MY YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

Chicago – August 1969–August 1970

By Russell Neufeld

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Some years ago, while suffering from anxiety, I saw a therapist and he asked about my experiences in the anti-war and civil rights movements of the late 60s and early 70s. When I told him about my time in Chicago, he said that was like being in combat. That helped me appreciate my aversion to returning to the Windy City and think about the effect of trauma on many of us who were active in those movements. More recently, it has helped me gain perspective on the awful political time we now live in. As resistance to the aspiring tyrant in the White House, grows, we hope, repression is likely to follow. My hope is that this brief memoir, half a century later, will help describe my experience in a way that will enable those who didn't go through it, to better understand and make use of our history.

I went to Chicago in late August of 1969 to work in the national office of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). I was born in Brooklyn in 1947 and grew up on suburban Long Island. My parents were social activists and members of Ethical Culture, a humanist offshoot of Reform Judaism. Ethical Culture emphasizes social engagement and a concern with how we all treat each other, rather than traditional religious dogma and ritual. One of its slogans was "Deed Before Creed". As an example, when I was 12, my 6th grade Ethical Culture Sunday School class took a bus to D.C. to participate in the March to End Jim Crow. My family's daily dinner table discussions were mostly consumed with politics.

Going to Chicago seemed a logical step in my life as a young activist. While in high school, I was part of New York High School SNCC, a support group for the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. Started by black college students, SNCC organized black people in the South. It was a leading organization of the civil rights movement. SNCC leadership encouraged us white kids to organize our own communities in the North to combat racism. At the same time, the U.S. involvement in Viet Nam was escalating and I wanted to participate in the anti-war movement. SDS offered an organization to take on both of these causes. As time went on SDS developed several factions and I went with the one that focused on a militant, anti-war, anti-racist approach – which became known as "Weatherman," after a line from a Bob Dylan song, Subterranean Homesick Blues, "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows."

I attended Goddard College in Vermont. Goddard is a progressive school, inspired by the teachings of John Dewey, that provided me with wide latitude to maintain my political involvement. While a student at Goddard, I was also a member of the SDS New England regional staff. That meant traveling to college campuses to help build their SDS chapters. Goddard had a work semester each winter when students were supposed to find off campus jobs. In the winter of '67 – '68, I worked at the National Lawyers Guild in Manhattan, doing draft counseling for young men seeking to avoid being sent to Viet Nam. In the winter of '68 – '69, I

went to Cuba as part of an SDS delegation to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Cuban revolution. I found meeting with the Cubans, a Vietnamese delegation, and others from around the world very inspiring. When I returned from Cuba, I, along with other SDS staffers, was hired by Harvard as a teaching assistant, to teach a section of a large lecture course on social change. This, although I had not yet graduated myself. That spring, I participated in the building takeover and student strike at Harvard. I graduated from college in June of '69 and spent most of that summer helping to build a friend's house in rural Woodbury, Vermont.

Since well before the '68 Democratic National Convention, Chicago had the reputation and the reality of a place where the cops were particularly brutal – especially to people of color. When the convention happened, demonstrators came from around the country on behalf of many causes, but particularly opposition to the Viet Nam war. The Chicago Democratic Party boss, Mayor Richard Daley, ordered his cops to shoot to kill. And when convention delegates, appalled at the beatings going on in the streets, tried to protest on the convention floor, Daley shut them up. When Connecticut Senator, Abraham Ribicoff accused Daley of using "Gestapo" tactics, Daley said "Fuck you, you Jew son of a bitch, you motherfucker, go home." Chicago definitely felt like enemy territory

Leaving the bucolic hills of Vermont for Chicago was like landing on an alien planet. I arrived on a hot day in late August and was immediately detailed to accompany another new arrival, Sam Karp, to pick up a film at the offices of Newsreel, the movement film organization. The film was to be shown that night at a community organizing event. The Chicago Newsreel office was a large open space with walls lined with shelves, holding hundreds of political documentaries and other films. It was staffed by several members of the Newsreel collective and there were people like Sam and me, from other groups, there to pick up films. Shortly after we arrived, a group of about a dozen very large white men burst through the door, carrying automatic weapons. They said they were from the Legion of Justice. That made me think of the DC comics "Justice League". But they didn't look like Superman or Wonder Woman. Instead they most resembled the Russian fighter in the Rocky movie. They pointed their M-16s at us, lined us up against the wall and proceeded to trash most of the large film library and to seize some of the films. We learned years later that the Legion of Justice was secretly controlled by the U.S. Department of Defense, in order to disrupt and neutralize the domestic anti-war movement.

