honorable discharges. In this way, coffeehouse counseling efforts helped introduce issues that continue to resonate in the post-Vietnam U.S. military.⁸²

The coffeehouse movement was also prescient when it came to gender issues and military service. Perhaps because of the influence of radical feminism among many antiwar activists, most coffeehouses made a conscious effort to reach out to local military women. At the time, women in the military could be divided into two distinct groups: active-duty women (those actually enlisted in the military), and military dependents (wives of enlisted men). Each group had particular problems and needs, and in attempting to develop strategies that addressed those needs, coffeehouse organizers became one of the first major voices calling attention to the unique position of women in relation to the military power structure. GI organizers based in Fayetteville, for example, initiated the Fort Bragg Women's Project at the Haymarket Square coffeehouse in 1971. Funded by the USSF, the project sought to organize local Army wives into a political collective, reasoning that women could play a powerful role in a movement to transform military culture:

⁸² Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, *Shell Shock to PTSD: Military Psychiatry from 1900 to the Gulf War* (New York: Psychology Press, 2005).

We felt strongly that our main emphasis in Fayetteville should be GI wives. It is our opinion that the GI movement is the only mass working class movement at this time; their awareness comes from their close relationship with imperialism. Wives are similarly touched except that they don't literally go to Nam themselves. Because of the Army's blatant sexism regarding "dependents" and its overt objectification of women, we do feel that most women in an Army town are a potential force against the Army.⁸³

Through coffeehouse women's groups, the FTA show's relentless satire of military machismo, and various efforts at off-base "consciousness-raising," radical feminism influenced the coffeehouse movement's overall direction; moreover, in persistently raising women's issues within a strongly male-dominated institution, coffeehouse organizers anticipated, and indeed contributed to, the military's continued focus on gender inequality in policy discussions decades after the Vietnam War.⁸⁴

The coffeehouse movement's focus on masculinity and other gender issues even drove some GI organizers to broach the hitherto-taboo subject of gays in the military. Organizers at the 1971 Williams Bay Conference, for example, perceived that the problems faced by homosexual GIs were unquestionably connected to the military culture that activists hoped to transform. but were simultaneously conflicted about how to move forward on an issue that few antiwar activists knew much about. When the discussion concluded, "We realized that since there are many gays in the military that we had a long way to go toward gaining an

⁸³ *GI News and Discussion Bulletin*, no. 8, August 1971; "Report From the Fort Bragg Collective (Haymarket Square Coffeehouse)," Box 1, Folder "Project Description (Internal)," David Cortright Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection; Chris McCallum, *Yes to the Troops, No to the Wars: Quaker House, 40 Years Of Front-line Peace Witness* (Quaker House Books, 2009), 127-134.

⁸⁴ Nancy Goldman, "The Changing Role of Women in the Armed Forces," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 78, No. 4, January 1973. See also Melissa S. Herbert, *Camouflage Isn't Only for Combat: Gender, Sexuality, and Women in the Military* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

understanding of their problems."⁸⁵ While the GI organizers at Williams Bay were unable to form a consensus on how to address the situation of gays in the military, the fact that the subject was even raised shows how the interaction of GIs with the radical civilian antiwar activists produced a GI movement that broke ground in publicizing and discussing political issues that eventually became matters of intense public attention in ensuing decades.

* * *

The GI movement, along with most antiwar movement activity, slowed down considerably after 1972. By 1974, no GI coffeehouses remained in existence, and the various organizations that had supported them (the USSF most prominently) had completely dissolved. Over the following years, in memoirs and interviews, organizers focused on a variety of factors to explain the collapse of the GI movement, from the corrosive influence of radical sectarianism, to the negative public image of Jane Fonda. It is true that a number of elements and strategies embraced by the movement ultimately proved ineffective, and in retrospect perhaps even misguided. However, there were also many forces at work in the early 1970s that were entirely out of antiwar activists' control.

The fate of the GI movement was largely shaped by two major developments: the end of the Vietnam War, which had fueled so much soldier dissent, and the conversion of the American military to an "all-volunteer" force beginning in 1973,

⁸⁵ Barbara Tischler, "Discourse of Dissent: Men, Women, and the GI Antiwar Press," *Columbia Journal of American Studies*, 1:1, 1995. For more examples of antiwar activists addressing the particular challenges of being gay in the U.S. military, see "Gays in the Military," *GI News and Discussion Bulletin*, no. 10, January 1972, 50; "Return to Fort Dix," *Shakedown*, vol. 2, no. 2, May 1971; "Sex Lectures for WAF," *Helping Hand*, vol. 1, no. 2, April 1971; "Women in the Green Machine," *Fragging Action*, vol. 2, no. 1, June 1972.

which, by eliminating the draft, took away one of the antiwar movement's major motivating issues. This dramatic shift in military policy during the later years of the Vietnam War brought an end to the concept of obligatory military service, and helps further contextualize the significance of GI coffeehouses. Military leaders and government officials viewed the existence of GI coffeehouses, rather unequivocally, as part of a serious crisis for the maintenance of America's armed forces, and took steps to eliminate some of the major institutional factors (like the draft), that they felt contributed to their existence. By re-structuring the military itself, the government clearly hoped to limit the possibilities of future political activism among soldiers. The process of that re-structuring, begun in the midst of the GI antiwar movement and associated crises, constituted a radical transformation in the American public's conception of military service. In ways that its organizers perhaps never anticipated, the GI coffeehouse movement helped contribute to a revolution in the structure and culture of the American military.

CHAPTER FIVE: COFFEEHOUSES AND MILITARY POLICY

GI coffeehouses were one part of a broad set of problems faced by the American military during the Vietnam War era. From the moment they began to appear, coffeehouses created intense concern among military leaders and government officials who hoped to neutralize the antiwar movement's growing influence among active-duty GIs. Over the course of the coffeehouse network's existence, its leaders and support organizations were subjected to intense scrutiny from the federal government. In responding to the GI coffeehouse movement, political and military leaders often found themselves in disagreement over both the origins of the network itself and, more importantly, how best to deal with it.

The first wave of federal attention stemmed from the coffeehouse network's early association with the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam ("Mobe"), after the antiwar group's prominent role in demonstrations at the Democratic Party's National Convention in Chicago in August 1968. Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden, along with several other Mobe leaders and political activists collectively dubbed "the Chicago Eight," were eventually indicted and tried in federal court for conspiracy, resulting in one of the more memorable public trials of the 1960s era. In the months before this indictment, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) held a series of hearings to investigate "subversive involvement in the disruption of the 1968 Democratic Party National Convention." In December 1968, Davis and Hayden testified before HUAC, and their respective interrogations revealed that the Congressional committee was concerned with much more than the Mobe's activities surrounding the Chicago convention; committee

members showed an intense interest in the GI coffeehouse phenomenon and the antiwar movement's efforts to support military dissent.¹

Although both Davis and Hayden repeatedly explained, in their testimony before HUAC, that the coffeehouses were designed to support an antiwar movement *already in progress* within the military, the committee members refused to acknowledge the possibility of dissent emerging from the ranks of GIs, instead insisting that "outside agitators" were behind any discontent expressed by soldiers. When Davis was specifically asked if his goal was to "encourage disaffection and desertion from the Army," he denied the charges, explaining that the coffeehouse network's purpose was not to indoctrinate soldiers but rather to develop an alternative cultural space for young people in the military:

We do not urge any young soldier to take any action that would put him in legal jeopardy with the United States military, nor do we in any of our coffeehouses counsel young men to desert. Our purpose is to try to provide a place for the young man who has given his body to Uncle Sam so that he does not have to give his mind. Our place is to provide rest and relaxation for basic trainees who around the fifth week of their basic training learn to kill. He has something to escape to, other than the warehouses and saloons that make up these small towns, like in Waynesville or Killeen, Texas, where there are people who generally care about him and are not trying to extract or steal his body for prostitution purposes. There are people who want to keep his mind alive, and not be totally sold out to the military machine. There are people there who essentially say, "I am from the peace movement because I care about the hell you are going through." That is the essential idea of the coffeehouse—pretty good.²

Needless to say, HUAC members did not agree that GI coffeehouses were a "pretty good" idea. Perhaps reflecting the particular brand of Cold War paranoia

¹ Andrew E. Hunt, *David Dellinger: The Life and Times of a Nonviolent Revolutionary* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 215-228. See also Ron Sossi (ed.), *Voices of the Chicago Eight: A Generation on Trial* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2008).

² "Subversive Involvement in Disruption of 1968 Democratic Party National Convention," *Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security, House of Representatives, 90th Congress, Second Session, Part 2, December 2, 1968, 2667-8.*

with which HUAC had become virtually synonymous, the committee saw the coffeehouse concept, and the New Left from which it emerged, as part of a sinister, possibly Communist-backed, plot to undermine the nation's military in a time of war.³

Because of the politically sensitive nature of HUAC's investigations, the proceedings were often imbued with hostility between witnesses and committee members. HUAC to some extent cultivated such drama, but it was only in the 1960s that this antagonism took on a significant element of generational and cultural resentment. As the New Left developed on college campuses around the country, HUAC members increasingly found themselves interrogating younger and younger citizens, many of whom self-consciously identified with the nation's rising youth counterculture. By 1968, the generational divide that fueled the counterculture was often on stark display in the halls of Congress, as the self-identified "old fuddy duddys" on various investigatory committees clashed, both visually and rhetorically, with the long-haired, sarcastic antiwar activists before them.

In a literal sense, HUAC members and the Chicago activists were sometimes simply not speaking the same language. For example, after Davis asserted that one of the coffeehouse network's main goals was to reach soldiers who might be "turned off" by the Army, Representatives Albert W. Watson (R-South Carolina) and Richard H. Ichord (D-Missouri) interrupted to clarify Davis' use of youth culture slang:

Mr. Watson: Then what is the meaning of the words "turned off"?

Mr. Davis: Well, Mr. Watson, have you ever been turned on?

Mr. Watson: I have turned on a light and I have turned off a light.

Mr. Davis: That is the problem.

³ Ibid.

Mr. Watson: By the common terminology or interpretation, the interpretation of the language, or the understanding of the language, would be to cause someone to become disenchanted to the point of losing all interest in the Army, even to the point of AWOL or desertion, but that is not your meaning?

Mr. Davis: I think a lot of young men are losing interest in the Army and "turn off" is the opposite of "turn on."

Mr. Ichord: Is it synonymous with "cop out"?

Mr. Davis: You are getting close to it, Mr. Ichord.⁴

The committee's struggle to grasp the meaning of the phrase "turned off" is symptomatic of HUAC's larger failure to understand the ways that culture functioned within the New Left. The coffeehouse network was built on the idea that culture (specifically, youth culture) could play a vital role in their political activism. Davis and Hayden, like Fred Gardner and other antiwar coffeehouse organizers, were convinced that a surging youth counterculture, based on values antithetical to war and militarism, could help build the foundation of a popular antiwar movement among young American soldiers.

Throughout their HUAC testimony, Davis and Hayden repeatedly made the connection between youth culture and antiwar politics explicit, portraying the coffeehouse network as a hybrid project that hoped to employ the aesthetics and orientation of youth culture for specific political purposes. As Davis testified, GI coffeehouses were primarily cultural institutions, places "where we can hopefully bring good entertainment, and kind of provide an antidote to the virus of the USO, with its old ladies and scaggs⁵ and very bad music." After one representative interrupted to defend the USO's honor, stating, "there are some fine young ladies in the USO across this nation of ours," another charged Davis with prostitution for

⁴ Ibid., 2679-2680

⁵ As Davis employs it here, "scagg" is 1960s slang for a "loose woman" or prostitute. Interestingly, during the same era the term "skag" was often also used to refer to heroin.

promoting "love-ins" at the coffeehouse. Davis responded that, "a love-in is a symbol of the youth culture that we are trying to create, that we hope some day will replace the sterile plastic culture that we think you represent."⁶ In his own admittedly contentious way, Davis was trying to explain that the coffeehouse network, and the GI movement of which it was a part, was less the product of Communist indoctrination and more a symptom of deep cultural changes among American youth.

In his HUAC appearance, Hayden similarly stressed the central role that youth culture played in undermining the authority of institutions ranging from the Chicago police to HUAC itself. Hayden smugly declared that, despite the committee's illusions of power, on the battleground of culture, the young people of America had already won: "Politicians of the kind like Dean Rusk, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Hubert Humphrey, these people are in a sense already finished, because they can't exercise any authority; they have no respect from wide sections of the American people. Richard Nixon does not even believe that Beatles' albums should be played. He believes that drugs are the curse of American youth." Hayden's easy transition between political figures like Nixon and rock bands like the Beatles reflected his conviction that the popularity of youth culture foretold permanent changes in the American political landscape and, specifically, the ability of the U.S. military to fill its ranks with willing young draftees.⁷

It was clear that HUAC members were not pleased by what Davis and Hayden

⁶ "Subversive Involvement in Disruption of 1968 Democratic Party National Convention," *Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security*, 2679.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2681.

had to tell them about the coffeehouse project. As Davis' testimony concluded, Rep. Watson angrily interrupted him to declare, "You have nothing but contempt for this committee, for the President, Secretary Rusk, and everything else!" Watson's outburst provided a concise summary of HUAC's initial reactions to the GI coffeehouse phenomenon and the wider New Left. To the committee, coffeehouses represented a vaguely Communist conspiracy, hatched by the same dangerous radicals who had allegedly incited riot in Chicago, to indoctrinate otherwise contented young American soldiers. By focusing its attention on the Mobe's outspoken leaders, viewing them as obnoxious anomalies, the committee was unable to see the coffeehouse network in its proper context. Blinded by Cold War political ideology and the divisive cultural atmosphere that existed in late 1968, the committee completely missed the important shifts that the coffeehouse phenomenon, and the larger antiwar movement of which it was a part, seemed to signal.

