

VOICES OF 1968

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

University of Delaware Library, Museums & Press

TIMESTAMP DOCUMENTATION

Notes from Phillip Bannowsky interview

Interview Date: Friday, June 11, 2018, 10:00 am

Interview Location: One-Button Studio, Morris Library, University of Delaware

Interviewer: L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin

Note taker: John Caldwell

Time (H/M/S) Topic/Notes

- 00:00:00 Introduction with names and location of interviewers and interviewees
- 00:00:40 **Personal background:** Bannowsky is a war baby, son of a Navy pilot who was shot down early in World War II. Father retired from the Navy in 1962, traveled a lot as a youth because of his father's career; as a result, there was "no normal" since everywhere was so different.
- 0:02:30 Attended a segregated school in Memphis; he was appalled by the experience. Remembers seeing images of the civil rights movement in the early 1960s, comparing these images to his experience in Tennessee. Self-described as conventional and patriotic in the early 1960s.
- 00:03:53 Father retired from the Navy in 1962 and the family came to Delaware. His parents divorced in the mid-1960s, led to an "unsettled" period to time living in Philadelphia.
- 00:04:50 Got involved in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) when he returned to Newark after living in Philadelphia. Spend a lot of time at the Phoenix House, which was run by Rev. Bob Andrews, who ran the United Campus Ministry on campus. SDS was just establishing itself, and the Vietnam was starting to pick up. Story of speaking to Vietnam veteran while hitchhiking, related to interrogation. Speaks about a job at the Budd Company on Chapel Street in Newark making tubes (nicknamed "bomb busters"). This was his first assembly line job.
- 00:08:05 **Lead-up to 1968 (1967/1968):** Was disturbed at first by his new friends in SDS because of his patriotic upbringing. Began thinking and reading a lot about the war and civil rights which shaped his stance on the Vietnam War. This was fostered by the environment of freedom and exploration at the time.

- 00:09:45 Became more involved with SDS, but never took a leadership role in the organization. While he was not a student at the time, Bannowsky wanted to stay close to the University.
- 00:10:30 **SDS Leadership:**
- Ray Ceci, who was slightly older than some of the other SDS members, was the “spleen”. Ceci was in the Navy, and his ship, which was carrying nuclear weapons, docked in Japan, in violation of the US treaty with Japan. This served to radicalize him. Ceci had a volatile temper, was smart, a skillful speaker. Ceci led the “Student Power” ticket in the 1967/1968 Student Government Association (SGA) election. Story of dating a woman, meeting her parents and her father was talking about Ray Ceci having been to Cuba and sent back to the United States to organize a communist revolution. This did not happen, though he eventually joined the Worker’s World Party.
- 00:14:45 Dave Burns was the “mind.” Had brother John burns who was also in the group. Dave was smart (eventually became a lawyer) and grounded. Co-founded *The Heterodoxical Voice (THV)* with Jim Tomarelli.
- 00:15:38 George Wolkind was the “heart.” George was very charismatic and spirited, a “spell binder” when speaking, a good writer, but did not get involved with the highly intellectual dialogue of SDS. Had the ability to make you feel sympathy and a feeling of belonging when he spoke on anti-war issues.
- 00:17:50 Jim Tomarelli, founder of *THV*, which was printed in the basement of the United Campus Ministry building. Newspaper very good, believes one of the best underground, alternative newspapers. *THV* was a mix of political analysis, art and movie reviews, and investigative journalism. After a couple of years, Tomarelli tired of editing *THV*, and Dave McCorqudale took over.
- 00:19:45 Wolkind ended up joining the Weathermen. People became frustrated with the war and the government’s ability to end the conflict; this led some to get drawn further into far-left sectarianism. To Bannowsky, the power of SDS was its dedication to overcome US imperialism and racism; however, this eventually led to the group feeding off of itself and accelerated the pace of action, especially action against other left-wing groups.
- 00:21:40 Bannowsky was an observer in 1968/1969, because he was married and a father. Comments on the wealthy and privileged upbringing of many SDS members and leaders. SDS was eventually banned on the University of Delaware campus.
- 00:23:20 **SDS in power in SGA:** Demonstrated against racism in and around Newark. Story about Earl Henderson (local United Autoworkers Union president) and Rev. Andrews integrating the Deer Park in the early 1960s. SDS and the “Student Power” ticket worked against the “in loco parentis” attitude at UD, advocated for student rights, especially rights for female students. Story of Patricia Jentz.
- 00:26:05 SDS turned to protesting mandatory ROTC on campus. Bannowsky had two years of ROTC, ended up failing in his last semester. There were a number of sympathetic cadets.

