

THE EVOLUTION OF *THE RAG*: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL,
POLITICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFLUENCES
ON THE BIRTH OF ONE UNDERGROUND
NEWSPAPER IN THE 1960s

by

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Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

MAY 2010

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am forever grateful to everyone who encouraged me to continue my education. Those people are too numerous to mention, but you know who you are. But, I owe my deepest gratitude to Dr. Andrew Clark, my committee chair, who liked my idea and helped me think it through and make it happen. His enthusiasm was motivating and his criticisms always made my work better. I would also like to offer thanks to Dr. Thomas Christie for being with me every step of the way, from my first visit to the graduate office to my final defense. In addition, I am grateful to Dr. Shelley Wigley for being the coolest professor ever.

However, I could never have done any of this without my husband Rick, who was behind me all the way. He never complained about the time I spent studying and always recognized my accomplishments as I went through school.

Finally, I must recognize “the girls,” our two rescue dogs, Myra and Cupcake, who spent many nights sitting with me as I researched and wrote.

For each of you I can't express my gratitude enough.

April 19, 2010

ABSTRACT

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This research examines the influences which led to the beginnings of *The Rag*, an underground newspaper in Austin, TX, that would last for 11 years and give voice to a generation of young adults that were intent on changing society. Students and young adults sought ways to voice their frustrations with government policies and newspapers were a major source of information for most of the American public. However, the large city dailies failed to adequately cover issues important to the youth culture. This historical analysis delves into big-picture influences that led to the creation of *The Rag* such as the counterculture, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), technological innovations and the Underground Press Syndicate, as well as local influences such as the Austin counterculture, the leadership of the *Daily Texan* and UT's campus police that all came together to inspire a group of about 20 University of Texas students to create *The Rag* in 1966.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
1.1 Rebellion

*You say you want a revolution
Well, you know
We all want to change the world
You tell me that it's evolution
Well, you know
We all want to change the world
But when you talk about destruction
Don't you know that you can count me out
Don't you know it's gonna be all right
all right, all right
(Lennon & McCartney, 1968)*

This thesis documents the creation of *The Rag*, one of the early underground newspapers in the 1960s. However, as with the creation of anything, there was not just one reason for the creation of the paper. In fact, there were many underlying reasons and events that led to the creation of *The Rag*. No one, as yet, has focused on the specific history of *The Rag* in the context of Austin in the 1960s and all the political, social and technological issues that led students to find a voice of their own amid the turmoil of the times.

Throughout American history college students have often rebelled, either because of their own concerns, such as campus life issues, or because of events off campus that touched a nerve. The first record of a student rebellion happened at Harvard

University in 1766 because of the “poor quality of butter served in the commons” (Brax, 1981, p. 3). But at that time students were primarily products of the cultural elite. These cultural elite, while quick to rebel for their own interests, often rejected the values of the larger society (Lipset, 1971). The result was that their rebellions held little value for society as a whole.

While college life had long produced dissenters, the birth of current-day U.S. college rebellion began at Harvard in 1910 (Horowitz, 1986). Many of these rebels were Jewish who had come from nurturing middle class families and who, by the fact of being Jewish and considered deviants, were often left out of the typical college experience including membership in fraternities and sororities and other social groups. This exclusion led them to develop their own ideas of what the college experience should be including the opposition of classical college teachings, instead preferring the language of early modernism, ideas with which they identified with the ideal university. They didn't see a college education as instrumental to their future success. Instead, they reveled in ideas, not content. They identified with the nonconformist conventions of artists, writers and “a few iconoclastic professors” who fought social distinctions “and reveled in difference, not uniformity” (Horowitz, 1986, p. 7). Because this iconoclasm was in contrast to the generally accepted college cultures, it never stood out as a college culture in its own right, but rather as an aberration. However, once the pattern of rebellion was exposed, these youth needed no goading to be known as rebels – they simply needed to regard themselves as nonconformists (Horowitz, 1986). This group, which reveled in difference rather than uniformity, quickly grew and by 1920 composed a large and spirited group.

In the 1920s those interested in artistic innovation diverged from those with so-called radical political views, thus dividing college dissidents into two factions – idealists and radicals. The political radicals began to link campus issues to broader national issues. One of those radicals, Eric Sevareid, while a student at the University of Minnesota in the 1930s, organized a group of his friends and gained control of campus

student publications and student government, seeking to abolish the required Reserve Officers' Training Corp. (ROTC) (Berman, 1976). They brought their antiwar ideas to their classrooms, awakening pacifist ideals on campus. In the 1940s, Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, known as the Columbia Outcasts, took their underground writings to the streets of New York. Later called Beats, this group promoted a curiosity for religion and spirituality, ultimately leading them to the practice of Buddhism and other non-traditional religious practices (Jones, 1995).

University rebellions quieted as the United States entered World War II (Horowitz, 1986). A period of conformity set in as public opinion galvanized toward fighting the war and all available energies and resources were funneled into the war effort. When the war was over, this period of conformity and conservatism continued producing a generation of young adults who went to school on the GI Bill and bought into the ideal of the American Dream and American exceptionalism.

Robert Pardun, an early participant in *The Rag* and founder of the Austin branch of the Students for a Democratic Society recalled that his parents were a product of this idealistic generation.

They [my parents] had come out of the Depression and World War II with the fear that another depression might follow. Instead, there was an era of prosperity fueled in part by the creation of the "Cold War," which stimulated the economy with war production during a time of relative peace" (Pardun, 2001, p.10).

This generation then gave birth to a generation that would soon renounce these ideals.

One movement was happening that would give rise to a new generation of rebellion – rock and roll. Heavily influenced by rhythm and blues (R&B), a product of African-American culture, rock and roll resurrected the rebellion that had basically shut down during the World War II. At the same time, Supreme Court decisions paved the way for civil rights, and the advent of nuclear weapons left students distasteful of war.

These events and others led to paradigm shifts in how young adults saw the world in comparison to how their parents' generation viewed it. In their book, *Anti-Rock: The Opposition to Rock 'n' Roll*, authors Linda Martin and Kerry Seagraves (1988) described the 1950s as one in which change was slowly coming in American culture.

While R&B was seeping into the white world and undergoing a name change, American teenagers were also undergoing changes which would lead them to a happy union with R&B. The atmosphere of the 1950s was a conservative and oppressive one. Eisenhower was president and Senator Joseph McCarthy was not vanquished in his witch-hunting until 1954. That same year the U.S. Supreme Court struck down racial segregation in the public schools as unconstitutional. This put an end in law, if not in fact, to the racist "separate but equal" notion. Hanging over everything was the Cold War and the threat of nuclear destruction (Martin & Segrave, 1988, p.6).

These changes in law gave way to changes in attitude which became full-fledged movements in the 1960s.

The post-war baby boom produced 70 million babies that were moving into young adulthood in the 1960s (Goodwin & Bradley, 2009). But, they weren't their father's young adults. Ready to move away from the conservative lifestyle of the 1950s, they were no longer content to be images of their parents (Goodwin & Bradley, 2009). They wanted change. The changes affected all facets of life. Some began to question segregationist policies, some began to want equality between the sexes and some questioned authority and war (Goodwin & Bradley, 2009). And, a vibrant counterculture sprang up that was epitomized by the slogan "sex, drugs and rock and roll." *Rag* co-founder Carole Neiman explained the difference between herself and the generation of her parents.

I saw it as sort of if you think of the 60s as the ultimate generation gapping. My parents were depression babies. They grew up in less affluent times. There was

WWII and the GI Bill. They were supposed to do certain things. They saw the world in a certain way. We went from the conformity of the 1950s to the decade of discontent in the 60s (C. Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

1.2 How They Got Their Voice

*“No future history concerned with the life and times of the twentieth century can leave out rock and roll. It’s that important”
(Bertrand, 2000, p. 5).*

Although the Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, had given black men the right to vote, Plessey v. Ferguson’s “separate but equal doctrine” legitimized racial segregation in 1896. Even music was segregated. Black popular music had been separated from mainstream white music until the 1960s. For example, *Billboard* magazine created the “Harlem Hit Parade” in the 1940s to identify black urban popular music. The phrase was later changed to “Race Records” and then to “Rhythm and Blues” in 1949 (Schuerer, 1989). In the early 1950s the *Billboard* charts were littered primarily with white performers such as Pat Boone, Perry Como, Rosemary Clooney and Patti Page.

A series of court decisions leading to the 1954 landmark case, *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka*, struck down the “separate but equal” doctrine, paving the way for integration. Before this the rules and restrictions about race had been clearly defined by previous generations. Black degradation and racial separation had been institutionalized, but those institutions were about to fall (Bertrand, 2000).

One of the first places in which integration began to show up was in rock and roll.

Rock and roll was emerging as the music of choice for teens and young adults. Often associated with youth, growing from the baby boomer generation, this group, which was relatively more affluent and endowed with more leisure time than previous generations, adopted rock and roll as part of a distinct sub-culture. This included not only

music, but cars, clothes, language and fashion. Parents and the “older generation” in general weren’t altogether happy with this movement.

As early as 1955, rock and roll was in their crosshairs. The dance crazes that came from rock and roll were called suggestive and obscene. Bridgeport and New Haven, CT, introduced the first bans on rock and roll shows (Martin & Segrave, 1988). By 1956 a “teen riot” was reported at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology when officials refused to allow dancing at an event hosted by radio station WCOP, a teen favorite. Teens smashed tables and trashed the place before police were called in (Martin & Segrave, 1988). By early 1957, Elvis Presley was a teen idol and the target of critics, teachers, clergy, and even other entertainers who said his hip gyrations were too suggestive. Nicknamed Elvis the Pelvis, he claimed he didn’t understand what all the ruckus was about, but during his 1957 appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show, he was shown only from the waist up (Martin & Segrave, 1988). Presley was identified as a symptom of juvenile delinquency. Ben Gross wrote in the New York Daily News that Elvis “gave an exhibition that was suggestive and vulgar, tinged with the kind of animalism that should be confined to dives and bordellos” (Martin & Segrave, 1988, p. 63). But rock and roll pressed on. In 1958, DJ Alan Freed emceed a show featuring Jerry Lee Lewis. As teens got up to dance, the police turned up the house lights to quell the activity. Freed allegedly said from the stage, “I guess the police here in Boston don’t want kids to have a good time.” He was subsequently charged with inciting a riot (Martin & Segrave, 1988).

Teens had developed their own music, distinctly separate from that to which their parents listened. The contrast between parents and teenagers typified by rock and roll concerned older generations who feared juvenile delinquency and social rebellion, especially since the rock and roll culture was shared by different racial and social groups (Coleman, Ganong, Warzinik, 2007).

Soon this criticism became overtly racial. As white teens began to listen to the popular recordings of black musicians, racism reared its ugly head. Elvis was slammed

for sounding black (Schuerer, 1989). Negroes were blamed for enticing white teens to ignore their parents and participate in degrading and sacrilegious dancing (Martin & Segrave, 1988).

Personal contact with blacks created positive perceptions of them among young whites. White teens began to identify with their black rock and roll idols and began developing a different attitude toward race than that of their parents. Rock and roll changed how young people saw themselves and the world around them. They drew upon popular music as a basis for their attitudes, which left them open to innovation (Bertrand, 2000).

The advent of racially mixed audiences at concerts and white kids going into black neighborhoods were experiences that contributed to their sense of fair play, increasing the acceptance of the civil rights movement. The music had come to symbolize integration (Altschuler, 2003). As their views changed, these young adults began to ask for change. This change led to the start of a movement.

The spring of 1960 was when students exploded into action throughout the South in opposition to racial segregation and discrimination. It all started in February when four black freshmen at A&T College in Greensboro, North Carolina, sat in at a "whites only" lunch counter at the local Woolworth's Store. The sit-in idea spread like wildfire to students at predominantly black schools around the South in Nashville, Atlanta, Jackson, Houston and many small towns as well. Two months later 126 student delegates from 60 centers of sit-in activities in 12 different states held a conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, at Shaw University. The Raleigh conference marked the beginning of a national student movement for civil rights and a New Left organization called the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (Burr, 1988, p. 4).

By the 1960s the word "student" had come to mean activist and, within the student group, had become a "prized social identity" which in turn gave even more

incentive to participate in the furtherance of the civil rights movement (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 290). The “younger generation” had come into its own. Now they were ready to start spreading their philosophy to anyone who would listen. The underground press was one vehicle through which this younger generation philosophized.

1.3 Relevant Literature

Definitions for the underground press are many and varied but generally apply to newspapers written and published by cultural and political activists who feel their views have been denied coverage in generally accepted mainstream newspapers such as the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal* (Embardo, 2005). Since the underground press first appeared in the early 1960s, a number of authors have written about everything from the exploration of motives and activities of the founders (Lewes, 2000), to the history of the movement (Ellis, 1971), (Glessing, 1970), to an analysis of its political influence (Gitlin, 1980). Still others have delved into the underground press and the political and societal context of the times (Leamer, 1972), (Rausch, 2007). Spiggle (1986) compared values of mainstream society and the counterculture. The underground press provided food for thought on issues such as censorship and freedom of expression. Even library science professionals have written on how the Underground Press Syndicate facilitated discussion of these principles within their very conservative communities. Some librarians were accused of failing to see beyond the mainstream horizons in their failure to archive underground publications (Samek, 1998).

Often the term underground press is used interchangeably with the term alternative media. Alternative media allow those who are most often under- or misrepresented in mainstream media to tell their own stories through their own media (Atton, 2002). This media is described as exhibiting several qualities, including the use of “non-commercial sites for distribution; transformed social relations, roles and

responsibilities; and transformed communication processes” (Atton, 2002, p. 27). In an attempt to categorize users of alternative media, Downing (2001) pointed out that subjects of struggle can become the subjects of information, thus alternative media can suffer from a lack of interest from any group other than the group enmeshed in the struggle and which makes alternative media useful in the mobilization of social movements (Downing, 2003).