I'd been in lots of street demonstrations, including at the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention and a couple of university building occupations, and I had even been arrested once for leafleting in Harvard Square. But this was definitely something new, different and scary. My natural reaction to crisis situations has always been to stay very calm, and it almost feels as if things are actually slowing down. So, I don't tend to overreact or respond too quickly. Appraising the scene, it was clear to me that the best way to avoid a bad situation from getting worse was to follow the Legion's orders.

When Sam and I returned from the Newsreel office and told everybody what happened, my expectation was that we would be treated sympathetically and supportively. Instead, we were subjected to a criticism/self-criticism session. It was explained by members of the Weatherman leadership, known as the "Weather Bureau", that criticism/self-criticism was the method used by

the Chinese Communist Party to develop its cadre and that it was being adapted by my SDS compatriots towards the same end. We were severely criticized for not confronting and resisting the armed raid on Newsreel. We were told it was an organizational priority to demonstrate to the other radical groups in town, which were organizing tough street kids or factory workers, that we weren't just a bunch of soft college kids; that we knew how to fight. I thought this was ridiculous. It made no sense to me to try to fight when the odds were so stacked against us and the other guys all had automatic weapons. Fred Hampton, the leader of the Chicago Black Panther Party, who would be murdered by the police the following December, accurately described this Weatherman approach to fighting as "Custeristic." My failure to accept the criticism did not endear me to the Weatherman leadership.

Eventually, I understood that this criticism/self-criticism process was a tool to undermine people's self-esteem and break down self-confidence. It was similar to methods used by cults to control their members. And the Weatherman faction of SDS was, indeed, beginning to exhibit some of the characteristics of a political cult. At the time, it just made me feel as if the people who were supposed to have my back, didn't. It was bad enough to be assaulted by the goons from the Legion of Justice. But the lack of solidarity from my compatriots made it even more difficult to deal with. Over the following months, I participated in criticism sessions of others and was subjected to some more myself. I tried to be more sympathetic and understanding than folks had been to me. But I really can't say if the targets of those criticism sessions perceived me the same way I did, and just participating in the process caused people to suffer.

I was recruited to come to Chicago by Bernardine Dohrn, an elected national leader of SDS and a member of the Weather Bureau. I had worked with Bernardine at the National Lawyers Guild in New York when I was doing draft counseling. Increasingly, active duty GIs, many of them AWOL, also came for counseling. I authored a brief manual to help with that. As a result of that experience, Bernardine asked me to lead the SDS legal collective, which was one of several task-oriented groups that worked out of the national office. I was very interested in law and was committed to the politics, so I agreed.

The members of the legal collective mostly lived in the home of Don Stang, an attorney with the Peoples' Law Office (PLO). We took turns sleeping in the house's beds, and mostly slept in sleeping bags on the floor. The PLO lawyers, law students and para-legals took on a large portion of the legal representation of movement activists arrested in Chicago. The legal collective worked nationally to get arrested Weathermen released from jail, raising bail money, coordinating court appearances, and recruiting additional attorneys to take cases. We also helped the PLO attorneys. On a couple of occasions, I went to a courtroom where a PLO attorney had a case and would slip a few dollars to the court officer, so that when the lawyer later showed up, the case would be called promptly. Without the money, a lawyer could wait hours to have a case called.