Investigation of Attempts to Subvert the United States Armed Services

Three years after HUAC's initial investigation into GI coffeehouses, government concern about a perceived crisis in the U.S. military reached a peak. Colonel Robert L. Heinl, a retired Marine Colonel and frequent contributor to military publications, helped fan the flames of institutional alarm when his widely-read and influential article "The Collapse of the Armed Forces" was published in *Armed Forces Journal* in June 1971.⁸ Heinl documented a series of disturbing

⁸ Robert D. Heinl, Jr., "The Collapse of the Armed Forces," *Armed Forces Journal* vol. 108, no. 19, June 7, 1971. For a wider discussion of Heinl and the internal conflict concerning military policy during the later years of the Vietnam War, see Cincinnatus, *Self-Destruction: The*

phenomena then plaguing the Vietnam era military, including increased incidents of racial violence, drug abuse, "fraggings" (murder of superior officers), political activism, desertion, and general insubordination. The article's alarmist tone and sensational claims (Heinl characterized rebellious black soldiers as "headhunters" out for white blood) set off a flurry of media attention in the months following its publication. The piece even garnered an official reaction from the Department of Defense, which conceded "problems" in the military but downplayed Heinl's often pessimistic conclusions.⁹

By 1971, the House Un-American Activities Committee, which had been in charge of the first Congressional investigation of the GI coffeehouse network, had been significantly diminished in power and public esteem. The stain of McCarthyism haunted the committee throughout the 1960s, and the emergence of a new generation of political activists, who openly mocked HUAC's proceedings, brought further ridicule for an institution that many Americans began to regard as a relic of an unpleasant earlier era. Public disdain for HUAC's investigations caused the committee to change its name in 1969, removing the politically divisive term "Un-American" and re-branding itself the "Committee on Internal Security." In 1975, the House of Representatives voted to abolish the committee altogether, its functions folded into the House Judiciary Committee.¹⁰

Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army During the Vietnam Era (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 10.

⁹ "Investigation of Attempts to Subvert the United States Armed Services," *Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security*, House of Representatives, 92nd Congress, 1st and 2nd Sessions, vol. 2, 7080-7081.

¹⁰ Victor S. Navasky, *Naming Names* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 12-15; William G. Staples, *The Encyclopedia of Privacy* (Westport, Conn. : Greenwood Press, 2007), 284.

Despite its significantly lowered profile, in October 1971 the Committee on Internal Security nevertheless initiated an investigation of "civilian subversion" of the U.S. military, mainly in direct response to the charges leveled in Heintz's article and the resulting media fallout. Representative Richard Ichord (D-MO), then chair of the committee, opened the proceedings by reading a statement titled "Contributing Factors to the Morale Crisis in the Armed Services," in which he cataloged the many distressing symptoms of the now widely-recognized crisis in the armed forces. Ichord acknowledged that the unpopularity of the war in Vietnam had taken a dramatic toll on military morale, but insisted that the war alone was not enough to explain the nearly mutinous situation described by Heintz and other observers. As was perhaps predictable, Ichord suggested that dark forces on the Left were in fact responsible: "One aspect of this morale situation which has not been widely revealed or understood is the matter of attempted subversion of the men in uniform by militant extremists of the far left. These include, of course, those with Marxist-Leninist leanings who actually seek a Communist victory in Asia and hope to promote an American defeat or, at least, a humiliation of this country and its military forces."¹¹

By once again viewing the military crisis through the lens of a McCarthy-era political mindset, the committee doomed itself to a narrow understanding of the coffeehouse network and GI movement of which it was a part. Ichord's statement included a specific definition of the GI movement that suggests the committee's almost willful misunderstanding of the larger political and cultural context that

¹¹ "Investigation of Attempts to Subvert the United States Armed Services," *Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security*, 6382.

contributed to its existence: "The 'GI Movement' is the term used by the radical left to refer to that aspect of the antiwar movement directed against the military . . . [T]he available facts indicate that the GI movement exists primarily outside the military and is essentially a civilian movement."¹² Ignoring the thousands of young soldiers who participated in one form or another, choosing instead to see the GI movement as the product of outside agitation by enemies of the state, Ichord and the rest of the committee imagined an exaggerated scenario that made it difficult to address the military crisis that it had been charged with investigating.

For five days, the Committee on Internal Security interrogated a series of witnesses in an attempt to uncover the subversive networks it assumed were behind the GI movement. In particular, the committee showed an intense interest in the coffeehouse network, identifying it as the most obvious base of operations for the radical Left's plans to infiltrate the armed services. Heintz's article, the source of so many of the committee's allegations, had explicitly characterized the coffeehouses in this manner, referring to them as institutions that "ply GI's with rock music, lukewarm coffee, antiwar literature, how-to-do-it tips on desertion, and similar disruptive counsels," and asserting that most of these coffeehouses were in fact sponsored by "a communist front organization."¹³ If radical outsiders were responsible for the problems in the military, the committee assumed, the nation's growing network of GI coffeehouses would be the place to root them out.

Ultimately, the committee's report spanned 1,200 pages and contained

¹² Ibid.

¹³ In his 1971 article, Heintz referred to the "communist" New Mobilization Committee ("Mobe") as the coffeehouse network's main ideological supporters, despite the fact that the Mobe had disintegrated in the late 1960s.

testimony transcripts, visual materials, clippings from the underground GI press, and dozens of photographs depicting GI coffeehouses, mugshots of GI organizers, and surveillance shots of various GI movement events. Despite the massive scope of the investigation, however, the committee's report contained few substantive conclusions about the nature of the GI movement and its possible relationship to the military's well-publicized morale problem. Approaching the investigation with an obsessive eye toward the influence of Communists, the committee was never able to develop a nuanced view of the GI movement. This is not to say that the committee did not discover direct links to Marxist and Marxist-leaning organizations; in fact, several witnesses described in detail how the GI coffeehouse network was, at least partially, supported by radical Left groups like the Young Socialist Alliance and the Black Panthers. During most of the testimony, however, committee members made Communist mountains out of radical molehills, in one case asking a witness nearly a dozen detailed questions about the types of books she found on a coffeehouse shelf. As the committee itself admitted in its final report, these details did not come close to proving any kind of criminal subversion. That an antiwar coffeehouse would stock Marxist literature on its shelves was simply not as shocking in 1971 as it might have been a decade earlier, and the once-powerful HUAC fell short in its effort to connect the military crisis to a clandestine Communist conspiracy.¹⁴

¹⁴ Thomas Geoghegan, "By Any Other Name. Brass Tacks", *The Harvard Crimson*, February 24, 1969. Geoghegan captured the wider cultural changes that undermined HUAC's authority: "In the fifties, the most effective sanction was terror. Almost any publicity from HUAC meant the 'blacklist.' Without a chance to clear his name, a witness would suddenly find himself without friends and without a job. But it is not easy to see how in 1969 a HUAC blacklist could terrorize an SDS activist. Witnesses like Jerry Rubin have openly boasted of their contempt for American institutions. A subpoena from HUAC would be unlikely to

On the last day of its public investigation, the committee interviewed several military officials, who offered a decidedly different interpretation of the armed forces' morale crisis. Rowland A. Morrow, an investigatory director from the Department of Defense, explained that, by the Department's own estimations, the actual influence of radical politics on GIs was minimal, despite the committee's assumptions about Communist indoctrination. When committee members repeatedly asked him why the coffeehouse network had not been more aggressively policed by military and government authorities, Morrow pointed out that GI coffeehouses were public spaces and that visiting one was not, in and of itself, an act of subversion. Though committee members were frustrated by the Department of Defense's seeming passivity toward what they considered a treasonous coffeehouse network, Morrow and other military leaders reminded them that, realistically, there was little that could be done about the coffeehouses and related civilian antiwar projects.¹⁵

VOLAR: The Culture War Comes to the Army

A close reading of Colonel Heintz's explosive article, which initiated the committee's GI movement investigation in the first place, shows that Heintz connected the military's crisis to a much larger set of issues than the simplistic picture of radical subversion offered by the committee. In fact, he was careful to point out that morale problems were the result of a larger shift taking place in American society, and framed the crisis, in characteristically melodramatic terms, as

scandalize Abbie Hoffman or his friends."

¹⁵ "Investigation of Attempts to Subvert the United States Armed Services," *Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security*, 7002.

a battle for the soul of the American military:

[T]he problem is not just one of trouble-makers and how to cope with them. The trouble of the services produced by and also in turn producing the dismaying conditions described in this article—is above all a crisis of soul and backbone. It entails—the word is not too strong—something very near a collapse of the command authority and leadership George Washington saw as the soul of military forces. This collapse results, at least in part, from a concurrent collapse of public confidence in the military establishment. General Matthew B. Ridgway, one of the Army's finest leaders in this century (who revitalized the shaken Eighth Army in Korea after its headlong rout by the Chinese in 1950) recently said, "Not before in my lifetime . . . has the Army's public image fallen to such low esteem."¹⁶

Though Heintz's tone could be, at times, as hysterical as HUAC's, his article nevertheless portrayed the military's morale crisis as a complicated problem with social, political, and cultural dimensions that required a sober, near total, reassessment of national purpose. Fundamentally, Heintz saw the crisis as one of values, and in doing so he reflected the thinking of a growing number of government officials, military leaders, and political figures, many of whom publicly argued that the seriousness of the problems necessitated radical changes in military policy.

One of these figures was President Richard Nixon, whose 1968 campaign promised to abolish the country's draft system entirely, converting the military to an all-volunteer system of recruitment at the conclusion of the Vietnam War.¹⁷ Nixon was responding to a diverse public debate that had intensified during the 1960s, as the war's progression raised serious questions about the fairness and efficacy of the draft system. Social critics on the left argued, from the moment the

¹⁶ Heintz, "The Collapse of the Armed Forces," *Armed Forces Journal* vol. 108, no. 19, June 7, 1971.

¹⁷ The most comprehensive institutional history of the U.S. military's transition to the All-Volunteer Force is Robert K. Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1996). Other, more sociologically driven histories include Bernard Rostker, *I Want You!: The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* (RAND Corporation, 2006) and George Q. Flynn, *The Draft: 1940-1973* (University Press of Kansas, 1993).

peacetime draft was reinstated in 1948, that the system reflected the socioeconomic inequality of American society, pointing to the disproportionately high numbers of blacks and other racial minorities drafted into combat positions, as well as a deferment system that unfairly favored the affluent.¹⁸ The Vietnam era draft resistance movement, which developed through the 1960s and early 1970s, played a large part in publicizing these imbalances, as the sight of young men burning their draft cards, taking refuge in churches, risking arrest and imprisonment to protest the draft system, helped bring the issue to front of national political debate.¹⁹

In addition to the public's growing disdain for the draft, the Vietnam War's unpopularity also created practical problems for the military, as re-enlistment numbers began to drop precipitously after 1965.²⁰ With fewer young draftees choosing to stay in the Army beyond the minimum requirement, some military leaders worried that the draft was creating an organization with a revolving door of unhappy, unmotivated soldiers, undermining the military's long-term strength and stability. Lamenting these developments, Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Schandler, a batallion commander in Vietnam, became a vocal critic of the draft's many shortcomings. In a series of speeches to military leaders through the late 1960s and early 1970s, Schandler called for a reassessment of the recruitment system, arguing

¹⁸ Christian Appy, *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 51-60.

¹⁹ Michael Foley, *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance during the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). Foley's work separates the phenomenon of "draft-dodging" (evading the draft through fraudulent deferments, fleeing to Canada, or other means) from "draft resistance," which constituted young men taking political action against the draft, most often in the form of public protest and/or civil disobedience.

²⁰ Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 84.

that the Vietnam War had exposed the weaknesses of coerced conscription.

Summarizing the reasons why the military might consider ending the draft,

Schandler described the political and military advantages of an all-volunteer system:

The concept of an all-volunteer armed force has great political and social appeal. A professional force composed solely of volunteers would blunt anti-military attacks and assist in furthering national unity. There are other obvious military advantages. It would mean less turnover, lower operating cost, a reduced training base, more professional and better trained leaders and units, higher morale, and greater motivation. Freedom of choice would be restored and the threat of compulsion to serve would be removed.²¹

As the Vietnam War brought the draft's social inequities and practical weaknesses into sharper focus, a growing number of political and military leaders came to share Schandler's observations.

By the time of the 1968 presidential election, both major candidates (Nixon and Vice President Hubert Humphrey) endorsed serious draft reform. Nixon himself was most influenced by a 1967 paper by Columbia University economics professor Martin Anderson, who put forth a pragmatic argument for ending the draft completely, asserting that conscription could be eliminated without a corresponding diminishment of military strength. Upon reading Anderson's work, Nixon became convinced that ending the draft could be a powerful issue for his campaign.²² Perhaps most enticing for Nixon was the suggestion (by Anderson and others) that the end of conscription might undermine the antiwar movement, based on the assumption that affluent youth would not protest a war if they were not

²¹ Herbert Y. Schandler, "To Raise and Support Armies," Speech Transcript, January 21, 1972, William Westmoreland Papers, Box 44, Folder 565, National Archives and Records Administration.

²² Jonathan Aitken, *Nixon: A Life* (New York: Regnery Publishing, 1996), 396–397.

being asked to fight it.²³ When the Nixon administration took power in early 1969, it appointed its own special commission, headed by Eisenhower-era secretary of defense Thomas S. Gates, to study the possibility of converting to an all-volunteer force while the Vietnam War was still being waged. Just over a year later, in February 1970, the Gates Commission reported that it had developed a comprehensive and workable plan for eliminating the draft.²⁴

Converting the nation's military to an all-volunteer system of recruitment created a discussion that eventually encompassed, in the words of military historian Robert K. Griffith, "everything from the war in Southeast Asia to demographic trends in the United States and from the style of an individual soldier's haircut to the prose of the Army's advertising jingles that would soon be broadcast through the American heartland."²⁵ Though this radical transformation would come to affect all branches of the American military, the Army was a focus of particular governmental concern for two reasons: first, the vast majority of draftees were sent to the Army; second, and perhaps more importantly, the Army was where the military's Vietnam-era morale crisis had been most concentrated.

The office of General William Westmoreland, who had become Army Chief of Staff in 1968, was charged with helping create the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), and Westmoreland himself eventually became an advocate for what would become a

²³ Stephen Ambrose, *Nixon, Volume Two: The Triumph of a Politician 1962-1972* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 264-266.

²⁴ Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974*, 12-13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

complex, multi-faceted undertaking.²⁶ Over the next four years, Westmoreland's office initiated a broad series of experiments that were intended to test the efficacy of the broad policy changes that it planned to implement. These experiments, and the debates that surrounded them, began a process of re-shaping the Army to a new set of social, cultural, and economic imperatives. Without the compulsion of the draft, the government would have to find ways to make service in the Army more attractive to a new generation of young Americans.