Historians have even written about *The Rag* specifically. Burr (1988) included *The Rag* in her study of student activism at the University of Texas at Austin and Olan (1981) included it in her study of underground journalism. But, the specific history of *The Rag* in the context of Austin in the 1960s and all the political, social and technological issues is still not documented. Additionally, there has been no research on the development of new journalistic styles, the use of technology to disseminate the written word and the recognition of how mainstream media’s lack of attention to specific societal issues brought about these movements. This study looks into the influences of politics, culture and technology on *The Rag* in the context of the times in which it evolved.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

History has been primarily a humanistic study, an exploration into what people have done. The decision of how to conduct this study hinged on the ultimate goal – to tell what brought about *The Rag*. This exploration of the evolution of *The Rag* is ultimately about people and relationships. It is a story about the influence events had on a group of students and how they found the power to thrust their thoughts about these events on society. It is about those looking to usher in a new age, The Age of Aquarius, an age marked by dissatisfaction with mainstream Western culture that led some to look for alternatives (Woodhead, Fletcher, Kawanam & Smith, 2002). It is about the human side of a movement that lasted through the turbulent decade of the 1960s and from which grew the Underground Press Syndicate. Historical analysis asks questions about the past and seeks to elicit answers (Startt & Sloan, 2003). Therefore, this requires that a story be told. To tell that story accurately and eloquently historical studies must contain at least three elements: a.) evidence, (b) interpretation and (c) narrative (Startt & Sloan, 2003). This study provides all three.

The evidence used in this research consists of historical documents which follow the development of *The Rag* from events that led to its evolution through to its demise in 1977. The documents include archives of *The Rag*, *The Daily Texan*, personal archives, books written by central players, FBI and University of Texas campus police records, and archives from the city of Austin. However, reading through these archives limited access to the emotions of these subjects. Recorded oral histories were also used. The

preservation of interview transcripts in oral histories allows for public inspection and verification in their entirety (Feldstein, 2004). They also allow historians to go back in time and compare answers from their interview subjects. That was done in this case. Since many of the interview subjects are still living and active in politics, journalism and activism, they were quite easy to find. They were also quick to share their stories.

Fortunately for this story, primary source evidence was the main source of data. The research began with a tidbit on a blog site called *The Rag Blog*. It included information about a publication in which the editors of *The Rag Blog* had been involved in the 1960s called *The Rag*. The website displayed some old issues of *The Rag* and listed those who had been responsible for putting out the first issue. Among the names listed was the "Funnell" (their term for editor), Thorne Dreyer. An exhaustive Google check turned up his phone number in Austin, Texas. Not only was Dreyer available and willing to tell his story, he was also quite willing to provide contact information for others who contributed to *The Rag*. One contact led to another, then to another, and so on. The fact that these people are still very much alive and many are still committed to the basic tenants of the movement, allows for a much more precise description of their stories. The passion and fire with which they speak conveys the information better than any reams of data could. These primary sources provide the background and the facts through which the evidence can be delivered.

In addition to evidence, accurate interpretation is required of the historian. While the evidence about *The Rag* is rooted in primary source materials, the credibility of both the people and documents involved must be evaluated. It can be argued that in relying on people to tell their stories, their interpretation of events, one runs the risk of getting a skewed picture of events. Embellishment, forgetfulness or even a romanticizing of events can occur when relying on first person accounts. Therefore, it is important to properly evaluate these sources. In this evaluation several methods were used. First, each person was asked to give his or her account of events. The sources were interviewed individually

and in groups in order to determine if their accounts varied from the individual sessions to the group interactions. Additionally, since some oral histories were available from the early 1970s, it was possible to evaluate how their accounts had changed from then to now. Finally, since some of the characters had written books or first-person accounts of the events leading up to the formation of *The Rag*, it was possible to compare their oral stories with their written accounts. This triangulation of data provided many checks and balances to assure that the information used was indeed accurate. Another thing that came up was the evolution of a narrative that was shared by the characters in this story. Some terms were used over and over such as the terms “heartfelt critique” and “it was LBJ’s war.” These “talking points” seemed to have been constructed by the central characters over the years as they have been asked to pontificate on events during *The Rag* years. It was therefore possible to go back to early oral histories for the original interpretations of these “talking points.” These individual accounts provide an account of events from the viewpoint of those who were there. Without these individual accounts the story of *The Rag* would not have had the texture, emotion and color these primary sources provided. It would have been a mechanical regurgitation of facts obtained from

Once the credibility of evidence was established, a strong narrative was needed to deliver the evidence and interpretation. The influential twentieth-century historian G.R. Elton described history as something that must be told as a story (Fogel & Elton, 1983). This is the story of *The Rag*.

CHAPTER 3

A NATIONAL REVOLUTION

*“To fully understand the circumstances that influenced the creation of The Rag, one must understand the context of the times”
(Pogue, Embree & Scott, 2005, para. 1). I*

In his book *The Greatest Generation*, Tom Brokaw wrote about parents of the baby-boomer generation:

I can recall the grown-ups all seemed to have a sense of purpose that was evident even to someone as young as four, five or six.” When the war ended, more than 12 million men and women put aside their uniforms and returned to civilian life. They went back to work at their old jobs or started small businesses; they became big-city cops and firemen; they finished their degrees or enrolled in college for the first time. They became school teachers, insurance salesmen, craftsmen or local politicians. They weren’t widely known outside their families or their communities...leaders in the greatest national mobilization of resources and spirit that the country had ever known (Brokaw, 2004, p. 11).

Although women had taken jobs to replace the men that went to war, they reverted to traditional roles when the men came home. Men resumed being the breadwinners and, although some women continued working, most assumed their roles in the home. Television contributed to the homogenizing trend by providing young and old with a shared experience reflecting accepted social patterns (U.S. Department of State, 2003, para.1). The sense was that one had to conform to societal expectations.

Robert Pardun described the times leading from the 1950s to the 1960s as contradictory.

For me, growing up in the 50s was like being in both a wonderland and a wasteland. Teenagers during the 50s were called “the silent generation” because we seemed apathetic and uninvolved in the world around us. Given the Cold War, the threat of nuclear holocaust, it seems a better name would have been “the intimidated generation.” There was an overwhelming sense of sameness, a sense that the future was planned, and that it was dangerous to stand out (Pardun, 2001, p. 10).

In the late 1950s, any pockets of cultural rebellion that existed were not significant enough to lead to radicalism (Horowitz, 1986). “Triggering experiences” were the beginning of the unrest as the new decade emerged, including the sit-ins in the spring of 1960 where four black students tried to sit at the counter of a Woolworth’s store for coffee, and lent “moral legitimacy” to the emerging civil rights movement (Horowitz, 1986, p. 15).

Moving into the 60s there came a time where young adults had to choose between the status quo and change. Carole Neiman, one of the founding staffers for *The Rag*, enrolled in the University of Texas in 1965. She observed that, for the first time, middle class kids were going to college. “I was one of those kids. I got to college and thought I could make the world better. I got to college and found out I couldn’t. Students had basically no voice in what happened. We had to make a conscious decision to take a stand and suffer the consequences” (Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

Pardun, who was already a graduate student when Neiman enrolled at UT, was beginning to encounter issues about which he could not remain silent.

In September 1963, when I arrived at the University of Texas in Austin as a graduate student in mathematics, I would not have described myself as a radical. I was concerned about world events and had been following the civil rights

movement in the South, but I had never been in a demonstration or spoken out publicly about any controversial issue. All that changed during the fall when I encountered the reality of segregation. Soon after, I learned that my government had actively supported French colonialism in Vietnam and was continuing to support a brutal dictator there. I believed it was important to make America live up to its ideals and, as I expressed my opinions publicly, I began a journey that took me into the heart of the student movement and the political and social turmoil of the time (Pardun, 2001, p.1).

This student movement exploded onto college campuses, melding into the social movement of hippies and those who were looking to “tune in, turn on and drop out.” It all became known as the counterculture.

3.1 The Counterculture

The counterculture is hard to define. It was more than young people’s affinity for sex, drugs and rock and roll. It was about achieving social and political change. “The youth movement was not merely against racism, the war or school administrations but against the totality of bourgeois social relations” (Rossinow, 1997, p.84). Idealism was certainly a basic tenant of the movement. In order to obtain the ideal society a revolution was in order. “Traditional values didn’t apply to the counterculture” (J. Nightbyrd, personal communication, January 11, 2010).

Unconventional appearance, music, drugs, communitarian experiments, and sexual liberation marked the sixties counterculture, whose members were mostly white, middle-class young Americans. To some young Americans, these attributes reflected American ideals of free speech, equality, and pursuit of happiness (Rossinow, 1977). The counterculture is a term used to group together widely varying institutions and social practices that were unified against the dominant culture of advanced capitalism (Rossinow, 1997).

We were all part of the counterculture and we all had strong beliefs about how to change society and this happened with the hip movement, the psychedelic movement, the music community it was all part of proselytizing in our own way and the new left and the SDS we were all involved in that (Thorne Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Others saw the counterculture as self-indulgent, pointlessly rebellious, unpatriotic, and destructive of America's moral order (Rossinow, 1997). David Richards, a defense attorney and husband of former Texas governor Ann Richards, recalled, "Hair was everywhere during this era. At times the issue of long hair seemed to outdistance Vietnam as a source of controversy. But wherever it began, hair length soon became a major generational cleavage" (Richards, 2002, p. 138). Drugs became an issue, too. Police officers would routinely stop "long hairs" and they soon found that smelling marijuana as they approached a vehicle amounted to "reasonable cause" allowing them to search the vehicle. Richards recalled some first-time offenders receiving prison sentences for small amounts of marijuana. In fact, in most states possession of any amount could result in a felony conviction and lengthy prison sentences (Richards, 2002). Soon hair length and misbehavior were inextricably linked. That link led some young people to question authority.

What did one have to do with the other? Being a long hair didn't mean you were a bad person. Neither did doing drugs. When we realized that doing drugs wouldn't make you a crazed murderer, we realized we were being lied to by the establishment. We started questioning everything (Thorne Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

This created an even wider chasm between the counterculture and the establishment. When middle-class kids were busted for drugs parents were forced to fork over the money to keep them out of jail. Middle- and upper-class families could do this, but kids from poor families often served time for their supposed transgressions (Richards,

2002). The chasm between the haves and the have nots was evident in how the law was applied to drug offenses. If you had the money you could get out of it, if not you went to jail. "The most common lament took this form, 'He was a wonderful kid, and then he let his hair grow long, and he never was the same again.'" (Richards, 2002, p. 139). Richards, who defended many drug cases, enjoyed practicing law during those times. "Stupidity abounded. It seemed as though every day brought some new outrage by governmental bodies as they tried to hold the line against the onslaught of the unwashed" (Richards, 2002, p. 138). Law officers in Pecos, Texas, were known for stopping hippies and shaving their heads and pronouncing, "Welcome to Texas" (Richards, 2002). Actions such as these divided the country along hair lines until the mid-70s.

Another aspect of the counterculture was the New Left movement. "The New Left was a white youth movement against racism and imperialism and for radical democracy that flourished at U.S. colleges and universities in the 1960s" (Rassinow, 1997, p. 79). Grouped within the counterculture were political radicals and social radicals. The hippies represented the social radicals and the members of the New Left represented the political radicals. The social radicals advocated communal living, sexual freedom, a pull back from consumerism, alternative religions and drug experimentation, among other things. The political radicals included groups such as The Black Panthers, the SDS and other groups advocating for political change. They organized support against the Vietnam War and fought for civil rights and women's rights. The Black Panthers started the "Black Power" movement and the SDS originated the rallying cry, "Make love, not war" which became the slogan for the hippie counterculture (Sale, 1973). Both the social and political radicals were all about change. Thus, it is understandable to see how the two became intertwined. But in the overall scheme of things it was a group of political radicals that eventually brought about the underground press movement.

3.2 Students for a Democratic Society

*“The Rag was very much connected with the local SDS chapter and they were the most interesting people around”
(C. Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009).*

The New Left was a movement that emerged from the aftermath of the McCarthy era in the 50s. Beginning with the SDS, the New Left became a multitude of organizations with hundreds of thousands of participants (Churchill & Waller, 1990).

The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) grew from a student wing of the League for Industrial Democracy known as the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID). The SLID sprang up from the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS). The ISS, founded by Upton Sinclair in 1905, offered students an opportunity to look at political philosophies that were not taught in the classroom (Gordon, 1986). This group did not participate in activism. Among the events with which they came to be associated were “the Vassar chapter's cooperation with Poughkeepsie citizens to start a public library and a fire company and Rose Pastor Stokes's efforts to found ISS chapters at black colleges” (Gordon, 1986, p.6). The ISS campus organizations became difficult to organize after coming under fire during the post-war Red Scare.

It was 1921 when the ISS became the LID and in the 1930s again undertook work on college campuses as the SLID. “The depressed economy of the 1930's and the social turmoil that boiled up in those years significantly affected students around the country. They turned outward from their insular world and became concerned with larger issues” (Burr, 1988, p.2). These students that grew up in the Depression protested issues including U.S. imperialism, opposition to Marxist economics and the war in Europe. The protests peaked in 1936 when 50 percent of college students nationwide participated in the national Student Strikes Against War (Brax, 1981). Eventually, there were a variety of national student organizations that directed these activities including the American Student Union and the National Student League as well as the Student League for Industrial Democracy.

Many of the student radicals from these 1930's movements influenced their children to be activists. "We called those kids red-diaper babies. They were kids of upper-middle class parents from ivy-league schools. UT was not one of those ivy-league or comparable schools" (C. Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

It was these red-diaper babies and the "cradle conservatives" that formed the foundation of two political movements, the Students for a Democratic Society and the Young Americans for Freedom, both the result of a youth movement that was all about change. These movements both began with a disdain for government, both decried the immorality of government policies and denounced the reach of government into their lives. But each had a different solution. The YAF sought to empower government through its constitutionally-given powers, mainly those of a strong defense against enemies. The SDS, on the other hand, felt the government had abused its powers to defend the country by using "the bomb" and continuing nuclear proliferation.