In addition to our legal responsibilities, we all also participated in local organizing activities, helped staff the phones and other functions within the national office, and prepared for a four-day series of demonstrations called the "Days of Rage," scheduled for October 8th to 11th. One of the rallies I attended was on September 24th, the first day of the Chicago Conspiracy

Trial. Eight people had been indicted and charged with leading the demonstrations that occurred during the Democratic National Convention. Having participated in those activities, I knew that the violence there was overwhelmingly perpetrated by cops and soldiers beating up protesters. But the only people charged were the demonstrators. One of the eight indicted was Bobby Seale, the national chairman of the Black Panther Party. The judge set a trial date, but Seale's attorney was on a trial in another case and requested a postponement so he could finish the trial he was engaged in and then come to Chicago. But, the judge, Julius Hoffman, said no, that Seale would have to be represented by the other defendants' attorneys. Bobby Seale said vociferously that he would not participate in a trial without his lawyer. So Hoffman had him chained and gagged and tied to his chair. Ultimately realizing the impossibility of a trial happening in those conditions, Hoffman severed Seale from the other defendants.

The Panthers called for a rally outside the courthouse to protest the trial and the treatment of their chairman. They were quite emphatic that this was to be a peaceful protest. A large group of us from the SDS national office and the Chicago Weatherman collective came to show our support. We respected the Panther leadership of the event and had no intention of starting any trouble. The rally was in a plaza in front of the federal court building. The perimeter of the plaza was ringed with police cars and a large contingent of cops. The speakers were in the front, near the courthouse, and the plaza was full of people listening to the speeches. At some point two small black boys, I'd guess about nine or ten years old, hoisted themselves onto the front fender of one of the cop cars so they could see the speakers. A police officer ran up on them, pulled them off the car, and began to beat them. One of our group, Larry Weiss, saw what was happening and rushed over to protect the children. He and the cop stated fighting and Larry seemed to be getting the better of it. At that point a large group of police, uniformed and plain clothes, jumped on Larry. They dragged him away and began beating him with their billy clubs and kicking him in the face and body. Then the rest of us tried to help Larry by pulling the cops off him. As I was trying to pull one cop off Larry, another came up behind me, put his club on my throat, and choked me until I lost consciousness. Bernardine later told me that she had pulled that cop away from me and wondered why I didn't take off. I explained that it was because I was unconscious.

When I came to, I was locked in the back of a police wagon with two of my comrades, Danny Cohen and Joe Kelly. We didn't know what was happening outside. We didn't know what had happened to Larry. We were driven to police headquarters at Eleventh and State. We were taken to a basement in a padded freight elevator, led into a large room, and encircled by eight or ten cops, with many other officers in the area. Each of us was held by a policeman. The one who held Danny was particularly angry. He seemed to be the same one who had beaten the children and fought with Larry. It became apparent, through his cursing at us, that Larry had escaped and that he held Danny most responsible. The cops holding Joe and me then shoved their Smith and Wesson 38 Police Special revolvers into our mouths and told us that if we tried anything, they would blow our brains out. The cop holding Danny then began to pistol whip Danny's face until he had broken every bone and there was nothing left but a bloody mass. I could no longer make out any features on Danny's face. I was powerless to help my friend and felt paralyzed.

Others of our group were also arrested, some at the scene and others, later, when a large group of cops broke down the door to one of our houses. We were all charged with felonies: mob action and aiding in escape. I spent a couple of days in the Cook County Jail and was released on bail. Danny was still in the hospital. A few of us went to see him and his face had now turned from the blood-red color I had last seen to purple and black. After a few days, he was released from the hospital but still needed to stay in bed. I tried to care for him as best I could, spurred on, in part, by what I later understood was similar to the feeling of survivor's guilt.

Then, these same cops started driving around the areas near the office and the places we lived, grabbing isolated individuals off the street. They grabbed one Weatherman member and beat him so badly that he was hospitalized. After that, we stopped going outside individually. The Chicago police "Red Squad" broke into one of the houses we used and hung another of our group out an upstairs window by his feet. In Cleveland, a member of the Weatherman collective was shot by the police. We were all now hyper-vigilant, and constant hyper-vigilance was exhausting.

Even with this level of repression, the police attacks on the Panthers were on an entirely different level. By the end of 1969, police around the United States had shot and killed many members of the Black Panther Party. On October 4, the police launched the latest in a series of raids on the Panther's office. First, shots were fired into the Chicago Panther office. Then the police broke down the front door, dragged out several Panthers, brutally beat them, and made them run a gauntlet of billy clubs and kicks. We later learned that the coordinated attacks by the FBI and local law enforcement were part of COINTELPRO, the Bureau's national strategy to destroy the black freedom movement, the movements of other peoples of color, and those of white radicals. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover specifically called for "preventing the rise of a black messiah."