The most visible of the Army's early attempts to change its public image was a program known as VOLAR (VOLunteer ARmy). A radical change in direction from the military's more repressive approach to the morale crisis, VOLAR was an attempt to ameliorate some of the common, everyday dissatisfactions with Army life. Beginning in January 1971, at four different U.S. Army bases, the VOLAR program introduced a series of "adjustments to administrative and training practices, regulations, and policies governing individual lifestyle and working conditions," which were meant to make the Army "a more satisfactory place in which to work by fostering professionalism, identification with the Army, and greater job satisfaction." Army leadership hoped that a more relaxed environment would not only attract more new recruits but would also induce more soldiers who were already in the Army to make a career out of it.²⁷

²⁶ William C. Westmoreland, "Towards a Volunteer Army," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 37, December 1, 1970, 98-100. Westmoreland outlined a similar set of political and military "advantages" of an all-volunteer system embraced by Lt. Schandler and other officials. Essentially, Westmoreland acknowledged the Vietnam War's heavy toll on military morale, making it nearly impossible for the draft system to function effectively.

²⁷ Robert Vineberg and Elaine N. Taylor, "Summary and Review of Studies of the VOLAR Experiment, 1971: Installation Reports for Forts Benning, Bragg, Carson, and Ord, and

What was remarkable about the VOLAR experiment was how its policy changes were so clearly modeled, in both aesthetics and underlying values, after the emergent youth counterculture. At the four Army posts chosen as VOLAR sites, regulations and new guidelines were designed specifically, sometimes exaggeratedly so, to appeal to a more permissive cultural sensibility. Because VOLAR's "lifestyle adjustments" were so contrary to the traditional Army experience, they garnered a great deal of publicity from mainstream media outlets, which reported on some of VOLAR's more sensational efforts to create a "New Army" throughout 1971 and 1972. In newspaper and magazine headlines, VOLAR bases were depicted as "psychedelic" refuges where a "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" ethos was replacing the Army's normally rigid and stodgy atmosphere.

In February 1971, *Life* magazine ran an extraordinary report on the VOLAR experiment. Cartoonist Bill Mauldin's famous World War II era "Willie and Joe" characters, the quintessential infantry soldiers who populated the pages of *Stars and Stripes* from 1941 to 1945, appeared on the magazine's cover and throughout the VOLAR article, providing commentary on the changes VOLAR was then implementing at Fort Carson, Colorado. The cover image itself depicts Willie and Joe staring in bewilderment as a mustachioed soldier of the "New Army," wearing Hollywood sunglasses, straps on a motorcycle helmet inscribed with a peace symbol and climbs onto an *Easy Rider*-style chopper (fig. 22). By employing Mauldin's vintage Army characters as the lens through which to examine VOLAR, *Life's* editors

HumRRO Permanent Party Studies" (Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization, 1972), 6.

were clearly situating the "New Army" within the generational culture war of the 1960s and 1970s. Throughout the accompanying article and photo spread, Willie and Joe wander around Fort Carson, the gimmick serving as a tool to demonstrate how much Army life had changed since the end of World War II.²⁸

As depicted in the pages of *Life* magazine, the VOLAR experiment drew heavily from youth culture in shaping its various initiatives. What is more remarkable, however, is VOLAR's explicit co-optation of the GI coffeehouse phenomenon. The article's opening photo shows Fort Carson's newly-opened on-base coffeehouse, complete with peace posters and colored lights, where GIs are "rapping" with 4th Infantry Division Brigadier General DeWitt Smith. While Willie and Joe look on in disbelief at the sight of a general engaging in direct dialogue with a group of lowly privates, the article explains that the Army was "faced with a savvy, restive generation of recruits" that compelled a reassessment of traditional policies and regulations (fig. 23). In their campaign to appeal to this new generation, military officials looked to GI coffeehouses for inspiration.

Considering the military establishment's historical hostility to the GI coffeehouse network, it was perhaps a bit surprising to see *Life's* photographs of Fort Carson's "liberated barracks," where soldiers had transformed their living quarters with "bedspreads, rugs, flowered curtains, hanging lamps and soft pastel walls plastered with posters conveying a heavy message of PEACE." (fig. 24) But the VOLAR experiment marked a decidedly new cultural strategy for the U.S. Army, one

²⁸ "Willie and Joe Visit the New U.S. Army," *Life*, February 5, 1971, 2A, 20-27. For more on Mauldin and "Willie and Joe," see Todd DePastino, *Willie & Joe: The WW II Years — Bill Mauldin, Vols. 1 and 2* (Seattle, WA: Fantagraphics Books, 2008).

that engaged elements of the counterculture rather than repressing them. These “cultural” aspects of VOLAR suggest that Army officials were beginning to recognize that *subversive culture* did not necessarily equal *subversion*, and that the military's battle to win the hearts and minds of the post-1960s generation would require a more dynamic relation to youth culture itself.²⁹

In addition to the new room decoration privileges, VOLAR's version of the permissive counterculture lifestyle also allowed soldiers to drink beer on base, grow their hair (and mustaches) longer, and “hang out” in several new recreational clubs that featured card games, music, and even dancing. The changes VOLAR brought were more than just cosmetic, however. Lieutenant General George I. Forsythe, who Westmoreland had appointed to head the VOLAR experiment, explained the “New Army's” underlying philosophy by quoting legendary Army general and Secretary of Defense George Marshall:

The soldier is a man; he expects to be treated as an adult, not as a schoolboy. He has his rights; they must be made known to him and thereafter respected. He has ambition; it must be stirred. He has a belief in fair play; it must be honored. He has need of comradeship; it must be supplied. He has imagination; it must be stimulated. He has a sense of personal dignity; it must be sustained. He has pride; it can be satisfied and made the bedrock of character once he is assured that he is playing a useful and respected role.³⁰

Marshall's invocation of values like individual freedom, dignity, and imagination so closely echoed the founding ethos of the GI coffeehouse network and the broader GI movement that they could have been found in the pages of an underground

²⁹ Drew Middleton, “Military Hails Outcome of Army Life Reforms,” *The New York Times*, July 1, 1972; “Willie and Joe Visit the New U.S. Army,” *Life*, February 5, 1971, 2A, 20-27. For more on VOLAR and culture, see Robert Vineberg and Elaine N. Taylor, “Summary and Review of Studies of the VOLAR Experiment, 1971: Installation Reports for Forts Benning, Bragg, Carson, and Ord, and HumRRO Permanent Party Studies” (Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization, 1972).

³⁰ “Removal of Irritants to Up VOLAR Caliber,” *Army Times*, February 10, 1971, 10.

newspaper. By quoting him, Forsythe was pointing out that the individualistic values of the counterculture, though associated with antiwar and anti-military sentiment, were not necessarily incompatible with traditional military values. With a bit of adjustment, Forsythe argued, the Army could use the counterculture to its advantage, co-opting popular youth values as a way of improving morale among young soldiers. In this sense, part of VOLAR's mission was to disentangle the links between counterculture and antiwar politics that the coffeehouse network had been attempting to fuse.

Many military officials, unable to appreciate the subtleties of Forsythe's cultural strategy, voiced loud objections to the VOLAR program's proposed changes. Perhaps because of the somewhat sensational media coverage of the new "psychedelic Army," of which the *Life* magazine feature was just one example³¹, a significant number of military leaders came forward to publicly denounce the new strategy. Just after VOLAR was launched, the popular military magazine *Army Times* published an opinion piece by Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker, a respected Air Force commander during World War II, entitled "Military Going Mod?" in which he worried that VOLAR's creation of a "hippie crew" would result in a total breakdown of military discipline. Eaker's overriding point was that, by introducing elements of "modern youth culture" into the military experience, VOLAR destroyed the Army's institutional aura, turning it into one more place where young people disrespected their elders. Even Colonel Heinl, in his *Armed Forces Journal* piece, lamented what he

³¹ Dana Anderson Schmidt, "The New Army—2," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 24, 1973; Michael Klare, "Can the Army Survive VOLAR?" *Commonweal*, January 18, 1974; B. Drummond Ayres, Jr., "Army is Shaken by Crisis in Morale and Discipline," *The New York Times*, September 5, 1971.

considered VOLAR's futile attempts to capitalize on popular youth culture.

Comparing VOLAR's relaxation of disciplinary standards to prior "postwar" shifts in policy, Heinl downplayed VOLAR's long-term importance and portrayed the program as another symptom of the military leadership's desperation in the face of an unprecedented crisis.³²

In contrast to the worries of military traditionalists, antiwar activists within the GI coffeehouse network interpreted the VOLAR program as the Army's blatant attempt to appropriate their concept, draining the counterculture of its implicit anti-authority, anti-military ethos. In late 1971, when coffeehouse organizers met in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, to discuss the direction of the GI movement, VOLAR was a prominent topic of conversation. Organizers were fearful that the more permissive structure of military life under VOLAR would undermine their movement by minimizing its main constituency: homesick, disgruntled soldiers. By turning the Army base into a more attractive environment, VOLAR initiatives persuaded many soldiers to remain within its gates rather than venture out to the nearby GI coffeehouse. In this way, VOLAR programs were an attempt to blunt the GI coffeehouse movement's effectiveness by recreating its social and cultural appeal within the institutional setting of the Army base. While unable to reach a consensus on how to address VOLAR, activists at the Williams Bay conference were convinced that the Army's new strategy was a direct effort to filter coffeehouse culture to fit a pro-military ideology.³³

³² "Commentary," *Army Times*, January 20, 1971, 12; Robert D. Heinl, Jr., "The Collapse of the Armed Services," *Armed Forces Journal*, June 1971, 29.

³³ *GI News and Discussion Bulletin*, no. 10, January 1972, 61.

At Fort Hood, for example, where the Oleo Strut coffeehouse in Killeen had become popular among local GIs, officials used VOLAR funds to open an on-base coffeehouse called "The Right Side" in October 1971. The Army's coffeehouse, whose name derived from a passage in the New Testament, was promoted as a place for soldiers to "relax . . . meet friends . . . or just to have a quiet place to think or pray." At a ribbon-cutting ceremony that opened the coffeehouse, Fort Hood Major General James C. Smith explained that its purpose was to "involve the men in the division of the concerns about what is going on around them."³⁴ Smith's statement, like the VOLAR program itself, mimicked the coffeehouse movement's underlying ethos of individual empowerment while simultaneously purging its innate antiwar politics. The Fort Hood coffeehouse was the Army's rather obvious attempt to respond to the existence of the Oleo Strut by creating a place where dissatisfied soldiers could be steered to the "right side" of identification with the military.

At Fort Carson, subject of the *Life* magazine feature, the Home Front coffeehouse in nearby Colorado Springs had, by 1971, become one of the most popular antiwar GI coffeehouses in the country. When the FTA Show came to town to stage its antiwar revue, GIs on base gave Jane Fonda and other FTA troupe members a grand tour of the new VOLAR-improved facilities, which included Fort Carson's own psychedelic—but not antiwar—GI coffeehouse, the "Inscape." As Fonda later recalled, she and many of the Carson soldiers she spoke with agreed that the Inscape had been created "to keep the men from coming to the GI movement

³⁴ "Hood Opens Coffee House," *Killeen Daily Herald*, October 28, 1971.

coffeehouse."³⁵ Fonda was particularly disappointed to see the Inscape's walls adorned with posters of pin-up girls and advertisements for "girlie shows" featuring Playboy playmates. Indeed, the *Life* article's final photo shows a large crowd of soldiers "relaxing" in the Inscape, the majority of whom are staring up at a pair of bikini-clad go-go dancers shaking their hips on stage (fig. 25). To Fonda and other GI movement organizers, who had worked hard to infuse GI coffeehouses with their own brand of feminism, VOLAR's campaign to reconstitute military misogyny under the guise of "cultural permissiveness" was both morally repulsive and, if the crowds were any indication, frustratingly effective.

Beyond incorporating the coffeehouse movement's aesthetic design choices and mildly rebellious cultural attitude, VOLAR also developed programs that seemed to engage with the identity politics and organizational strategies of the New Left and counterculture in its campaign to transform Army life. In late 1971 VOLAR officers at Fort Lewis, for example, invited staff members of the Shelter Half coffeehouse to visit the base for a "women's liberation" rap session.³⁶ On-base convenience stores ("PX Stores) began stocking ethnic hair products to accommodate the popular "Afro" hairstyle that had become legal under the new VOLAR rules. VOLAR funds were also used to create a whole new set of institutions and official positions, including "human-relations councils," "equal-opportunity officers," and a "special assistant for minority affairs," all of which were intended to

³⁵ Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far* (New York: Random House, 2006), 238.

³⁶ *GI News and Discussion Bulletin*, no. 10, January 1972, 45.

address the Army's severe racial problems.³⁷ As GI movement historian David Cortright points out, however, the majority of these changes did little to substantively alter the "fundamental injustice" experienced by many minority service-people. The various VOLAR-created racial councils and special officers, for instance, never enjoyed true independence from commanding officers, and were thus rather limited in their ability to improve conditions. Cortright places such VOLAR actions in the context of American labor history:

The councils seem primarily designed to co-opt and dissipate black militance by channeling demands for reform into administratively controlled outlets. In a tactic frequently employed by industrial management in its struggles with trade unionists, the most articulate and effective GI spokesmen are offered leading positions in these councils and are thus brought under command scrutiny.³⁸

Skeptical of the motivations behind VOLAR's sudden embrace of New Left politics, rap sessions, and Afros, Cortright's analysis reflects the general opinion of organizers within the GI movement. Activists at GI coffeehouses universally recognized that VOLAR's seeming effort to address their movement's demands was, in reality, a rather transparent campaign to undermine its effectiveness.

1960s Social Liberation Movements and Military Policy

The VOLAR program marked the beginning of a concerted effort to deal with the military's morale crisis by transforming the concept of military service itself. Although the VOLAR experiment itself was inconclusive, and many of its more controversial proposals were ultimately scrapped, military policymakers increasingly recognized that the cultural revolution of the 1960s could no longer be

³⁷ "Statement of Secretary of Defense, Melvin R. Laird, Before the Senate Armed Services Committee," February 15, 1972, 173-174.

³⁸ David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 174.

ignored. Young people especially were embracing a transformed set of cultural values, and the nation's military would have to update its practices in accordance with these new values. In 1972, the federal government commissioned a series of studies by social science researchers.³⁹ One representative report, compiled by the Westinghouse Corporation, seemingly confirmed that the shifts in American society during the 1960s would require all social institutions to reinvent themselves:

It appears overwhelmingly likely that the military establishment will be profoundly affected by cultural change over the next decade . . . Even if they emerge with essentially the same roles and rationales, they will have to restate them in modern terms which abandon partly-outworn clichés and adopt terms meaningful to generations with perspectives which are, at least in part, radically new.⁴⁰

In creating a "New Army" for a new generation, the military faced a set of specific social, cultural, and political challenges. The GI coffeehouse movement is significant because it concentrated all of those challenges under one roof and connected them directly to the military experience.