The life histories of former members of YAF and SDS suggest common causes of their activism. Many were the products of politically active or interested families. Parents molded the antiracism and anti-capitalism of "red diaper babies" and the anti-communism and support for individual freedom of "cradle conservatives." Members of SDS and YAF also shared historical experiences that shaped the populism and distrust of large-scale organizations that ran through both groups. Both felt a disparity between the ideals they were taught and the reality they found around them in the experience of the Cold War and, for SDS'ers, the African American civil rights movement. In the 1960s, members of SDS and the libertarians within YAF were further radicalized by their increasing disillusionment with the Vietnam War, the draft, government repression, and the insularity of socializing and working with those with similar outlooks. Differing stances toward the counterculture, especially the use of drugs, created splits within SDS and YAF (Blee, 2001, p. 1200).

The SDS won this battle for idealistic supremacy early on. In 1962 the SDS held its first convention in Ann Arbor, MI, where it unveiled its political manifesto, *The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society*, written in part by future senator Tom Hayden (Frum, 2000). It begins:

We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit. When we were kids the United States was the wealthiest and strongest country in the world: the only one with the atom bomb, the least scarred by modern war, an initiator of the United Nations that we thought would distribute Western influence throughout the world. Freedom and equality for each individual, government of, by, and for the people -- these American values we found good, principles by which we could live as men. Many of us began maturing in complacency. As we grew, however, our comfort was penetrated by events too troubling to dismiss (Hayden, 1962, para. 1).

This manifesto goes on to denounce nuclear weapons, segregation and racism, poverty, the exploitation of natural resources and other societal issues that were brewing in the early part of the 1960's. It ends by announcing the role of the universities in its mission.

To turn these possibilities into realities will involve national efforts at university reform by an alliance of students and faculty. They must wrest control of the educational process from the administrative bureaucracy. They must make fraternal and functional contact with allies in labor, civil rights, and other liberal forces outside the campus. They must import major public issues into the curriculum -- research and teaching on problems of war and peace is an outstanding example. They must make debate and controversy, not dull pedantic cant, the common style for educational life. They must consciously build a base for their assault upon the loci of power. As students, for a democratic society, we

are committed to stimulating this kind of social movement, this kind of vision and program is campus and community across the country. If we appear to seek the unattainable, it has been said, then let it be known that we do so to avoid the unimaginable (Hayden, 1962, final para.).

Though its initial focus was on promoting the civil rights movement, in April 1965 the group organized an anti-war march on Washington, D.C. Growing more and more militant in opposition to the Vietnam War, tactics included raucous demonstrations and occupation of campus buildings at nearly 100 universities across the U.S. As President Johnson escalated the war In 1965 there was a significant uptick in the number of young men drafted by the Selective Service, jumping from 112,386 in 1964 to 230,991 (Selective Service System, 2003). Young men flocked to universities in order to avoid the draft. Poor and working class young men who could not afford to go to college resented those who could afford the exemptions (Selective Service, 2010). Those disillusioned with these political issues began to vent their anger, presenting the perfect opportunity for the rise of the Underground Press Syndicate. But that opportunity would not have happened were it not for the relatively new technology of the offset press.

3.3 The Photographic Offset Press

*“Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one”
(Liebling, 1960, p. 105)*

Before the Underground Press movement there was a profound change in the printing industry. Leading up to this change, the capital-intensive world of journalism made it so anyone who wanted to print a newspaper needed a major capital investment, leaving small operators out. But the offset press changed that by making it so that almost anyone could afford to print a newspaper.

Offset printing was developed in 1903, but it took further refinements in photography and rubber rollers to make it an affordable alternative to the old engraving process of printing (Howard, 2005). Some publications were beginning to utilize the offset

press in the 1940s. An article in *Time* magazine in 1940 described what the offset press was.

Offset is cheap because it does away with engraving, form makeup, stereotyping – all standard processes on a daily newspaper. The printer simply photographs a page of copy pasted up on ruled boards, transfers the negative to a zinc plate and prints from an inked rubber roller (Time Magazine, 1940, para. 2).

The *Time Magazine* (1940, para. 3) article also predicted that some papers might decrease their capital investment by as much as 50 percent. The magazine noted that in order to turn out clear copy a composing typewriter was needed. The composing typewriter had been invented but was not yet in production. It took the decade of the 1950s for this invention to be readily available. “Further innovations in the offset press also made it smaller, cheaper and, thus, more accessible’ (A. Embree, personal communication, March 22, 2009). By the late 1950s offset printing had revolutionized the printing world.

But cost wasn’t the only thing that made the offset press attractive to small publishers and underground media. It also allowed publishers to be much more innovative with layout and graphics. Art was juxtaposed with text, center-fold paintings were reproduced easily, and freehand drawings wound around the edge of the page (Olan, 1981). The black and white columns of the mainstream press were rejected by underground newspaper editors who utilized the offset press to create a distinctive look. Thorne Dreyer and Victoria Smith described how the technology led to this distinctive look.

The use of color has remained a major distinguishing characteristic of the movement papers, dazzling color made financially feasible because of the offset process.

Some papers never use color, but rely on other graphic techniques, such as line shots of photographs, screening, unusual and often hand drawn headline

typefaces, superimposition of pictures over print, collage and montage. Artists have always been a crucial factor, filling the papers with strange and beautiful drawings (Dreyer & Smith, 1969, para. 85).

Offset printing offered flexibility. No large printing presses or Linotype machines were required to print a publication. The offset press offered a fast and inexpensive method of photographic reproduction and allowed for innovations in design. By freeing themselves of the columnar design, publishers could create colorful publications with a distinctive collage look (Fig. 1.1). Type could flow in and around graphics and color bleed techniques were common (Embardo, 2005). The sheet-fed press allowed for further flexibility.

For a relatively small cash layout, the offset press granted entre to those previously excluded from the high dollar world of professional journalism and offered new innovations in presentation. Without this flexibility the underground press movement would not have been possible (Olan, 1981).

As Thorne Dryer stated, "The offset press was creating new ways for people to communicate" (Thorne Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

3.4 The Underground Press

"The underground press had an enormous impact on the above ground media"
(J. Nightbyrd, personal communication, January 11, 2010).

Society gains its sense of what is "reality" through the conduit of mass media. Mass media serves as a mirror of reality, a watchdog over democracy and an intermediary that transfers the images to the public. This also leaves journalists vulnerable to pressure from public officials and state and military leaders placing the impartiality of the journalist in jeopardy. This is when distortion of situations can emerge, influencing public opinion (Simons, 2007). Charges of distortion, omission and outright propaganda began to come from a group who felt they weren't getting the "truth" from mainstream media. Some of them decided they would tell the public the "truth."

One of the true phenomena of the sixties, fueled by anti-authoritarian, antiwar, dope-smoking young people, was the meteoric rise of underground newspapers. Beginning on the West Coast, they suddenly sprang up everywhere. They were, of course, an affront to notions of respectability, extolling sexuality, drugs and irreverence (Richards, 2002, pp. 65-66).

But, more than that, the underground newspapers of the 1960s offered a unique communication avenue for social activists, mostly young adults, to express their views of social issues in a way that some in mainstream media viewed as rebellious. The “rebellion” of these social activists had already begun to manifest itself in protest marches, sit-ins, strikes and even popular music. In order to draw attention to these activities, the underground newspapers wrote about them. Since the readers of these publications rejected mainstream media as polluted, they refused to acknowledge that mainstream media had any usefulness (Downing, 2003). These alternative news venues were bent on opposition and this opposition was often their *raison d'être*.

They were called “underground” because of their opposition to America’s political, economic and cultural systems that were vestiges of the 1950s (Ellis, 1971). In expressing this opposition they dispensed with the journalistic traditions of layout and objectivity and broke ground with a style of writing that could be called the forerunner to the New Journalism movement, a style made popular later in the decade by the likes of Hunter S. Thompson, Truman Capote and Tom Wolfe. First-person accounts were the norm, often about the writer’s sexual exploits or drug use. The writers themselves were the subjects of the stories. Eventually subjects such as the Vietnam War and civil rights became mainstays of the underground press.

In 1966 a group called The Underground Press Syndicate was formed that officially allowed these publications to share content in order to disseminate activist views. The term is said to originate in July 1966 when a reporter from *Time Magazine* met with the editors of the underground publications the *East Village Other*, *The Fifth*

Estate and The Paper. John Wilcock of the *East Village Other* suggested they form a nationwide counter-culture conspiracy and suggested they band together “in something called the Underground Press Syndicate (Lewes, 2000). Dreyer and Smith described the nature of this relationship.

The three qualifications for membership were simple, and no central coordination was required. Papers were expected to exchange gratis subscriptions, occasionally print a list of UPS papers with addresses, and, most important, agree to a policy of free reprints: papers could reprint from each other without asking permission or paying money. Thus the concept of copyright was done in from the start. New papers could draw on the experiences of the more established ones, learning valuable techniques, gaining a source for national news. These practices set a tone of cooperation that was extremely important in the development of the new media (Dreyer & Smith, 1969, para. 7).

The Underground Press Syndicate officially began with six member publications, but would grow to 200 members by 1972 with an estimated circulation of 1,500,000 (Leamer, 1972). The six original members were the *Los Angeles Free Press*, *The Berkeley Barb*, the *East Village Other*, *The Fifth Estate*, *The Oracle* and *The Paper*. *The Rag* was number seven.

The early papers were by no means a monolith. They varied greatly in visual style, content and even in basic conception. But they had a similar vision, and same Man was breathing down their necks. Most impressive of all was that the underground press developed essentially out of a journalistic vacuum. There was little precedence for these freaky, raving, irreverent little tabloids (Dreyer & Smith, 1969, para. 10).

By the time *The Rag* began publication in October 1966 escalation of the Vietnam War had begun. Lyndon Johnson had been elected president in 1964 in an overwhelming victory over Barry Goldwater winning 486 electoral votes to Goldwater's

52 (Leip, 1999). Though he had been president since Kennedy's assassination, this election cemented his right to the office. After his inauguration on January 20, 1965, he slowly began to escalate the U.S. commitment in Vietnam. The underground media began to question why mainstream media was not covering this escalation, blasting them as water-carriers for the military machine. One recent researcher even equates the "media" with war machines, summing up the outlook of many in underground media.

The media, in the modern era, are indisputably an instrument of war. This is because winning modern wars is as much dependent on carrying domestic and international public opinion as it is on defeating the enemy on the battlefield. And it remains true regardless of the aspirations of many journalists to give an impartial and balanced assessment of conflict (Payne, 2005, p. 81)

East Village Other editor Allan Katzman, one of the original underground press publications, charged in a *Playboy* expose written by Jacob Brackman (1967) that mainstream media's coverage of the troop escalation was anywhere from ignorant to hypocritical (Brackman, 1967). Katzman went on to critique the mainstream press for not taking a stand.

Katzman lifted one foot onto a desktop in his claustrophobic city room and stroked his beard reflectively. 'The press is losing its power to report spontaneous events,' he went on. 'But it's gaining a new power – to create events; to turn news gathering into news making. The papers of pseudo events, news leaks and press releases offend no one; they take no moral stand. They are just...neutral. They furnish our boring and repetitive lives with boring and repetitive 'news' (Brackman, 1967, para. 3).

In Brackman's (1967, para. 4) article, Paul Krassner, editor of *The Realist*, decries the mainstream media's "escalation of bullshit" and Brackman's (1967, para. 4) quote from John Wilcock, a nationally syndicated underground columnist, described big-

city dailies as a “corrupt advertising medium” that had “forfeited their right to be called newspapers.”

Feeling there was no real critique of the war, publications written by activists, particularly SDSers, began to spring up critiquing mainstream media and the escalation of the war. Jeff Shero (Nightbyrd), co-founder of the Austin SDS described how he felt about mainstream media. “Jesus Christ, we were a lost country. In regard to the mainstream media it was an idiocracy. I could articulate things better than the *New York Times*” (J. Nightbyrd, personal communication, January 11, 2010). Underground media content was mostly political, critiquing the war, racism and advocating political change (Ellis, 1971).

In a retrospective article explaining how they had become disillusioned with mainstream media, *Rag* co-founder Throne Dreyer and writer Victoria Smith wrote:

The commercial press, from the prestigious *Washington Post* to the provincial *St. Paul Dispatch*, has a common language. It is a hackneyed language, but a language that most Americans recognize, internalize and accept. The distortions in both language and general reportage around the Vietnam War demonstrate how journalistic ‘objectivity’ operates in the American press. Despite the mounting disaffection with the war and increased sympathy with the National Liberation Front among Americans, the press consistently refers to the NLF as the ‘enemy’ (Dreyer & Smith, 1969, para 88).

The underground newspapers of the 1960s offered a unique communication avenue for social activists, mostly young adults, to express their views of societal issues in a way that some mainstream media viewed as rebellious. “It was an attempt at a new kind of journalism — developing a more personalistic style of reporting, questioning bourgeois conceptions of ‘objectivity’ and reevaluating established notions about the nature of news” (Dreyer & Smith, 1969, para. 46). These activists felt marginalized by “mainstream media’s ” treatment of events. Those trying to be heard above the multitude

of mainstream media outlets were often drowned out by the sheer power of the media elite.

Not only does the commercial media fail to tie together the facts it presents, but it actually destroys a sense of continuity and history in the minds of the American people. In the name of journalistic objectivity, it reports events; the readers are supposedly free to make their own judgments, but the people read their daily papers and make no judgment at all, except that most of what they read doesn't relate much to their lives. It relates to Jackie Onassis, Lyndon Johnson, the UAW bosses, Charles De Gaulle, the local police department, to any number of figures and institutions that the media makes into legends (Dreyer & Smith, 1969, para. 66).