We believed that we were now living in a police state and that the organizational structures needed to survive would have to change. We came to the conclusion that the movement in general, and the Weatherman organization in particular, would have to develop the organizational capacity to withstand the escalating level of repression and survive. But this perception of what the state of the struggle was, and what would be needed to go forward, was not at all shared by the overwhelming majority of SDS members or the broader anti-war movement. The government's strategy was to come down heaviest on the more radical groups and alienate them from their base of support. Weatherman tried to get SDS members to come to Chicago for the Days of Rage beginning on October 8. In contrast to the popular anti-war slogan, "Bring The Troops Home," the Weatherman slogan was "Bring The War Home." One poster, intended to build support, showed a helmeted, mean-looking, beefy Chicago cop with the message: "PIG CITY. BUT THE STREETS BELONG TO THE PEOPLE. DIG IT. DO IT." Not surprisingly, only a few hundred of Weatherman's hard core showed up. There were street marches that included vandalizing cars, corporate buildings, and the apartment houses of the wealthy. I spent the Days of Rage at PLO lawyer Dennis Cunningham's house, helping staff a phone bank. We kept track of arrests and injuries and provided updates on the state of the street actions. And there were a couple of hundred arrests.

Instead of realizing that we were at fault for completely cutting ourselves off from the rest of the movement, the Weatherman leadership blamed the tens of thousands of SDS members who didn't show up. They moved towards an elitist strategy of building a small vanguard, and to hell with the mass movement. The legal collective now had the job of finding lawyers for all those who had just been arrested, raising bail, and coordinating legal strategy. The PLO attorneys thought the best way to limit jail sentences for those arrested was to demand immediate trials. This would jam up the court system and result in pleas to reduced charges and lesser or no time in jail. That is what we did and it worked. But it required a lot of effort to keep everyone informed of their court dates and to help ensure they made their appearances. At the same time, I was also dealing with my own case from the September 24th arrest.

On November 13th, Chicago police ambushed two Panthers in an abandoned building. There was a shootout and two policemen and one Panther, Spurgeon "Jake" Winters, were killed. A second Panther, Lance Bell, known as Santa Claus, was wounded and arrested. The Panthers told the Weathermen to print a memorial poster for Jake Winters on their big press in the national office. By this point Weatherman was increasingly isolated from the rest of the movement and SDS. Relations with the Panthers were very bad, since the period leading up to the Days of Rage – which the Panthers opposed. The SDS printer, my good friend, Ron Fliegelman, wanted to print the poster, but the Weather Bureau told him not to.

On November 28th I was in the national office when a group of Panthers, led by Illinois chapter chairman Fred Hampton, came to the office. They were justifiably angry about the memorial poster. They were getting killed by the cops and all they asked us to do was to print a memorial poster and we didn't do it. The amount of pressure the Chicago Panthers and, particularly their leadership, were under at that time was enormous. They were being arrested and beaten on a daily basis and now, they were being killed. We told most of those present in the office to wait in the back room. The one Weather Bureau member who was there, and who would normally be the one to talk to the Panther chairman, was afraid to deal with Chairman Fred and went with the others to the back room. Ron, Mark Lencel, and I met with the Panthers. Fred Hampton was indeed very angry about the memorial poster. He asked us if we knew what Stalin said about the weapons of criticism and the criticism of weapons. I had no idea what he was talking about. He was carrying a 2 by 4, with which he ran at me, sending one pointed corner into my skull. I started bleeding profusely. Ron and Mark were also badly hurt. The Panthers left. We then met with the larger group in the back room and told them that given the pressure the Panthers were under, we should be understanding of their behavior. The three of us then went to the nearest hospital E.R. to get stitched up. When we got back from the hospital, we had a turkey dinner supplied by a Chicago collective member's mother. It was the day after Thanksgiving.

