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Peace, Politics, and Vortex: The Cultural and Political Consequences of Oregon's Only State Sponsored Rock Concert

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**Peace,
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Sponsored Rock Concert**

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Honors Project History
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It was not every day that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) paid a visit to the Governor of Oregon, and they were seldom bearers of good news. The FBI and Attorney General told Governor Tom McCall that 50,000 members of the People's Army Jamboree were marching to Portland to disrupt the city's American Legion conference. 50,000 people. McCall thought that, "Some of the group's members openly welcomed a riot. I could envision our state being pulled apart before the world's television cameras."¹

The year was 1970 and McCall's fears were well grounded (Figure 1). The pain of losing John F. Kennedy and his brother, Bobby, was still raw in the heart of the nation. Chicago still smoldered from the riots after Martin Luther King's assassination. Even more present in the minds of the public were the student demonstrations and shootings at Kent and Jackson State Universities. These events led to a total of six student deaths. Oregon's liberal university students were no different from those setting the national trend for angry protesting.

McCall, poised for his upcoming re-election campaign, was faced with a seemingly impossible task: how could he make the city of Portland and the state of Oregon deviate away from this trend of violence? Every time that students and officials met it seemed to end in anger at the least, deadly violence at the worst. How could Oregon break this trend? The only way to break the pattern of hostility was to stop responding to violence in a way that would end up precipitating it.

This is the story of that method: the story of Vortex 1. The extent to which Oregon's method worked and the consequences of its unorthodoxy are a tribute both to the region's unique political ideology and the desperation of the times. It was a

¹ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977),132.

demonstration of a new way for the Left and Right to understand one another. It showed the ‘taming’ of the young people and the ‘loosening-up’ of the old. This is a story of compromise and learning. Whether and to what extent this solution was necessary or, for that matter, successful in completing the government’s goal of peace, has faded in light of the story that Vortex became.

Oregon’s Protesting Youth

Protests and potential violence were realistic fears for Oregonians in the 1960s. In solidarity with protesters around the country, students from the University of Oregon stubbornly occupied its buildings. They sat in, they stood around, they sang at the top of their lungs, all to bring the University’s administration to a screeching halt despite being told that their actions violated statute ORS 164.460 and could lead to their arrest.²

In the winter and spring of 1970, Portland State University (PSU) became more actively involved in politics than ever before, and the increased tension between the police and the students led to violence. At the University of Portland, student protesting the Vietnam War disrupted foot traffic on a frequented path which they dubbed “Fort Tricia” – named for President Nixon's daughter after she publicly stated her opinion that young people were not really as upset about the war as they pretended to be. Portland State students monopolized park blocks, claiming them for their own ‘Ho Chi Minh trail.’³ One spontaneous violent protest at the University of Oregon ended up costing the school 55,886 dollars in emergency law enforcement alone.⁴

² Attorney General Lee Johnson to University of Oregon President Dr. Robert D. Clark. April 22, 1970, Portland State University Archives, Portland, OR.

³ Sanders, Rick, Phone interview by author, Portland, OR, May 12, 2010.

At PSU, students harassed visiting Navy Recruiters in protest of the draft. The protesters formed a ‘ring-around-a-rosie’ encircling the recruiters and bodily taunting them. On February 23rd, 1970, the offending students were brought before the University’s judiciary committee. The committee decided to expel the perpetrators. Ironically, the students’ protesting of the war may have resulted in their forced participation in it. The committee’s report concludes, “The Committee has worked hard to be fair, realizing that loss of academic status can have far-reaching effects for those who are subject to the draft.”⁵

In effect, the students were committing minor acts of terrorism. Not feeling they had the tools to make a difference through normal political means, they took to the streets and vented their frustration on buildings and whatever institutions were on hand. They felt powerless to enact change through conventional political channels. It would take a great demonstration of state trust to convince them otherwise.

The Kent State tragedy motivated PSU’s activists to protest like never before. Their organizations were a flurry of activity. Pamphlets such as the PSU student newspaper the *Barricade*, passed from hand to hand, put forward four demands: the U.S. had to withdraw from Vietnam, remove police from college campuses, stop the importation of nerve gas into Oregon, and free Black Panther cofounder, Bobby Seale, from jail.⁶

⁴ John Chairet to Dr. Gregory Wolfe. May 5, 1970, Portland State University Archives, Portland, OR.

⁵ F. Bernhard Fedde to Dr. Gregory Wolfe. June 10, 1970. Portland State University Archives, Portland, OR. 2.

⁶ Police-Community Relations Committee of the Portland Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, *Campus Unrest Investigation Results*. (filed) Sep. 22, 1970. AND *Barricade #3*, May 14 1970.

These protests upset Governor McCall. As a former journalist, he wholeheartedly respected the students' right to protest. However, he was also enraged by what he considered to be their shortsighted demands and fruitless methods. Thus, McCall's Chief of Staff Ed Westerdahl was left to take care of the rebellious protestors.⁷

Westerdahl tried to quench student anger by announcing that, while the flag would not be lowered to half-staff, memorials to the students killed in other states would be welcomed. He said in a public address,

“All of this thrust is toward the recognition of two essentials: 1. Destruction and violence will not be tolerated under any circumstances. 2. All responsible students deserve reassurance that their state government is listening and is attuned to legitimate complaints. It is vitally essential that the students of this nation realize that government has the ability and willingness to respond to reasonable expressions.”⁸

Protesters might not have heard this message then, but it was a message that would be repeated in later months.

Even though not all Oregonians agreed on the student committee's first few points, the import of nerve gas into the state was almost unanimously opposed. Agreements such as this may have begun to lay the groundwork for cooperation across the political playing field; cooperation that would later be utilized during the organization of Vortex. Governor Tom McCall and Robert W. Straub, the man he was running against in the upcoming gubernatorial election, both opposed the nerve gas, making it a “truly bipartisan effort.”⁹ McCall recounts this effort in his autobiography, “Never in the history

⁷ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1994), 284.

⁸ Office of the Governor, *Special Message to Oregonians on Kent State University Tragedy*. May 5, 1970, 2.

⁹ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 122.

of Oregon has its citizenry united in such an overwhelming majority. Every age group, every economic group, every occupational group – every possible kind of group says NO!”^{10 11}

However, the protesting students wanted to focus on more than just the nerve gas and continued petitioning for their four-pillared protest. John Chairet, a representative of the Student Mobilization Committee, wrote to the University’s President Wolfe concerning these issues. He asked that time off be granted to the students that they might be able to protest the war and Kent State shootings.

“If the latter is not granted, or if the reply is a no comments, it will be made publicly known that you oppose the right of those students who want to, to peacefully, dissent and voice their opposition to our government’s atrocities, by not allowing them to make up lost schoolwork and lost classes due to their striking.”¹²

Chairet’s forceful demands were in keeping with those being made by students across the country. President Wolfe granted the requested days off.¹³

As the rest of the state protested the nerve gas, PSU’s rebels continued preparing to strike for its full list of demands. However, the date of the protest was postponed until May 9th, several days after students had originally intended. Students obtained permission from the city to close off some of its central park blocks. The protest started off in a very

¹⁰ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 129.

¹¹ Originally McCall was torn over how he should react to the importation of nerve gas into Oregon. President Nixon thought Oregon was the best place to dump the nerve gas. McCall felt that he owed the President a favor after being nominated to the Citizens Advisory Committee on Environmental Quality. However, in typical McCall fashion, what was right for Oregon won out over what was right for the Republican party.
Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 266 – 269.

¹² John Chairet to Dr. Gregory Wolfe. May 5, 1970, Portland State University Archives, Portland, OR.

¹³ Police-Community Relations Committee of the Portland Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, *Campus Unrest Investigation Results*. (filed) Sep. 22, 1970.

civil manner; protesters at the park blocks remained orderly throughout. However, havoc was later wreaked in PSU's Smith Memorial building, causing 17,970 dollars worth of damage.¹⁴

Portland has many lush, green parks. The numerous trees, bicycle stands, and play-areas are a point of local pride. The park blocks are one of the longest stretches of park in the heart of the city's downtown area. More importantly though, the park runs right through PSU and up against what was formerly a conservative, high-brow, residential area.¹⁵ The close proximity of the straight homeowners with rebellious college students was cause for concern.

On the park blocks, barricades were constructed out of anything students could find. Park benches were utilized to obstruct traffic flow. The students also built multiple makeshift encampments, including a large hospital tent.¹⁶ It would be the hospital tent, the least threatening structure of all, which would cause the disaster that haunted the memories of those trying to protect Portland from the impending cultural collision between protestors and Legionnaires.

The clearest rendering of the subsequent events came from PSU's special investigative committee's report on the incident. At 9:30 AM on May 11, 1970, President Wolfe held a meeting with protestors. The president and protestors mutually decided it was time to deconstruct the barricade. At this same time the non-protesting students, upset that their education was being interrupted yet again by a small group of radicals,

¹⁴ Police-Community Relations Committee of the Portland Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, *Campus Unrest*. (filed) Sep. 22, 1970: 2.

¹⁵ Author's observations.

¹⁶ Dorothy Tarter, citizen, to Gregory Wolfe President of Portland State University, 13 May 1970, Portland State University Office of the President.

marched to the Mayor of Portland's office and asked him to do something about the situation. The mayor, Terry Schunk, then decided, contrary to the permission granted by the permit, that the tents and barricades must come down immediately. He put a tactical squad on alert and sent another group of officers to the school to help facilitate deconstruction.¹⁷

When ordered by police to take the hospital tent down, students refused, believing their permit was still in effect. Both parties were safe and calm. However, verbal orders from the Mayor to Police Chief Gulafson clearly dictated the tent be removed regardless of the consequences. Mr. Gulafson then called in the tactical squad to destroy the hospital tent.¹⁸ The squad fought the protestors – beating them with clubs in attempts to force them into submission (Figure 2). Eyewitness accounts of the beatings are angry and moving. One professor reported that police were confrontational and hostile even to him as he walked by. It made the professor angry and even more sympathetic to the students whom he thought were being treated sadistically.¹⁹ He writes,

“The police officers were men of stone, acting like robots and reacting on command like automatons with one notable exception; their faces shown with what looked like anticipation of a physical confrontation...How, in the name of whatever makes life sacred, can the police officers justify three officers beating on one defenseless, down on the ground student with riot batons?”²⁰

¹⁷ Police-Community Relations Committee of the Portland Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, *Campus Unrest*. (filed) Sep. 22, 1970: 3.

¹⁸ Police-Community Relations Committee of the Portland Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, *Campus Unrest Investigation Results*. (filed) Sep. 22, 1970: 3.

¹⁹ Clinton W. Rowley to Dale Parnell. May 12, 1970. Portland State University Archives, Portland, OR.

²⁰ Police-Community Relations Committee of the Portland Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, *Campus Unrest Investigation Results*. (filed) Sep. 22, 1970: 2.

An elderly resident, on the other hand, reported seeing the protestors act like “wild, crazed, hate-filled men and women deserted by reason – begging to be forced back.”²¹ However, the majority of witnesses were shell-shocked and confused by the way nonviolent protestors were manhandled in their own city.