When mainstream media did write about these activists they often depicted them as irritants, saboteurs and even traitors (Atton, 2002). Thus alternative media became a vehicle for presenting views that were seen as alternative to the general public.

Dreyer describes how he compared underground media to mainstream media.

The mainstream media, the commercial media, was the other side of the story, that's what they were doing is presenting the other side, they just happened to not be on the right side. When the new left started up you had virtually no coverage of the war in Vietnam, period. And that's one of the things that we really did was by getting out there and starting to bring things out we caused, in very real ways, the establishment to have to start dealing with stuff (Thorne Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

We [*The Rag*] also did a lot that was pretty—that was based in fact and that offered people information that they couldn't have gotten anywhere else. And I know we had, we always had, contacts with sort of friendly people on the local newspapers, and news services, and television stations, or whatever, we always

had those kind of contacts throughout the history of the thing, who would feed us information that, say, they couldn't get in their papers (Dreyer, 1976).

While there is some debate as to whether or not the views of alternative media are in the minority, there is at least agreement that they were writing about events that were not being depicted in the mainstream (Atton, 2002). Some saw this as an attempt at change. Others saw it as subversive. Police agencies seized on the view of subversion, creating campaigns to infiltrate these groups and expose them as criminal.

3.5 The F.B.I. Watches

In January 1975, the Senate resolved to establish a Committee to: conduct an investigation and study of governmental operations with respect to intelligence activities and the extent, if any, to which illegal, improper or unethical activities were engaged in by any agency of the Federal Government (U.S. Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1976, p. v).

According to the Senate's Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (1976), one of the main programs under scrutiny was the COINTELPRO program, started in 1956 and run through 1971 by the F.B.I. It was basically a way to suppress political dissent and suppress civil liberties. "Hoover said it was created to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit or otherwise neutralize activities of individuals and organizations deemed to pose a threat to domestic tranquility" (Besthorn, 2006, p. 73). The Committee explained the motives, but also commented on the effect these activities had on society.

It was designed to disrupt groups and neutralize individuals deemed to be threats to domestic security. The F.B.I. resorted to Counterintelligence tactics in part because its chief officials believed that the existing law could not control the activities of certain dissident groups, and that court decisions had tied the hands of the intelligence community. Whatever opinion one holds about the policies of the targeted groups, many of the tactics employed by the F.B.I. were indisputably degrading to a free society (U.S. Senate Select Committee, 1976, p. 10).

Until 1960, the FBI's COINTELPRO program was aimed mostly at Communists. It then progressed to those allegedly under communist influence, then to persons taking positions supported by Communists (U.S. Senate Select Committee, 1976). This left a lot to interpretation, and, depending on who was doing the interpreting, many were caught up in the wide net that had been cast.

The most intensive domestic intelligence investigations and COINTELPRO operations were targeted at persons identified not as criminals or criminal suspects, but at rabble rousers, agitators and key activists or key black extremists because of their militant rhetoric and group leadership. The Security Index was revised to include such persons (U.S. Senate Select Committee, 1976).

One group that had been caught up in this interpretation was civil rights activists, many of which were members of the newly formed SDS. Although COINTELPRO head William C. Sullivan claimed in his memoirs that the F.B.I. didn't even know the SDS, a.k.a. the New Left, existed until 1968, records show an active surveillance program aimed at these groups had existed as early as 1961 (Churchill & Wall, 1990). This was when white activists began accompanying civil rights workers on "Freedom Rides" into the Deep South to draw attention to Jim Crow laws. Kenneth O'Reilly, a participant on one of the Freedom Rides, recounted an incident in Anniston, AL, about 60 miles from Birmingham, on May 13, 1961.

The F.B.I. watched as the second bus, the Trailways, pulled into Anniston within an hour. Eight toughs boarded, demanded the black riders move to the rear, and then beat two white riders, Dr. Walter Bergman and James Peck. The sixty-one year old Peck, a retired school administrator, suffered permanent brain damage. When the bus arrived at its terminal in Birmingham about fifty minutes later, a mob of about forty Klansmen and members of the National States Rights Party (a neo-nazi group) greeted the Freedom Riders. Most carried baseball bats or

chains. A few had lead pipes. The F.B.I. looked on again as one of them knocked down the unfortunate Peck once more (Churchill & Wall, 1990, p. 166).

With civil rights being one of the defining goals of the SDS, F.B.I. officials said they were concerned with keeping order as SDSers began their civil rights protests in the early 1960s (Churchill & Waller, 1990). In 1964, SDS protests began to include free speech issues. University of California at Berkeley's Chancellor Clark Kerr attempted to quell SDS campus activities by prohibiting off-campus political causes. The resulting "Free Speech Movement" forced Kerr to reverse his position in January 1965 and he was ultimately forced from his job in the face of a massive refusal by students to forfeit their rights of free speech (Churchill & Wall, 1990). Student radicals across the nation began to mobilize their cause for "student power" within the institutions with the SDS at the forefront. The F.B.I. began a campaign to infiltrate the organization.

Informant activity *vis-à-vis* SDS was an integral part of a more generalized F.B.I. "political intelligence" emphasis during the period from 1964 to 1968 which saw the installation of some 800 wiretaps and 700 bugs (facilitated by some 150 surreptitious entries), and an unknown number of informants and infiltrators, all utilized in "non-criminal" investigations. Far from the Bureau being unaware of the new left's existence until 1968, Hoover himself had gone on record in February 1966 describing SDS as one of the most militant organizations in the country and claiming that Communists were actively promoting and participating in the activities of this organization (Churchill & Wall, 1990, p. 166).

In March of 1965 there was an upsurge in student anti-war sentiment with the landing of U.S. expeditionary forces in Danang. The SDS played a key role in organizing a mass demonstration against the U.S. role in Vietnam when in April 1965 some 25,000 people marched on the capital in Washington, D.C. (Sale, 1973). Although the FBI had already begun to infiltrate the SDS, J. Edgar Hoover had received approval to tap the

phones of the national as well as local organizations. Although the group had not been accused of any crimes, the F.B.I. was definitely watching.

Not only were they watching, they were actively engaging in campaigns to discredit these “dissidents.”

In the 1960s Bureau, agents were instructed to increase their efforts to discredit “New Left” student demonstrators by tactics including publishing photographs (“naturally the most obnoxious picture should be used”), using “misinformation” to falsely notify members that events had been cancelled, and writing “tell tale” letters to students’ parents (U.S. Senate Select Committee, 1976, p. 9).

The report goes on to state that

Other tactics, including “anonymously mailing letters to the spouses of intelligence targets for the purpose of destroying their marriages and anonymously attacking the political beliefs of targets in order to induce their employers to fire them” (U.S. Senate Select Committee, 1976, p. 10).

Opened in 1975, the U.S. Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Gathering, also called the “Church Committee,” began to investigate intelligence gathering operations to determine if the F.B.I. and C.I.A. had been involved in questionable, or even illegal, intelligence gathering activities. The Committee noted that its

findings and conclusions concerning abuses in intelligence activity and weaknesses in the system of accountability and control are amply documented. I believe they make a case for substantial reform. The recommendations section of this volume sets forth in detail the Committee’s proposals for reforms necessary to protect the rights of Americans. The facts revealed by the Committee’s inquiry into the development of domestic intelligence activity are outlined in the balance of the volume (U.S. Senate Select Committee, 1976, p. iii).

3.6 From National to Local

While all of this was going on at a national level, communities around the country were dealing with these changes at a local level. These national influences seemed to be a common thread for the movements at a local level, but each community had influences of its own which sparked the rebellion. Austin in particular had a reputation for progressivism, deep in the heart of conservative Texas, and was a bastion for the non-traditional. There was a thriving music scene that would lead to “the psychedelic rock explosion” and would become one of the definitive events of the 1960s cultural movement (Conn, 2008).

CHAPTER 4

A LOCAL MOVEMENT

The cultural explosion led to some rebellion in 1960s Austin, TX. With the University of Texas at the heart of the community, and its standing as the state capitol of Texas, the scene was set for a clash of cultures – the deeply-rooted political culture and the new activist culture. The ascendancy of Lyndon B. Johnson, a state representative and senator from Texas, to the presidency following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, brought this formerly quiet, good-old-boy bastion of Texas politics into the national spotlight. But, a growing activist student population at the University of Texas was already challenging the political establishment. Racial issues, feminism and the escalating war in Vietnam inflamed the student activists and they sought ways to express their disagreement with U.S. policies.

4.1 A Progressive City in a Conservative State

Austin was founded in 1839 as the capitol for the Republic of Texas. It began as a 640-acre parcel of land on the Colorado River on a 14 square block grid (Humphrey, 2008). In 1881 the University of Texas was founded, cementing Austin's place as an educational center for the state. Over the next 50 years industrial development in the state, fueled by the oil industry, bypassed Austin (Humphrey, 2008) so the Austin Chamber of Commerce called on the city leaders in 1928 to develop its strengths as a residential, cultural and educational center. City planning and beautification became official city policy (Humphrey, 2008). This policy led to Austin's reputation as a center for progressive ideas, which was often at odds with the conservative leanings of the other metropolitan areas of the state, all of which had elected representatives who spent much of their time in Austin.

The city was a magnet for progressive whites and was fast becoming the cultural center of the state. But segregation was still an issue. The 1928 development plan had recommended that east Austin be designated a “Negro district” and by 1930 the east side of town was predominantly African-American (Humphrey, 1985). With the help of Austin’s mayor Tom Miller, who took office in 1933, and congressman Lyndon Baines Johnson, elected in 1937, Austin received more funding from the Public Works Administration than any other city in Texas (Humphrey, 2008), but little of it went to the areas in east Austin.

By the 1950s Austin was almost completely segregated. A growing influx of Hispanic residents swelled the population of east Austin. In 1950, Hispanics composed 11.1 percent of the population and African-Americans 14.1 percent of the city’s total population of 132,459 (City of Austin, 1995). The city was now composed of three distinct centers – the minority centers of east Austin, the University of Texas at the center of town and the seat of the state government to the south. The three factions were set to clash as the 1950s came to a close.

4.2 Segregation, SDS and Vietnam

When 1960 began, the University of Texas had a student population of almost 20,000 (University of Texas Office of the Registrar, 2007) and Austin’s population had grown by 40 percent since 1950 to 186,545 (City of Austin, 1995). Students were seeking a voice in school policies. Segregation was one of those policies. Austin SDS founder Robert Pardun remembered walking one of his African-American friends to his dorm one night in 1963 and realizing the extent to which segregation was still alive on campus.

The black men’s dormitory in which David lived was an old army Quonset hut, located in a swampy area far from the main part of the campus. It was very different from the multi-story air-conditioned white dorms on campus. David told me that the visiting rules in the women’s dormitories were quite specific about segregation. Black women could visit in the white women’s dorms, but they couldn’t use the drinking fountains or the bathrooms. White men could go into the

waiting room in the white women's dorms to visit, but black men were forbidden. Intercollegiate athletics, the Longhorn band, drama, student employment and the beauty queen contest were all for whites only. This confrontation with reality was another step in the string of events that were changing my life (Pardun, 2001, p. 26).

It was about that time that *Rag* co-founder Thorne Dreyer entered UT.

Well I went up to – went to the University of Texas in 1963, I guess – uh, and I guess it was a very heightened time already. It was a time of anticipation, a time of sort of excitement, something was in the air, something was beginning to happen. The civil rights movement was growing, and there were sort of these sparks. The country was really just beginning to come out of the long sleep of the fifties, there was that undercurrent of energy, and I had always been – my parents were very sort of open-minded and liberal – and I had always been, I guess, more open to different kinds of ideas than a lot of people, that are among my peers. And so I went up to Austin – I was ready, I mean I was ready (for) something, I felt this energy, and I was ready to move into something (Dreyer, 1976).

Dreyer watched as the counterculture and SDS began to make the changes happen.

In the fall of 1963, Pardun and Austin activist Charlie Smith decided to start an SDS chapter at the University of Texas. Just before Christmas break they went to the student activities dean to get approval.

This meant we could use university rooms and pass out approved leaflets on campus and set up a recruiting booth at registration. While we didn't like the restrictions on our freedom of speech, we went along with them in order to build an SDS chapter at the University of Texas (Pardun, 2001, p. 36).

But little did they know they were being watched. Beginning in 1963, campus police, in connection with the F.B.I. were following anti-conformists on the campus of UT. As early as April of 1963 the F.B.I. was receiving reports from the University of Texas campus police about beatnik activities which they described as “those bearded types and their playmates” (Austin-American Statesman, 1963, p.6). UT Police Chief Allen Hamilton was gathering and sharing information with federal agencies. A memorandum was obtained from the U.S. Secret Service dated December 30, 1963, informing campus police of three persons they were following who were potentially dangerous because of their radical views (Bartram, 1963). The names included Lyndon Panry, Douglas Heinline and Don Laguarda, known civil rights activists with the TPSL (*Työväen ja Pienviljelijäin Sosialidemokraattinen Liitto*), also known as the Social Democratic Union of Workers and Smallholders of Finland, who would later be part of the SDS. The letter read in part, “This office was furnished with information from the Intelligence Security Files on subjects they consider potentially dangerous, due to their radical view, and of possible interest to this service as protective subjects.” It went on to say, “A list of members or prospective members at Austin, Texas, consisting of three pages was furnished. On this list appears one Sandra Ward, Kinsolving Dorm 344, Austin, 15, Texas, which may be of interest to the Velvet Detail. The list also contains other university students” (Bartram, 1963, para. 1 & 8 respectively).