One week later, on December 4, 1969, the Chicago police, under the direct supervision of the Cook County State's Attorney in coordination with the FBI's COINTELPRO program, assassinated Fred Hampton and fellow Panther Mark Clark. Fred Hampton, who had been drugged, most likely by an FBI informant, was shot while he slept. A tactical unit of 14 cops

fired more than 90 rounds into the room where Hampton slept and then made sure he was dead with two more shots to his head at point blank range.

We believed we were in a state of war. The Weather Bureau called for a "war council" to be held after Christmas in Flint, Michigan. On Christmas eve, I was doing night duty with Mark Lencel, while Ron worked in the print shop on materials for the war council. Everyone else was at a Christmas party. I volunteered for night duty whenever there was a Weatherman party. I avoided the parties because they were self-defined as orgies where everyone had sex with many others in large open spaces. I still retained quaint notions of intimacy and privacy and really was uncomfortable at these gatherings. The "orgies" were related to the Weather Bureau's stated goal to "smash monogamy." This was another indication of typical cult-like behavior. Ostensibly instituted to undermine patriarchal relationships, it actually served to provide the leadership with greater sexual access to the members.

Ron was under great pressure to complete the printing in time for the Flint meeting and could not attend the party. I heard a scream coming from the print shop. Ron's hand was caught in the giant Heidelberg press. As I rushed in, he pulled it free, but his fingers were badly mangled and bleeding. He was in excruciating pain. We took him to the hospital ER. The nurse told Mark and me to wait outside, but Ron asked us to stay. When we didn't leave, the nurse called security. They came in with guns drawn and threw us out into the waiting room.

Three days later, we were at the war council in Flint. The Weather Bureau's understanding of preparing for a war focused on glorifying violence, almost for its own sake. They were starting to lose sight of the underlying politics. When we got back to Chicago, a meeting was held to plan the next issue of the SDS newspaper. It was proposed that the celebration of violence define the content of the paper. Ted Gold and I argued, only partially persuasively, against this. Three months later, Ted died in an explosion in a Weatherman "bomb factory" in New York City. A few days after the meeting, the Red Squad broke down the door of the national office with a battering ram. They could have rung the doorbell and, if they had a warrant, come inside. But they didn't want to come in that way. They wanted to terrify the people inside with the thud, thud, thud of the battering ram. I was outside of the office, received a phone call from inside, and could hear the sound of the battering ram over the phone. When the cops got in, they terrorized the people inside and seized one very old, non-working rifle. We realized it was no longer practical to maintain the office. I contacted the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison. They came the next day with a van and took years of records, documents, and publications.

In early January, I was sent to Seattle by the Weather Bureau to work with the Weatherman collective there. After about a month or so, the Weather Bureau began to dissolve the aboveground collectives. My differences with the leadership had only become exacerbated and I was particularly at odds with the decision to destroy SDS, the largest left student organization in the country. Though I agreed that we had to build organizations that could withstand the growing onslaught of the state, I believed that real social change could only be accomplished by mass movements and mass political organizations – not by a guerrilla vanguard.

I had to keep returning to Chicago to make court appearances on my case. One such appearance was scheduled for the morning of February 18th. I arrived on the 17th and was hanging out with Joe Kelly, who had moved to Seattle a few months before me. Meanwhile, the Chicago 7 trial was ending. The jury started deliberating and Judge Hoffman jailed all the defendants even before there was a verdict. The Chicago 7 Defense Committee called for demonstrations to take place around the country the day after. So the protests, known as TDA demonstrations, happened in dozens of cities on February 17th, when Joe and I were in Chicago. One such event happened in Seattle. The following April, Joe was indicted with 7 others for conspiring to lead the Seattle protest. I thought then, how it was particularly ironic and revealing of the government's use of the courts as part of a strategy of political repression, that Joe was charged with leading a demonstration that he wasn't even at. I didn't know that I would soon be charged with something even more serious, which I, also, didn't do.

On March 6,1970 I was in New York City, staying with my parents at the Hotel New Yorker. My dad was in the shoe business and twice a year they held a "shoe show" at the New Yorker, where he and others would display their new designs for the next season to retailers. I left the hotel at mid-day and took the train uptown to meet one of my Chicago codefendants, Bob Tomashevsky, at the West End, a bar and restaurant near Columbia University. When I got off the train at 110th Street and started to walk uptown, I ran into Joady Guthrie, a friend from college. He asked me if I'd heard about a big explosion in Greenwich Village that they were saying on the news was connected to Weatherman. I told him I hadn't and continued to the West End. Bob Tomashevsky never showed up and I began to realize that something really serious might have happened.

