

0-7-87

Bill,

A long story is the only answer to your questions.

It's a dream, back 20 years, when I was a seventeen yearold freshman. It was my first time away from home just like hundreds of other freshman. I was in WSA's marching band until some of the football team talked me into playing. I won a scholarship and played two years until I got tired of losing.

I grew up in Pullman. I met my first wife there and two of my children were born there. Pullman was my home.

There were only about 30-40 Black students there when I arrived and most were athletes. I had two academic scholarships. I couldn't have afforded the cost any other way.

Things went along well for a couple of years. There weren't too many incidents with rednecks or nazists until some of us were involved ~~with~~ in a fight

with a fraternity; that was the beginning of things happening in Pullman. Students from several colleges met in Colfax to protest what we felt was unfair in that only the black students were prosecuted for involvement in the fight. We stayed in a church in Colfax. There were bomb threats and guys riding around with guns. We were all put in jail. I forgot exactly what was the charge but that was the first time I was ever in jail. That was 1969.

I became more involved with the Afro-American Alliance group at the University and was a student senator in the ASWSU. Pullman really needed some changes.

People were starting to speak up against the war on campus then finally there was the March on March 13th, 1970. It was an event that rocked the status quo in Pullman and it was the beginning of my being a visible vocal force in WSU campus politics.

After the march ended in a rally in downtown Pullman and some people burned their draft cards, etc, we decided to show support to the Chavez grape boycott. Some people got carried away and destroyed some grapes at one of the stores. Other things happened to make us look like a very large group of vandals and it was called a riot. I was a parade marshal and had a bullhorn. I had a black beret, black leather jacket and sunglasses so obviously I was a perfect choice by the prosecutor to be named as the leader. It is curious that no one else was ever charged. The merchants and folks in Pullman wanted blood and I was the scapegoat.

I was stunned when I found out I was charged with inciting a riot - in Pullman! A campaign started for my defense and I began to speak out on the issues.

The student movement got more radical in the spring of 1970. We made a coalition of groups and there were large meetings and demonstrations.

Finally the Admin Bldg was seized by the students for several days.

The student union bldg was occupied.

The issues were the Vietnam war and racism. Well, most of the colleges at WSU closed early in 1970. The University provided movies for a racism workshop during the coming year.

The spring of 1970 saw a group of people grow in Pullman. ~~Protestors that~~

Columbia University was the only school that had ever <sup>been</sup> shut down by students in those years. We had to make a statement against the wrongs in our society that could only be expressed through civil disobedience.

It was before the Pentagon papers were published and we were telling people what those papers would later validate. People wanted social change NOW

We started the Organization to End All Racism which had the concept that whites could end racism among themselves by talking to each other. So called Rednecks hated so called liberals but they would have to learn how to talk to each other to better end the problems of this country. I really felt that even though we

were against the war, we were patriots because we didn't want our country to

be wrong. We had the courage to stand up and speak our hearts.

I gave up a lot and I know of others who gave more - their futures and college education - just to speak and stand against what was wrong.

For instance, when I was arrested for "inciting a riot" in Pullman, 25 people (students) went to the City Police to turn themselves in for the same charge - they went to the Whitman County Sheriff's office also. In both instances their requests were turned down. They then went to the Ad building and some of them dropped out of school in protest. I suffered a lot but they gave all they had for me and a cause.

We were trying to deliver a message that this country was being trapped inside a military-industrial complex economic situation - and that the millions made by American businessmen and foreign entrepreneurs was blood money and that our brothers, cousins and friends were dying to make some folks very rich.

My respect has always been for the American soldier, the individual, the person. I would have been in that jungle if I thought it was right. After Daniel Ellsberg, <sup>especially</sup> ~~even~~ veterans realized it was wrong. Besides, it was an effort to prolong the war rather than win it anyway so more money could be made and so the economy could wind down and avoid a depression. You understand

The domestic problems that were existent before the war - about 2400 years - are still present today. There were so-called race riots among Vietnam stationed troops, aboard aircraft carriers and so on. Drugs are killing us all regardless of color. No matter how many protracted wars are fought, Nukes reign.

The struggle in Pullman saw a lot of children wake-up, grow up, and stand up to deal with these 'problems'.

The real world was only a part of Pullman in those times. Academia was blasted when what was learned could not be applied to real people in a real world. It is meant for a university to be a learning center. The student and faculty of WSU were closer to the mainstream than they had ever been or perhaps ever will be. Involvement is a good teacher at times.

No matter how things are done in a situation like that, someone's toes are stepped on. Controversy breeds animosity, etc.

For all that happened during those times

I have to say the University Administration  
deserves applaud. Their handling of various  
situations kept things from getting totally  
out of hand. Some of them grew, changed their attitudes and widened their worldly outlook, too.

I don't know what Pullman is like now but then it was alive. There was a time people really cared about each other and shared what little they had.

I could ramble on but I think this should help you in what you're trying to do.

Some of the old Evergreen issues particularly an article by Judge Denoo in 1972(?) before he retired - said alot. }  
I would check them out.

If you have any questions or you want to talk to me on the phone, I must call you collect. There are only 5 lines going out so its hard.

I'm here building a disarmament system for chemical agents. It's good to be helping dismantle this part of the machine. I'm not a pacifist totally. I believe in defending this country but never in being part of an oppressive force.

God bless,

Roy L. Atkins

ATKINS

P.S. Send me a copy