By this time the national SDS had broken into factions due to philosophical differences on whom to recruit. One faction of the national SDS movement had decided that, rather than convince bourgeois students to leave school and work for the poor, they should focus on radicalizing middle class students (Burr, 1988). That middle class, working culture was the theme of the UT SDS movement.

During winter registration in 1964, Pardun set up an SDS information booth and invited people to attend an organizational meeting in January where about 35 people showed up. They decided to sponsor a demonstration to force the integration of a local

restaurant, the Picadilly Restaurant. Original members included Judy Schiffer, Pardun's girlfriend; Jeff Shero (Nightbyrd), a military kid; Gary Thiher who drove a big rig in the summer to make money for college; former divinity student George Vizard; and Alice Embree, the daughter of a UT professor (Pardun, 2001). In response to the protest, the Picadilly decided to open its doors to everyone. Because of this success, the SDS received a lot of recognition on campus. Dreyer remembers this as the time the SDS began to grow.

At this point, my friends, the people I had known in school, and the people I had known around Austin, were beginning to get involved in this new kind of political, cultural energy that was still very much a minority thing. There were still very few people, but it was a growing thing, and it was sort of the way we felt things were going, the motion was taking things, and I got involved in SDS – Students for Democratic Society – early. Really in '64, I guess, and started. I got involved in the anti-war movement, various kinds of demonstrations, became very active in that whole process (Dreyer, 1976).

This initial protest was their way of bringing attention to civil rights, but the fledgling anti-war movement was also getting their attention (Pardun, 2001). Embree recalled giving an anti-war speech on the west mall of the campus.

The (University of Texas) administration didn't like us protesting the war. They said this was LBJ's school and LBJ's war and we shouldn't embarrass him. I was called up and put on disciplinary action in the spring (1965) for giving a speech against the war. They said I gave a speech in an unauthorized location – the west mall at the University of Texas. I didn't reserve a room. The same thing happened to the Portland chapter of SDS – they were in trouble because they didn't reserve a room. That didn't go over real well with a constitutional lawyer who taught at the University – Fred Cohen, and he defended us which was hilarious. Fred the Red. He defended us before the disciplinary committee. It was

nice to have a constitutional lawyer on our side” (A. Embree, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

After a visit to Texas Western University, where she was recruiting for the SDS, Embree sent a postcard to Chief Hamilton in March of 1965 comparing the actions of Texas Western campus police to Hamilton’s force. “Literature table was set up by local group. Big mob gathered, literature was torn up, egging, table was overturned and fist fights. Girl ran for campus police, they replied ‘it’s none of our affair.’ Appreciate your people more now! Your friendly campus agitator” (Hamilton, 2005). Hamilton copied the postcard onto a memorandum to UT Chancellor Harry Ransom explaining that “Alice Embree, Scott and Charlotte Rathburn all UT students this semester are contributing to Texas Western problem. Byron Shipp told me yesterday that the foreign student agitator had withdrawn from U.T.” (Hamilton, 1966, entirety).

By this time the SDS was firmly entrenched at UT. Pardun and his fellow SDS members followed the escalation of the war.

We didn’t know how much opposition to the war there was within the government because almost everyone maintained a façade of unity. On July 28, President Johnson held a press conference announcing that he was sending 50,000 troops right away and more later. He didn’t mention that he had already approved 150,000 men, raising the total to 225,000. Honest straightforward information was an early casualty of the war (Pardun, 2001, p. 128).

Pardun also didn’t know the FBI was gathering information on him.

Although we didn’t know about the details at the time, the FBI began to gather information about SDS following the March on Washington. They opened a file on me when I went to Mississippi and, in their eyes, my brief membership in the Young Socialists Alliance was enough to make me into a communist and therefore a ‘communist infiltrator’ of SDS. We were aware that they were probably watching the office, but we weren’t particularly concerned because we

weren't doing anything illegal. If they wanted to know what we were doing, all they had to do was ask. We joked about how the phone was probably tapped, which it really was, and would occasionally comment on strange noises during phone calls. I had no idea at the time that I was doing anything that was important enough for the FBI to be keeping track of me (Pardun, 2001, p. 124.)

As the new school year was starting in the fall of 1965, the SDS set up a booth near the exit of the registration area. "I was surprised at how many people did stop to ask questions, particularly about the war" (Pardun, 2001, p. 132). *Rag* co-founder Carole Neiman, who later that year joined the SDS, was one of those who did ask questions. Neiman had seen some SDS members on campus before and recalled her first impressions of its members.

I'm in the Chuck Wagon, the local cafeteria in the Student Union Building. I saw these people sitting at a table in the back and it was obvious from their appearance that they were different from everyone else. They were the ones I wanted to hang around with (C. Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

Later that year Neiman attended her first SDS meeting.

I remember I went to an SDS meeting and getting all dressed up and putting my hair up and getting dressed in sort of my Sunday suit, and I walked into this meeting and it's full of everybody in jeans and overalls and long hair. They were very nice to me despite the fact that I looked like some sort of parochial school student (C. Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

Neiman recalled that she felt the Austin SDS chapter was somewhat different from other chapters around the country.

It was kind of unique in terms of the overall national organization in that it really did incorporate artists and druggies and musicians and the whole cultural phenomenon that was happening in Austin and at UT in that kind of odd situation

that was not east or west coast (C. Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

Daily Texan editor Kaye Northcott remembered the SDS as an extension of Austin culture. "They weren't screamers. It was much more civilized than that. They might have screamed at Johnson. They had to, but they weren't screamers. They just wanted a better world" (K. Northcott, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Dreyer recalled the Austin SDS as more of a cultural movement.

SDS was unique in Austin because we were more cultural than in other places. We were less intellectual. We were less academic. We were more involved in the community. Because in lots of places the new left were a bunch of graduate students that were theoreticians like Tom Hayden. We weren't that way. I mean we were smart, but we were more into the culture (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Activist Alice Embree agreed.

In another aspect, on the coasts there is sort of a different political climate and in Texas if you were weird you were just lumped in with the weirdos and Austin was a magnet for it. There was much more blending than occurred on the coasts. The SDS on the coasts were more academic (A. Embree, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

But there was a price to pay for being a member of SDS in Texas' conservative environment because it meant you were different. Jeff Shero (Nightbyrd) was one of the original SDS members at UT. He went on to become a national vice president of SDS. He explained what that price could be.

In Texas, to join SDS meant breaking with your family, it meant being cut off. It was like in early Rome joining a Christian sect. If you were in Texas and a member of SDS it meant you were a bad motherfucker and couldn't go home for Christmas (J. Nightbyrd, 2005, 4 mins, 51 sec.).

By 1965 the UT campus had already been the scene of one of the earliest war protests. The new SDS chapter, in conjunction with other chapters nationwide, had organized what they called the “Death March” to the Texas capitol in October as part of the International Days of Protest against the Vietnam War. The assembly walked from the university library to the state capitol building.

Handwritten notes in the surveillance files of UT Chief of Police Allen Hamilton detailed the planning for the march, including the route and the fact that marchers were prepared to march without a permit in hopes of embarrassing the city council for refusing to grant such permit (Hamilton, 2005). Apparently the police were still watching.

A flourishing counterculture was taking root, too. *Rag* co-founder Thorne Dreyer recalled how the counterculture movement was coming together.

We were all a part of it and we all had strong beliefs about how to change society and this happened with the hip movement, the psychedelic movement and the music community. You had two phenomenon occurring. There was the new music, the drug revolution, this whole 60’s psychedelia that grew out of it and had this incredible draw to the Austin culture because it was radical. It was affecting people and changing people’s lives. It was drawing people that were in a sort of staid, manila environment. At the same time you had people coming out of academia who were looking at the civil rights movement, people who had grown up through this new era of involvement, of political involvement, that saw all of these things happening that were tied to our economic structure. We were the hippies. We didn’t call ourselves hippies then, we were just the counterculture (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Neiman recalled that although the counterculture was a nationwide phenomenon, in Austin it centered around the University of Texas campus.

There was this whole kind of huge cultural collection in Austin, a developing phenomenon of a 60s thing, music people and drug people, artists, that kind of

dropped in and out of the university. It was the same as in Berkeley or in Ann Arbor. There was this kind of flow between the on-campus and off-campus community of people all about the same age, but people were not necessarily staying in classes and going to school all the time. The school was sort of the focus and provided support for a supportive community for artists and musicians to hang around and be around a sort of intellectually stimulating environment without necessarily being enrolled in college and getting degrees and stuff (C. Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

The counterculture had a message but that message was funneled through the UT SDS chapter. In early 1966, SDS member Gary Thiher ran for student body president in an effort to spread the local SDS platform to the university community and to show that the local chapter was about more than national issues. In his platform statement he called for the availability of contraceptives in the university health center, funding for a “peace study” equal to that of R.O.T.C. funding, the elimination of tuition at state universities, and a stop to the university’s intrusion into student’s free speech and personal decision making, among other things (Thiher, 2005). “We demanded a student government that could advocate for the students instead of being powerless” (Pardun, 2001, p. 97). Thiher also took a stance against racism, the war and the military draft. He also had a theme song. The chorus went like this:

We know he cannot win, 'cause he's advocatin' sin,

And if you vote for Thiher, they'll wonder what you're in.

But if you wanna show 'em how you feel,

Vote for Gary Thiher, if you don't want this kind of deal. (Pardun, 2001, p. 97).

Thiher was able to speak about the issues in public forums and even wrote articles that ran in *The Daily Texan*. “The whole campus was more aware of the issues and our positions by the time the campaign was over” (Pardun, 2001, p. 97) Thiher lost

the election, but the SDS continued to make inroads on campus – so much so that in 1970 SDS candidate Jeff Jones was elected president of the student body (Thiher, 2005).

At about the same time Thiher ran for student body president *The New York Times* reported that chemicals had destroyed 130,000 acres of Vietnamese farmland in an attempt to deny cover to the enemy by aerial spraying of Agent Orange and Napalm bombs were dropped on populated villages, killing or causing burns that resulted in melted flesh (Pardun, 2001). As the war progressed, students began to question the official government stance that it was saving South Vietnam and the Vietnamese from destruction by the communists (Pardun, 2001). In February 1966, *The Texas Ranger*, a UT student-produced magazine, printed a caricature of President Johnson on its cover depicting him as a snake oil salesman. The Board of Texas Student Publications refused to allow its distribution on campus saying it put the president in a ridiculous situation (Pardun, 2001). “Many university administrators believed that they had the right to control what students said and did, on and off campus, and we challenged them on constitutional grounds” (Pardun, 2001, p. 149).

The other student publication, *The Daily Texan*, decided not to challenge the UT power structure.

The editorial staff of the student newspaper, *The Daily Texan*, was too intimidated to do anything, but just to make sure, the board ordered that there be no editorial criticism of the Board of Regents. In the controversy that followed, the staff members of *The Daily Texan* caved in and refused to stand up for freedom of the press and autonomy in their editorials. SDS protested this blatant interference with the freedom of the press, but since the students running the paper wouldn't take a stand, the protest just simmered beneath the surface (Pardun, 2001, p. 150).

4.3 The Daily Texan

Soon after John Economidy was elected editor of the Daily Texan last spring he made a grand entrance into the newspaper office wearing an Air Force ROTC uniform and carrying a makeshift swagger stick. He marched to the copydesk, banged the stick on the table rim and announced 'General John is here.' The Texan has not been the same since (Northcott, 1966).

The Texan had been around since 1900, first as a weekly newspaper becoming a daily in 1913 (Copp & Rogers, 1999). It also had an independent streak.

In the 1920s it fought censorship. An October 9, 1922, ad for Jersey Silk Lingerie angered the dean of women, but the newspaper prevailed, retaining its right to determine advertising content (Copp & Rogers, 1999).

This continued in the 1930s with editorials condemning the formation of an R.O.T.C. unit on campus. Editor Joe Storm wrote in an editorial that the R.O.T.C. was “another Hitleristic shocktroop to throttle freedom of thinking, discussion and organization” (Storm, 1935). The Texas Student Publications Board, which oversaw fiscal operations of student publications responded on November 7 with a resolution which read in part, “The Board of Directors of the Texas Student Publications believes that *The Daily Texan* should be edited with zeal for building respect and friendship for the University and with a factual, analytical, and unbiased attitude toward current problems” (Copp & Rogers, 1999, p. 33).

Although the *Texan* slowed its critiques, issues still arose occasionally that prompted its editorial staff to respond. One of the most contentious to date came up in 1942. UT president Homer P. Rainey disagreed with the Board of Regents when it refused to reappoint economics instructor J. Fagg Foster because of his political views. The *Texan* responded with an editorial titled *Academic Freedom* in which it stated, “Academic freedom must be preserved. To this end *The Daily Texan* will fight – until the day when it is denied Freedom of the Press” (Wilke, 1942, p. 1). When the *Texan* refused to back down, the Board of Regents turned to banning books from professors’ reading

lists. When the board banned *U.S.A.* by John Dos Passos, *The Texan* published a book review with Rainey's support (Copp & Rogers, 1999). The Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools placed the university on probation for firing Rainey and eventually the furor died down and Rainey was replaced by T. S. Painter (Copp & Rogers, 1999). By the end of the 1940s a rift had developed between the Student's Association and *The Daily Texan*.

Women made it to top *Texan* positions in the 1950s. Editor Anne Chambers and managing editor Jo Ann Dickerson began their term in 1952 with an editorial that read, "The *Texan* is not on our shoulders, but in our hands" (Dickerson, 1952, p. 3). Sportswriter Norma Mills became the first woman allowed into the press box at Memorial Stadium (Copp & Rogers, 1999). Integration continued to be an issue and in 1954 the *Texan* ran a front page article touting the first "Negro" undergraduate admission, a young student named Marion Ford (Copp & Rogers, 1999). When the administration reversed its decision to admit Ford, *Texan* editor Shirley Strum fought back in an editorial saying "Desegregation must come. The main building lauds that 'Truth shall make you free.' It does not label this truth 'for whites only'" (Strum, 1954, p. 1). The Board of Regents instituted integration of university enrollment in July 1955, but full integration had not been achieved (Copp & Rogers, 1999).