I went back to the hotel and turned on the TV. I saw the smoldering ruins of a townhouse on West 11th Street. Three bodies were found in the debris: Terry Robbins, who I'd known in SDS since my freshman year in college, my friend Ted Gold, and Diana Oughton, who I barely knew. The news report said the police believed the townhouse, which was owned by the father of Weatherman member Cathy Wilkerson, was a bomb factory. It was later disclosed that they were preparing bombs to be used at an army dance at Fort Dix. I had nothing to do with this group. I didn't know that what came to be called the Town House Collective even existed. Nevertheless, four months later, I would be indicted by the feds and charged falsely with buying the dynamite that blew up the town house.

In May I again returned to court in Chicago to deal with the September 24th arrest. Along with most of my codefendants, I agreed to a plea bargain. In return for dropping the felony charges against us, we would plead guilty to misdemeanor mob action and be sentenced to 90 days in jail. The sentences would start at the beginning of June. We were imprisoned in the House of Correction section of the Cook County Jail. As soon as we surrendered, we went through an intake process. We had to strip naked and were sprayed from head to foot with DDT. We had a medical exam that included a psychiatrist with a heavy German accent asking me if I had "ever committed suicide." We were photographed and given ID cards. Then, we were led to separate interrogation rooms where we were met by FBI agents. This was truly what was meant by custodial interrogation. We were prisoners sentenced to spend the next months locked up and

they could keep questioning us for as long as they wanted. On May 21st the Weathermen, now calling themselves the Weatherman Underground, announced that within the next 14 days, they would attack a "symbol or institution of Amerikan injustice." The FBI agents wanted to know if I knew what the target was. I told them that I didn't know, but even if I did, I wouldn't tell them. They eventually handed me back to the guards to be taken to a cell. On June 9, a Weatherman Underground bomb exploded in the New York City police headquarters.

Nearly all the inmates in the Cook County Jail were black or brown. So, we seven white people, five men and two women, sort of stood out. The five of us men were put on a work release tier with other prisoners who were sent out to jobs during the day and returned to jail after work. Joe Kelly and I were assigned to work for a Cook County Deputy Sheriff who also owned a moving company. He enjoyed profiting off the low wages he could pay prisoners. The other guys on the crew were all much bigger and stronger than Joe or me. When we got to our first job, Joe and I started to carry a heavy refrigerator down several flights of stairs. The boss stopped us and told us it was one man to an appliance. The other guys were strapping stoves and refrigerators on their backs and hauling them down solo. We told the boss we couldn't do that. We only lasted one day on the job.

The next day, as I waited in my cell, hoping to find more manageable work, a large prisoner, several years older than me, entered my cell. He wasn't one of the guys on my tier, which meant the guards had let him in through the locked gate. He had a mean scowl on his face and a tough-guy manner. He told me that I was going to be his "bitch." He told me that that was how things worked here and he thought we'd get along just fine. He said he was going to come back in two hours, and we would begin our new relationship. I told him that if he came back "one of us will leave here dead." I meant it when I said it, which I guess he knew. He never came back. This incident was so traumatizing that I completely repressed it for many years.

A friend of my parents who lived in Chicago found me a new work release job on the "engineering" staff at a local hospital. It was really a glorified custodial unit. We took care of all the minor maintenance that could be done without calling in outside professionals. The hospital had no central air conditioning and each patients' room had a window unit. One of our jobs was to replace the filters in every unit. Most of the rest of the building was not air conditioned and that summer Chicago was suffering through a terrible heat wave. We prisoners were only allowed two showers a week and they kept the water at a scalding temperature, so you could barely run through it. One morning at work, my supervisor told me that some of my co-workers had complained that I smelled really foul. I guess I had gotten used to my own bad odor and didn't even realize it. I explained the jail shower situation and he arranged for me to use the showers in the staff locker room.

