

## Voices of 1968

George Wolkind interviewed by Shaun Mullen

May 1, 2018

University of Delaware Library

Newark, Delaware

Notetaker: Rebecca Johnson Melvin

Also attending: Debra Olson

- Begin 1968 – Political identity was a critical issue for Wolkind. Heroes at the time were the Civil Rights activists. Had a chance to see Martin Luther King in 1967 when Wolkind went to Cleveland. Andrew Young was team leader. Experience changed his life.
- 2:30 Toured the Hough section of Cleveland (site of 1966 riots). MLK gave electrifying speech (Glenville High School on April 26, 1967?). Wolkind had sense that MLK wouldn't live long. Premonition based on MLK's re-direction from civil rights activism to anti-war issues. Believes George Wallace orchestrated MLK assassination. Believes it was not Sirhan Sirhan who killed Robert F. Kennedy in 1968.
- 5:00 SDS group of students from UD went to Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August 1968. Parents of UD SDS students were contacted by FBI warning them not to let their kids go to Chicago. FBI was informed about student activities and membership by secretary of the UD SDS chapter. Robert Bresler (political science faculty advisor) advised to get rid of the secretary.
- 5:35 SDS chapter staged a Student Government Association (SGA) election coup. Wolkind was still a student at UD in 1967 but had left UD by 1968.
- 6:10 Ray Ceci, very smart student, ran for SGA. Wolkind was his wingman in the campaign. Ceci was good at talking to fraternities. Wolkind ran leaflets that he believed were needed to win. Five names on the Student Power campaign ticket. Ran a full-page ad in the Review and believes that helped win the election. Wolkind knew "how to get elected" from experience on the 1966 Bill Roth campaign (William V. Roth, U.S House of Representatives). Wolkind never won an argument against Ray Ceci, Ray Ceci's mom, or his own mother.
- 8:47 Ray Ceci resigned from the SGA presidency after the ROTC walk on/walk off incident. Idea to stage a walk off (of the mandatory ROTC drill practice) came from Edward "Stretch" Wesolowski. Ken Wiggins blew a whistle and 10-20 people walked off the field.

- 10:00 Eric Laubach (later an insurance agent) suggested a counter “walk on” the drill practice field. Incident changed lives. Wayne Anderson was in ROTC then, now a brother-in-law. UD disciplined kids. Supposed plan was to call draft board to report students. Wolkind organized a protest of the UD administration. Jim McCarthy composed a confession that was signed by about 1600 students.
- 11:55 Rev. Robert Andrews, Methodist minister at the Phoenix Center, had the confession for safe-keeping but burned it because of calls from concerned parents.
- 13:13 Chief William Brierley, Newark police chief, kept eye on kids. Rev. Andrews targeted by UD for his sexual orientation. Ray Ceci resigned from SGA.
- 14:15 Wolkind started new confession but it was signed by only about 19 people. UD professors Robert Bresler (Political Science), Al Meyers (Psychology), and Ed Kaplan (History) all signed the confession; all were fired by UD. Wolkind went from being a nerd in high school to becoming very involved in this student activism. This “rebellion at UD” occurred around the same time as Columbia University student strike.
- 16:07 Loves America. Loves American system. Believes assassination of Martin Luther King ended civil rights progress. UD’s response was a “whimper” when faced with odds of the situation.
- 17:45 Reached out to Josea Williams and Leroy Tate (SGA president 1968) at Delaware State University to try to coordinate protests of the National Guard patrols in Wilmington. Students in Dover shut down.
- 18:20 Josea Williams urged take-over of UD student center. Larry Mason involved in student center (Perkins Student Center) vestibule demonstration. SDS, with its philosophical support for participatory democracy put to vote on whether to block the entrance to the student center. Held a non-violent sit-in and fast with singing. Frat boys “terrorized” the protesters by walking by with pizzas to tempt the fasting protesters.
- 22:15 Herb Conner, son of Delaware State Senator Louise Conner (1964-1972) and New Castle County Executive William J. Conner was involved with the Perkins Center demonstration. Students had been demanding end of Delaware National Guard occupation of Wilmington.
- 24:00 The Heterodoxical Voice was founded by Jim Tomarelli (nom de plume “Tacitus”). Wolkind hawked it on the street as “Heterosexual Voice” to sell it. Several factions of SDS involved in the paper (psychology students were creative). David McCorquodale and Mario Pazziglioni were involved.

- 25:25 After Martin Luther King was assassinated, Wolkind went to Wilmington. Talked to kids on the streets. Kids talked about burning buildings.
- 26:00 As national editor of the Heterodoxical Voice, Wolkind told story of Vietnam War. Gulf of Tonkin was a lie. Went to visit I.F. ("Izzy") Stone in Washington, D.C. Wolkind wanted to work with him. Stone told Wolkind to go back to school. Was reading Wilfred Burchett and believed war was illegal. Did not believe Lyndon Johnson administration about Vietnam War being held to stave off communism. (Shaun Mullen: war was better framed as a national liberation effort by the Vietnamese.)
- 29:00 Wolkind was a freshman in 1965 when SDS started. CBS stories every week about the war. Used to debate the war with Michael Quinn, ROTC brigade commander.
- 29:40 Read French writer Bernard Fall about the Vietnam War. Wolkind believes all wars are religious wars. Vietnam was a Buddhist war against Catholic oppression.
- 32:35 Wolkind was born in Hawai'i and family served in World War II.
- 33:34 References to Leo Tammi photographs at the protests in Chicago in August 1968.
- 34:00 Bill Redd was opponent of Wolkind in race for Newark mayor in 1972. Redd called himself a "Chinese Redd," meaning he was the son of Chinese missionaries.
- 36:15 Saw 1960s as a failure, especially after Kent State and Cambodia.
- 36:25 Story about running for mayor of Newark in 1972. Ken Kesey, during visit to University of Delaware campus, urged activists to get elected in city governments in order to legalize pot. Wolkind was nominated from the floor of the program by local artist Tom Watkins. Learned that candidates needed to own property in the City of Newark to run for mayor. Mayor Norma Handloff was running for re-election. Shaun Mullen, working at News Journal at the time, ran story: Wolkind bought cemetery plot (7 x 3 x 6 feet) to qualify for property ownership. Learned that cemetery plot is not real estate. Lawyer was Carl Schnee assisted by Al Lindh. Result is that property ownership is no longer required to run for election in Delaware. Students can also claim residency through dorm address in order to vote. Wolkind came in second in the mayoral election but that was his last political involvement.
- 41:30 1968 activities and the Heterodoxical Voice involvement generated death threats for Wolkind. Believed they were from the White Vigilantes of North America (WVNA).

- 42:30 Wolkind's parents received threatening calls. Rising Sun, Maryland, had a split in the Ku Klux Klan of young guys who worked at Chrysler Plant in Newark. Believes these guys were responsible for a flag planting and cross burnings at the Phoenix Center in Newark. WVNA member involved in a shooting in Wilmington. Shooter turned self in to Shaun Mullen at the News Journal.
- 47:09 Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August 1968. Violence experienced personally by E.G. (Edith G.) Creighton, Larry Mason, Art Magness, all University of Delaware students. The event radicalized Wolkind. Did not vote for Hubert Humphrey in 1968.
- 49:00 Closed interview with short kazoo performance by Wolkind, a "blues kazooist."