Portland State film students intended to document the student protest, but what they captured instead was footage of a riot. Police respectfully asked protestors to disperse. They refused because they were in the middle of taking things down but wanted to leave the tent up. There was no warning. They were not arrested for refusing to disperse (as many students were prepared to be); instead, they were beaten with riot clubs.²² At this point in the movie, the footage shows groups of confused and distraught young people with banners, as well as interviews with some injured students. Several of them even had to be hospitalized.²³

A few days later, a peace march was held. This time the protestors included not only students, but business people and right-wingers as well, all of whom marched to the Mayor’s office to ask for calmer solutions to tumultuous situations (Figure 3). The movie shows bandaged kids from the PSU protest walking alongside elderly folk who a few days before would have been shouting at them to get a haircut.²⁴

Though this image seems idyllic, not everyone was angered by the city’s demonstration of strength. Many on the right supported Mayor Schrunk’s use of force at

²¹ Dorothy Tarter to Mr. Gregory Wolfe. May 13, 1970, Portland State University Archives, Portland, OR.

²² Clinton W. Rowley to Dale Parnell. May 12, 1970. Portland State University Archives, Portland, OR

²³ Center for Moving Image. 1970. *The Seventh Day* .DVD. Portland State University Class, 1970. Portland State University Archives.

²⁴ Center for Moving Image. 1970. *The Seventh Day* .DVD. Portland State University Class, 1970. Portland State University Archives.

Portland State and even wished he had gone a step further and withheld the pay of rebellious professors.²⁵ Nevertheless, the majority of people drew the line at having to face violence.

Uniting to eliminate the nerve gas and stop violence at PSU demonstrated that citizens of Portland were tired of being afraid. They may not even have realized how closely they worked at this early stage in the game. Though the beliefs of the different cultural groups divided them, they had in common the inability to stomach violence and the goal of making Oregon the best state it could be. There were different ways to achieve this, but when it came down to an issue whose outcome was fundamental to that goal, Oregonians had proven they were willing to work together. To some extent. While those close to the event were appalled by it, those writing to the editors of Portland newspapers were “ten to one in favor of police action” in cases like the PSU protests.²⁶

On May 22nd, McCall publicly addressed the turmoil on campuses. He acknowledged that many students, indeed the ‘silent majority’, wanted to keep going to classes but that their education, the education they paid for, was being disrupted. He quoted one student saying:

“ I am a junior in elementary education, and wish to continue attending regular classes according to our agreement on registration day. The students in protest are a small minority of our beloved campus and are hindering the education of the large majority of students like myself who have a strong desire to educate themselves with no delay of their graduation date...Please help us by not closing classes – help us to obtain the goals for which we have worked so hard.”²⁷

²⁵ Dorothy Tarter to Mr. Gregory Wolfe. May 13, 1970, Portland State University Archives, Portland, OR.

²⁶Steineger, Melissa. "1970: Memories of confrontation." Portland State University: Portland State Magazine. <http://pdx.edu/magazine/news/1970-memories-of-confrontation>.

²⁷ Office of the Governor, *Campus Unrest in the 70s: Excerpts from an Address by Oregon Governor Tom McCall*, May 22, 1970. 4.

McCall reiterated that “we have done everything within our power as a governor’s office to stay with the problems – to listen to those involved in the problems – to assess the changing scene – and to move and react accordingly.”²⁸ He closes by quoting a statement from a bank that had recently been destroyed during protests.

“Some of (the) grievances are real, some are fanciful, and others are false. But all deserve to be aired. To the degree that they are not aired, are not taken seriously, Americans break faith with their young. But all Americans, young and old, liberal and conservative, lose by violence. Violence and destruction are the seeds of anarchy and tyranny – whether it be the tyranny of the extreme right or the extreme left...Let us, as a nation, find once again our ability to distinguish between protest and revolt; between dissent and chaos; between demonstration and destruction; between non-violence and violence.”²⁹

This served as a strong cry to dissuade further violence in the state. The Governor addressed the part that both the rebellious youth and extreme conservatives played in perpetuating pandemonium.

Shortly after the turmoil of the park blocks the Governor was told that the People’s Army Jamboree and American Legion were making their way to Portland.

The Governor

McCall was a staunch, lifelong Republican. Contrary to the polarized politics of the day however, he was as likely to agree with his opponent as he was to agree with his own party. Of some aspects of his 1970 campaign he recalled that:

²⁸ Office of the Governor, *Campus Unrest in the 70s: Excerpts from an Address by Oregon Governor Tom McCall*, May 22, 1970. 2.

²⁹ Office of the Governor, *Campus Unrest in the 70s: Excerpts from an Address by Oregon Governor Tom McCall*, May 22, 1970. 13.

“They [the Oregon press] could see there wasn’t much substance to what we were fighting about and there was great substance to what we were agreeing about. That’s why it was substantially a campaign of general agreement on what the objective of governance ought to be for the office.”³⁰

Like most Republicans of the time, McCall supported the federal government’s stance on Vietnam. However, in contrast to others in his party, he supported socially liberal causes such as environmentalism. He looked at issues on a case-by-case basis instead of automatically taking the republican stance.

Part of this objectivity came from the regret that he had run a campaign with Guy Cordan despite the fact that he and the McCarthyite were as different as “night and day.”³¹ McCall’s politics continued to be so Left leaning that the Democrat who defeated him in a Senate race later urged him to become a Democrat and run for Governor.³² Though he remained loyal to the Republican Party, his ideas were so close to the middle of the political spectrum that the opposition thought he was helping them.

Perhaps it was McCall’s newspaper background that maintained his objectivity, and kept him from blindly touting the Party line. The University of Oregon’s school newspaper got him involved in journalism. His paternal grandfather was a senator and his maternal grandfather a stock market king, but the family fortunes were nonexistent or unavailable to him during the Great Depression.³³ McCall’s newspaper work at Moscow, Idaho’s *News Review* barely kept him and his wife, Audrey Owen, afloat during the

³⁰ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 70.

³¹ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 39.

³² Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 44.

³³ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 13-33.

Depression. During this era it was illegal for married women to work since jobs were so scarce. The McCalls kept their marriage secret for as long as they could, so that Audrey could keep working and earning the money they desperately needed to pay off McCall's gambling debts.³⁴

In 1941, McCall moved from the little Idaho paper to Oregon's state newspaper *The Oregonian*³⁵. Despite Audrey's objections, he interrupted his journalism career to volunteer for the Navy in World War II.³⁶ The move would prove helpful politically in later years. When he got back from the war he got involved in broadcasting for the first time. He had a reputation for being an evenhanded reporter both in the news world and in the public consciousness.³⁷ McCall's sights were set on something more grandiose than being a simple reporter. He wanted to demonstrate his Republican values and gain the clout that came with working in politics.³⁸

When Governor Douglas McKay had a position open for an aide, McCall jumped on it. This served as a great apprenticeship for future gubernatorial work. Among other tasks, McKay put McCall in charge of diffusing some high-level labor disputes. In each confrontation McCall sat down with the opposing parties and listened to their grievances. The dissenters knew they were being listened to because of the acceptable compromises McCall put forward at the end of the meetings. In one dispute, inmates at the Oregon

³⁴ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 6.

³⁵ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 10.

³⁶ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 67.

³⁷ Bogorad, Rebecca, interview by author, Portland, OR, July 14, 2010.

³⁸ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 74.

State Penitentiary threatened violent action if their demands were not met. He says of the event,

“I went out and met with the inmate negotiating committee. There were eight convicted murderers on the committee. I walked into the room by myself – with no guns over me. I asked, ‘How do you settle something like this?’ ... They were for the most part, simple grievances – basic things that prisoners should have mostly concerned with mail and visitation matters.”³⁹

Instead of punishing the prisoners, McCall sat down with the inmates to find out exactly what they wanted. Finding their claims to be reasonable, he promised they would get a hearing before the Board of Control provided they ceased their threatening. The prisoners agreed.⁴⁰ McCall was comfortable engaging with people from all different walks of life because of his newspaperman objectivity. This attitude carried over into political ideology. McCall solved problems through discourse and compromise.

The amount of freedom McCall afforded the press was unprecedented for a state government. His experience in the newspaper business meant he knew just how to phrase things to make reporters salivate over each of his statements and eagerly whisk them away to their editors. He understood, “the necessity of saying something provocative, but factual, to give reporters an excuse to come to our meetings and pick up something solidly interesting about governors, along with the political froth which they cherish so greatly.”⁴¹ He let the press have access to him during his less scripted moments as well. To the frustration of his political strategists, McCall had an open door policy, allowing the press to attend even preliminary brainstorming sessions for every meeting at the State

³⁹ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 22.

⁴⁰ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 22.

⁴¹ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 160.

Capitol. He would even willingly talk to reporters after his 5 o'clock cocktails.⁴² The openness of his office and efforts to converse with opposition were highlighted in his attempt to communicate with frustrated protestors after the PSU riots.

This did not mean McCall would roll over and submit to the opposition. He was a loyal Republican. That, along with his service during World War II, gave him the respect of his conservative constituents.⁴³ What it did mean, however, was that McCall was not beholden to his party. When he thought that Ronald Regan had “no experience in government and had [run] a simplistic platform on conservative shibboleths,”⁴⁴ there was no sense of Republican loyalty staying his tongue. Furthermore, he trusted and worked with members of the Democratic Party to promote state bills. For example, in multiple speeches in the late 60's and early 70's, Governor McCall cited the importance of women's rights and recycling (Figure 4). He then entrusted a Democrat, Betty Roberts, to champion the bills pertaining to these issues.⁴⁵ McCall had no problem working with Democrats and speaking against Republicans. He willingly engaged not only members of the political opposition in debate, but those of his own Party as well. Unfortunately for the governor, this issue-driven, compromising stance came across as wishy-washy to many Oregon voters during his 1970 campaign for re-election. His opponent, Robert Straub, commissioned a public opinion poll to see what he was up against. One of his aides interpreted the results of the poll in this fashion; “He [McCall] hated to make

⁴² Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 152.

⁴³ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 70.

⁴⁴ Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 400.

⁴⁵ Betty Roberts, *With Grit and by Grace: Breaking Trails in Politics and Law, A memoir*, ed. Gail Wells (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2008), 147,132.

decisions that were going to hurt somebody. It was either black or white, and he'd always go with gray. And that left the impression of weakness."⁴⁶ McCall could not allow this impression to prevail if he wanted to win another term as governor. Vortex would irreversibly change McCall's public image and give him the additional confidence to champion centrist bills.

Northwest Politics

On the national level McCall's status as a liberal Republican was an anomaly. However, in the Pacific Northwest one could argue that he was merely the poster child for a regional phenomenon. (Later he would seem even more radical for his times.) Pre-war dam construction and World War II shipbuilding and timber industry caused Oregon's economy to boom like never before. Workers migrated from all over the country. Many of those workers were from the East, lower middle class, and had strong liberal unionist ties.⁴⁷ This group was more focused on particular issues instead of what political party they were affiliated with. This can be seen by how split the legislature typically was. In the 1930s there was an increase in the number of Democrats holding state offices. Then in the 1940s 54% of the population supported a Republican presidential candidate, while 56% supported a Democratic senate. Furthermore from 1956-1990 the Republicans never controlled both houses in the state legislature.^{48 49} One

⁴⁶ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 282-283.