To military officials, the GI coffeehouse phenomenon provided a powerful demonstration of how fissures in American society during the Vietnam War era could have a substantial impact on military morale. As bases of operation for a growing antiwar movement among American soldiers, GI coffeehouses directly threatened military authority. By helping to organize resistance activities and more often than not serving as printing presses for underground GI newspapers, coffeehouses brought attention to the complex political issues raised by the antiwar

³⁹ Beth Bailey, *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 58.

⁴⁰ *Potential Impact of Cultural Change on the Navy in the 1970s*, Center for Advanced Studies and Analyses, Westinghouse Electric Corporation, August 1, 1972, 25-26.

movement's presence within the military itself. Coffeehouses also served as living symbols of a popular youth culture that rejected traditional military values. This culture found potent political expression within (and often, on) the walls of GI coffeehouses, as GI movement organizers self-consciously connected their political activism to youth culture's evolving notions of manhood, nation, and individual liberty. The GI coffeehouse network's combination of revolutionary black politics, radical feminism, and the nascent gay rights movement presaged the military's struggle with issues of race, gender, and sexuality during the post-1960s period. As military officials embarked on their mission to establish "tomorrow's authority" in the final years of a war that had badly damaged the institution's public esteem, the GI coffeehouse movement embodied the radical social and cultural forces that were undermining the military's traditional place in American society.

The various social liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which were on such prominent display at GI coffeehouses, weighed heavily on the minds of policymakers as they dealt with the Vietnam-era military crisis. The most threatening of these developments, of course, was the Black Power movement and related radical racial ideologies which, for a time, exerted a powerful influence on a significant portion of black GIs. As historian Herman Graham III documents in *The Brothers' Vietnam War: Black Power, Manhood, and the Military Experience* (2003), Black Power offered an alternative model of masculinity, which "redefined opposition to the Vietnam War as a manly pursuit."⁴¹ To Graham, this redefinition was embodied most powerfully in the figure of Muhammad Ali, whose very public

⁴¹ Herman Graham III, *The Brothers' Vietnam War: Black Power, Manhood, and the Military Experience* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 89.

resistance to military service in Vietnam made him a lightning rod of public controversy and a figure of reverence for many young (especially black) American men. Posters and photographs of Ali adorned the walls of virtually every GI coffeehouse, promoting to soldiers across the country his iconic image and principled stand against war.

But as Graham also points out, Ali was only one prominent symbol of the much wider cultural rejection of military values by young black soldiers beginning in the late 1960s. Cultural expressions of Black Power, particularly the Afro hairstyle and "dap" handshake ritual (employed to express racial solidarity), became a common way for black GIs to communicate their antiwar, anti-military orientation. GI coffeehouses and the GI underground press were the chief promoters of the connection between Black Power and antiwar politics, disseminating the ideas of popular black revolutionary figures like Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, and Bobby Seale. In 1969 a military-commissioned study of racial conditions at Fort Bragg expressed grave concern about the effects of such "radical indoctrination":

Many young black soldiers have been indoctrinated with the idea that to remain within the white man's social structure will mean they will be forever subservient to the white man. To break away from the establishment, and from the white man's culture, means feeling black pride, regaining manhood, and a type of soul-cleansing that they cannot otherwise obtain by continuing in the ways of their forebears.

Outward appearances of black pride are "Afro" haircuts, mustaches, soul music, and continued rhetoric against the white man's imperialist and competitive society. Rightly or wrongly, they view the war in Vietnam as a white man's war in which the majority of people who are fighting and dying are black.⁴²

At the same time that GI coffeehouses were attempting to strengthen the links

⁴² Charles K. Nulsen Jr., "Rap It Out," *Army Digest* 25, no. 11, November 1970, 4-9.

between the culture of Black Power and radical politics, military policymakers began actively searching for ways to sever those links.

VOLAR was one effort to confront Black Power's influence by acknowledging the military's racial problems, loosening restrictions regarding hairstyles and clothing, and introducing "rap sessions" to increase communication among soldiers and commanders. As the military continued to study the crisis, officials became convinced that the Black Power movement's underlying ethos could be adapted to fit American military values. In 1969, Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor publicly advanced the idea of using Black Power's values to the Army's advantage: "Formerly [the Negro soldier] countered acts of racial discrimination with hard work and endurance. Today he is more likely to make his resentment known. He needs a commander who recognizes such slogans as 'black is beautiful' as the expression of pride, comradeship and solidarity that it represents to most young Negroes. The commander must understand his men before he writes off the spirited ones, who may be potential leaders as troublemakers or militants."⁴³

By the time the armed forces initiated a new national advertising campaign in 1970, Black Power's visual signifiers and culture of racial pride and solidarity had been fully integrated into the military's updated image. Recruitment posters for the Navy, for example, depicted young black men in dashikis, with large Afros, bearing the slogan "You can be Black, and Navy too."⁴⁴ By using the Black Power movement as a recruitment tool, the American military accomplished the ultimate reversal. The

⁴³ "Army Aide Urges Race Awareness," *New York Times*, October 14, 1969.

⁴⁴ Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center, *African-Americans and the U.S. Navy: Recruiting Posters Featuring African-Americans*, Digital Archive, accessed March 13, 2011, <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/prs-tpic/af-amer/afa-pstr.htm>.

model of black masculinity embodied by figures like Muhammad Ali and promoted at GI coffeehouses was systematically purged of its explicit anti-militarism in a campaign that instead emphasized Black Power's development of "positive character attributes" and "leadership skills." Through this process of meticulous cultural co-optation, the American military clearly hoped to neutralize a social movement that had, throughout the 1960s era, threatened to undermine its authority.

Widespread changes in the social, political, and economic status of women in American society also presented a unique set of challenges (and, ultimately, opportunities) to the Vietnam War-era U.S. military.⁴⁵ As previously discussed, radical feminism functioned powerfully within the GI coffeehouse movement, whose participants often employed the language of women's liberation to articulate their antiwar positions. GI coffeehouses were in fact regularly characterized as "liberated sexual territory," where soldiers could escape the narrowly proscribed gender roles they were expected to fill on base. To many radical feminists, the military was a deeply sexist institution, the ultimate symbol of patriarchy, male violence, and sexual degradation of women, and GI coffeehouses represented one effort to de-condition soldiers from such a destructive mode of gender consciousness.

As they had done with the Black Power movement, GI coffeehouse and GI underground newspapers promoted a specifically anti-military version of women's liberation. Sexism was regularly cited by antiwar activists, along with racism and imperialism, as a key element in the military's weapons of oppression. When GI

⁴⁵ Beth Bailey, *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 130-171.

coffeehouse staff near Fort Dix, New Jersey, were organizing their 1971 "Armed Farces Day" antiwar parade, they issued a list of "demands" meant to summarize the GI movement's central complaints. The third demand, "End Reinforcement of Unnatural and Oppressive Sexual Roles," is a laundry list of gender problems in the military, from widespread use of prostitutes to the USO's misogynist girlie shows.⁴⁶ Antiwar organizers at Fort Dix, like most activists in the GI movement, consciously connected the women's movement to their wider critique of the military institution.

In the same way that it had redefined black radicalism, the military establishment intervened to develop its own interpretation of feminism, one that squared more comfortably with military values and recruitment goals. Beginning in 1970, in the pages of women's magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and *Esence*, military advertisements cast service in the armed forces as a viable opportunity for employment within an otherwise unfair job market.⁴⁷ Playing on ideas of economic inequality developed by the women's movement, military recruitment campaigns in the post-Vietnam era increasingly portrayed the military environment as one of the few places in America where a woman could expect a fair shake.

Although military officials made a conscious effort to address the women's movement in their plans for a "New Army," their task was complicated by the nature of the institution itself, whose powerful gender dynamics were essential to its overall structure and function. Thus, even as women's roles shifted dramatically in the rest of society, their rising status in the military was extremely limited. Military leaders recognized that to fully integrate the idea of "women's liberation" into the

⁴⁶ "Return to Fort Dix," *Shakedown*, vol. 2, no. 2, May 1971.

⁴⁷ Bailey, *America's Army*, 127.

armed forces would so radically alter the organization as to render it unrecognizable. Because it depended so powerfully on a specific, narrow interpretation of gender, there were limits to how much the military could absorb the myriad new gender constructions that developed in the 1960s.⁴⁸

Of course, the military's inability to come to terms with these new gender constructions was not limited to its dealings with women. In fact, it was the changing status of young men in America that posed the greatest challenges for military policymakers in the post-Vietnam War era. As the concept of American masculinity grew ever more complicated through the 1960s, the military struggled to create an image compatible with the alternative expressions of manhood then forming in the wider culture. From the the hippie counterculture to the burgeoning gay rights movement, by the early 1970s there were many signs that new models of American manhood were being formed, and that these models often did not include military service as a fundamental element of that manhood. In order to remain viable, the U.S. military found that it would have to adjust its image to appeal to the

⁴⁸ Bailey, *America's Army*, 134. As Bailey points out, the significant cultural backlash that accompanied second-wave feminism's rise in the early 1970s complicated the debate over women's increasing role in the armed forces: "Virtually no one in the early 1970s anticipated the strength of the backlash that was coming, the ways that issues of gender and sexuality would unite conservatives and give them a political voice. For although the 1970s may have given America "the year of the woman," they also produced the countervailing forces of STOP ERA, the Eagle Forum, the Coalition for Decency, and the Moral Majority. And even the opportunities afforded by the ERA, it turned out, would have paradoxical results. The pending constitutional amendment opened doors for women in the military during the 1970s. But as the military insisted--publicly--that women now played a vital role in the nation's armed forces, it gave opponents of women's equality their most potent weapon: an image of women--America's wives and daughters--drafted and dehumanized, sent into combat, brutalized, maimed, raped and killed. Debates about women's proper role in the military were shaped by debates about women's proper roles in American society."

new types of men that inhabited post-1960s America.⁴⁹

Coffeehouses, Youth Culture, and the Death of the Citizen-Soldier

Although the various social liberation movements of the Vietnam War era, including Black Power, radical feminism, the gay rights movement, and even the antiwar movement itself, all played parts in challenging traditional models of masculinity, it was the development of a vibrant, anti-authority youth culture that presented the most direct threat to the military's specific version of manhood. Young Americans of the late 1960s and early 1970s were surrounded by a popular culture that projected fierce individualism and mocked all forms of institutional authority. The culture's rebellious, seemingly hedonistic embrace of sex, drugs, and rock and roll in fact reflected a wider distrust and rejection of traditional American values. As youth culture's "do your own thing" ethos flowed into the mainstream, the military found that its esteem among young men, its target demographic, was being significantly diminished. In communicating the depth of this cultural transformation to military policymakers in 1972, Westinghouse sociologists quoted French philosopher Raymond Aron: "Yesterday's authority is gone, and tomorrow's authority doesn't exist yet."⁵⁰

By cultivating a distinctly hip, rock and roll image at GI coffeehouses and in

⁴⁹ Warren Farrell, *The Liberated Man* (New York: Random House, 1947); Herb Goldberg, *The Hazards of Being Male* (New York: Nash Publishing, 1976); Marc Feigen Fasteau, *The Male Machine* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974); Meyer Friedman and Ray H. Rosenman, *Type A Behavior and Your Heart* (New York: Knopf, 1974). Each of these books asserted, in their own ways, that traditional American masculinity was unhealthy, and that the development of a more open, sensitive masculinity would benefit both individuals and society. See also Alan Alda, "Alan Alda on the ERA," *Ms.* (July 1976), 93. The *M*A*S*H** actor celebrated the arrival of this more "feminine" masculinity on the pages of a woman's magazine.

⁵⁰ *Potential Impact of Cultural Change on the Navy in the 1970s*, Center for Advanced Studies and Analyses, Westinghouse Electric Corporation, August 1, 1972, 2.

underground newspapers, the GI movement used youth culture to express resistance to the Vietnam War and traditional military values. The most common visual way to accomplish this, as coffeehouses discovered, was to paste youth culture iconography on every available surface. Posters had developed as an important form of visual expression in 1960s youth culture, as prints of rock bands, celebrities, political figures, or groovy psychedelic imagery became an easy way to announce a space's "liberated" status (or sometimes, just to anger Mom and Dad). GI coffeehouses employed this practice for specific political effect, using "personality posters" of youth culture figures in order to express the coffeehouse's antiwar, anti-military orientation. On the walls of coffeehouses around the country, the traditional American soldier image was subverted, ridiculed, and ultimately replaced by a new generation of cultural heroes whose values were in direct opposition to traditional symbols of military masculinity.

The images that adorned the walls of GI coffeehouses invoked an attitude of rebellion, non-conformity, and radical individualism: Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda riding motorcycles through the American desert in *Easy Rider*; Jim Morrison of The Doors gyrating shirtless on stage; Malcolm X pointing a defiant finger; Allen Ginsberg smiling beatifically, an Uncle Sam hat sitting atop his head (fig. 14). What united these figures was their unmistakable association with an alternative set of cultural values embraced by millions of young people in the 1960s era. Even images of celebrities like Clint Eastwood, Charlie Chaplin, and Humphrey Bogart projected an air of generalized rebellion against authority. Placed in a military context, the images took on a particularly potent resonance, signaling the coffeehouse's

underlying antagonism to military culture. "Personality posters" spoke volumes about a coffeehouse's orientation toward the nearby military base. Government and military officials, in their investigations of the coffeehouse network, frequently cited these posters as evidence of radicalism and intent to subvert the armed forces.