Editor Willie Morris, in 1956, began to criticize a congressional proposal known as the Fulbright-Harris Natural Gas Bill which Morris said was financed by corrupt Texas money. On numerous occasions Morris was called into the office of UT president Logan Wilson where he was admonished for his involvement in state politics. When Morris refused to stop his criticisms, the Texas Student Publications Board moved the *Texan's* daily deadline from 5:30 p.m. to 9 a.m. and declared that any controversial editorial or column would have to be approved by the board (Copp & Rogers, 1999). Morris' reaction was to run blank spaces in place of the copy with text that read, "This editorial withheld" (Copp & Rogers, 1999, pp. 71-72). At a Texas Student Publications Board meeting in

February, the student majority “overturned the editorial manager’s decision and granted Morris the power to decide the content of his editorial” (Copp & Rogers, 1999, p. 72).

Kaye Northcott, *Daily Texan* editor from 1965 to 1966, who later worked for Morris at the *Texas Observer*, sarcastically remarked about the dust up, “Willie Morris was editor before me and they did try to do away with his editorial page. They wouldn’t let him write about tideland policy so he wrote a hell of a series about the water pressure on campus” (K. Northcott, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

The Daily Texan had established itself as an independent source of news for the UT campus and by 1960, with a daily circulation of about 17,000, it had become the largest campus newspaper in the nation and a major source of news for UT students (J. Economidy, personal communication, March 21, 2009). Its editorial staff, headed by Northcott as editor in chief, continued to fight censorship, to speak out against racism, and it was beginning to question the war in Vietnam. Northcott recalled their efforts.

We thought the war was wrong and so we wrote about it. I think what was radical about the *Texan* was that it was independent. Rather than being a PR forum for the university it was doing something. That was radical then. My philosophy of journalism was to provide information about what was going on in the world. We were learning about what the CIA was doing in Central America and we were running it in the *Texan*. We had a hard time getting it in the *Texan* but we were. And so it was with the Vietnam War. We didn’t like the Vietnam War and so the chairman of the Board of Regents tried to do away with the editorial page. (K. Northcott, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

In the Oct. 12, 1965, issue of *The Daily Texan*, Northcott wrote, “The draft, like the Eyes of Texas, is inescapable. The once safe college student or married man can no longer rest easy, according to the recent announcements from the selective service” (Northcott, 1965, p. 2).

She did not let up even when she was called in by the chairman of the UT Board of Regents, Frank Erwin.

Well I probably weighed 90 lbs. then and they dressed me for the regency meetings with little green ribbons in my hair and the student body president would go with me to support me. But Frank Erwin played a very heavy hand. I got hauled up to Dallas right before a football game and they made a proposal to me of things they wanted to do. The regents wives didn't like him and they realized I was going back to Austin to edit the paper rather than to stay to see the football game and so they pinned a little mum on me and that was the day they decided that Frank Erwin should just by God leave us alone. He had just overstepped his bounds. He was very boorish. He was an LBJ crony. He was a Democratic National Committee man for Texas and LBJ was president. It wasn't like I was saying get out of Vietnam, I was just saying 'ewwww.' And that was just too much for Erwin. This was Lyndon Johnson's war and this was Lyndon Johnson's university. No one should embarrass him. UT was the jewel and the *Texan* was its voice and that was especially bad to put the limelight on him (Northcott, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Northcott continued her criticism of the war. In a final attempt to shut her up Norman Hackerman, the vice chancellor for academic affairs, had their paychecks withheld. Eventually the administration relented and their paychecks were reinstated (Copp & Rogers, 1999). "I think what was radical then about the *Texan* was that it was independent. Rather than being a PR forum for the university it was doing some thinking. That was radical. Kaye lent credibility to it" (A. Embree, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

All that changed when John Economidy, a member of the campus R.O.T.C., ran for editor of *The Daily Texan* in 1966.

I started getting significant support from Student Republicans and sororities and fraternities. Sororities and fraternities had an inter-fraternity council who ran the Greeks, and a classmate, Bobby Franks, was head of inter-fraternity council. That rapport was the biggest contributor to my election. Peter Conaway undertook to really support me. I never talked to him about it, but he did it. He later became member of Board of Regents 30 years later. I owe them for that. I'm only the second Republican editor who had been elected to that date. Richard Elam in the 1940s was also a Republican. Campus conservatives believed we were going to get another wild-eyed, bleary-eyed liberal in there and at that point I started getting significant support from Student Republicans and sororities and fraternities. Part of my campaign slogan was to oust the clique at *The Daily Texan* (J. Economidy, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

The clique to which Economidy referred included previous *Texan* editors Northcott (1965-66) and Charmayne Marsh (1964-65) whom he saw as radicals. "They were part of the campus turmoil of the 1960s. They were basically SDS and other campus radicals and I didn't like the sons-of-bitches" (J. Economidy, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

Economidy became editor after two runoffs and after filing suit alleging that "the election commission failed to maintain voting lists, failed to have voting boxes at all precincts and did not require students to vote in their respective colleges and schools" (Kowart, 1966, p.1). The Student Court agreed and Economidy won the *Texan* editorship for 1966-67 on April 17, 1966 (University of Texas Student Court, 1966).

After I was elected I came into the *Texan* offices. We had just finished an R.O.T.C. drill and I was wearing my military tuxedo. I rapped on the copydesk with a classroom pointer, obviously I had been drinking, and told the crew that 'General John was here.' Kaye talked about it being a swagger stick instead of a campus pointer in an article in the first edition of *The Rag*. She said 'Economidy's

position is hard to determine because he changes perch so often (J. Economidy, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

In referring to an article Northcott wrote for *Newsweek* about the growing conservatism at the university, UT student Mike Walker wrote this letter to the editor in May of 1966:

Newsweek magazine was right about the university being essentially conservative in its political outlook. It kind of frightens me, too. The runoff election for the editorship of the *Texan* proved this. Essentially the issue was: do you like the present *Texan* editorial policy or do you disapprove of it as it now stands? John Economidy won by claiming that he would put an end to 'extremism' in editorial opinions. I am proud to say that I'll be graduating this June and can remember the *Texan* as I've always known it, i.e., nipping at the heels of that sluggish giant known as Texas Conservatism (Walker, 1966).

"My time at the *Texan* was over when John became editor. When he walked in wearing his R.O.T.C. uniform and carrying that so-called swagger stick, we all knew the *Texan* was taking a sharp right turn" (K. Northcott, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Economidy admits he wanted to change the *Texan*.

The standard I had on the *Texan* was that there was no spin. Kaye Northcott and Charmaine beforehand had spins. That just wrankled me. It might have been the right moral choice if you had that choice but to print it with the spin was just wrong. I remember Norris Davis, an ethics professor, who said you don't have to say someone is a son of a bitch. Just print the truth and everyone will know that. I implemented changes. My best accomplishment was a first-rate staff. Anybody could apply. The radical elements were not journalism majors so they didn't apply because if I was going to choose between journalists and those with a

philosophical bent, I was going to pick the journalists (J. Economidy, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

4.4 The Watchful Eyes of Texas

Economidy was more than a journalist – he was helping the UT campus police spy on people, including the SDS and *The Rag*. In an August 1966 letter to UT police chief Allen Hamilton, Economidy said, “Here is the list of persons which I promised you. I don’t think that I can get you the negatives of the shots I took right now (Monday) but I will give them to you Tuesday at the latest” (Economidy, 1966, entirety). Economidy freely admits he was an informer.

I had given Hamilton and the FBI information on their activities during my editorship. They were part of campus turmoil of the 1960s. I didn’t like the son-of-a-bitches. Apparently Hamilton kept a lot of those files in his garage after he left UT. His son found them after he died” (J. Economidy, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

Economidy was not the only UT student helping the campus police. Hamilton also recruited the treasurer of the local SDS, Jeff Gardner, as an informer (Hamilton, 2005). In a report titled *Background on July 24, 1966 meeting of Austin Committee Against the War in Viet Nam*, which included SDS member Jeff Nightbyrd, known then as Jeff Shero, Gardner recounted the meeting. The report read:

John Conway arrived in a 1955 green Pontiac four-door sedan, with Michigan license plate FB-4778. Smokes Winston cigarettes. Brad Blanton laid out plan for march on the blackboard at Presbyterian Campus Ministry. Opposing the march on Sunday, Dean Beebe said “Newsmen probably would not take pictures of us.” Also pointed out that AP and UPI are usually closed Sunday (sic). Jeff Shero emphasized that the Negro community tends to oppose the war in Viet Nam more than other persons. He said Latin Americans followed to a lesser extent. 49 plus or minus at meeting. Shero said that he once talked to persons about the

war in a poolroom in Gainesville, Florida. Address of Charlie McKinley Smith, local member of the W.R.R. DuBois Club: Box 4103 Austin, TX 78702-3660. John Herrera, 19, of 1256 Curtain Road in Houston is member of the Houston chapter of the DuBois Club. Said that he works as a sort of co-chairman with Danny Schacts, 20, of Houston (Economidy, 1966, entirety).

Since he was part of the movement, Gardner was able to tell Hamilton specifically what went on in some of the anti-war planning meetings. In a July 1966 report, Gardner describes SDS member and future *Rag* salesman George Vizard explaining how to conduct an anti-war march. "He said that heckling could get rough (sic). He said that generally you have a non-violence workshop prior to the march in order to let people know what their responsibilities are" (Gardner, 1966, para. 27). The report went on to say, "Shero (a.k.a. Jeff Nightbyrd) suggested that the *Daily Texan* sponsor the event since they support the first amendment of the US Constitution. Shero makes motion that Blanton get several veterans to take the petition to the council because it would be more effective--PASSED" (Gardner, 1966, para. 19-20).

Rag "funnel" Dreyer wrote about the files in a *Texas Observer* article in 2006.

Allen Hamilton kept his files secret until his death in 2005, long after his retirement as campus police chief for the University of Texas at Austin. His son discovered them while cleaning out his father's office. The boxes of documents and photos from the 1960s included records of the most horrific event in Chief Hamilton's tenure—the August day in 1966 when Charles Whitman perched atop the UT Tower with a high-powered rifle, killing 15 and wounding 33. Graphic photos from the Whitman archives were made available to newspapers to mark the 40th anniversary of that bloody day.

But Hamilton's files also provide valuable links to the complex political and social currents that were washing over the campus four decades ago. These documents—made public here for the first time—tell the story of how the

University of Texas spied on its nonconformist and dissident students. The records—covering a period from approximately 1963 to 1970—show the extensive efforts that campus police made to identify, watch, and follow students and faculty members whom it found suspicious.

The files include more than 500 pages of department memos, some from student informers; lists of names of campus "dopers" and activists; and photocopies of newspaper articles and leaflets. Also included are over 250 surveillance photographs. The documents reveal that among the subjects campus police were monitoring at the time were Janis Joplin, Jerry Jeff Walker, and Richard ("Kinky") Friedman (Dreyer, 2006, para. 1, 2, 3).

"I was in many of those pictures, too" (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Hamilton's files were originally sold to Half Price Books. Realizing the historical value of the content, Half Price Books donated the papers back to the UT Center for American History. Dreyer was allowed to go through the files before they were given back to UT and archived many of the documents for the *Texas Observer* (Dreyer, 2006).

4.5 The Rag is Born

The March 1966 election of Economidy as editor of the *Daily Texan* so disgusted Dreyer and many of his SDS friends that they began to think about starting an underground newspaper in the summer of 1966. They also knew it would bring attention to their cause. "Like the underground papers were like this juicy little cat toy for the police. You know it was just this test, let's just see what we can get the police to do" (Kaye Northcott, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Dreyer recalled reading one underground newspaper called *The Paper* that came out of East Lansing, MI. He had heard of the Underground Press Syndicate early in the summer. "We sat around and talked about it for a little while and that summer Carol

[Neiman] and I went to Berkeley to learn more” (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009). This was in July of 1966.

Neiman remembered her role in the whole thing.

After I met these students I ended up moving in with Thorne and Gary (Thiher) and as I recall we went to the UPS conference in Berkley as preparation to start *The Rag*. I was kind of the cleaner upper. Thorne was this wonderful wild character and I was to kind of look after him and keep him on the ground a bit. My role was to look after him and say ‘okay this is a great idea. Now what are we going to do about it?’ (C. Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

Dreyer recalled what they were thinking at the time.

Several friends and I, mostly the sort of core people in both the political and cultural movements, we all got together and felt a real need for some kind of a publication, and there weren’t really any models for that kind of thing. Nobody had done it before. There were other underground papers, things like the *Los Angeles Free Press* and the *East Village Other*, and whatever, but none of them were really the kind of thing that we wanted to do. It was going to come out of the kind of community we were involved in. The germ was there and it was mainly over the summer that we thought about it and talked about it and then we just decided to do it. The events with *The Daily Texan* created this wonderful sense of timing. It created a wonderful opportunity. We felt like we no longer had a voice so we started talking about it [*The Rag*]. It came out of a community and there were a lot of people involved. And we had some people who we thought could probably pull it off. Onward through the fog – hubris – radical hubris. It was a collective effort. It grew out of a process. One was the Austin SDS and the Austin counterculture. We were all part of it.

“Jeff Shero (Nightbyrd) gathered a group of fellow Austin activists—including Gary Thiher, Alice Embree, Thorne Dreyer and Carol Neiman—for a series of exploratory

meetings. The response was enthusiastic, and *The Rag* was off and running” (Pogue, Embree & Scott, 2005, para. 4)

By the time they decided to start *The Rag* they had developed a sense of what they wanted to do.