⁴⁷ Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 457.

⁴⁸ Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 457.

could interpret this as Oregonians not being able to make up their minds. It is more accurate to realize that these discrepancies are a result of voters looking at political issues rather than the political party the candidates affiliated themselves with. A candidate won a Northwest election not by being the only candidate running for the individual voter's political party, but rather by demonstrating they were the best advocate for the economic, environmental, or social policies the constituency held dear.

The bipartisan efforts that resulted from this issue-driven atmosphere were genuine. In the interstate political community, the Republican governors of Oregon and Washington were great friends with the Democratic Idaho Governor Cecil Andrus and they all treated one another "like brothers."⁵⁰ McCall even endorsed Andrus during his re-election bid in 1974 despite the backlash he could receive from his own party.⁵¹ The issues were more important than the people promoting them. This made Oregon fertile ground for the kind of cross-cultural discussion that would save the city from violence.

Portland Prepared

As the American Legion and People's Army Jamboree drew near, Oregonians were primed to do something about the impending collision. The possibility of violent conflict, like that seen at Kent State and PSU, scared them. Whether directly or indirectly,

⁴⁹ Brent Walth argues that "The [Republican] party had dominated state politics for decades. Democrats built the first political machine, but the GOP started to run the state soon after the Civil War." Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 74.

However, Schwantes' claims are substantiated quantitatively by the party split in the state government leading his analysis to the body of this paper.

⁵⁰ Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 461.

⁵¹ Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 461.

the Right and Left had just worked together to get nerve gas out of Oregon and protest the Mayor's use of combative police during protest. Finally, Oregon had a governor whose past was respected by his fellow Republicans and whose dedication to environmental concerns and bipartisanship were admired by his opposition. Together, these factors prepared Oregon for the cooperation that would be needed to make Vortex 1 a reality.

Though in retrospect these factors make Oregon seem like a relatively bipartisan place, the feeling on the street was far from calm. Many reporters thought the conflict between protestors and Legionnaires would put too much strain on the city's political climate. Newspapers from across the country reported the possible clash between the two groups, making it seem as though violence was the only possible outcome. Reports from Arkansas, Illinois, and Wisconsin prepared readers for the violence brewing in Portland.⁵² Newspapers in cities as far away as Washington D.C., and Illinois began to foreshadow "legion, youth clash."⁵³

With this tremendous conflict looming overhead, both McCall and the city of Portland decided to start taking action. 6,000 guardsmen were provided with extra riot training and their leave days were indefinitely cancelled.⁵⁴ Police and firemen were also placed on call, ready should misfortune strike.⁵⁵ Michael P. McCuster, a member of the People's Army Jamboree, declared that the governor's distrust of the protestors was, in

⁵² "Anti-War Veterans, Legion May Clash." *Wisconsin State Journal* 6 Aug. 1970: 2.

⁵³ "Legion, youth clash: Portland gets ready." *Southern Illinoisan*, 16 August 1970: 7.

⁵⁴ "Legion, youth clash: Portland gets ready." *Southern Illinoisan*, 16 August 1970: 7.

⁵⁵ "Legionnaires, Protesters on Way to Oregon." *The Post-Crescent*, 14 August 1970, Sec. A: 9.

itself, a call to violence that would not be taken lightly.⁵⁶ The American Legion on their end refused to reschedule their rally.

The American Legion

The American Legion was the epitome of conservative ideals. Founded at the close of World War I, it served as a fellowship in which veterans could bond and commiserate over the post-war memories that alienated them from the rest of society. Over the years, the organization shifted its focus to the care of veterans and up-holding the values of “Americanism, National Security, and Foreign Relations.”⁵⁷ These values manifested themselves in ways consistent with the Republican platform of the time. For example, their views on how to conduct the Vietnam War were in sync. The 1968 Republican Party Platform states, “We pledge to adopt a strategy relevant to the real problems of the war, concentrating on the security of the population, on developing a greater sense of nation-hood, and on strengthening the local forces.”⁵⁸ Not only did the Legion ally with Republican ideals, it also distanced itself from Democratic ones. At their 1967 convention it was decided that the Legion would strongly support the bombing of

⁵⁶ "Legion, youth clash: Portland gets ready." *Southern Illinoisan*, 16 August 1970: 7.

⁵⁷ Thomas A. Rumer, *The American Legion: An Official History* (New York: M. Evans & Company, Inc., 1990), 394.

⁵⁸ The American Presidency Project, *Republican Party Platform 1968*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25841#axzz1u7c4ZVC8>

enemy forces in Cambodia.⁵⁹ The Democratic Platform on the other hand called for an immediate stop to all bombing.⁶⁰

In 1970, the majority of American Legion members, especially its leaders, were around 65 years of age.⁶¹ This further culturally separated the Legionnaires from the rebellious youth. This was the Great Generation that survived World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II; events dominated by conformity and American cultural and industrial unity. It is no wonder they believed that strong military presence and American pull-togetherness would get them through the struggles of the day just as it had during their previous times of crisis.⁶²

The People's Army Jamboree Prepares

Though the FBI painted the People's Army Jamboree (PAJ) as a national organization, it was in fact a small Portland-based group trying desperately to rally protestors from other parts of the nation. The PAJ "laughed when they read claims by police in the newspapers that fifty thousand people would show up..." but took advantage of the misinformation both in raising awareness and getting police officials to make concessions to the group's demands.⁶³ In effect, it was the FBI reports themselves

⁵⁹ Thomas A. Rumer, *The American Legion: An Official History* (New York: M. Evans & Company, Inc., 1990), 414.

⁶⁰ The American Presidency Project, *Democratic Party Platform of 1968*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29604#axzz1u7c4ZVC8>.

⁶¹ Thomas A. Rumer, *The American Legion: An Official History* (New York: M. Evans & Company, Inc., 1990), 430.

⁶² Jerald Podair, "Reconsidering the 1960's" (lecture, Lawrence University, Appleton WI, Spring 2010).

⁶³ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 289.

that precipitated the potential for violence.⁶⁴ Whether this was done on purpose or on accident has yet to be determined.

With a tiny spark of renewed fervor from the newspaper, the PAJ decided that perhaps their plan for a major protest of the American Legion could succeed after all. The PAJ met to discuss their protest plans on June 22nd, 1970. The only documentation of this meeting is an FBI report filed by an undercover agent who attended the meeting. As such, many of the names are blacked out. Decipherable information in the report purports that the meeting was led by a young woman, and that the group intended to have a seven-day ‘jamboree’ in Washington Park, timed to overlap with the American Legion convention.⁶⁵ They were funded by the potato chip heiress Patricia Sabin who gave the group 10,000 dollars because she “believe[d] that it can give voice to the political protest of all of us today. And do it in a non-violent way. I am against violence myself.”⁶⁶ With that, the money was whisked off to Jamboree leader Doug Weiskopf. Had the heiress attended more meetings, she may have felt more apprehensive about her generous donation. While everyone did agree that they would *prefer* a peaceful protest, many amongst them proclaimed that they would not back down from a fight should one break out.

The Idea

⁶⁴ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 289.

⁶⁵ FBI Document insert (hand placed in each copy of his book): Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004).

⁶⁶ Interview with Lee Meier: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 24.

At the close of the 1960's many protest groups began to splinter. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and Black Panthers began to disintegrate due to conflicting ideologies. Some people wanted to work through the existing legal system, changing laws and policies from within, while others, like the Chicago 7, got progressively more frustrated and violent due to what they considered a lack of progress.⁶⁷

The People's Army Jamboree (PAJ) was no different from these other disenchanted groups of the time. Not all the members of PAJ were in favor of supporting their ideals with their fists. A small subsection left the meetings distraught by the notion that violence could become necessary. The group rallied together after the prolific meeting and called themselves "The Family."^{68 69} They wanted to find an alternative for youth to the potentially explosive situation bubbling up in Portland. Someone within the group came up with the idea of holding a rock concert outside the city to keep the streets of Portland clear during the Legion's marches. 'Family' members Robert Wehe and Glen Swift championed the idea and took it to the Oregon Governor's office.^{70 71}

⁶⁷ Jerald Podair, "Reconsidering the 1960's" (lecture, Lawrence University, Appleton WI, Spring 2010).

⁶⁸ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 291.

⁶⁹ This researcher has found no connection between "The Family" group and the national commune "The Family." The latter was a nation-wide movement to get people to leave typical jobs and spend time focusing on spirit and community.

Jurate Kazickas. "They dropped back into 'straight' world" *Chronicle Telegram*, 31 October, 1971, Sec D: 9.

While some of these ideals were held in common by the other Family, the Portland group, to the best of current knowledge, was a group formed solely for the organization of Vortex and finding alternatives to violence.

⁷⁰ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 291.

The long haired, bearded representatives of The Family were escorted into Westerdahl's office. Though the governor's office was always open to the public, hippie long-hairs rarely took advantage of the policy. It was, no doubt with apprehension on both sides that the meeting began. Yet, as the long hairs started to talk, Westerdahl saw the inherent advantages of their idea and decided it was worth presenting to the governor (Figure 5).⁷²

Westerdahl ended one odd meeting only to enter into another with McCall. "'Westerdahl, are you crazy?' McCall screamed. 'Are you out of your goddamn mind?'"⁷³ Shortly thereafter, however, McCall acknowledged that the rock concert just might keep the protestors out of Portland. And if there was any chance that violence could be prevented in Portland McCall thought it was worth giving it a shot. He admitted though that the concert would probably be "political suicide" for his re-election bid.⁷⁴

His opponent in the upcoming gubernatorial elections, Straub, likewise thought McCall was crazy and wanted to slam down the concert as an example of misuse of government funds. However, Straub's campaign manager, Ken Johnson, advised against making the concert political. "He told Straub that the dynamic of panic and violence had gone beyond politics and that the plans for Vortex had changed everything in the

⁷¹ Matt Love reports that Lee Meier, Michael Carr, Kristen Hansen and Jeff Moscow took the matter to the governor's office as well. Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004)

Walth's work, however, is the more academic of the two. Since this issue deals with the governor's office and their records, the more academic source was deemed appropriate.

⁷² Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 291.

⁷³ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 292.

⁷⁴ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 144.

campaign.”⁷⁵ In short, he felt Vortex was needed to keep the peace. If it worked then there was no hope of Straub being elected. If it did not he was a shoo-in. Either way, the campaign was now out of their hands.

After The Family presented the idea, the government ran with it. Initially, the Portland governor approached the upcoming conflict just like every other official in the country had: with increased police presence. The Family idea, however, was an opportunity to do something new, something other than subscribing to the formula that had already led to so much violence in the previous decade. The Governor hastily began preparations not only for a major national convention in Portland, but for a rock concert as well.⁷⁶

People on both sides of the political aisle claimed to come up with the name ‘Vortex 1: A Biodegradable Festival of Life.’ Whichever side actually deserves the credit had the support of all those involved. McCall envisioned it as a festival that would draw angsty, impressionable youth away from Portland during the American Legion convention, while The Family saw it as a venue for discussing their ideas- opposing Vietnam, but at the same time creating a new, peaceful atmosphere. Whatever the motivation, peace in Portland became the overarching goal that both sides supported wholeheartedly. The government took charge of logistics and the acquisition of material

⁷⁵ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 295.