One of the union contract benefits at the hospital was free lunch in the cafeteria. This was great for me as it was the one good meal I knew I could get. The jail food was awful. In jail every morning, I would have a bowl of corn flakes and a cup of coffee. The coffee was served steaming hot in tin cups that became as hot as the liquid. If you waited for the cups to

cool down enough to pick them up, the coffee was cold. So we tried to use towels to hold the cups and avoid spilling the whole thing. Work release inmates had to bring their paychecks back to the jail and sign them over to the County. Because we were not permitted to keep any cash in the jail, they would give us just enough to buy lunch each day. Since my lunch was free, I used the cash to buy a slice of pizza that I'd eat on the city bus ride on the way back to jail. This way I generally avoided eating jail food, except on weekends. This also worked out well for my cellmate, Bob Tomashevsky. He worked all day in the sweltering sun in a junk yard, which resulted in his being famished by the end of the day. He didn't seem to mind the quality of the cuisine as much as I did and would eat my dinner as well as his own.

Our sentencing judge, Saul Epton, was conflicted about sending us to jail. On the one hand, he thought we were dangerous, deluded radicals. On the other, we were a bunch of white college kids, so different from the poor black and brown people he usually put away. So, in addition to arranging for us to be on work release, he also set up weekly Sunday afternoon discussions with him, House of Correction warden Dan Weill, and a guest speaker. The idea was to win us away from our crazy politics and turn us into good, productive, middle class professionals, like his honor. In addition, the warden would sometimes have me brought to his office just to continue the political discussions. I was uncomfortable with the involuntary nature of these talks. I, also, grew concerned that my trips off the tier could lead the other prisoners to think I was a jailhouse snitch, which could result in severe repercussions. I used that as a reason to end the discussions. All in all, we clearly had it better than the thousands of black and brown prisoners at Cook County.

After several weeks, my jail experience became normalized. I'd go to work on weekdays. I read an enormous number of books and newspapers in my cell. I did as much exercise as was possible in a very small area – mostly pushups and chin ups on the bars. I spent a lot of time talking with my co-defendants who were on my tier and got friendly with several of the other prisoners. I played chess with my cellmate and watched TV in the day room with the other prisoners. On another occasion one of my codefendant's friends sent him a letter with a form of LSD known as "blotter acid," hidden behind the stamp. We each ate a piece of it and had a most interesting acid trip on a Saturday night in the Cook County Jail. Rather than being a scary place and a guarantee of a bad trip, the jail left me feeling very secure. After hanging out in the day room watching TV, we all were locked in our cells at 10 o'clock. I spent the rest of the night lying on my cot feeling very safe, enjoying visions and listening to Joni Mitchell on the radio singing her song Big Yellow Taxi. "Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone." I only had two visitors while I was incarcerated. One was my mother. The other was a woman I'd met once or twice, who had been in the Milwaukee Weatherman collective. She criticized me for being in jail. She said it was a cop out. If I was truly a revolutionary, I would escape and join the underground. I thanked her for her visit but declined her invitation.

On a hot mid-July day, one of our attorneys, Jeff Haas, picked us all up early at our jobs and drove us to a beach on Lake Michigan, before getting us back to the jail at the regular time. He didn't realize that we were under surveillance by the Red Squad the entire time. Our trip was

immediately reported to Judge Epton, who hauled all of us and Jeff into court and excoriated Jeff. The others were immediately taken off work release, but I wasn't. I thought at the time that that must have been because I hadn't shown up in the Red Squad's beach surveillance pictures. I would soon realize that that was not the reason they wanted to keep me on work release.