Of course, organizers at GI coffeehouses *did* intend to subvert the armed forces, just perhaps not in the criminal way the government so often suspected. Rather, they hoped to undermine the military's cultural influence by using every weapon in the countercultural arsenal to relentlessly ridicule *all* symbols of power and authority. Crude humor and brutal satire, more often than not, constituted the main visual aesthetic at coffeehouses, creating an irreverent atmosphere that often provoked strong local reactions in patriotic military towns. At the Fort Knox Coffeehouse in Muldraugh, Kentucky, for example, as civilian activist Steve Goldsmith recalls, "one whole wall was an American flag painted upside-down. The stars part of it was a toilet seat. And if you lifted the toilet seat up, there was Lyndon Johnson's picture. And when the police officer who came to examine the place saw that, he just hit the roof."⁵¹

The GI underground press of the Vietnam War era is remarkable for many reasons, but one of the more extraordinary aspects of the phenomenon was the extent to which it employed comics, cartoons, and other visual iconography to communicate political meaning. GI newspapers employed the crass humor, smart-aleck attitude, and psychedelic imagery of the 1960s youth culture. Many papers self-consciously copied the look and attitude of popular counterculture publications

⁵¹ *Sir! No Sir!* (Dir. David Zeiger, Displaced Films, 2005).

like the *Berkeley Barb* and *East Village Other*, connecting the GI movement's politics to the subversive humor of 1960s youth culture. Having grown up reading *Mad* magazine and its many antecedents, artists in GI underground newspapers persistently used the comic medium to make fun of the military establishment. Virtually every GI paper contained several over-the-top comic images satirizing military authority.⁵²

The most common target of these comics were "lifers," the GI movement's preferred term for career military men. In contrast to enlisted men, or "EMs," lifers were not simply serving their required time before discharge but had made a career out of military service. The large numbers of lifers during the Vietnam era was the result of the military's post-World War II policy shifts that promoted the armed forces as a viable career. As the Cold War expanded in the early 1950s, the Officer Corps, which functioned as the Army's central group of "middle managers," grew to become the centerpiece of a new and more professional military. It was during this period that the Army began advertising the "military career" as a way to express patriotism while earning a living. By the Vietnam War era, the increased numbers of career officers meant greater competition for jobs and promotions, which helped

⁵² David Hajdu, *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic Book Scare and How it Changed America* (New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008); Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith, *The Power of Comics: History, Form, and Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 53-54. Duncan and Smith credit *Mad* magazine as the inspiration for a whole generations of comic artists and publishers. By the early 1960s, they argue, *Mad's* influence was evident not only in other comic publications, but in the wider aesthetic and attitude of American youth culture. This orientation made underground comics ("comix") inherently political: "Comix not only defied the sources of authority in conventional society by breaking their taboos, but they also went on the direct attack. Authority figures are presented as inept or brutish and always corrupt. The structures of society, institutions, and bureaucracies, are portrayed as soulless and oppressive. As German media critics Rheinhold Reitberger and Wolfgang Fuchs correctly observed from their outside perspective, 'the underground cartoonists and their creations attack all that middle America holds dear.'"

contribute to an atmosphere of behavioral conformity among "lifers," who felt pressure to align their attitudes with the goals and ethos of the military establishment.⁵³

As the Vietnam War brought an unprecedented number of draftees into the U.S. military, frequent clashes between EMs and lifers became symptomatic of larger class, racial, and generational divides among the nation's armed forces. A GI stationed in Vietnam, when interviewed in the *New York Times*, expressed a seemingly common sentiment: "[T]he grunt's the one who has to go through all the hell . . . [L]ifers sit back in their air-conditioned rooms" and tell the GIs to "go out there and fight the war" while they just "draw their combat pay for . . . doing nothing while they're sitting . . . on their butts."⁵⁴ While this resentment echoed the kind of animosity that often develops between labor and management in working environments, the war undoubtedly heightened these tensions, producing a bitter divide within military culture that threatened to undermine the effectiveness and cohesion of the nation's armed forces.

Since so much of this tension stemmed from the war's unpopularity, the EM/lifer divide took on particular resonance for antiwar GIs. According to psychiatrist and writer Robert Jay Lifton, for soldiers opposed to the war and alienated by military values, lifers came to signify "not only the counterfeit universe

⁵³ A series of books published by military leaders and critics in the 1970s took issue with the Vietnam-era Officer Corps and its focus on careerism and professionalization. See Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Edward King, *The Death of the Army: A Pre-Mortem* (Saturday Review Press: New York, 1972); Mark R. Grandstaff, "Making the Military American: Advertising, Reform, and the Demise of an Antistanding Military Tradition, 1945-1955," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 60, No. 2, April 1996, 299-323.

⁵⁴ "The Hours of Boredom, The Seconds of Terror," *The New York Times*, February 8, 1970.

of the immediate environment and the larger military establishment, but also the misguided older generation responsible for sending him to fight the war, and indeed for the war itself."⁵⁵ During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the most potent expression of GI animosity toward lifers could be found on the pages of GI underground newspapers, where lifers were depicted as pigs, rabid dogs, grotesque old men and, in at least one case, anthropomorphized toilets. By targeting "lifers," the GI movement expressed its contempt for the entire concept of military service, using cultural differences (crew cuts vs. long hair, alcohol vs. marijuana, country music vs. rock and roll) to cast traditional military values (and those who willingly embraced them) as hopelessly old-fashioned, square, and out of touch with the younger generation (figs. 26-30). These images, along with countless articles, editorials, and letters printed in the GI underground press during the Vietnam era, were a powerful reflection of the military's "morale crisis," providing visual evidence of a cultural breakdown that policymakers hoped to address by eliminating the draft and transforming the concept of military service.

Citing the widespread resentment of lifers by GIs, historian Andrew Bacevich identifies the Vietnam era as a critical turning point in American national mythology involving soldiers. The concept of the citizen-soldier, a hallmark of republicanism, had maintained that "the ideal relationship between the armed forces and democratic society is a symbiotic one. In a civil-military context, it entails a continuous process of rotation in which the ongoing incorporation of citizens into the tanks renews the army, while the return to civilian life of discharged veterans,

⁵⁵ Robert Jay Lifton, *Home from War* (Simon & Schuster, 1973), 231.

understanding at first hand the meaning of service, renews civic life."⁵⁶ Bacevich argues that "Vietnam demolished the notion of military obligation and brought the tradition of the citizen-soldier to the verge of extinction."⁵⁷ When the Selective Service administration issued its final draft orders in March 1973, the citizen-soldier's disappearance from American life was made more official, initiating a process of re-imagining the soldier's relationship to the rest of society that continues into the twenty-first century.⁵⁸

As the draft ended, the Army created a multi-million dollar advertising campaign to kick off the All-Volunteer Force. The campaign attempted to create an image of military service more in line with the changed values of young Americans in the early 1970s. In contrast to the stern authoritarian face of Uncle Sam imploring "I Want You," the Army adopted the slogan, "Today's Army Wants to Join You," reflecting youth culture's celebration of individual empowerment and freedom over responsibility to the state. The ad campaign, like the VOLAR program before it, borrowed heavily from youth culture, and even the GI coffeehouse movement, in fashioning recruitment advertisements that often seemed more like invitations to a party. In countless magazines, images of young men playing on beaches and drinking in cafes with young women accompanied text that played on one theme: that soldiers in the "New Army" could expect a relaxed environment that respected the individual (figs. 31-32). Any mention of actual military service

⁵⁶ Andrew Bacevich, *The New Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 219.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁵⁸ George Q. Flynn, *The Draft: 1940-1973*, 258.

had completely disappeared. As historian Beth Bailey discusses in *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force*, the Army's initial effort at reaching the post 1960s generation signaled a long-term shift in image that "turned the traditional call for military service on its head The language of service and sacrifice, duty and honor, has been almost completely absent from army advertising since the beginning. For the past three decades, the army has recruited with promises of individual opportunity: money for college, marketable skills, achievement, adventure, personal transformation."⁵⁹ The image of the citizen-soldier, long promoted as a symbol of democracy, has been absent from recruitment campaigns since the end of the Vietnam War.

* * *

If, as Bacevich claims, it was "Vietnam" that ultimately destroyed the concept of the citizen-soldier, then "Vietnam" must be taken to mean the whole range of social and cultural changes that the war instigated in American society. GI coffeehouses concentrated those changes and defiantly shoved them in the military's face, showcasing the anti-authority ethos of popular youth culture and connecting it directly to issues faced by young GIs. In doing so, GI coffeehouses alerted military officials to the profound transformation in young men's attitudes towards authority and masculinity, service and patriotism, and demonstrated how those attitudes could directly threaten the military's ability to maintain morale and discipline. The coffeehouse network's popularity also indicated that a significant number of young GIs did not identify with traditional military values, contributing

⁵⁹ Beth Bailey, "The Army in the Marketplace: Recruiting an All-Volunteer Force," in *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 94, No. 1, June 2007, 47.

to the government's eventual recognition of the military crisis as, at least in part, a cultural phenomenon. This recognition was crucial; the end of the draft and the total transformation of the American soldier came only after policymakers began to understand that the concept of compulsory military service depended upon cultural foundations that had been thoroughly eroded over the course of the decade. For the U.S. military, GI coffeehouses had functioned as highly visible symptoms of that erosion.

CONCLUSION

When Fred Gardner and Donna Mickleson opened the doors of the nation's first GI coffeehouse, the UFO in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1967, they could not have imagined that their idea would eventually inspire the creation of a whole network of coffeehouses and similar projects near military bases throughout the country. During the relatively brief time that these antiwar coffeehouses dotted the American landscape, they brought the civilian antiwar movement in direct contact with U.S. soldiers, and in the process became potent symbols of a significant crisis for both the military and the nation itself. The Vietnam War had a drastic impact on the American armed forces, and nothing demonstrated this impact more sharply than the rise of the antiwar GI movement, which created a loosely connected set of institutions and resistance activities that sought to organize soldiers' anger toward the unpopular and devastating war. Since GI coffeehouses were directly involved in so many of these protest activities, the history of the coffeehouse network provides unique insight into the GI movement and the role it played in the federal government's decision to redefine military service in the years of and the decades following Vietnam.

GI coffeehouses were the central physical spaces in which the GI movement planned activities, published political literature, and made contact with the wider antiwar movement. As such, they conferred a degree of legitimacy to the actions of antiwar soldiers, amplifying their activism to the public and establishing them as important components of a multi-pronged national effort to end the war. In her work on feminist activism in the early 1970s, anthropologist Anne Enke

demonstrates the importance of institutional spaces like coffeehouses, bars, and movement centers in giving political feminism a public face and helping American women locate sites of resistance. In her book *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism*, Enke asks, "How does one locate a movement that could reach a woman in her home and at the same time seem utterly inaccessible to her? A movement that was 'everywhere' and yet nowhere the same? A movement nearly infinite in its origins as well as its continued and changing expressions?"¹ In answering these questions, Enke asserts the vitality of physical spaces developed by feminist activists, arguing that deliberately politicized spaces gave definition to an amorphous movement.

GI coffeehouses, like the feminist institutions that Enke describes, similarly created a physical reality for a set of political ideals, providing sites for American soldiers to "locate" a civilian antiwar movement that no doubt seemed inaccessible to GIs stationed at often remote military bases. As antiwar sentiment increased throughout the armed forces in the later years of the Vietnam War, GI coffeehouses helped give public voice to soldiers with limited opportunities to formulate and articulate political critiques. The GI underground press was particularly important in this regard, with coffeehouses evolving into busy printing presses that sustained a robust stream of antiwar information and opinions delivered directly (often covertly) to active-duty soldiers around the world. In an age of instantly accessible digital information available on the internet, it is important to recognize that, during the Vietnam War era, access to information (particularly of the radical political

¹ Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), 2.

variety) was more easily circumscribed and limited by institutional authorities like the American military establishment. Possession of printing technology like mimeograph machines and paper presses thus played a much more critical role in allowing alternative political and cultural formulations to find wider audiences and take more legitimate places within the public consciousness.

The history of the GI coffeehouse movement also brings the particular social and political elements at play in American "base towns" into relief, demonstrating how these communities have historically negotiated their close ties to the U.S. military. As coffeehouses came face to face with base authorities, FBI moles, local police forces, and vigilante citizens of these communities, it became clear to coffeehouse organizers that base towns took their connections to the armed forces very seriously, seeming to internalize a pro-war, patriotic ideology that was often hostile to any sign of dissent from a political and cultural status quo. In Catherine Lutz's *Homefront: A Military City and the American 20th Century*, the anthropologist and historian describes Fayetteville, North Carolina (home of the Fort Bragg Army base), as a representative base town, showing how mobilization for war can have a totalizing impact on regions that have become virtually dependent on the U.S. military for their economic well-being. According to Lutz, this dependence breeds a kind of ideological homogeneity enforced through local politics, culture, and social relations.

Lutz's history of Fayetteville includes the story of both the Haymarket Square coffeehouse described in Chapter Four, as well as Quaker House, a GI movement center created by antiwar organizers in 1970. Months after opening,

Quaker House was burned to the ground, with several civilians and GIs injured in the blaze; a police investigation concluded it was arson but no one was ever charged for the crime.² On the editorial pages of local newspapers, Fayetteville citizens often expressed virulent hostility to the antiwar movement's presence in their city. While this hostility was often expressed in cultural terms ("these doped up, whining, dirty, non-working, non-tax-paying, dutiless non-Americans should be behind bars where they belong," one letter read), there was an undeniable allegiance to American military values underlying the cultural revulsion. To many citizens of Fayetteville and other similar military-centered American communities, GI coffeehouses and other antiwar projects geared towards American GIs felt like a direct attack on local values, and many of them lashed out in perceived defense of those values.

The decades since the end of the Vietnam War have not witnessed a rebirth of a "GI movement" as profound as the one that shook the American military to its core in the 1960s and 1970s. As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to take a heavy toll on American soldiers, however, a new movement of antiwar soldiers and civilians is beginning to take shape. In the tradition of the Vietnam era GI movement, this new set of activists have created a loosely connected set of GI coffeehouses and movement centers in the same base towns that hosted these establishments at a different point in history. Places like Under the Hood Cafe in Killeen, Texas, Coffee Strong in Lakewood, Washington (near Joint Base Lewis-McChord), and Norfolk Offbase in Norfolk, Virginia (near Norfolk Naval Base, the largest naval base in the world), attempt to provide soldiers with an alternative set

² Catherine Lutz, *Homefront: A Military City and the American 20th Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 146.

of spaces and resources meant to address the issues faced by twenty-first century American GIs.³ These projects offer unrestricted internet access (often not available on base), information on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as well as the more traditional legal counseling and help with gaining conscientious objector status.

While GI coffeehouses in the post-9/11 era have not experienced anything approximating the level of revulsion and harassment expressed by base town citizens during the Vietnam War, these projects have still faced serious difficulties taking root in these communities. At the Different Drummer Cafe near Fort Drum Army base in upstate New York, for instance, owner and operator Tod Ensign, a longtime civilian antiwar activist, struggled to come to terms with how changes in military service have put up new barriers for the coffeehouse model:

We carefully compared the US military during Vietnam to the present “all volunteer” force. The most obvious difference is that after conscription was ended in 1973, our military no longer represented a cross-section of American society. One third of the troops in Vietnam were draftees with another third being “draft induced” volunteers. Today, virtually all enlisted soldiers are from working class or poor families. Secondly, they receive pay and bonuses which in most cases are competitive or superior to what they would earn in civilian jobs. During Vietnam, many soldiers earned \$120 a month, lived in crowded barracks and took their meals in dismal chow halls. Only a few were married or owned a car. Today, over half of all Army soldiers are married and most of these are also parents. You won’t find many soldiers today who don’t own a cell phone, a lap top computer as well as a car or a truck. They use this mobility to escape the base whenever possible, often travelling hundreds of miles.⁴

Ensign highlights a critical element of my research, which demonstrates that the often dismal conditions faced by American soldiers during the Vietnam War

³ Jon R. Anderson, "New era for coffeehouses rooted in anti-war tradition," *Army Times*, March 7, 2010.