⁷⁶ Bacon, Leonard. “Vortex ‘Governor’s Ball’ all just L-O-V-E.” *The Oregonian* 24 August 1970, Sec C: 23.

goods, while The Family charged itself with spreading the word and helping in any way they could.⁷⁷

The government searched long and hard for the perfect location for the concert. Eventually, they settled on McIver Park, near the town of Estacada in Clackamas County, about 25 miles from Portland. The park seemed the ideal “Vortex” to draw people in and keep them there. Cliffs and rivers surrounded the edges of the park, leaving only one road in and out. Security forces (the police and National Guard) thought such an arrangement would make containing and controlling festival-goers simpler, allowing them to more effectively keep the peace.⁷⁸

The Governor's Actions and How They Were Perceived

McCall presented the Vortex event to his constituents during a radio address on August 25th (Figure 6). In his speech he walked the dangerous precipice between pleasing his fellow Republicans and avoiding youth provocation.

He spent much of the speech addressing the security measures that were being taken in light of the two groups meeting in Portland.

“Periodic intelligence reports, evaluations and briefings have involved the Portland police, sheriff's units of Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington Counties, the Oregon State Police, the FBI, the Secret Service, the Postal Inspection Service, the National Guard and the Department of the Army.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 97-101.

⁷⁸ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 134. AND Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 57.

⁷⁹ *KOIN News*. KOIN-TV. 25 Aug. 1970. Television.

After assuring the citizens that every law enforcement agency at his disposal was being used, he states that, “Vortex [was] authorized as a safety valve – as a defusing mechanism for reducing the numbers we may have to deal with in Portland. We can say to those young who are truly dedicated to peaceful disagreement: go to McIver Park or Delta Park, which the city of Portland has approved for overnight occupancy.”⁸⁰ In one fell swoop he assured the Right that safety was his top priority while simultaneously informing the Left that he was graciously providing them a place to stay and protest however they liked.

The announcement produced startling results. People on both sides, the far Right as well as the radicalized Left were both opposed to and in favor of the idea. This was a theme of Vortex that repeated itself over and over again: people across the political spectrum agreeing with one another on a solid concept, the concert, yet for different ideological reasons. While a commune listened to the governor's address with a “right on” attitude, one letter writer wrote to the governor saying, “Last night I listened to your declaration of war on the young people and it was a great comfort to me to know that you have marshaled our military forces to protect property.”⁸¹ The two groups supported the same concert for entirely different reasons. The youth saw it as a chance for a protest party, while the Right saw it as shepherding the protest into a place where it could be contained. Still others disagreed with the governor, declaring his methods ‘incorrigible.’ People on the Right and Left thought he was ‘giving in.’ The Right thought that his

⁸⁰ *KOIN News*. KOIN-TV. 25 Aug. 1970. Television.

⁸¹ Anonymous man of Eugene Oregon and Citizen Letter to Governor McCall: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 96 AND 94.

declaration was a surrender to rock culture, while the Left thought he was giving in to the needs of Portland business owners who were fearful for their property.⁸²

This jumble of opinions radically contrasted the usual line in the sand between the differing political ideologies of the day. Liberals believed in ending the war in Vietnam, conservatives believed in seeing it through. Both their politics and life-styles juxtaposed one another. Hippies lived in communes with long flowing hair and were ostracized and ridiculed by the politically straight community.⁸³ Conservatives for their part were outraged by groups of vagabonds disrupting the political system. The Vortex concert, with its nod towards youth culture yet governmental organization, seemed to blur that line in the sand leaving individuals to develop their own convictions rather than falling back on the prescribed party line.

Before and after the speech Governor McCall spoke to both sides about the upcoming tumultuous situation. Prior to Vortex's conception, he begged the PAJ to hold their event on a different day. Instead of threatening prosecution or canceling permits, he wrote them a letter stating that, "The City of Portland has limited facilities for the holding of mass conventions, and I am informed that these facilities cannot accommodate two major conventions being held simultaneously."⁸⁴ When the Jamboree refused to move McCall was faced with a dilemma: How could he stop overcrowding in Portland yet afford both groups their constitutional right to gather? Vortex seemed to solve this problem. The number of people who would attend Vortex instead of the PAJ made it

⁸² Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004) (Text as a whole)

⁸³ Bogorad, Rebecca, interview by author, Portland, OR, July 14, 2010.

⁸⁴ Letter to People's Army Jamboree from Governor McCall July 6, 1970: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 35.

possible to allow the PAJ the use of the parks they wanted without fear of them becoming overcrowded and unmanageable. The PAJ even commissioned their own mini rock festival with the permission of the government. Furthermore, they were given the permits to parade on the days they wished to even though they coincided with the Legion's marches.⁸⁵ Instead of confronting the counterculture group with guards, the City of Portland and the State of Oregon aptly used compromises and pacifying accommodations, all with the overarching goal of keeping the peace. In regards to Vortex, McCall wrote, "I know it costs money, it shouldn't be done, but the whole alternative is the possibility of bloodshed."⁸⁶ This argument seems to have been convincing enough for many in Portland. An editorial in the Capital Journal stated that the choice between supporting the concert or letting angry kids run free was clear: "Let the kids do their thing at McIver. Or, enforce the law rigidly, and drive them all into the waiting arms of those who manipulate them to protest in Portland, perhaps violently."⁸⁷

The Legion's Response

J. Milton Patrick, the commander of the American Legion, told Oregonian reporters, "I have no apprehension [about the security of Portland]. I have full faith in the

⁸⁵ James Hill. "Pact Provides For Sharing of Delta Park by Free People's Pop Festival, Jamboree." *The Oregonian*, 28 August, 1970, Sec 4m: 40.

⁸⁶ Governor McCall in a Television Interview: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 95.

⁸⁷ Editorial, *Capital Journal*: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 223.

security being provided by your governor and mayor.”⁸⁸ However, he did resent the idea that riot police would not be allowed to use bullets (Figure 7).⁸⁹

When questioned about the impending confrontation with the counterculture, Patrick replied,

“We are always interested in speaking with these youths... [but] some that I have seen on television, to some things I have read that were going to confront us – to these types of individuals, no. I think it would be a waste of time. I don’t think I could sell them my views and I don’t think they could sell me theirs.”⁹⁰

This attitude was indicative of national politics. The common perception that the two sides were too different to learn from one another prevailed. The Oregon State government and The Family demonstrated that this was not the case, that cooperation and learning between the two groups could be a fruitful endeavor. But first this encounter needed a space to take place.

McIver Park

McIver Park has been greatly changed since Vortex. The fields that people once camped in have been converted into a Frisbee-golf course (Figure 8). The area in which medical tents once stood is now a parking lot. Yet, by visiting the park you can still get an idea for why the park was chosen. There is only one entrance to the park down a very steep hill. The other side is blocked by a river. The river is wide and fairly quick flowing, but you can easily see the people on the opposite shore (Figure 9). The car ride from

⁸⁸ “Legion Head Believes In Dissent When ‘Responsibly Expressed’” *The Oregonian*, 29 August 1970: unknown.

⁸⁹ “Legion Head Believes In Dissent When ‘Responsibly Expressed’” *The Oregonian*, 29 August 1970: unknown.

⁹⁰ “Legion Chief Decides Not to Talk War With Protesters.” *The Oregonian*, 29 August, 1970, Vol 107 No 67

Portland is a short (about fifteen minutes) and easy drive. The park's location and 'controllability' made it the ideal location for Vortex. There was also nothing of particular historical significance that could be ruined during the course of the festivities.⁹¹

The Family Prepares Estacada, Meets with Challenges

While the governor readied Portland and began the logistical process necessary for preparing the rock concert, The Family prepared Estacada for the rock concert they would soon host. The distributed pamphlets read, "We, The Family, are putting together Vortex 1 because we believe in it. As a non-violent group of people we believe Vortex to be a cultural and political affirmation of our common humanity and alternative to the negation of violence."⁹² In this spirit they attempted to fulfill their goal of making Vortex a cultural forum. While it may have caught the attention of some Estacada residents who later did attend the festival, it certainly did not please all. One Estacada woman stated quite bluntly that, "the governor should get the chair for doing this."⁹³

Not every faction of the counterculture put their support behind the rock concert either. Indeed, there was as much dissent over the festival on the Left as there was on the Right. The *Willamette Bridge* - a Left wing underground paper - stated that Vortex would better be named, "Bullshit 1 as the people are being asked to repress themselves, put themselves into a temporary detention camp well away from the city so the Legionnaires

⁹¹ Authors observation

⁹² Letter from Mr. and Mrs. Max F. Hiltcher to Governor McCall October 12, 1970: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 14.

⁹³ Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 71.

can have the run of that.”⁹⁴ In its July 31st edition, the newspaper staff reported that “The Legionnaires will certainly get drunk and there is a good possibility of a repeat of the 1967 New Orleans Legion riot in which they ran through the streets smashing windows and beating people up.”⁹⁵ ⁹⁶ No one was more upset than the People's Army Jamboree who felt that the festival corrupted potential supporters who were just being lazy. They even threatened to blow up the stage if they did not get a chance to give their rallying cry to the masses.⁹⁷ The *Fed Up!* newsletter declared Vortex a “pig sponsored festival.”⁹⁸

The Attendees

Despite the disagreement, people attended the concert in droves. Commune members showed up as many as four days early to help set up the concert. On August 28th, the official start of the concert, “the road to McIver State Park might as well have been one-way, because that’s how the traffic was Friday on the opening day of hte [*sic.*] Vortex 1 rock festival.”⁹⁹ The governor thought that he was driving people away from Portland. The Family thought they were sponsoring an alternative kind of protest. But

⁹⁴ The Shadow, *Willamette Bridge*: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 95.

⁹⁵ Bridge Staff. “The Jamboree & The Legion – Bridge Statement” *Willamette Bridge* 31 July, 1970: 2.

⁹⁶ Searches in conventional newspaper archives revealed no record of this misconduct. Thus, the possibility that the *Willamette Bridge* exaggerated their actions is quite high. However, this newspaper represents the cultural narrative indicative of the left wing mind set making it a valuable piece in this story.

⁹⁷ *The Oregonian*: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 192.

⁹⁸ *Fed Up!* Newsletter from “Fort Lewis GI's who can no longer stand the oppression of the U.S. Military”: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 72.

⁹⁹ Bill Keller. “Crowds Growing At McIver Park As Rock Festival Starts Activities.” *The Oregonian*, 29 August, 1970, Vol 107 No 67.

what were the people who actually went to the festival thinking? How did they interpret the revolutionary state-sponsored rock festival? The answers to these questions are ambiguous.