We weren't interested in just talking to people at UT anymore. You've got to understand, the line in Austin was much more amorphous. There were students and non-students all blended together and we all considered ourselves students. It was an academic community and we thought the education at that point was happening outside the classroom because we felt the academic community was a bit of a restraint. We were less intellectual. We were less academic. We were more involved in the community, so we wanted to reach out to a larger group (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

One local SDS member, Larry Freudiger, was a printer who owned his own offset press and had it set up in his living room. He offered to print the newspaper for the cost of the materials and some free advertising. (A. Embree, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

The very fact that Freudiger could run sheet-fed paper through an offset press was revolutionary. You know newsprint was on a roll and we could run smaller sheet-fed paper on a much smaller scale. We could just buy what we needed and that was all (A. Embree, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Dreyer drafted a letter to the Underground Press Syndicate on October 5, 1966, asking that *The Rag* be accepted into its membership (Fig. 1.2). It made three points: 1.) that many UT students were apathetic, but that Austin had a very active and vocal underground that wanted to change things; 2.) that Austin was the “capitol of radical political activity in the South-Southwest; 3.) that *The Daily Texan's* longstanding liberal editorial policy had been co-opted by a “veritable fascist (Dreyer, 1966).

The Rag was born on October 9, 1966, in a large, old house at 2506 Nueces, where Neiman, Dreyer and many others lived. Marianne Vizard, one of the original members of *The Rag*, was one of those.

See, they had this big house. They rented this big house and there was this big room downstairs. That's where we did it. That became *The Rag* office. They lived in it. This was the pattern. Thorne and Carole and Michael Beaudette, who was our motorcycle editor, and various other people, many people lived there. *The Rag* office during a certain period of *The Rag's* development, if you lived in *The Rag* office, you were a part of *The Rag* staff, too, by virtue of the fact that you shared space. You were there. Also, it was cheap rent. A lot of people lived there because they liked to be around it (Olan, 1971, p. 58).

Carole Neiman remembers the house as the center of activity for *The Rag*.

It all happened at our house. Our house was where it was produced, where we actually laid out the pages. Thorne was the person who actually knew everybody and had the facility to get people signed up to do stuff. I was the person who then would take that, all that creative energy, and herd it into one place to make it happen and actually put out a paper (C. Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

Neiman recalled that it took all night to make it happen.

I recall the biggest memory is the first night or marathon we did to put the first issue together. It was insane. We had no computers in those days so we had to type out everything twice to make the columns justified. We would type it out then put Xs at the end of each line so we would know how many spaces we needed to take up when we re-typed it to make the columns justified. We cut them out and had these layout sheets the printer had given us. His name was Larry Freudiger and he and his wife had a printing press in their living room, a little offset press. Larry was always covered with ink. They had a dwarf cat and lived in some funky

house in a back alley in Austin, we pasted it all down with rubber cement. The, I don't know, about four in the morning, Jeff Schero comes waltzing in and says some slightly critical weird thing and Thorne had this sort of eruption of outrage and spilled coffee over three or four pages and we had to redo them. It was fun (C. Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

Dreyer remembered the process as being completely new to everyone involved.

It was an incredible process in the early days. As I've said, none of us had ever really done that. We had had some experience in other areas, but we just, we just dove into it. And ended up, ended up staying up all night, for all day and all night, for two and three-three day stretches, just to do layout and everything and putting it all together. But it ended up being an incredible cohesive force in those early days – pulling together political radicals, and sort of the new emerging cultural scene – the drug scene, which was really just developing, and had heavy philosophical overtones at that point, it was all seen as very important, mystical, and we—Austin in the middle '60s was one of those few places in the country where the cultural and political movements really kind of merged and grew together, and were in overlapped, and had this sense of vision, sense of hope (Dreyer, 1976).

In the beginning *The Rag* had four full-time staff – Thorne Dreyer, Carol Neiman, Dennis Fitzgerald and his wife Judy. Many others were involved in the paper's conception. Virtually all of them were also active in the SDS.

We had some really good writers and really good thinkers in our core group. Dennis Fitzgerald who briefly worked at *The Daily Texan* was one of them and people like Alice (Embree) and Gary Thiher. We had a really good group and we were all so brazen (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

The members of *The Rag* were intent on it being a participatory democracy so it was set up as a collective rather than a hierarchy.

People had job descriptions but they wanted to get away from traditional terminology and to redefine the roles. Instead of an editor there was a 'funnel,' Thorne Dreyer, and a 'funella,' Carol Neiman. Other positions had names like the 'copy cat,' the 'artsy crafters' and the 'super shitworkers.' George Vizard was in charge of getting the paper out to the people and was affectionately called 'the sellout.' The collective was a combination of people with both political and counterculture perspectives (Pardun, 2001, p. 162-163).

But the participatory democracy was not without its struggle. Marianne Vizard remembered why they didn't want an "editor."

It was somewhat of a power struggle. Other people would like to have been called an editor, to have been an editor and had an editorial structure, but a bunch of people who had worked on newspapers before all said, 'No, no. We don't want an editor. Editors fuck you up.' [We take] whatever people write and bring in, and if they're willing to work and do stuff (Olan, 1981, p. 52).

The Rag published its first edition on October 10, 1966.

Vizard recalls how they financed it. "We could publish about a thousand of them for sixty dollars worth of paper and ink and take them out and sell them. And sell ads, sell ads to the places where we ate or where we bought our books" (Olan, 1981, p. 51). The group had pooled the \$60 from among themselves. "Then it all got printed and we started selling it. It sold out about 1,000 copies on the first day so we went back and printed 1,500 more which sold out the second day. It was amazing" (C. Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009). "We just went out and held it up and said 'buy a *Rag*, buy a *Rag*, buy a *Rag, Rag Rag*'" (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

When the first issue was hot off the press, a gutsy staff member rushed to the middle of campus and began selling papers. This act violated a vague state law against commercial solicitation on a state campus. He was dressed in colorful garb, held a large helium-filled balloon inscribed *RAG*, and began a vociferous

side-show hawker spiel. 'Commie propaganda—get it while it's hot. Page 6 is soaked in LSD—it's a cheap trip. Read about the freaks!!' A large crowd of students gathered around to buy *Rags* and jive with the kook. Deans and cops ordered him off campus. He defied them gleefully, and the crowd mushroomed. They dared not bust him. The thousand copies, which *Rag* prognosticators had thought would be more than enough for the first issue, were gone within hours. The presses were oiled and another 1,500 copies were run off that night, only to disappear quickly the next day. The enthusiasm and vitality of the *Rag's* style excited the community (Dreyer & Smith, 1969, para. 117)

Marianne Vizard said she expected a lot of interest in *The Rag*.

We thought a lot of people would read it. We thought a lot of people would be curious about it, would be intrigued, that we could interest people in our ideas. We could address people out loud on the street and break the traditional silence of the passerby or whatever and involve people in a transaction, gather a crowd (Olan, 1981, p. 55)

The idea of *The Rag* was to respond to issues not normally in the mainstream media.

'*The Rag* covered what was not covered by the 'straight' press,' Embree recalls. 'Antiwar actions, the 13th Floor Elevators, Kenneth Threadgill at the Split Rail, the antics of the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers, the emerging feminist movement, and more—all of it found a voice in *The Rag*. The writers participated in the political and cultural uprising and also wrote about it. And they told you where to get a chicken dinner for 35 cents (at the Stallion)' (Pogue, Embree & Scott, 2005, para. 7).

The front page of issue one carried a piece written by Northcott and titled, "Gen. John Economidy: The First 100 Days" which excoriated Economidy's political ideology and qualifications as editor of *The Daily Texan* (Fig. 1.3). "The public relations and

government major is hard to put into any political pidgeon (sic) hole for he often changes perches” (Northcott, 1966, p. 1). It continued, “The *Texan* is blessed with a number of green but energetic workers, determined to put out a newsy product. Their occasional degeneration to triviality is excusable. The editor, however, should know better” (Northcott, 1966, p. 4).

Another article on page 4 (Shero, 1966) of issue one titled, “Playboy’s Tinselled Seductress” Shero says, “For men, the leading exponent of the new sexuality is *Playboy* magazine.” Shero goes on to say,

Playboy promotes the idea that the sexy woman is young, has large breasts and a cute bottom, is without pubic hair (which Hefner judges is distasteful to most urban males) and unbuttons the latest fashions. She is neatly adorned with cosmetics and has an interesting job like airline stewardess, actress, student, therapist, etc. *Playboy* doesn’t think that married women, older women, girls with dull jobs or those that don’t shave under their arms are very attractive (Shero, 1966, p. 4)

But in the same issue, motorcycle editor Michael Beaudette (1966) compares a motorcycle to a woman. “You can straddle it like a woman. Its controls are under your fingers. It responds to your various and slightest notions” (Beaudette, 1966, p. 6). Embree admits enlightenment came in increments.

We were just beginning to ask for equality and we were just beginning to question gender roles. I think like a lot of women I did what they called grunt work – I typed. I was a good typist. At one point I kind of borrowed a typewriter from the University of Texas office. I would take it overnight and I would bring it back. It was electric. I really didn’t think of myself as a writer, even though I was (A. Embree, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

But more lighthearted fare also populated later issues of *The Rag*. Movie and music reviews, event listings, articles about motorcycles and even a call for Gentle Thursday.

Well, okay, one of the first things, we did a thing in Austin called Gentle Thursday, which was really a kind of precursor to the be-ins. It was before the other be-ins and other sorts of happenings, before those things had, I guess – San Francisco that the first be-ins were. We just, we declared, in fact I think the second or third issue of *The Rag* started to have these cryptic little notices that Gentle Thursday is coming. You know, each-each week it would get a little bigger and a little more specific, sort of building-building this sense of anticipation, sense of mystery, ‘What is this Gentle Thursday thing?’ And finally what we did is we organized, and it was *The Rag* and SDS in fact, in Austin, in fact that organized the thing. Uh, organized a day for people to come and sit on campus, you know, the kind of flower-child idea that goes into that period, you know, ‘Bring your balloons, and your flowers, and bring your kids, and your dogs, and your musical instruments.’ We put up signs all over campus that advocated various kinds of things, like ‘Go barefoot on Gentle Thursday,’ and ‘Kiss someone on Gentle Thursday.’ But the amazing thing is that the administration, uh, decided that this sounded sort of subversive, which blew our minds, and really was a surprise to us. They outlawed Gentle Thursday and said it could not happen. They banned it. And of course, this immediately caused this sort of cohesion and coalescence. And it ended up being a very, very big event. And what was originally conceived as being just a coming together on campus, an attempt to break down those traditional barriers of people – walking from one class to another and scurrying around – something that was intended to show people that there are other ways to live, other lifestyles and stuff. It ended up being a mammoth event. The lawn that day was just filled with people. There

were musicians out playing musical instruments, and a lot of dialogue. It sort of helped to spread that small counterculture that had just really begun to emerge and coalesce. It spread that out and gave people contact and I think was one of the first events on campus, at the University, that, that helped the movement to begin that mushrooming process that then occurred over the next couple years. But it was *The Rag*, to a great extent, that built that and made that happen (Dreyer, 1976, para. 9)

For Thorne Dreyer who, along with Embree, wrote for *The Rag* in its early years, the happily unpolished weekly filled a much needed space as an alternative voice: 'It always played the gadfly, challenging established notions and confronting the powers-that-be.' (Pogue, Embree & Scott, 2005, para. 18). Neiman reiterated that *The Rag* helped usher in a new era.

I feel like it gave people, young people, more courage to kind of go with their own dreams and feelings and visions than this regimented and 50ish flavor. I'm not wrong. Other people feel like me. It was like black and white TV versus color TV (C. Neiman, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

4.6 *The Rag's* Influence

The most tangible legacy of *The Rag* involves free speech rights and came from a 1969 incident where the UT Board of Regents, egged on by its chairman Frank Erwin, prohibited distribution of *The Rag* on campus. David Richards, the attorney who represented *The Rag*, recalls how it all got started.

The dirty hippies who produced and sold *The Rag* on campus became some of Frank's prime targets. To get rid of *The Rag*, the Regents amended their rules in 1969 to ban commercial solicitation on campus. Banning commercialism was not necessarily an unreasonable thing to do, but the rule labeled commercialism anything that contained advertising. Such a definition would seem to have

included the *Daily Texan*, the UT paper, which was chock full of ads (Richards, 2002, p. 128).

The Rag sued. The lawsuit, named *New Left Education Project v. Board of Regents of The University of Texas*, went forward in the federal courts, avoiding the good 'ol boy system in the state courts (Richards, 2002). But the University filed a case in state court. The state court found the Regents' rules to be constitutional and tried to enforce them. However, the federal court decided that the rules violated the First Amendment.

The regents did not have the cajones to try to enforce their state court order against *The Rag* salesmen in view of the federal court ruling. As a result, *The Rag* continued to be distributed on campus without interference...The regents spent three years in fruitless appeals, twice to the U.S. Supreme Court, and finally amended their rules (Richards, 2002, p. 135).

The result was that *The Rag* could be sold on campus and that administration couldn't ban a publication just because they didn't agree with it. But by the time this was established in 1978, *The Rag* had ceased publication.

Another legacy of *The Rag* was that it helped spread a new journalistic style. The new journalistic style that had become the hallmark of the underground press consisted almost completely of opinion written by those affected by the event about which they were writing. This was the voice of the writer. Objectivity was not the point and sources were often those writing the stories. The content was written in first person, sources were not cited and few quotes were included.

Embree described their style.

It was activist journalism and we had beliefs and we used the media, in this case *The Rag*, to advance those beliefs. I mean, I don't think we thought of ourselves as journalists as much as activists, and I don't think we were maybe as conscious as we are from this perspective of what was so unique about it (A. Embree, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Dreyer said the style was a product of the times.