⁴ Tod Ensign, "Shooting Pool Alone at Ft Drum: Lessons for the GI Movement," *Veterans for Peace Newsletter*, July 2009.

contributed to and helped build a movement of soldiers against war and military values. As the military re-calibrated these conditions throughout the post-Vietnam era, political activity expressed by soldiers has been reduced dramatically.

But, as Ensign also notes, this does not mean that "conditions" for soldiers have improved to the point that there is nothing for them to complain about. In fact, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have, in many ways, demanded more sacrifice from GIs than ever before. "I believe that combat soldiers from these current wars suffer more stress and mental dysfunction than even those who served in Vietnam. Their rates for PTSD, depression and suicide so far confirm this conclusion. This is partly because they are forced to endure multiple deployments in combat zones where the tension and danger never lets up. However, I've learned in my forty years of activism that the level of oppression someone experiences is not predictive of whether he or she will fight back or instead seek escape through self destructive behaviors."⁵ As the military struggles with unprecedented rates of suicide, alcoholism, drug abuse, and domestic violence among both active-duty soldiers and veterans, support networks like coffeehouses are attempting to address these behaviors in the context of an antiwar political framework.⁶

Unable to raise enough revenue to pay its bills, the Different Drummer Cafe closed in 2009 after less than a year. Although its tenure was brief, like that of many Vietnam-era coffeehouses, its short lifespan nevertheless provides valuable insight

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Mark Thompson, A Mounting Suicide Rate Prompts an Army Response, *Time*, December 14, 2009. For a comprehensive view of the PTSD crisis and related phenomena, see Erin P. Finley, *Fields of Combat: Understanding PTSD among Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan* (Ithaca: ILR, 2011).

into the evolution of military service and its place in American society. The experiences of soldiers and civilians at antiwar coffeehouses and similar projects around the country also lends perspective to the role of places like coffeehouses, cafes, bars, and other public spaces, which have historically occupied a vital place in the development of American democracy. In his book *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*, urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg identifies these spaces as "third places," between home and work, where citizens can engage in social and political discourse in environments designed to sustain such activity.⁷ Oldenburg, along with many other contemporary voices, argues that such public spaces are the lifeblood of civic engagement, providing locations in which dominant ideologies can be mulled over, questioned, even overturned. By putting ordinary people in contact with one another in this context, these institutions allow ideas to develop publicly, acting like machines for producing new sociopolitical forms.

Taking that democratic tradition seriously, GI coffeehouses during the Vietnam War created physical institutions designed to support and develop an unprecedented movement of soldiers against war. By providing a place for men and

⁷ Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafés, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through the Day* (New York : Paragon House, 1989). Authors that make similar arguments about the decline of public space in American life include Michael Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Macmillan, 1992) and Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone : The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001). For a longer historical view, see David Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995) and Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic : The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

women to engage in political discourse outside the context of the military, coffeehouses fostered discussions that were difficult, if not impossible, to have on base. In doing so, coffeehouse organizers posed a threat to military officials, local and federal authorities, and the citizens of base towns who, for various reasons, felt deep connections to the military's presence in their communities. Ultimately, though the GI coffeehouse movement died down along with most antiwar activity in the years since the Vietnam War, the fundamental issues it helped to raise in spaces throughout the country continue to resonate in American life.

APPENDIX



Figure 1. GIs peruse copies of underground GI newspapers at the UFO Coffeehouse in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1968.



Figure 2. A comic printed in the GI newspaper *The Ally* (no. 9, September 1968) depicts military police breaking up an interracial, counterculture, antiwar atmosphere at Columbia, South Carolina's UFO coffeehouse.



Figure 3. A flyer advertising the UFO coffeehouse in Columbia, South Carolina, reflects the coffeehouse's unmistakable countercultural orientation, while simultaneously avoiding specific political statements.



Figure 4. The cover of an issue of *Fatigue Press*, published at the Oleo Strut coffeehouse, Killeen, Texas, 1968-1971.

HOUSTON NOV 6TH



MARCH AGAINST THE WAR

- MARCH**
- AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT
 - AGAINST G.I. TOWN RIP-OFFS
 - FOR THE RIGHT OF G.I.'S TO BE FIRST CLASS CITIZENS
 - FOR FREEDOM FOR ANGELA DAVIS AND ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS.



F.H.U.F.

TRANSPORTATION

Bus tickets available at the Oleo Strut
101 Ave. D. Killeen, Tx. 634-9405
\$5.00 per person except married
E. M.'s and wives \$2.50 per person
Please make reservations by Nov. 2.

CHILDCARE AVAILABLE IN HOUSTON.

Figure 5. A 1971 leaflet produced by the Fort Hood United Front. The war is presented as one part of a matrix of social, political, and economic issues that concerned GIs.

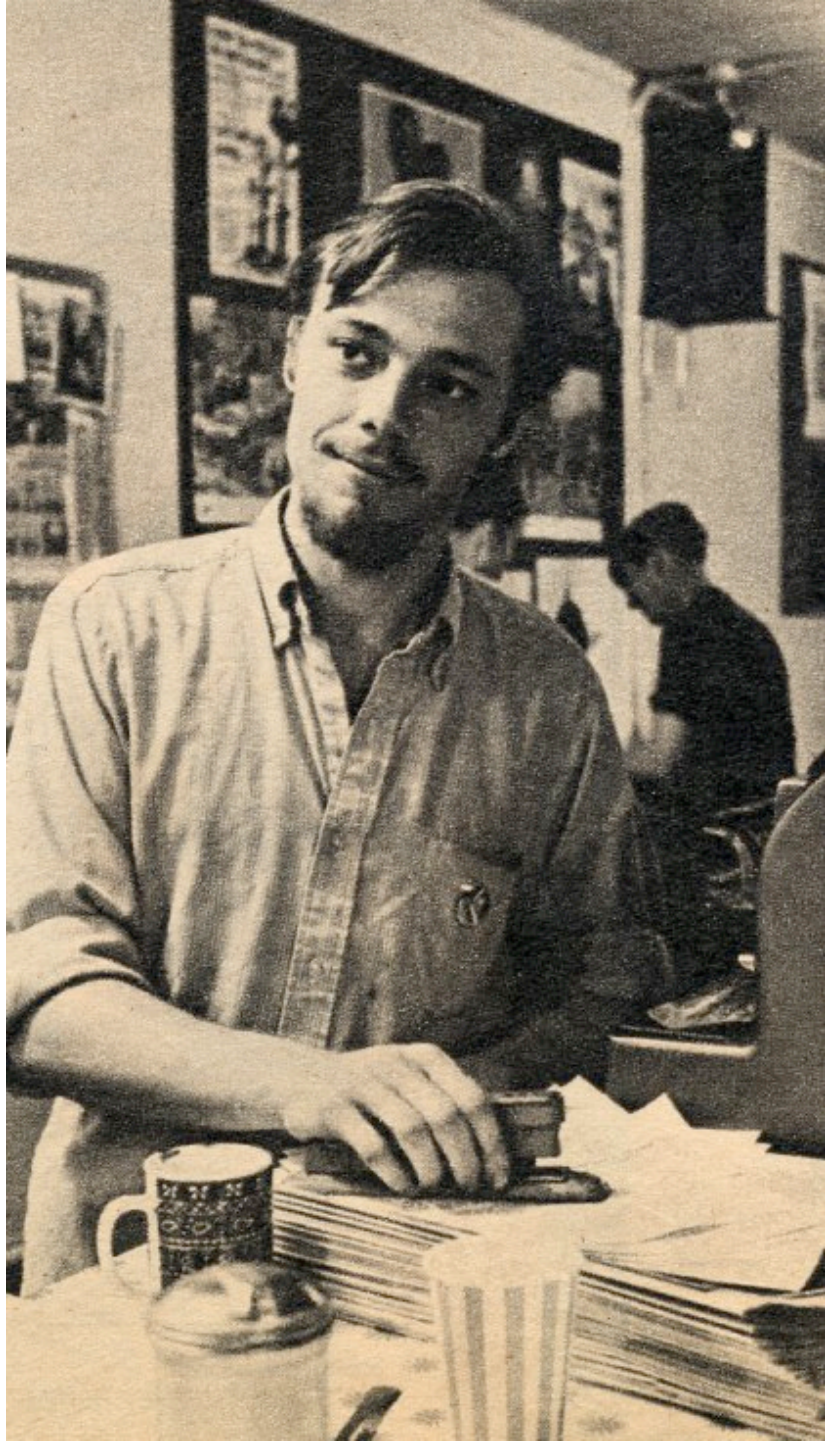


Figure 6. Vietnam veteran and antiwar organizer Dave Cline at the Oleo Strut coffeehouse in Killeen, Texas.

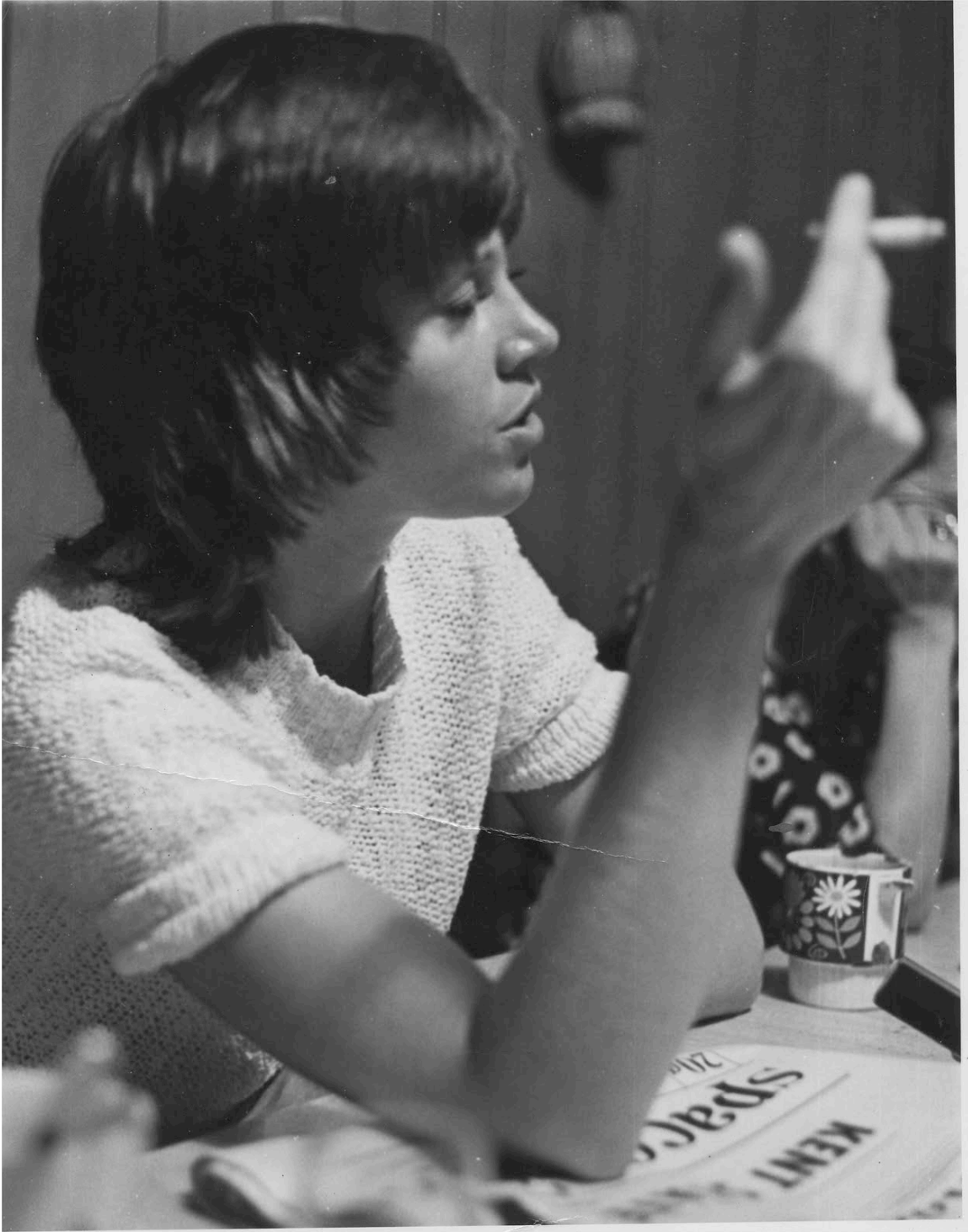


Figure 7. Actress and antiwar activist Jane Fonda visits the Oleo Strut coffeehouse in May 1970.