On one hand, kids went to the concert instead of joining the PAJ, just as the Governor had hoped. University of Oregon student Rebecca Bogorad was one such example. Bogorad was fiercely political; the number of political protests she and her friends took part in necessitated experimentation with ways to counter being tear-gassed, such as wearing goggles and spreading Vaseline over their faces.¹⁰⁰ She later recalled thinking,

“Ok fine... I don't wanna be there and especially you know, I mean, cops busted heads back then and they were probably going to be more likely to bust heads if Nixon was there and, you know, these Legionnaires there. So we figured getting out of town is a good idea thank you very much.”¹⁰¹

Michael Carr, another young Vortex attendee, later felt guilty to have let himself be lured in by the mysterious concert, “I feel I inadvertently participated in a sellout. The state redirected the energy of people like me and it worked absolutely.”¹⁰² Sally Driver intended to run a daycare for those participating in the PAJ, but when she heard of Vortex she thought, “Screw it, the sun's out, it's summer, music, yeah! Go stick your thumb out...It was obvious that something was happening out there and that there was the place to be and Portland was not.”¹⁰³ While the Governor was not trying to manipulate people

¹⁰⁰ Rebecca Bogorad, interview by author, Portland, OR, July 14, 2010.

¹⁰¹ Rebecca Bogorad, interview by author, Portland, OR, July 14, 2010.

¹⁰² Interview with Michael Carr: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 225.

¹⁰³ Interview with Sally Driver: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 149.

out of their protest, his goal of getting easily inflamed youth out of Portland was achieved.

Many of the people in attendance at Vortex, however, knew or cared little about the American Legion or the Vietnam War. In the words of young Tim Arnold, “I didn't have a clue about the American Legion or their convention. All I was thinking about was gettin' high and gettin' laid.”¹⁰⁴ Mike Esquire of the band Mother Smucker's Jam says fondly, “Vortex man, it was my first gig!”¹⁰⁵ A member of the Brown Sugar band had a similar sentiment: “We didn't know any of the politics, we just wanted to play outdoors.”¹⁰⁶ ¹⁰⁷ Whether it was just for the opportunity to jam, avoid politics, or out of pure curiosity, people came to the concert for all sorts of reasons that the governor and the commune did not originally foresee. People did also attend the concert for the reasons desired by The Family: cultural curiosity, communal living, and an alternative protest (the results of which will be discussed later in this paper).

Welcome to Vortex

If you were like most Vortex attendees, you probably heard about the concert through a friend or on the radio. As the day draws near, you pack a knapsack with a

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Tim Arnold: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 177.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Mike Esquire of Mother Smucker's Jam: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 151.

¹⁰⁶ Lloyd Jones of Brown Sugar: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 151.

¹⁰⁷ There are few accounts of the music at Vortex. Mostly local bands played. La Chance, like many attendees, says he does not remember a thing about the music. Bogorad thinks she remembers enjoying it.

blanket and maybe some food if you are particularly prepared.¹⁰⁸ Then, you hoof it to the road where you stick out your thumb and let your long hair blow in the breeze until a Vortexer lucky enough to own a car takes pity on you (Figure 10). The closer you get to the concert the slower the traffic becomes until eventually your kind driver pulls over to the side of the road, slams the door, and walks the last few miles to the concert.¹⁰⁹ Shirtless men and loosely robed woman carry tent poles and cooking stoves on their backs accompanied by naked children and faithful dogs.¹¹⁰

Finally, you arrive at the bottle neck entrance to McIver Park. In contrast to the official McIver State Park sign, blows an adjacent sign, proudly proclaiming “Vortex 1: Admission Charge: Love” in hand-painted letters.¹¹¹ State troopers sit around the perimeter and hide in trees, yet do nothing to impede the festival’s lighthearted atmosphere and the chattering of your companions.

Though there is not an over-abundance of food, every core necessity at Vortex is provided for - leaving you free to pursue whatever brought you to the concert in the first place, be it political conversation, drug use, listening to music, or spending time beating the intense August heat in the river.¹¹² Waiting in line rewards you with a piece of aluminum foil full of rice and beans (Figure 11). Chopsticks can be found, but you’re

¹⁰⁸ Rebecca Bogorad, interview by author, Portland, OR, July 14, 2010.

¹⁰⁹ Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011.

¹¹⁰ Ron Cooper and Gerry Lewin, *Vortex I* (Salem: Adolphson’s Printing Company, 1970), unnumbered.

¹¹¹ Ron Cooper and Gerry Lewin, *Vortex I* (Salem: Adolphson’s Printing Company, 1970), unnumbered. AND Bacon, Leonard. “Vortex ‘Governor’s Ball’ all just L-O-V-E.” *The Oregonian* 24 August 1970, Sec C: 23. AND Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 140.

¹¹² Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011.

more likely to unabashedly lick each grain of rice from your fingers as many of the other crouching concert goers do.¹¹³

Your legs are tired from the walk, but the food and rest has helped. Getting a place to stay for the night becomes a priority and you find a nice tall evergreen to plop your bag under before you walk over to the cliff where the stage is. On the way a few children shriek with delight as friendly strangers swirl them in the air and blow bubbles.¹¹⁴ The scene is dominated mostly by 20-somethings with a smattering of older and younger folks.¹¹⁵

The stage is about 6 feet tall made from fir logs so freshly cut you can smell their sweet sticky sap mixed in with the crowd's August sweat (Figure 12). Bandana-sporting musicians seem to be having a wonderful time. The crowd, while not of the Woodstock proportions you hoped, seems appropriately excited.¹¹⁶ As you gradually get more into the music you notice someone to the side of stage twist their ankle on their way up the stairs. It does not look too bad, but you decide to help him walk all the way to the medical tents at the opposite end of the park.

The sound of electric guitars is gradually replaced with the thumping of drums as you approach the clump of tipis. A bustling doctor thanks you for delivering the patient and you decide to explore the tents on your own. There's a particularly calm one where

¹¹³ Ron Cooper and Gerry Lewin, *Vortex I* (Salem: Adolphson's Printing Company, 1970), unnumbered.

¹¹⁴ Ron Cooper and Gerry Lewin, *Vortex I* (Salem: Adolphson's Printing Company, 1970), unnumbered.

¹¹⁵ Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011.

¹¹⁶ "Vortex I." *Oregon Experience*. Oregon Public Broadcasting. 7 Feb. 2010. Television.

people are being talked off drug highs and another where a man, wearing nothing but a loincloth knocks out the hypnotizing drum beats (Figure 13).¹¹⁷

At this point your body is drenched with sweat and you are drawn to the river and its promise of coolness. To get there you pass through several clouds of marijuana smoke as stagnant in the air as the smokers are on the ground.¹¹⁸ Though you're asked to join them, getting the disgusting sweat off your back takes priority. At the river's edge there are more people than there were at the stage. This is clearly the most vibrant part of the park. Mud splatters as naked people roll and howl and slip and laugh in it (Figure 14).¹¹⁹ After a moment of hesitation you decide, "What the heck, 'when in Rome' ...", and peel off your shirt and pants, letting the slimy mud cover every inch of your body as you revel in the group's natural acceptance. You're now a full fledged member of the Vortex community.

Nudity and Exposure

As the first attendees began to trickle and then flood into McIver Park, it became clear that many common social norms were to be left on the other side of the "Admission Charge: Love" sign.¹²⁰ Clothes were deemed optional. Dr. Cameron Bangs, a volunteer physician helping with the medical organization of the concert told the story of seeing his first naked woman washing her hair in a water fountain: "Initially it was extremely hard

¹¹⁷ Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 140 AND 146.

¹¹⁸ Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011.

¹¹⁹ Rebecca Bogorad, interview by author, Portland, OR, July 14, 2010.

¹²⁰ Bacon, Leonard. "Vortex 'Governor's Ball' all just L-O-V-E." *The Oregonian* 24 August 1970, Sec C: 23.

to maintain equanimity and keep my eyes from the nude thing.”¹²¹ However, by the time he saw a naked man he “had no further feeling towards nudity, found it neither vulgar nor stimulating, and accepted it in my stride. This is true of everyone else exposed to the same problem.”¹²² In other words, because the people at the concert did not feel embarrassed or sexualized by their nakedness, it lost the taboo quality present in the rest of society. It became the epitome of the cultural openness that the groups wanted to embody.

The only people to dwell on the issue of nudity were the straights that attended the concert. Jim Landles, the Clackamas County Sheriff's Deputy, remembers “seeing a woman directing traffic topless and she wasn't using her hands. It was quite a treat.”¹²³ Former hippie David Dumas tells a story of how “some old guy, had to be a local, was having a picnic. He watched us for a while. We invited him over and he took off all his clothes and got into the mud sauna. We were all applauding.”¹²⁴ Local youth, especially high school students, also reveled in this flouting of social norms.¹²⁵ A nurse working at Vortex commented that it was not the hippies but the more conservative concertgoers, “with their pornographic minds evidencing desire over the nudes and sensuous acts. The establishment in these instances reflected a far sicker era than that of the younger

¹²¹ Dr. Bangs' Diary: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 125.

¹²² Dr. Bangs' Diary: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 125.

¹²³ Jim Landles, Clackamas County Sheriff's Deputy: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 160.

¹²⁴ Interview with David Dumas: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 180.

¹²⁵ Dave Cammack: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 141.

generation.”¹²⁶ Both straights and long hairs alike were amazed and commented on the famous “tall, black man with a helium balloon tied to his penis” story that is probably one of the most widely spread stories of Vortex lore.¹²⁷

Though nudity was not a political issue per se, the younger generation was reaching a larger audience for their ideals. Though nakedness was not the social issue they tried to bring to light, they were getting across the point that one did not need to be bound by traditional restraints. There are multiple stories of local straights shedding their clothes to jump in the river or mud sauna to join in the fun.¹²⁸ The barriers between the two groups started to weaken. Even though they did not disappear altogether, the walls between the groups became as transparent as people's clothing, and the straights saw the loose, peaceful nature of members of the youth counterculture, formerly deemed violent and malicious.

This is not to say that everyone condoned nudity. Reverend Walter Huss created a video entitled “Pornography of Vortex.” He claims its purpose was to “expose McCall, his promotion of juvenile delinquency. It was a shock when people saw what a governor would allow. Vortex 1 was a sin.”¹²⁹ This Reverend and other Church leaders attended Vortex in an attempt to promote Christian values to the gathering of what he considered

¹²⁶ Letter to Governor McCall from Ellen L. Brown, Portland General Electric nurse: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 205.

¹²⁷ Dr. Bangs' Diary: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 127. AND Rebecca Bogorad, interview by author, Portland, OR, July 14, 2010. AND "Vortex I." *Oregon Experience*. Oregon Public Broadcasting. 7 Feb. 2010. Television.

¹²⁸ "Vortex I." *Oregon Experience*. Oregon Public Broadcasting. 7 Feb. 2010. Television.

¹²⁹ Statement from Reverend Walter Huss: "Vortex I." *Oregon Experience*. Oregon Public Broadcasting. 7 Feb. 2010. Television. 208.