We didn't make a decision about how to deal with journalism, a new kind of journalism, it flowed directly from what was going on. We found a forum to present our ideas. We happened to be right and so, in that sense, history has absolved us. Turns out we've been right down the line. Every time history has shown anything about this period it has shown that we were right from the beginning. The mainstream media was the other side of the story. That's what they were doing is presenting the other side. They just happened to not be on the right side. If someone had come out and tried to put out a right-wing, pro-war publication they would have called it the *Austin American-Statesman* or the *Houston Chronicle* (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Dreyer pointed out that objectivity is in the eye of the beholder and by trying to be objective, mainstream media sometimes loses the truth.

Much of what is done in the name of objectivity is slanted and sometimes by being open and overt about your prejudices you're actually being more honest and that is something that the underground press was somewhat of a pioneer in dealing with although we didn't know it at the time. Who came up with the idea of two sides? You want to know the perfect example is global warming. They want to write about global warming and they go and find a scientist who says it's not happening and there's what three of them. And who is it that finances those guys – Exxon or Texaco? There's three scientists that don't believe in global warming and they're financed by Exxon, I mean seriously, and they say the story is balanced by going and including their perspective (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Apparently the editorial board of *The Daily Texan* agreed that *The Rag* had filled a niche that was not being covered. In an editorial written on October 11, 1971, titled "Happy Birthday *Rag*," the *Texan* admitted as much.

Today the *Rag* celebrates its fifth anniversary.

There have always been and will no doubt always be times when the *Texan* fails to meet the needs of the University community. Five years ago was one of those times. It was the time of the Free Speech Movement; the time of the farmworkers' struggle in the Rio Grande Valley the time of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. It was a time of change, and, through one of the queer perversities of fate, the editor of the *Texan* was John Economidy, a conservative, who greeted this change by ignoring it.

The Rag was born in response to his silence. It was a good response. It provided a liberal thoughtful voice when there was none. It provided an alternate medium for publication when one was badly needed. It provided, in essence, a vehicle for change (*The Daily Texan*, 1971, p. 2).

The newspaper that had been the impetus for the creation of *The Rag* admitted its impact – that *The Rag* had given a voice to a group of young adults who felt their voice had been taken away by the editor of the *Daily Texan*.

4.7 The Rag's Demise

Eventually society began to change and so did *The Rag*. The SDSs' influence became decentralized and so, too, did the issues that once brought together *The Rag* founders. The Vietnam War ended, civil rights became the law of the land and women's liberation was no longer a slogan. *The Rag* lasted for 11 years but finally it died from apathy. As the years went by fewer and fewer people showed up for deadline days and it was falling on the shoulders of just a few dedicated people. The original cast of characters was gone. "We worked hard on *The Rag*, but then we all grew up and went on to other things" (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009). Finally, in 1977 *The Rag* ceased publication. Dreyer (2009) said the major reason was because the issues with which they had aligned themselves had gone away. The war ended, civil rights laws were taking hold and the SDS was splintering.

Rag founder, Thorne Dreyer, describes the passion that compelled him to participate in this movement.

We became committed to the concept of changing the world and giving an analysis of what was wrong and happening in the world and we used journalism as a means to communicate with people and *The Rag* grew out of the movement in Austin. We had a really strong and heartfelt critique of society. What do you do with that critique? You communicate with the people. And so the obvious step is you look for ways of communicating it. And it's something we all sat around and talked about. We were not the first underground newspaper. We were a paper that came out of Austin, but we were a paper that came out of a phenomenon that occurred throughout the country and eventually around the world. You can't quantify our commitment to that. You can only tell why we were committed to it and what drove us to that commitment. This was our lives (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Dreyer, Embree and Neiman all agreed that the phenomenon of *The Rag* was probably a once-in-a-lifetime event that can never be repeated. "Those days are gone" (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

Or are they?

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In retrospect, *The Rag* is recognized for giving voice to young adults who felt their views were marginalized in mainstream media. "We wanted to change society" (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

The Rag played an important role in influencing the youth culture of 1960's Austin to speak out against the Vietnam War, racism, economic injustice and in support of women's rights and presented a view of popular culture that was not readily available from any other source in the area. It gave a voice in Austin to the counterculture that was rebelling against the conformity of the 1950s and injustices in society (Olan, 1981).

The lesson learned is one of necessity. Since mainstream media did not reflect the views of many young adults, they found other ways to express themselves. It isn't always conventional and it isn't always easy, but the need for expression usually leads the unheard to find a way to be heard. In this case the failure of mainstream media led this group of young adults to ponder their options, to talk to others of their ilk and to determine a method of expression that would satisfy their needs. Cultural changes, political organizations and technology were their entrée into the world of self-expression. Vietnam and civil rights planted the seed, the SDS and the role of police agencies nurtured its growth, and technology brought to fruition the mechanism for self-expression. Without these influences *The Rag* would never have existed.

But this phenomenon is not an aberration. It is instead a cycle. Underrepresentation, realization of a need for self-expression and the coalescing of influences to provide the means for that expression occur over and over again and create

a niche that begs for attention. Other examples of the cyclical nature of this phenomenon include the invention of written language, the printing press and radio. In each case there was a group, generally an underclass, who needed to express themselves. In each case a technological innovation came along that allowed that expression to occur. And in each case that innovation created a change in society. The underground media was the phenomenon that filled this niche for this group of young adults and other phenomenon will do the same in the future. This intersection of social change and technology is destined to be relived again and again. In fact, these influences are coming together again through blogs. Many blogs are started in response to some cultural or political need for self-expression and they allow expression through a mass medium without the cost of printing or the capital investment of radio or television. All one needs is a computer, some software and an opinion. And an argument could be made that blogs are changing society. Only time will tell the extent of that change.

5.1 Future Research

This historical analysis of the influences that led to the creation of *The Rag* leaves room for further research. One area would be in the parallels between the relatively new blogosphere and the underground press. “There’s real parallels between blogs and the impact of the offset press. It was creating new ways for people to communicate. It was a new technology” (A. Embree, personal communication, March 22, 2009). Embree recalled that *The Rag* was a way of disseminating an opinion about a topic, like the Vietnam War or racism, and all they had to do to get their opinions out was to print some copies and go out on a street corner and sell them. “People wanted to read *The Rag* because it was talking directly to them, not just regurgitating some facts. It made them think about what we were writing about, just like blogs do. Both were revolutionary” (A. Embree, personal communication, March 22, 2009). And, Dreyer said, “They are both cheap and available to anyone who wants to get their opinion out to a lot of people. But it

is international. I mean the thing with the Internet is that it's cheap and global. We've got to be global" (personal communication, March 22, 2009).

However, both Embree and Dreyer cite some major differences.

You actually made eye contact selling the newspaper and pushing your newspaper and passing it around like that. I think that is significant versus the kind of isolation a lot of people have with the Internet (A. Embree, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

We had a sense of community. We all got together; we made decisions collectively a lot. It pulled people in and the newspaper itself added people who got involved then got involved in the larger movement. It was a community. The Internet, we don't know. It calls itself a community but it's a virtual community. It's removed. We don't know what that's going to mean yet. It's still a new phenomenon and in that sense maybe it's more alienating. Who knows. (T. Dreyer, personal communication, March 22, 2009).

But Dreyer said blogs need to be successful to move journalism forward and to keep it relevant. Moving forward involves changes in communication. A need for expression arises. The technology comes about that facilitates a new form of expression. The form is adopted and used until its usefulness is gone or a new form takes its place. Such was the case with *The Rag* and such could be the case for blogs.

The Rag was a part of the history of the 1960s. It is one of many, yet it is unique. Its influences included politics, a changing culture and new technology. It is a story of particular circumstances that bring to mind recurring themes but, most of all it is a story worth remembering and understanding.

APPENDIX A

UNDERGROUND PRESS ARCHIVES

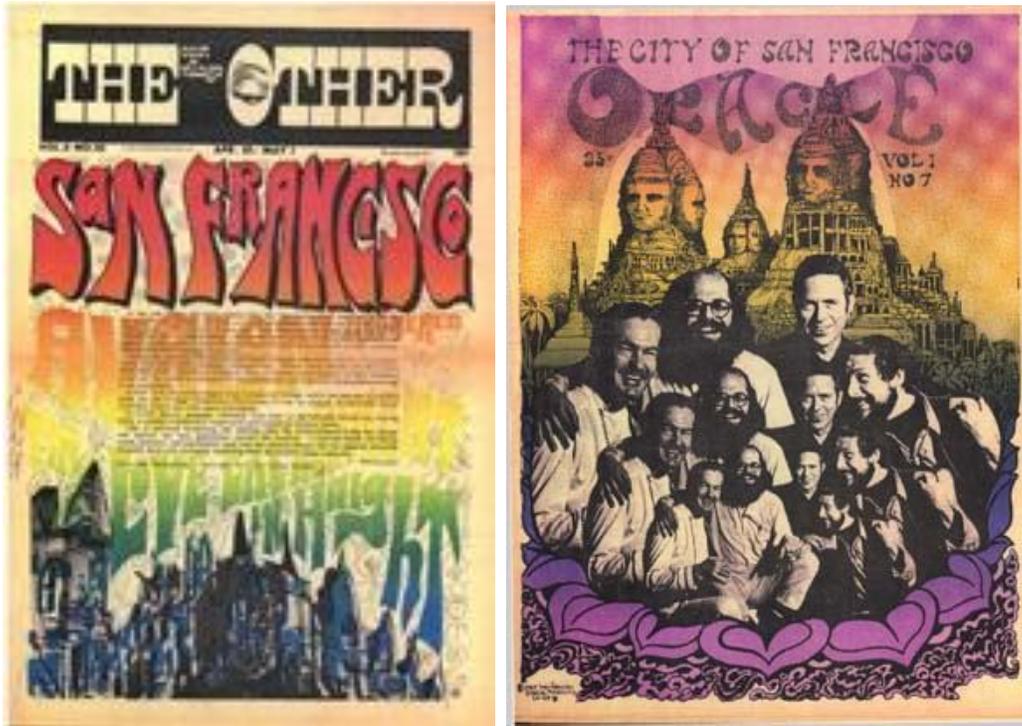


Fig. A.1, Front pages of (a) East Village Other and (b) The City of San Francisco Other

October 5, 1966

EDITORS

The East Village Other
The Los Angeles Free Press
The Berkeley Barb
The Fifth Estate
The Paper
Sanity
Peace News

From deep in the bowels of reaction, from the home land of Superlbj, yes, from Austin, Texas, friends, arises--(doodley-doo-de-doo)--
THE RAG.

THE RAG sees itself fulfilling several needs. Most of the student body at the University of Texas can be aptly described as the soggy green masses. Apathy and dullness thrive. However, as a reaction to this a rather notable percentage of the university community has completely dissociated from the Machine. Austin has for several years been the home of a very active and vocal underground. Austinites were gobbling down peyote before most of our present crop of hippies discovered appendages atop their shoulders and between their legs.

Point two: Austin is the capital of radical political activity in the South-Southwest. Our sds chapter has over a hundred fifty members, one of the largest in the country. Austin sds was instrumental in the national "organization"'s recent turn towards anarchism. The Austin radical scene has the strongest sense of community of any I have come in contact with; hippies and politicos merge.

And finally: The Daily Texan, the University's daily has a tradition of reasonable enlightenment, has always had a "liberal" editorial policy. But this year, after three run-offs, a veritable fascist was elected editor. His campaign platform was essentially to kill the comics and uncover all that dope on campus. Needless to say, there is a great demand for THE RAG.

THE RAG will(hopefully) be a weekly. We have an offset; the largest it can do is 10" X 14". So it'll be about comic book size. We will have the first issue ready this weekend and will put copies in the mail immediately.

This summer I was in San Francisco with Mike Kindman. We talked about THE PAPER and UPS. Also talked a bit with Max Scheer. I definitely think the Syndicate has exciting potential and want to announce THE RAG's intention to Hook Up. So send us the UPS Organizer's Handbook, the Secret Initiation Rights, and the Keytto the White John.

= Up the Revolution

Thorne Dreyer

Fig. A.2, Letter from Thorne Dreyer to the Underground Press Syndicate

The Truth »beep«
Is On Page..

By Carol Neiman

Yeah, babes, you've finally hit the bigtime rah rah scooby doo beat the hell outa SMU these are the best few years of your life so learn to think for your self make your place in society be a phi beta kappa sigma chi omega doo wah. Hello??

I dunno about you but that really turns me off. So what can you do? Of course the logical, sensible thing to do is to try getting turned on to something else that makes sense.

But woe and alas! Most people seem to remain turned off, unplugged, and militantly apathetic members of the soggy green masses. Why, oh, why this dusty fate for so many once-eager scholars?? Why do they retreat behind stacks of textbooks and class notes, venturing
CONTINUED on page 10



Gen. John Economidy: The First 100 Days

KAYE NORTHCOTT - Past Editor, DAILY TEXAN

Soon after John Economidy was elected editor of the Daily Texan last spring he made a grand entrance into the newspaper office wear-

ing an Air Force ROTC uniform and carrying a makeshift swagger stick.

He marched to the copy desk, banged the stock on the table rim and announced, "General John is HERE!"

The Texan has not been the same since.

The public relations and government major is hard to put into any political pigeon hole for he often changes perches.

During the campus-wide campaign last spring, Economidy presented himself as a

YEAH, but wait til you see
What we got **INSIDE:**
The Tinselled Seductress - SEX & SOCIETY
THE BENT SPOKESMAN - OUR REGULAR
MOTORCYCLE COLUMN
A REVIEW OF WHO'S AFRAID OF
VIRGINIA WOOLF
Psychedelic Drawings
and Rag Bag - an esoteric guide to
where the ACTION IS.

October 10, 1966 AUSTIN, TEXAS

PAGE 1

Fig. A.3, The cover of the first issue of *The Rag*

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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