KILLEEN DAILY HERALD, FRIDAY, MAY 14, 1971

UNITED STATES
**ARMED
FORCES
DAY**
MAY 15, 1971
ATTEND
OPEN HOUSE
AT
**FORT HOOD
SATURDAY**

THIS MESSAGE SPONSORED AS A PUBLIC SERVICE BY THE FOLLOWING BUSINESS FIRMS WHO URGE
EVERYONE TO JOIN IN EXPRESSING OUR APPRECIATION TO OUR ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL:

<p>AAA AWARDS CO. 916 W. Hwy. 190—226-8773</p> <p>B&J ELECTRONICS 814 North 10 St.—424-2924</p> <p>BJ's DISCOUNT TAPE CENTER 1110 W. Rowlett—224-4000</p> <p>BIG CINEMA THEATRE Copperas Cove—247-2223</p> <p>BURGER CHEF</p>	<p>FOGLE AUTO SUPPLY 311 N. Gray St. 424-2752, 424-4222, 424-4200</p> <p>FORT HOOD NATIONAL BANK N. Hood, Texas</p> <p>FURNITURE CENTER 816 S. Ave. G—492-4922</p> <p>GIBSON'S DISCOUNT CENTER 2204 E. Hwy. 190—Killeen</p> <p>GROSS, YOWELL & CO.</p>	<p>QUALITY GIFTS 822 Gore Terrace Shopping Center—247-2475—Copperas Cove</p> <p>RICKETTS BAKERY 209 N. 4th—Killeen—424-2571</p> <p>ROBO CARWASH 4th S. Rowlett—224-4227</p> <p>SEARS ROEBUCK and COMPANY 2209 E. Rowlett—Killeen—424-2191</p>
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<p>BJ's DISCOUNT TAPE CENTER 1110 W. Rowlett—224-4000</p> <p>BIG CINEMA THEATRE Copperas Cove—247-2223</p> <p>BURGER CHEF 2820 E. Hwy. 190—412 N. Hood Road</p> <p>CACTUS MOTEL AND APARTMENTS 1217 Hwy. 190—Copperas Cove—247-4271</p> <p>CACTUS SERVICE CENTER E. Hwy. 190 at Ave. B—Copperas Cove—247-2618</p> <p>CARROLL REAL ESTATE E. Hwy. 190—Copperas Cove—247-2124</p> <p>CHARPING CONSTRUCTION COMPANY 124 W. Ave. B—424-1874</p> <p>CHRISTELL'S FLOWERS 214 East Ave. B—424-8224</p> <p>CLOUD REAL ESTATE Hwy. 190 & Gordon—424-8713</p> <p>COURTESY LINCOLN-MERCURY E. Hwy. 190—224-4191</p> <p>COVE DISCOUNT FURNITURE 303 N. 1st St.—Copperas Cove—247-2711</p> <p>COVE PLUMBING COMPANY 2414 E. Hwy. 190—Copperas Cove—247-4243</p> <p>DAVIS APPLIANCE and FURNITURE 402 N. 9th—424-2014</p> <p>Donnell & Thompson Real Estate and Insurance Centre Lodge Building—Copperas Cove—247-4243</p> <p>DOWDY REAL ESTATE 814 N. Gray St.—424-4028</p> <p>BEN DUGGER REAL ESTATE & RENTALS Corner of Hallmark, Tomlinson Rd. & 10th St.—424-4010</p> <p>ENTERTAINMENT CENTER Midtown Mall—Killeen</p>	<p>FURNITURE CENTER 816 S. Ave. G—492-4922</p> <p>GIBSON'S DISCOUNT CENTER 2204 E. Hwy. 190—Killeen</p> <p>GROSS, YOWELL & CO. 1000 E. Hwy. 190—424-2447</p> <p>H.E.B. FOOD STORES Hs. 1, 8th and Green—Hs. 2 Midtown Mall</p> <p>Hallmark Homes Real Estate and Rentals 214 E. 2nd St.—Copperas Cove—247-2218</p> <p>HALLMARK SERVICE COMPANY 311 W. Rowlett—424-2217</p> <p>HARRY'S ADVERTISING and SIGNS 707 E. Hwy. 190—Copperas Cove—247-2219</p> <p>HER REDUCING SALON 1809 Walls Center at Tomlinson & Walls, Across from Tomlinson Leanderland 424-4201</p> <p>IMPORT AUTO SALVAGE & DICK'S USED CARS 4224 E. Hwy. 190—224-1971</p> <p>KEN'S TV and APPLIANCE 817 E. Main—Copperas Cove—247-0439</p> <p>KILLEEN STEREO TAPE CENTER 1004 N. Gray at 8th St.—224-2440</p> <p>LEA'S FASHIONS and LEDGER FURNITURE Copperas Cove</p> <p>LONGHORN MOTORS 303 W. Rowlett—424-1911</p> <p>MARY LEA BAKERY 106 Gore Terrace Shopping Center—247-2223</p> <p>MINTHORN REAL ESTATE, Artie L. Cloud, Broker 908 W. Rowlett—224-4723</p> <p>19th HOLE 249 W. Hwy. 190—Foster Heights</p>	<p>ROBO CARWASH 4th S. Rowlett—224-4227</p> <p>SEARS ROEBUCK and COMPANY 2209 E. Rowlett—Killeen—424-2191</p> <p>SOUTHWESTERN TRANSIT CO., INC. 404 S. Ave. C—424-2442</p> <p>TAYLOR'S CONOCO and U-HAUL W. Hwy. 190—Copperas Cove—247-2422, 2471</p> <p>TERRY'S FASHIONS Gore Terrace Shopping Center—Copperas Cove</p> <p>TEXACO, INC. Cooks & Gilman, Conalysan</p> <p>TEXAS MOTORS Gray & Ave. G—224-2224, 224-6111</p> <p>THE DUMP 221 E. Ave. D—Open Daily</p> <p>THE SPOT 277 1/2 E. Ave. D—424-2780</p> <p>WESTERN AUTO STORE 320 Ave. D—Decorators Killeen—424-6112</p> <p>Western Plumbing, Heating and Air Conditioning 2011 1/2 Lincoln—Copperas Cove—247-2129</p> <p>WHISENHUNT REAL ESTATE 1402 E. Rowlett—424-2110</p> <p>WILEY PLUMBING COMPANY Copperas Cove, Texas</p> <p>WINN'S VARIETY STORES 807 N. Gray St.—424-4822 & 222 E. Hallmark—424-0442</p> <p>WOOLWORTH Midtown Mall—Killeen</p>
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Figure 8. A full-page advertisement in the *Killeen Daily Herald* reflects a wide selection of the business community's public support for the U.S. military.



Figure 9. *Fatigue Press* covers Killeen's first major public antiwar demonstration, the "Armed Farces Day" event, May 1970.

NEW! IMPROVED!

OLEO STRUT

IS NOT OFF LIMITS

DIG IT!

<p>free movies 8:30</p> <p>FRIDAY - SATURDAY</p> <p>JULY 3 -INSIDE NORTH VIETNAM</p> <p>JULY 10 -CHINA - 1/4 OF HUMANITY</p> <p>JULY 12 -VICTORY IN VIETNAM -STORY OF UNKNOWN SOLDIER -CONGRESS OF PEOPLES' DELEGATES</p> <p>JULY 24 -NO VIETNAMESE EVER CALLED ME NIGGER -INTERVIEW WITH DAVID HILLIARD</p> <p>JULY 31 -HUELGA!</p>	<p>POLITICAL EDUcATION</p> <p>SEMINARS - DISCUSSIONS</p> <p>WEDNESDAY 8:00 JULY 8:</p> <p>"U.S. TROOPS - U.S. SOIL" RIOT CONTROL IN AMERICA</p> <p>"WHEN YOU HAVE INVESTIGATED THE PROBLEM THOROUGHLY, YOU WILL KNOW HOW TO SOLVE IT." -MAO TSE TUNG</p>	<p>mILITARY COUNSELING</p> <p>FRIDAY - SATURDAY 5:00 - 9:00 PM</p> <p>MILITARY LA DISCUSSION EVERY SUNDAY 9:00 PM</p> <p>WHEN TYRANNY IS LAW, REVOLUTION IS ORDER</p>	<p>WE ARE OPEN</p> <p>WEEKDAYS 5:00 TO 11:00 PM</p> <p>WEEKENDS 2:00 TO 12:00</p> <p>CLOSED MONDAY</p> <p>101 E. AVENUE "D" ACROSS FROM RED TOP CAB</p> <p>COME TO THE STRUT</p>
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The ghetto rebellions spread; they became the most effective tool the black community possessed. If the rich, racist white landlords of the slums refused to make repairs and continued to jack up the rent until no one could pay it, then those slums were going to burn. If Safeway stores in the black sections of town charged higher prices than they did in suburbia, then Safeway was going to get trashed. If racist cops kept harassing and busting brothers and sisters on the block, then there was going to be a showdown. These "riots" are simply the expression of 300 years of hatred for a racist and exploitive system, and for a white majority that spouts shit like "all men are created equal" at the same time it won't sell property to a "nigger." Now blacks are going to stand up and fight for a piece of the cake.

Blacks Can't Dig It!

Blacks come into the army straight out of these ghettos struggling for the power to control the forces that shape their lives. They find themselves in the by now familiar conditions of institutionalized racism. Because they have re-

ceived a second-rate education and do not do well on the army tests, they are placed in the most undesirable jobs in the army. In Vietnam they are Infantry, state-side they are Infantry and maintenance. On state-side posts these units are quartered in the oldest and most deplorable buildings on post. Take a look at the 65th street area on Ft. Hood; what units are placed in these buildings?

The army tries to paint a picture of conditions in the ghettos which is inconsistent with actual conditions. It tries to tell blacks about their own communities. The army tries to tell GIs that it is troublemakers, drunks and people with nothing to do who rebel in the ghettos. The Black GIs realize that this is a lie; that it is not troublemakers or "outside agitators", but rather that it is their own brothers and sisters fighting for the same things they are. The Black GI realizes that if he helps crush those rebellions he will be destroying his only chance for a decent life. They are fighting for changes in a community he will live in again once he ETSs. Black GIs, once they have rejected the lies, the racism, the role of cop against their own people, have


no choice but to begin to move against "riot" control. And this is a motion that can't be stopped.

Where We Must Stand

Most white GIs find it hard to understand why Blacks are rebelling. The reason for this is that they have never lived in a ghetto, never driven through one, never talked to anyone who lives there. Most whites unconsciously accept the conditioning they received in school about ghetto inhabitants. They were told that these people are lazy, don't want to work, and satisfied living in sub-human conditions. This simply isn't true. The ghetto dweller has been trying for decades to get out of the ghetto. But he can't; he is trapped; trapped by the economic and social conditions that created and perpetuate the racism of the ghetto system. All GIs, Black and white, must come to understand that ghetto rebellions are necessary, not accidental. We must realize that by putting down ghetto rebellions, we are denying freedom to Black people.



Fatigue Press
P.O. box 388
Killeen, Tex.
76541

Figure 10. Ad copy for the Oleo Strut shows the coffeehouse displaying a more overt radical politics in the summer of 1970.

 **FATIGUE PRESS** 204
Price 10 C. L. 1/4

ARRIVE IN THE RIGHT TO READ AND RETAIN COMMERCIAL PUBLICATIONS
THIS IS YOUR PERSONAL PROPERTY, IT CANNOT BE TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU
Page 15 Issue 55

TYRRELL'S BOYCOTT



**PANTHERS FREED
IN NEW HAVEN,
NEW YORK** PAGE 14

Figure 11. *Fatigue Press* publicizes the GI-organized Tyrrell's Jewelry boycott in Killeen, Texas, in 1971.



Figure 12. GIs and other activists prepare for a Veteran's Day antiwar march in front of the Oleo Strut in Killeen, Texas, in 1971.



Figure 13. The exterior of the Shelter Half coffeehouse's first incarnation in Tacoma, Washington, at 5437 South Tacoma Way.



Figure 14. Veterans and activists at the Shelter Half coffeehouse in Tacoma, Washington, in 1969. Steve Ludwig Photograph Collection, Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies, University of Washington.



Figure 15. UW-Seattle student, YSA member, and GI organizer Stephanie Coontz in 1969. Steve Ludwig Photograph Collection, Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies, University of Washington.



Figure 16. Stephanie Coontz leads the Aquatic Invasion of Fort Lewis, July 13, 1969. Steve Ludwig Photograph Collection, Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies, University of Washington.



Figure 17. Bob Hope appears in South Vietnam at a USO-sponsored performance in 1971.



Figure 18. The cast of the FTA show performs in 1972.



Figure 19. Jane Fonda and Michael Allario perform in 1972's FTA Show.



Figure 20. The *Fatigue Press* newspaper office in the back of the Oleo Strut coffeehouse in Killeen, Texas.



Figure 21. Radical and antiwar newspapers available to GIs at the Oleo Strut coffeehouse in Killeen, Texas.



Figure 22. The cover of *Life* magazine, February 5, 1971. Bill Mauldin's World War II era "Willie and Joe" comic characters are used to highlight the transformation of the armed forces in the later years of the Vietnam War.

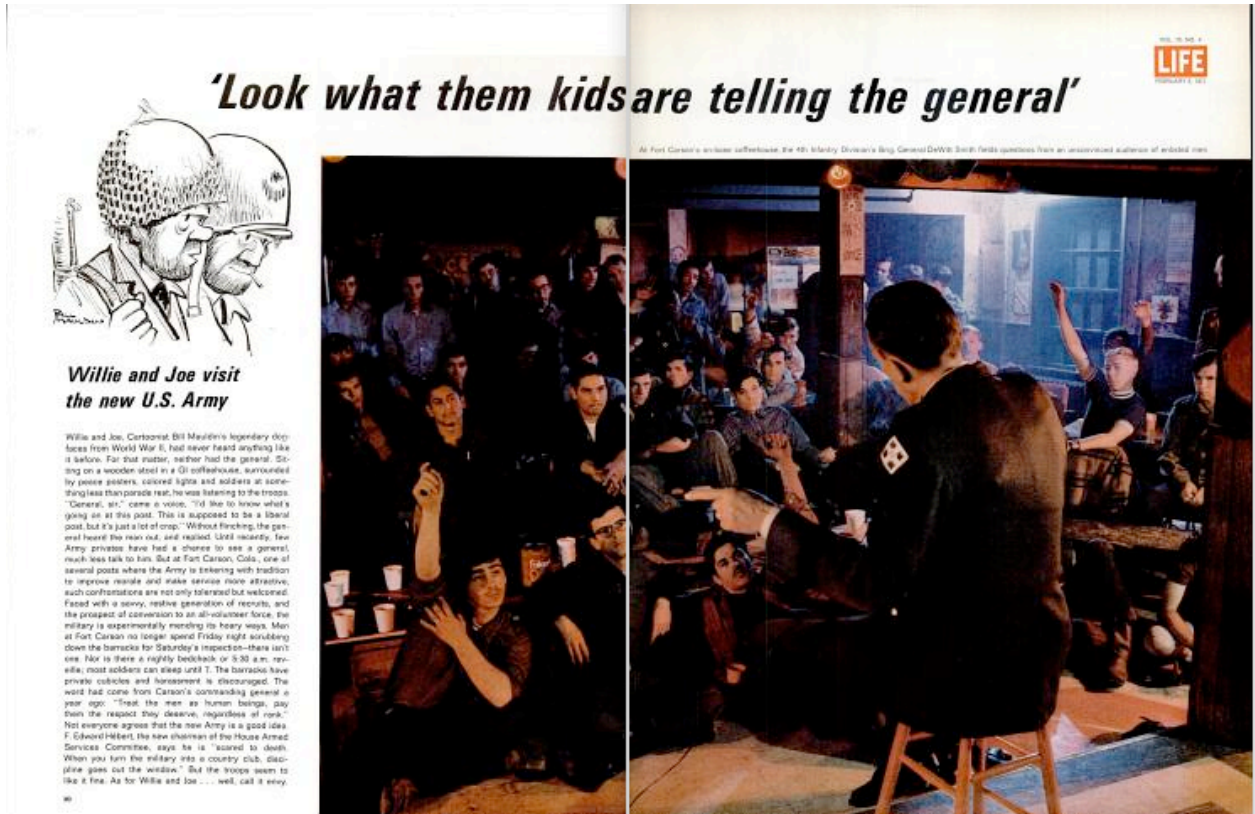


Figure 23. On the pages of *Life* magazine, Maudlin's Willie and Joe marvel at the level of dialogue taking place between GIs and officers at an on-base GI coffeehouse in the "New Army" of the early 1970s.