‘disenfranchised youth.’ “We went because Jesus told His follower to be His witnesses, to be everywhere to everybody [*sic*], He didn't say 'Preach the gospel to everybody but those who wear their hair long or go naked!” insisted Minister Bill Newkirk. A mother reunited with her hippie daughter by Newkirk was quoted as saying, “Vortex was the greatest thing that ever happened to our home,” because her daughter was fished out of the commune lifestyle and brought back into the faith.¹³⁰ Thus, while straights began to accept the hippies’ easy-going ways after seeing casual nudity, the long hairs themselves were exposed to the philosophy of the conventional religious Right. Only a gathering sanctioned by leaders of both groups could have given them the sense of belonging and acceptance necessary for both groups to feel comfortable voicing their separate opinions.

Though there is no doubt people walked around naked at Vortex, the extent to which this occurred may have been slightly exaggerated. The pictures from photo-journal landscapes show few people completely nude, although the laid back attitude is evident. A naked bongo player performs for an audience that seems unperturbed by his lack of clothing.¹³¹ In another photo, a large topless women dances while a primly dressed couple stands behind her staring with both shock and amusement.¹³² This further epitomizes the idea that it was the straights that turned the nudity into a spectacle. The festival goers were just doing what seemed natural (Figure 15).¹³³

Drugs

¹³⁰ “Vortex I Called Sin, Godsend” *The Oregonian*, 10 October, 1970, C1: 5.

¹³¹ Ron Cooper and Gerry Lewin, *Vortex I* (Salem: Adolphson’s Printing Company, 1970), unnumbered.

¹³² Ron Cooper and Gerry Lewin, *Vortex I* (Salem: Adolphson’s Printing Company, 1970), unnumbered.

¹³³ Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011.

A matter less uniting was that of drugs. LSD and marijuana were sold cheaply and used openly at the festival. This was an integral part of the uninhibited culture promoted by Vortex and was quintessential to the youth counterculture. Very few arrests were made for drug possession. The deal the government cut was ‘stay out of Portland, and you can do as you please in McIver.’ While protesters in Portland were fined for jaywalking, people at Vortex smoked pot in front of policemen in broad daylight.¹³⁴

The doctors and nurses that worked at Vortex grew to respect the youth over the course of their time there, yet they found the physical toll that drugs took on young people disconcerting. One first aid worker reported,

“Their [the youth's] empathy for all persons with problems was duly noted by those that received their consideration. Full-well, I realize that all this does not remove the facts that we have a great number of young people who are sick, sick...How you effect change within this group is a problem that appears to have no solution at this time...Many cooked meals went uneaten because of nausea, half sick minds and depression.”¹³⁵

Dr. Bangs used his contact with youth to explain to them the consequences of drug use.

“We explained to them that this was what happened on a trip and if they didn't want it then they shouldn't take the drug. We also at the time tried to explain to them the worst that could happen, and that they should be careful with the drugs they did take. I feel that this attitude differs from one of complete condemnation.”¹³⁶

Vortex did an amazing job of promoting this attitude of didactic conversation instead of condemnation. Because the doctor respected the youth, he gave them helpful advice

¹³⁴ Anne Hopkins, Great-Speckled Bird, Atlanta underground newspaper, September 21, 1970: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 219.

¹³⁵ Letter to Governor McCall from Ellen L. Brown, Portland General Electric nurse: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 205.

¹³⁶ Dr. Bangs' Diary: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 146.

instead of dismissing their entire lifestyle in one fell swoop like the rest of society.

Meeting people one-on-one made it difficult to vilify their entire group.

Dr. Bang's respect for the long hairs increased considerably throughout his time there. Though a licensed physician, he had little experience with people reacting badly to drugs. Members of "The Rainbow" commune, on the other hand, had plenty of experience and "were excellent at talking down drug reactions."¹³⁷ Instead of trying to just treat bad trippers with drugs, Dr. Bang learned that holding a patient's hand and reassuring them in a safe environment was more effective. Even he found the atmosphere inside the Rainbow overdose tipis calming. "I myself became rather flustered due to the long hours and extreme activity and took a short break in the Rainbow tent...my 20-30 minutes spent there has certainly been thought of many times since then as a very peaceful experience."¹³⁸ Thus, while the counterculture took full advantage of the free medical care provided, the 'establishment' doctor was also able to learn something from 'natural' methods he may have formerly deemed bogus.

Not everyone took such an accepting, philosophical view of drugs. Shortly before Vortex, Robert W. Straub announced his intentions to run as the Democratic candidate against McCall in the upcoming gubernatorial election. At the close of the concert he said that the allowance of drugs and the suspension of other laws was "too high a price" for

¹³⁷Dr. Bangs' Diary: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 143.

¹³⁸Dr. Bangs' Diary: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 143.

peace in Portland.¹³⁹ His argument was that Vortex put “prosecuting attorneys and the judiciary in an unbelievably awkward situation” by creating a double standard for drug use, saying it’s permissible sometimes but not others.¹⁴⁰

Circuit Judge Val D. Sloper was put in just the sort of situation that Straub identified. George James Smith was brought before him on charges of drug use just outside the park grounds. In the end, he decided to give Smith a 60-day sentence. This sanction was considerably less severe than precedent would dictate. “ ‘Everyone should be treated equally under the law,’ Sloper said. But he indicated he found this difficult to do in the face of illegal drug use and nudity at Vortex 1 without arrests.”¹⁴¹ The people in charge of keeping law and order found themselves having to bend and accept the counterculture in ways that were alien to them. However, the world did not explode. A few naked, high people did not turn the state upside down or thrust it into a state of anarchy. Perhaps it was because this secret fear was never realized that the judiciary acted so leniently towards lawbreakers, as a thank you for not fouling up society.

In response to his opponent’s criticisms of the acceptance of drug use, McCall stated at the close of the American Legion National Convention that,

“I do not condone any violation of the law, whether it involves one person or ten thousand. But in times of crisis, it is necessary to assign law enforcement priorities – and the protection of lives and property had to be given top priority in

¹³⁹ Harold Hughes. “Straub Labels McIver Park Rock Festival As Ransom ‘That is Too High’” *The Oregonian*, 9 September, 1970, Sec C1: 15.

¹⁴⁰ Harold Hughes. “Straub Labels McIver Park Rock Festival As Ransom ‘That is Too High’” *The Oregonian*, 9 September, 1970, Sec C1: 15.

¹⁴¹ “State’s Vortex Role Questioned By Judge.” *The Oregonian*, 5 September 1970, Sec C7:11.

this case. It is easy to find fault with the way in which we sought to avoid violence -- successfully. It was not so easy then.”¹⁴²

McCall sought to negate the criticism of Vortex by pointing out the potential danger in the situation he had faced.

Some claim that the government went beyond turning a blind eye to the drug problem. Reverend Huss reports that “I talked to many police officers...several of them told me that drugs confiscated from the state's lockers were being given away at McIver to keep people there.”¹⁴³ Vortex attendee Tim Cherry said, “All the law enforcement agencies in the area took all their confiscated drugs and gave them away at Vortex. The sandwich board guy was giving it away... All the different pots were blended together. It was incredible! They probably emptied every drug locker in the state inside McIver.”¹⁴⁴ The Clackamas County Sheriff denied these claims. In some ways it seemed like a good way to take drugs off the market and dispose of them in a controlled environment. In addition to this, it would have the desired upshot of keeping people stoned and away from Portland. Yet, at the same time, it seems unlikely that the state would hang onto a vast quantity of drugs in the first place. If the story is true, it provides another example of the Right trying to placate the hippies.

Not all the long hairs were as thrilled as Cherry with the stoned atmosphere. Factions of the Left were frustrated that Vortex did not contain the protest atmosphere they desired. One visitor said,

¹⁴² McCall, Tom. "Governor McCall's Position on the Handling of Potential Violence." *Keep Oregon 1970*: 1.

¹⁴³ Reverend Walter Huss: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 176.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Tom Cherry: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 176.

“I wanted to sit down and communicate ideas with them [other attendees], that is why I went. But you can't communicate with anyone who is stoned on drugs. The conversations were all drug oriented... it is the most selfish thing an individual can do – hide in a personal world of fantasy he can't share.”¹⁴⁵

Though originally conceived of as a protest alternative to the American Legion convention, those seeking political stimulation were disappointed by the stoners' lack of sociopolitical motivation.

Meanwhile, in Portland

Before the festival, the Governor's radio address pleaded with Legionnaires and protestors alike to keep the peace. He asked the protestors to “respect the human rights and the property rights of others – that you show that you respect yourselves by your own conduct.”¹⁴⁶ The protestors did not respond, but neither did they send back any threatening retort. McCall then told the Legionnaires:

“As avowed targets of political confrontation, it is only reasonable to expect that some of you will become objects of taunting, of verbal abuse, of inflammatory gestures, of obnoxious provocation. The purpose of such acts is precisely to invoke your reaction; even, possibly in the hope you will react violently. Don't give them a victory. Don't let them use you. Don't be a tool of the radicals.”¹⁴⁷

The Legion leader, J. Milton Patrick, responded

“We come with only peaceful intentions... We are committed as an organization to the maintenance of law and order... I have issued a statement urging all Legionnaires and their guests to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the high principles and purposes upon which our great organization was founded.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Vortex visitor as quoted in the Oregonian: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 220.

¹⁴⁶ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 41.

¹⁴⁷ McCall, Tom, Steve Neal, *Tom McCall: Maverick* (Portland: Binford and Mort, 1977), 141.

¹⁴⁸ “Forceful Measures Ready if ‘Doves,’ Legion Clash” *The Bridgeport Telegram*. 27 August 1970: 70.

It just remained to see if this promise would be kept.

In Salem, the state capital, McCall made a separate plea to legislators as well. State senator Betty Roberts said the governor asked “responsible adults, particularly elected officials, to join any of the young people who chose to march in demonstrations outside the convention. It was thought that our presence would inhibit both demonstrators bent on being rebellious and police who would want to retaliate.”¹⁴⁹ The idea of having a critical mass of people guaranteed to keep a cool head would help keep the general atmosphere under control. Thus, elected officials ended up marching with the PAJ.

While many youth decided to go to Vortex for the weekend, others remained faithful to their original plan of protesting the American Legion. Leaders of the People’s Army Jamboree asked Mayor Schunk for the use of Delta Park in Portland to sleep and demonstrate in. They even attempted to organize their own mini rock concert, perhaps clinging to the hope that people would pick this concert over the state supported event at McIver Park.¹⁵⁰ In a public statement about sanctioning park use the Mayor says,

“It is evident that we have a strong polarization in this community and many misunderstandings of the matters that the City Council has been pondering during the past weeks. In order to present the facts as I see them now, I am making this public statement in the hopes of clarifying some of my actions and soliciting your support.”¹⁵¹

It seems the Mayor learned from the PSU problems and decided to take strides towards communicating with the opposition to come up with peaceful remedies.

¹⁴⁹ Betty Roberts, *With Grit and by Grace: Breaking Trails in Politics and Law, A memoir*, ed. Gail Wells (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2008), 121.

¹⁵⁰ “Mayor Calls for Understanding.” *The Oregon Journal*, 25 August 1970, Vol 69 No 144:1.