- 00:27:30 In late 1967 or early 1968, SDS organized a “funeral” for the class of 1968. Built a coffin and marched on the Green during class changes, ended up in front of Hullihen Hall. Around noon, cadets were marching up for drills and took offense to the protest. Led to a tug of war between cadets and protesters over the coffin. This kind of activity was part of the objective of SDS: to “raise the temperature” and make a statement.
- 00:30:45 **Ceci and Wolkind speaking/SDS meetings:** Heard in various places. Memory of George speaking at a University building, and while speaking, his facial expression was one of empathy, feeling the pain for the victims of the situations he was talking about (racism and Vietnam War). Wolkind had a very melodic and empathetic voice. Ceci’s voice was raspier. When speaking, Ceci would challenge people in their beliefs and experiences. SDS would have weekly meetings in Perkins Hall debating issues, some discussions would get heated. Ray Ceci would use his position as SGA President to speak around campus, including in dorms
- 00:35:25 **ROTC walk-off:** One of the bigger events arranged by SDS was the ROTC walk-off. Was not as massive as hoped, but a couple dozen cadets did walk off while a big crowd watched on. Some people marched onto the field, which caused a larger disruption and led to discipline by the University. This disciplinary action led to demonstrations and an occupation by students of Hullihen Hall (which may or may not have been a direct result of the ROTC walk-off). Faculty and students were signing onto a petition protesting the suspensions and faculty firings that came about after the walk-off incident. Petition was kept (and later destroyed) by Reb. Andrews.
- 00:38:50 **MLK assassination, Wilmington, and aftermath:** Was a data worker at State Hospital when he heard the news. Bannowsky knew that in the aftermath of the assassination, things would “heat up.” Some SDS members went into Wilmington to volunteer at refugee centers organized by local churches. Centers did not get much use, but they did end up spending the night in Wilmington during the rioting.
- 00:41:08 Entire state on lockdown. Governor Terry, described as a “Southern gentleman,” called in the National Guard and kept them in place for nine (9) months, even though they could have left after a few days. Terry wanted to control the situation. Ceci and others held a demonstration in Rodney Square in Wilmington during the occupation. Leo Tammi came in and took a number of photographs of Wilmington. Talked about Steven Leech, a Wilmington native who had served in Vietnam and came home during the occupation by the National Guard. Leech was angry over what he saw in Vietnam and what was happening at home; these experiences changed him from a conservative viewpoint.
- 00:44:20 Discussion of “radical” GIs coming back from Vietnam “looking for revolution.” Many other GIs came home and were viewed as “damaged goods;” many people were not ready to handle their needs.
- 00:46:38 SDS was made up of social democrats and libertarians with a lot of pacifists. Governor Peterson’s son was a SDS member.

- 00:47:40 **Robert Kennedy assassination:** Remembers a lot of awful things happening quicklin in 1968. Things were fracturing and the country was looking for a better, unifying vision. People were not ready for SDS.
- 00:50:00 **Chicago 1968:** Bannowsky went to visit a friend (Jim McCarthy) who lived in Chicago studying harmonica. McCarthy was not a radical, wrote music reviews for *THV*. Remembers playing the Beatles songs "Revolution" and "Hey Jude" going to Chicago. Knew that SDS friends would be in Chicago, so went into town to see them. Discusses four "images" he remembers most clearly from his time in Chicago:
- 00:52:35 1) Sitting in a group, listening to a person talking about coming back at night with guns and "do things." No one in the crowd called him out, though everyone knew he didn't mean it. Everyone there was a "hippie" or a "yippie." Events in Chicago were organized by people like Jerry Rubin, Paul Krasner and Abbie Hoffman.
- 00:53:37 2) LBJ "unbirthday" party. Band called the Holocaust No Dance Band provided entertainment, members of a Maoist group was present selling communist newspapers ("Challenge"). Dave Dillinger, William Burroughs, Jean Genet, all present and speaking. Genet talks about day when he can see Chicago "burned to the ground." Paul Krasner (editor of "The Realist") talking about Hugh Heffner and tells story about LBJ speech.
- 00:56:50 3) Allen Ginsburg was in Lincoln Park, playing "ohm" on a harmonium with police "blue helmets" looking on at the far end of the park. With each new scale of "ohm," he was moving to the opposite end of the park, to prevent the crowd from the police. Several people were able to safely leave the park. When Bannowsky came back to the park later that evening, "all hell had broken loose" and police were beating hippies in the park.
- 00:59:35 4) Dick Gregory speech outside of the Democratic National Convention and confrontation with Richard J. Daley, Mayor of Chicago.
- 01:01:50 End of interview