Figure 25. Go-go dancers entertain GIs in a photo from *Life* magazine's 1971 article on the Army's VOLAR program.



Figure 26. A comic image of a "lifer" (career officer) from the pages of a Vietnam era GI newspaper.

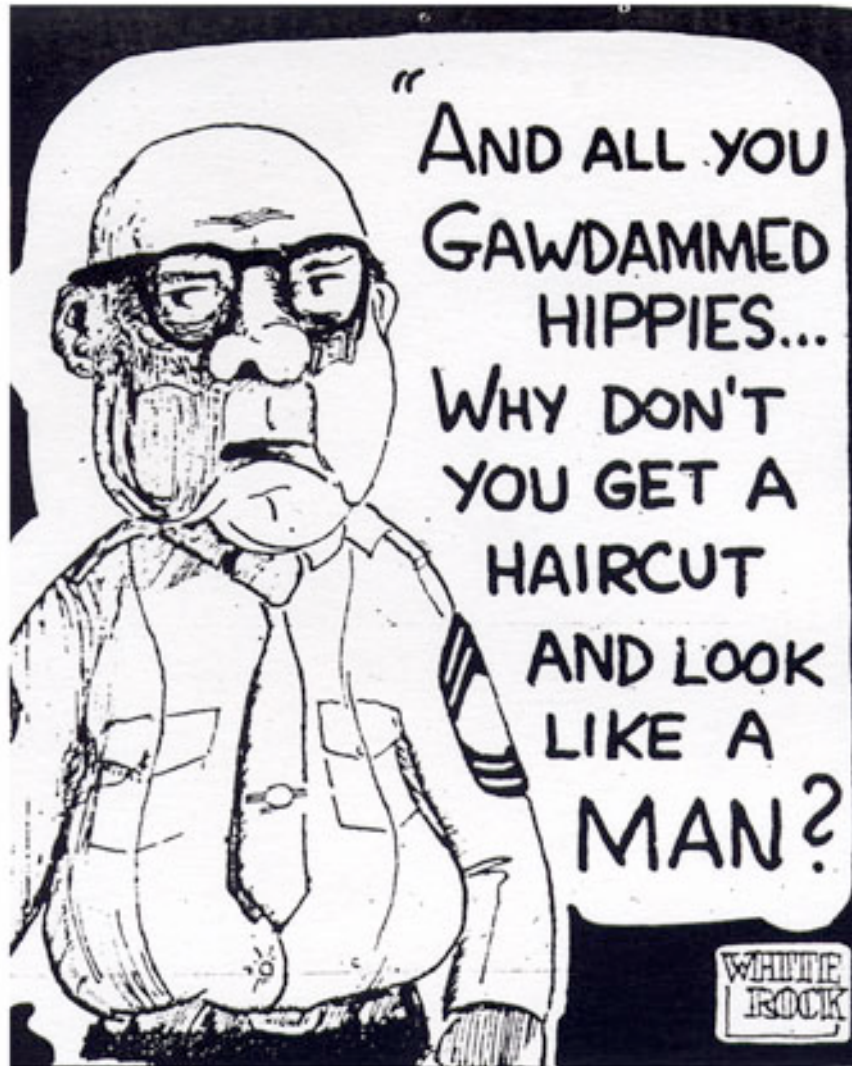


Figure 27. A GI newspaper comic positions military masculinity against the new countercultural models offered by "hippies."



Figure 28. Comics in GI newspapers frequently contrasted the military's promotion of recreational alcohol use with its harsh treatment of marijuana offenders.

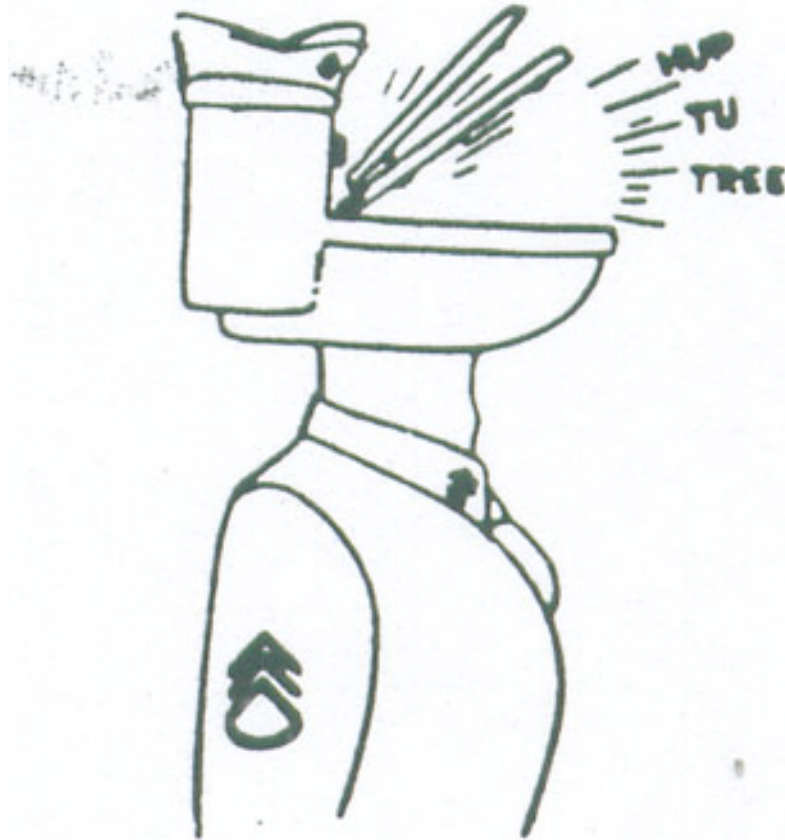


Figure 29. A crass but undeniably effective representation of many GIs' view of "lifers" during the Vietnam War era.



Figure 30. An underground GI comic reflects a common attitude toward authority among Vietnam era GIs.



If you think you'll miss the guys, bring them along.

We know how it is. The good times. The jokes. The horsing around. You'll miss them, right?

So, the Army doesn't want to break it up. In fact, the Army wants to accommodate you. And the guys.

If you and the guys enlist together, you can take basic training together. And we'll guarantee it. In writing.

Not only that, we'll guarantee that you and the guys get a choice of hundreds of job training courses.

Your pal Joey likes wheels? We have more wheels to choose from than GM.

Freddy's an electronic nut? We have circuits that do everything but dance.

Big Mike likes to make noise? We have noisemakers that can be heard ten miles away.

Talk it over with your local Army Representative. Ask about enlisting together, training together. Or send us the coupon.

Talk it over with the guys. Tell them that the gang that enlists together, stays together.

**Today's Army
wants to join you.**

Name (Last, First, Middle)	Address
City, State, Zip	Phone Number
Age	Education
Service Number	Enlistment Station
Signature	Date

Figure 31. The first advertising campaign for the All-Volunteer Army depicted military service as a fun-filled adventure.



Take the Army's 16-month tour of Europe.

Right out of high school.

In today's Army you can enlist for European duty that guarantees at least 16 months with one of seven crack outfits stationed in Germany.

France, Denmark and Switzerland are just across the border. Within easy reach of any free weekend. Italy and the Riviera are just a few hours away. Just waiting for you on some of that 30 days paid vacation you earn each year in the Army.

This is your chance of a lifetime. To live and work in Europe. To get to know places like no tourist ever can. To get to know the people. Pick up the language.

If you want to live and work where tourists only visit, drop us the coupon. Or talk to your nearby Army representative about enlisting in Armor, Artillery or Infantry for European duty.

**Today's Army
wants to join you.**

Army Opportunities	Dept.
Dept. 500, Hampton, Va. 22089	290 6115
I'd like to spend 16 months in Europe	
Send me more information on European duty in today's Army	
Name _____	Sex _____
Address _____	
City _____ State _____	
Zip _____	
Education _____	

Figure 32. An advertisement for the All-Volunteer Army uses suggestions of sex on a European holiday to lure new recruits.

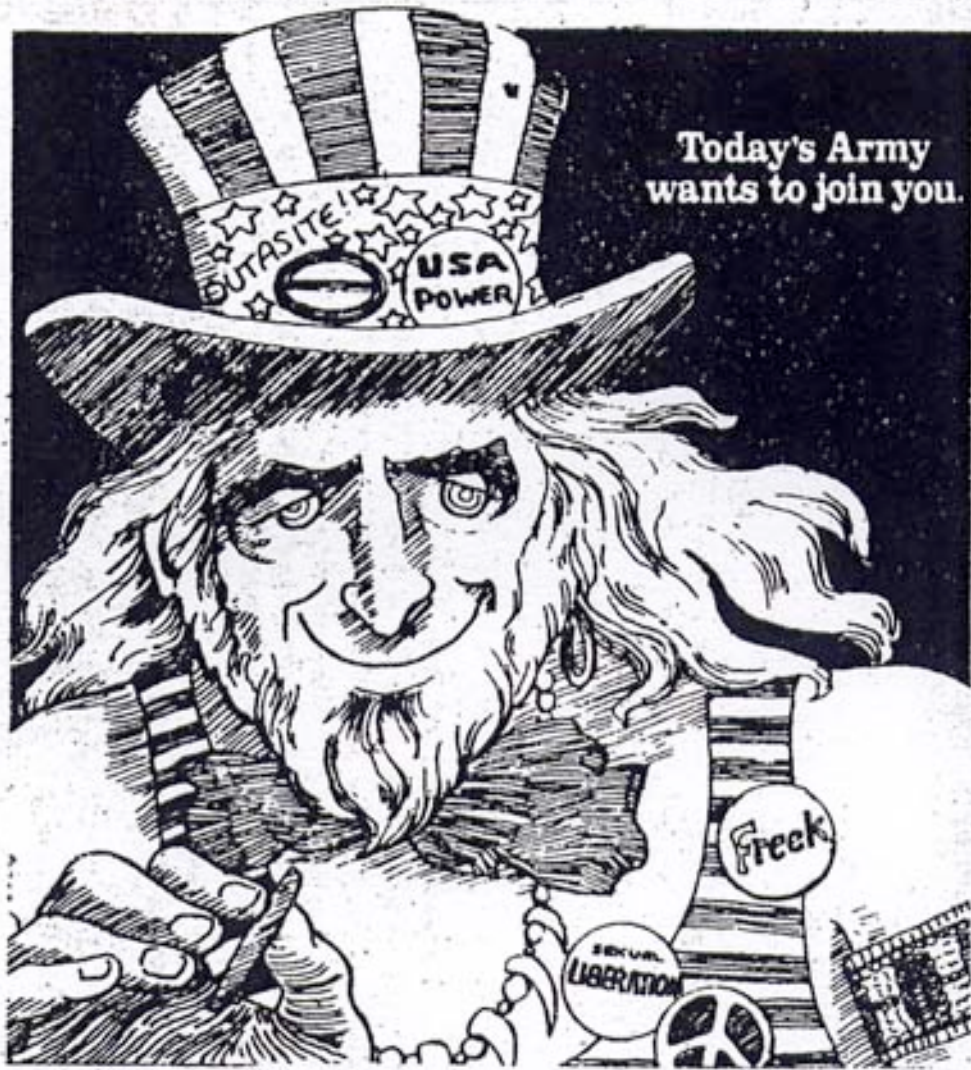


Figure 33. A comic from a GI newspaper ridicules the Army's attempt to co-opt the counterculture in its advertisements for the All-Volunteer Force.



Figure 34. GI underground comics frequently subverted the Army's use of the counterculture in its new recruitment advertisements.



Figure 35. A Vietnam era underground GI comic explores ideas of masculinity and military recruitment.



Figure 36. The Army's attempt to wear the mask of counterculture in its recruitment efforts was often ridiculed in the GI underground press.

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GI Underground Press

In addition to the GI newspapers specifically cited in the text, I consulted dozens of other GI-produced antiwar newspapers from the Vietnam War era, located in archives around the country. These papers served as the basis for many of the generalizations made about the culture and direction of the GI movement throughout the dissertation.

Abbreviations:

Contemporary Culture Collection, Temple University (CCC)

Sir! No Sir! Digital Archive (SNS)

Swarthmore College Peace Collection (SCPC)

Tamiment Library, New York University (TL)

Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS)

About Face! (SNS)

Aboveground (SCPC)

The Ally (TL)

Anchorage Troop (CCC, TL)

As You Were (SNS)

The Bacon (SCPC)

The Bond (SNS)

Coffee House News (WHS)

Counterpoint (SNS)

Duck Power (SNS)

Dull Brass (SCPC)

Fed Up! (SNS)

Fun Travel Adventure (SNS)

Getting Together (SCPC)

GI C.L.D.C. Newsletter (SNS)

G.I. Press Service (SNS)

G.I. Voice (CCC, SCPC)

Gigline (SCPC)

Graffiti (CCC)

Hair (SCPC)

Head-On! (SCPC)

Helping Hand (SNS)

Kill For Peace (SCPC)

Last Harass (SNS)

Left Face (SCPC)

Liberated Barracks (SCPC)

Marine Blues (SCPC, TL)

Military Law Project News-Notes (SCPC)

Navy Times Are Changin' (SCPC)

The New Testament (SCPC)

Next Step (SCPC)

Omega (SCPC)
Open Ranks (SCPC)
Potemkin (SCPC)
RITA-ACT (CCC)
Semper Fi (SCPC)
Shakedown (SNS)
Short Times (CCC, TL)
Up Against the Bulkhead (WHS)
Up Against the Wall (CCC)
Up From the Bottom (SCPC)
Veterans Stars and Strips for Peace (SCPC, TL)
Vietnam GI (Personal Collection)
Wildcat (SCPC)
Your Military Left (SCPC)

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New York Post
New York Times
New York Times Magazine
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