¹⁵¹ “Bridge the Gap, Says Governor” *Sandusky Register*, 1 September 1970: 2.

Perhaps anticlimactically after all the hype and fear protestors caused, a few days before the convention took place, President Nixon's office announced that he would be unable to attend the American Legion's meeting because his "schedule wouldn't allow."¹⁵² According to the President's desk diary, he spent August 29th in San Clemente, California. On August 30th he talked briefly with a friend, and from 11:49-12:01 had a discussion with his assistant. Then he walked to the golf course and later back to his residence. From 2:58-3:08 he talked with his assistant H.R. Haldemann. At 5:00 he returned to the residence, went to the pool, had dinner, and at 8:13 watched the movie 'Wilson.'¹⁵³ On the 31st the President talked with the press corps, had a studio filming session, talked with friends, family, and assistants from 1:38-6:55 and then watched the movie 'Chisum' with his wife.¹⁵⁴ Finally, on September 1st, 1970 Nixon met with the National Security Council from 10:00-11:47 and with H. R. Haldeman and other advisors from 3:59-7:37.¹⁵⁵ Though any President of the United States will have a busy schedule, this record begs the question: When and for what reason was Nixon's visit to Portland was canceled? Activities such as talking with friends and watching movies hardly seem indicative of sudden crises. However, we must afford the president a certain amount of secrecy, and may not have enough information to judge the purpose of his cancellation.

¹⁵² "Attorney General to address meeting of American Legion." *Post-Tribune Jefferson City*, 2 September 1970.

¹⁵³ The White House, *President Richard Nixon's Daily Diary*, August 30 1970, From Nixon Presidential Library online: <http://nixon.archives.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/dailydiary.php>.

¹⁵⁴ The White House, *President Richard Nixon's Daily Diary*, August 31 1970, From Nixon Presidential Library online: <http://nixon.archives.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/dailydiary.php>.

¹⁵⁵ The White House, *President Richard Nixon's Daily Diary*, September 1 1970, From Nixon Presidential Library online: <http://nixon.archives.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/dailydiary.php>.

Nixon did draft an address to give at the American Legion, perhaps indicating the need for a sudden cancellation of the speech.¹⁵⁶

The historian Brent Walth believes that as early as July 1970 McCall began to suspect that the FBI estimates of protester attendance had been inflated. His press secretary, Ron Schmidt says,

“Tom believed that a violent confrontation was exactly what the White House wanted. It would have fit into their scenario of what they would have liked to have happened – these ‘commie peace protestors’ put down for their opposition to America’s war...Tom was well aware of what their game plan was. He saw that he was caught in the middle. Both sides wanted to make a violent point. And Tom did not want Portland torn apart for the White House’s political advantage.”¹⁵⁷

Whatever Nixon’s reasons for deciding to give the speech and then later cancel it, Vice President Spiro Agnew took his place.¹⁵⁸ Even though Nixon was not there, the American Legion itself was seen by youth as plenty enough reason to protest.

Little is known about what happened during the 1970 American Legion meeting. *The American Legion: An Official History* makes no mention of the hype that surrounded the meeting stating only that, “The 1970 National Convention in Portland, Oregon adopted convention resolution 46 reiterating the stance taken at the previous convention regarding the United States’ extricating itself from the war.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Nixon did draft a speech to give at the Portland American Legion convention. It is in the Nixon Libraries. The Nixon library failed to return both phone calls and e-mails requesting a copy of the speech. Permission to receive a copy was not granted to this author.

¹⁵⁷ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 290.

¹⁵⁸ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 300.

¹⁵⁹ Thomas A. Rumer, *The American Legion: An Official History* (New York: M. Evans & Company, Inc., 1990), 422.

Though little is known about what went on during the meeting, one of my interviewees briefly attended the session.¹⁶⁰ 17-year-old Pierre La Chance showed up exhausted and a little “loaded” to accept a scholarship from them.¹⁶¹ He was loaded because he had just gotten back into town from a night spent at Vortex. At the time it struck him as odd how calm and independent both groups were despite the newspapers painting them as explosive entities,

“You met these people [at Vortex] and they seem like the nicest people in the world, and you meet those people [the Legionnaires] and they seem like the nicest people in the world...I never got any feeling about the conflict on either side... It was so funny, it was like the Vortex people cared about Vortex and the American Legion people cared about the American Legion stuff. And, everyone was kind of inward looking rather than, what I felt that the papers at the time were presenting this coming clash, and I didn’t see it.”¹⁶²

La Chance’s sentiment encapsulates the contrast between the atmosphere on the ground and the fatalistic rhetoric of the press.

When it came time for the Legion to embark on its 1.5 mile, four hour, Portland Parade, the protestors were hostile but not violent.¹⁶³ During the parade “15 hippie-type persons, carrying a Viet Cong flag, fell in between the California and Alaska units and marched one block in front of the reviewing stand without incident.”¹⁶⁴ The Legionnaires

¹⁶⁰ Attempts to contact the American legion were thwarted. I left messages for each of the Portland branches and none were returned. I did catch one branch working and was transferred to the historian. When asked if he had any records on the organization, situation, or subject of the 1970 National Convention meeting he said “No” and hung-up.

¹⁶¹ Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011.

¹⁶² Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011.

¹⁶³ “Bridge the Gap, Says Governor” *Sandusky Register*, 1 September 1970: 2.

¹⁶⁴ “Attorney General to address meeting of American Legion” *Post-Tribune Jefferson City*, 2 Sep 1970.

did not respond, just as McCall had asked, and the hippies harmed neither people nor property (Figure 16).

After the Legionnaire's parade, the People's Army held one of their own. Approximately 1,500 marchers turned out. They carried banners and shouted slogans. When they saw Legionnaires on the street they shouted profanity in their direction. All and all, however, peace and order were maintained.¹⁶⁵ Senator Roberts reported that "Keith [her husband] and I took part in one demonstration. I asked John [her son] if he wanted to go with us, but he declined in favor of Vortex. We marched with a few hundred other people."¹⁶⁶ Apparently McCall's call for responsible adults had been heeded; when police with billy clubs approached screaming protestors, an elderly lady came to their defense, saying, " 'Go back, you police just make trouble... Why, you even incense me.'"¹⁶⁷ The elderly lady's age was enough to calm down both police and protestors.

McCall and his team kept tabs on the situation from the top of the Macy's building in downtown Portland. The specially trained riot police maintained their positions, the jail cells remained mostly empty, and Portland business shuffled along as usual. Portland could not have handled another thousand vagabonds, but those that truly

¹⁶⁵ "Attorney General to address meeting of American Legion." *Post-Tribune Jefferson City*, 2 September 1970.

¹⁶⁶ Betty Roberts, *With Grit and by Grace: Breaking Trails in Politics and Law, A memoir*, ed. Gail Wells (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2008), 121.

¹⁶⁷ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 300.

believed in what they protested against were given the opportunity to make their voices heard. It seemed that Vortex 1 had served as an effective safety valve.¹⁶⁸

Youth Culture At Vortex

More important than the drugs and nudity exhibited at Vortex was the youth's personal counterculture, their denial of the nine-to-five trap accepted by their parents without question. The 'housewives' of Vortex displayed a lifestyle that would have been unthinkable even a decade before hand. They claimed that dishes, laundry, marital relationships, and babysitting were all easier in the laidback society they made for themselves.¹⁶⁹ A 16-year-old wife at Vortex told a reporter that she just washed their shared dishes in the river at the end of a meal. When time was spent naked, there were fewer clothes to wash. Donna Stubbs brought her six-year-old to the festival and felt she did not need to worry about her since,

“Right now she's probably back down at our camp...I tell you I never worry about my Lisa for a single minute out here. Everybody takes care of everyone else's kids and they love them. Lisa runs free...At home (back in Portland)...you wouldn't dare leave your baby with strangers. You even have to have the credentials of every single babysitter you hire. You're scared.”¹⁷⁰

At Vortex everything was communally owned and communally taken care of, taking stress and fear away from individuals. With the rise of feminism, the ideal of decreasing wifely duties began to take root. Though it did not perpetuate itself in the quasi-

¹⁶⁸ Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011.

¹⁶⁹ Schneider, Walli, “Housewife Finds ‘Advantage’ At Vortex” *The Oregon Journal*, 2 September 1970, Sec C1: 5.

¹⁷⁰ Schneider, Walli, “Housewife Finds ‘Advantage’ At Vortex” *The Oregon Journal*, 2 September 1970, Sec C1: 5.

communist manner found at Vortex, the idea that women did not need to care for their children in isolation or feel beholden to the needs of their husbands started to manifest.

Pierre La Chance, the 17-year-old recent high school graduate, considered his background conservative, yet found the lure of a Pacific Northwest Woodstock irresistible. The concert impressed upon him that the social structure he lived in was by no means pre-ordained:

“The biggest thing it meant to me, more than anything, was there was this whole world out there that could be anything I wanted it to be and probably was going to be something I had never even imagined. Cause I was just ya know right at the opening, the door, ready to step out into my life. Ya know? And you’re a kid and you think it’s going to be just like the ‘Leave it to Beaver’ show when you grow up. Ya know? Cause that’s what you expected, ya know? And then to see, no, it could be... anything. It could be anything. The world is just open and that to me was pretty exciting and frightening at the same time.”¹⁷¹

To the young La Chance, it was a “classless” place where people stripped and helped one another.¹⁷²

One could easily argue that people could only live so freely at Vortex because everything was given to them freely. A hippie named Jerry agreed, yet acknowledged that life was not always that way. “It’s just that if we have to work later—some other place—to get everyone fed, we will. But we won’t hold the same eight-hour-a-day jobs year after year to do it. You only live once. Why spend 95 percent of your life doing what you don’t want to?”¹⁷³ People had thought in this way for decades. What other opportunity did they

¹⁷¹ Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011.

¹⁷² Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011.

¹⁷³ Schneider, Walli, “Housewife Finds ‘Advantage’ At Vortex” *The Oregon Journal*, 2 September 1970, Sec C1 : 5.

have to calmly voice their views and opinions to the press? In the past, the counterculture got publicity for doing radical, outlandish things, but at Vortex they got a chance to share their everyday views and philosophies. Furthermore, the youth's acknowledgement that work was necessary showed the de-radicalization of the youth movement.

Though the hippies may have wanted to believe that they existed outside of the system or that they opposed it by going to Vortex, they were, in fact, cocooned in it. The reason that the free food was available to them was due to the support of businesses in Portland. They supported it because they wanted a peaceful Portland that would not disrupt the flow of their clientele. Furthermore, the business owners remembered seeing riots on TV and imagined their own stores being burned to the ground, so donating some rice seemed a small price to pay to avoid catastrophe. The Republican Party itself donated money to the festival in order to guarantee its success.¹⁷⁴ Though originally the attempt may have seemed underhanded, the contact this forced between members of different political and social persuasions is striking.