On July 24th I was eating lunch in the hospital cafeteria when Susan Jordan, a PLO attorney, walked in. She said she had just heard over her car radio that I, along with a dozen others, had been indicted in a federal case in Detroit, charging us with conspiring to blow up police stations in five cities. We decided that I should call Warden Weill and ask him what I should do. Should my lawyer take me to the FBI office or court to surrender? Should she drive me back to the jail right away? He told me to finish my regular workday and then return to the jail. It seemed a little strange, but we decided I should follow the warden's instructions. Susan left, and hours later I left work at my normal time. I walked about two blocks from the hospital when I was surrounded by several cars full of FBI agents. The cars came to screeching halts. The agents jumped out, grabbed me and threw me against one of the cars and cuffed me. They had a camera guy filming the whole thing. That night on the TV news they showed me being arrested, saying that the FBI had apprehended a dangerous fugitive on the streets of Chicago who was involved in blowing up police stations all over the country. I then understood why I had not been taken off work release like everybody else.[1]

I was booked at the FBI office, brought to federal court for a removal hearing, and then flown in custody to Detroit, where I was arraigned. The whole process took a couple of days and I was returned in custody to the Cook County Jail. However, because of my new charges, I would no longer be on work release or housed on the work release tier. Along with another prisoner, I was brought upstairs on a jail elevator to my new home. The other prisoner stepped off the elevator first. He crossed his arms over his chest and shouted "Stone to the bone. Death to the Disciples". Unfortunately for this member of the Blackstone Rangers gang, this was a Disciples tier and another prisoner immediately broke a broom stick over his head. I then stepped off the elevator with great trepidation. I was approached by one of the inmates who said "Hey. I recognize you from TV. You're the guy who blew up all those police stations." I shook my head and told him that I really didn't do that. He said "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say you were guilty." His voice was shaking. Incredibly, one of this group that I was afraid of, was afraid of me. It was very weird. Then a member of the Panthers, Lance Bell or "Santa Claus", who had been shot and arrested when Jake Winters was killed, came to see me. He said he had put out the word on the tier that no one was to bother me or give me a hard time. He was followed by the leader of the Nation of Islam on the tier, who told me the same thing. They both said I was under their protection. As a result, I spent the next two weeks uneventfully waiting to finish my time. Being released became my main focus, the thing I was really looking forward to. On the day we were scheduled to get out, all my co-defendants were released. I expected to also get out. But as

[1] The Detroit indictment was dismissed in 1973 after we had fought it for three years. Rather than obey the judge's order to disclose all the government illegal activities aimed at us, the government dropped the charges. Five years later, the former director of the FBI, L. Patrick Gray, his chief deputy, Watergate's Deep Throat, Mark Felt, and the Bureau's head of domestic intelligence, Edward Miller, were indicted for an FBI conspiracy to deprive us of our rights. Felt and Miller were convicted after trial in 1980 and pardoned by President Reagan in 1981.

the hours passed and nothing happened, I began to worry. I asked a guard if he could find out what was going on. He told me that I wasn't given credit for the time I was in Detroit and would have to do two more days. They were two very long days. I didn't realize how much I'd been looking forward to being released, until it was delayed. Finally, the wait ended and I was released. I spent the evening with one of my codefendants, Courtney Esposito, who lived in Chicago. The next morning, I got a flight home to New York, hoping never to return.

My time in Chicago left an indelible impression. It affected some of my major life choices – including helping start the prisoners' rights magazine "The Midnight Special" and becoming a public defender with The Legal Aid Society in New York City. My Chicago experience left me with a lasting wariness about government's abuse of its enormous power. It also left me with a wariness of human arrogance, rigid ideologies, and their ability to cause and justify great suffering. Fifty years ago, the United States was in the midst of a political and cultural crisis of its own making. A century after the Civil War, African Americans were engaged in a renewed struggle for freedom – a fight to throw off the terrible vestiges of slavery. Their movement inspired and gave hope to millions of other people in the U.S. and around the world. I remember visiting Northern Ireland in 1966 and hearing Catholic civil rights marchers singing "We Shall Overcome" in Gaelic. At the same time, the U.S. role as the international champion of imperialism met its most serious challenge in Viet Nam. The initial support for the war had faded and millions of Americans were in active opposition. The government's response to these threats to white supremacy and to its overall control are instructive. It disregarded the rule of law and respect for basic human rights, particularly against people of color. It initiated a campaign of repression that included every conceivable tactic, up to and including the murder of its own citizens. Knowing that this can happen here, because it did happen here, should remind us of how high the stakes are again, now. The ways we respond today to police violence, the locking up of children at the border, or a Department of Justice that makes a mockery of its name, will define what the government believes it can or cannot get away with tomorrow.