The citizens of Estacada and members of the Right made contact with the youth through hundreds of little vignettes and found themselves surprised at the decency of their temporary neighbors. Local bar owner Maxine Bethel was concerned that the hippies would be angry at her refusal to provide them with liquor, since she did not have the appropriate license. Instead of being appalled, they sympathized with her and cleaned up the street around her store. She later stated, "This is really an experience. It is probably the only time something like this will happen to me so I really want to

¹⁷⁴ David, *Willamette Bridge* Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 118.

remember it.”¹⁷⁵ Another Estacada resident donated hundreds of jars of canned zucchini to the festival-goers, while still others talked about what they learned from the long hours socially.¹⁷⁶ A woman driving away from Vortex told reporters, “I’ve always been a rather straight hawkish character and since being associated with The Family over just the last couple of days I tend to draw my claws in a bit.”¹⁷⁷ In a show of goodwill, the National Guard collaborated by helping direct traffic. The hippies helped set up the stage and policed the drug quality and the violence levels of festival-goers. Both sides trusted the other to aid in keeping the peace during a time where police were notorious for violent reactions in tense situations. To some extent idealistically, The Family was able to reach the goals they initially put forward before the first busload of hippies showed up.

“Now we, the Family of Vortex, have a vision of adding the second element to radical left politics; the cultural affirmation of new life styles. Vortex sees itself as a catalyst for cultural genesis. We wish to bring together people from all over the world who are beginning attempts at a new culture and, through our solidarity and reciprocal exchange of vision and ideas turn our isolated attempts into a movement.”¹⁷⁸

Thus, they articulated the indefinable cultural and emotional aspects of their goals.

That is not to say that everything went smoothly. One hippie stole a National Guard member's radio, causing the guard to have to disguise himself as a local in order to

¹⁷⁵ *Enterprise Courier*: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 186.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with David Dumas: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 195.

¹⁷⁷ Willamette Bridge interview with young people from Zidell in a gray Cadillac: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 191.

¹⁷⁸ Document distributed by The Family in and around Estacada several days before Vortex I officially opened: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 119.

enter the festival and retrieve it.¹⁷⁹ Bad trips caused participants to wail into the night to the disturbance of local residents.¹⁸⁰ Nudity also offended various bands of local mothers.

All in all, Estacada residents were relieved when the last traces of Vortex were cleared out on September 7th, 1970. However, they were also pleasantly surprised at the lack of residual problems. The Mayor declared, "I don't agree that youth needs this kind of thing...but so far as the town goes, no damage was done. It helped business."¹⁸¹ If something is good for the economy, it is more likely than not that it will be spun in a positive light, rather than deemed a total failure. A drug store clerk even went so far as to call the kids "pleasant."¹⁸²

Locals were not the only straights to venture into Vortex. Legionnaires entered the gates swinging bottles of Jack Daniels and saying, "The hell with Portland, we're coming to Vortex."¹⁸³ While the number of Legionnaires present was probably inflated at around 30, the fact that any of them attended strengthened the wind of change erasing the line in the sand between conventional and unconventional, the Right and the Left.

¹⁷⁹ Dennis Bonney, National Guardsman: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 161.

¹⁸⁰ Reed, Watford, "Vortex Outrages Some, Pleases Most Neighbors." *The Oregon Journal*. 3 September 1970.

¹⁸¹ Reed, Watford, "Vortex Outrages Some, Pleases Most Neighbors." *The Oregon Journal*. 3 September 1970.

¹⁸² Reed, Watford. "Vortex Outrages Some, Pleases Most Neighbors." *The Oregon Journal*, 3 September 1970.

¹⁸³ Interview with Harold Wilson: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 183.

Other unexpected attendees at the festival included government workers such as Bob Warren, who drove 60 miles to deliver food to festival attendees.¹⁸⁴ Ed Westerdahl also attended part of Vortex. “At one point the governor's right hand man was photographed with a young woman who was helping cook huge vats of steamy rice and vegetables. 'Ohh, I don't like that, ' she cooed as a strobe light flashed. 'Associating with a government official, huh!' Westerdahl chided with a grin.”¹⁸⁵ The irony of a hippie feeling as awkward with the official as the official initially felt with her was noteworthy. Again, Vortex brought people together who would not normally have interacted voluntarily. Surprisingly, the state did not fall into complete anarchy. The government successfully interacted with the counterculture without communists taking over or the world turning upside down. Of course, the biggest surprise of all was McCall’s own appearance at the end of the Festival when a few hippies were dismantling the stage. He joined them in an ‘Ommm’ ceremony, even holding their hands and acknowledging it as an important part of their culture.¹⁸⁶

Political Consequences of Vortex

Far from the political suicide McCall predicted, Vortex practically gift-wrapped the election for him. It turned out the concert was just what the governor needed to dispel

¹⁸⁴ Letter from Glenn Jackson to Governor McCall: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004),187.

¹⁸⁵ Dean Smith, *Oregon Journal: Matt Love, The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004),163

¹⁸⁶ "Vortex I." *Oregon Experience*. Oregon Public Broadcasting. 7 Feb. 2010. Television.

the ‘flip-floppy’ image that had him lagging in the polls. Though Vortex was far from the brainchild or sole effort of McCall, he was willing to accept political responsibility for it and therefore unabashedly took credit for its success. This successful gamble may have emboldened McCall to be an even more outspoken lone-ranger politician.¹⁸⁷ It was in McCall’s second term that he got the Oregon Bottle Law passed. The first of its kind, this deposit law set the stage for litter control bills across the country. McCall also helped champion abortion support, women’s rights, the rights of immigrant workers, and, most dear to his heart, the expansion of environmental protection policies. Many of these policies remain central to Oregonian identity today and may not have existed had McCall not been re-elected.¹⁸⁸

McCall did not change the course or even the tone of national politics, but he did serve to contrast other members of the Republican Party. Not only was McCall’s re-election important for the politics of Oregon, but also for his unique voice in the Republican Party. There were even murmurings that McCall would make a decent Presidential candidate.¹⁸⁹ Inside the Republican Party he voiced many opinions he was not supposed to. For example, during a governor’s conference attended by Vice President Agnew, McCall was asked to behave himself during a speech. During Agnew’s remarks McCall became so enraged he stormed out of the room. He then told the gathered press, “I can’t believe he said what he did! ...There was the most unbelievable, incredible

¹⁸⁷ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 309.

¹⁸⁸ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 283-469.

¹⁸⁹ Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 406.

misunderstanding of the mood of America in that rotten, bigoted little speech.”¹⁹⁰

Outbursts such as this made him very popular with the press. Perhaps it was Vortex that gave him the gusto to fight for the issues he believed in instead of toeing the Party line. Whereas before Vortex McCall made political decisions based on his personal moral criteria, after Vortex he more fervently and openly criticized those that did not; Ronald Regan was one of his favorite victims.¹⁹¹ McCall’s charisma and legislation would mark Oregon politics for years to come.

McCall served his second term and then took a break from politics due to the Oregon constitution forbidding him to hold office for three terms in a row. His old opponent Robert Straub became governor in January 1975. McCall tried to regain the governorship in 1979. Polls showed he was still popular among the voters, but his lack of fundraising abilities and decision to run as a Republican without the Party’s support led to a sobering defeat. Fellow Republican Victor Atiyeh became governor instead.¹⁹² Although McCall’s later bid for election was shot down, his bills are well liked and many remain in effect to this day.

Cultural Effects of Vortex

Tying specific events and policies back to Vortex is difficult. The people who attended the concert were not, for the most part, of cultural fame or import and there are

¹⁹⁰ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 308.

¹⁹¹ Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 400.

¹⁹² Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 422-430.

not many records of the trajectories their lives took after Vortex. However, if the people I have interviewed are any indication, some ended up leaving their more radical views behind.¹⁹³ They grew up. They started working in offices, yet kept their interest in counterculture ideals.

The cultural residue left by Vortex may have been the impetus behind the boom in grassroots activist lobbying during the 1971 legislative session. If nothing else, McCall demonstrated that citizens could effect political change. He showed that he was willing to listen. People who protested, or wanted to protest, got a chance to have their voices heard. A multitude of citizen action groups started popping up around Salem, Oregon's capitol. Among them were "1000 Friends of Oregon, the Oregon Environmental Council, and Sensible Transportation Options for People."¹⁹⁴ Betty Roberts used this anecdote to describe the multitude of activist groups pouring into the capitol (Figure 17):

"I heard a long-time lobbyist for business complain one day about how 'everybody and their dogs' had taken over the State Capitol. He asked rhetorically and without irony, 'Do they think they own this place?' ... The young people we'd seen publicly protesting or becoming 'peaceniks' were now turning to politics to influence the future they rightly claimed."¹⁹⁵

In short, this meant that the hippies were learning how to get things done through more conventional means. They did not need to commit minor acts of terrorism anymore because they learned how to effectively instigate change from within the existing political system.

¹⁹³ Rebecca Bogorad, interview by author, Portland, OR, July 14, 2010. AND Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011.

¹⁹⁴ Betty Roberts, *With Grit and by Grace: Breaking Trails in Politics and Law, A memoir*, ed. Gail Wells (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2008), 127.

¹⁹⁵ Betty Roberts, *With Grit and by Grace: Breaking Trails in Politics and Law, A memoir*, ed. Gail Wells (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2008), 127.

Many, if not most, of the hippies themselves felt burned out by the movement. The reflective Pierre La Chance said he became involved with the countercultur- living in communes etc. As the 1970s got into full swing, he saw the idealistic youth being taken advantage of by cults that manipulated them. In the moment, drugs seemed to give youth the spiritual truths they sought. However, La Chance and others began to notice the long term disconnect with society and physical consequences of drugs and commune culture. “Plus I lived in some alternative places and I decided that you know I kinda did like having a nice TV you know? And a bed, and running water...”¹⁹⁶ This attitude was exhibited by youth throughout the time period. Though they kept their liberal attitudes towards war and conservation, both La Chance and Bogorad ended up working in typical ‘nine-to-five’ office jobs.¹⁹⁷

The Story of Vortex

Historians have only just begun to take an interest in Vortex because it is a fairly recent event. In the academic community it exists mostly as a side-note in the life of Tom McCall. In Carlos A. Schwantes’ *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History*, he very briefly states: “McCall arranged a free rock concert at McIver State Park thirty-five miles southeast of Portland...”¹⁹⁸ By recounting the event in this simplistic fashion, he undermines the cultural cooperation that was central to Vortex’s initiation and organization.

¹⁹⁶ Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011.

¹⁹⁷ Pierre La Chance, interview by author, Portland, OR, August 8, 2011., Rebecca Bogorad, interview by author, Portland, OR, July 14, 2010., and personal observations.

¹⁹⁸ Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 402.

In *Fire at Eden's Gate*, Brent Walth spends an entire chapter of his biography on Tom McCall discussing Vortex. Though he highlights the fact that Vortex did not originate from McCall and that the involvement of numerous individuals made the event, he looks at the concert through a limited, government-centric perspective. He cites Westerdahl's admission that, " ' we knew going in ninety-eight percent of the kids going to Vortex would be local kids,' " using it as the crux of his argument that the chances taken at Vortex were not necessary to prevent violence.¹⁹⁹ Walth goes on to say, "the myth that Vortex drained off thousands of people who would have rampaged through downtown Portland still lingers."²⁰⁰ Yet dismissing the Vortex story as a myth undermines the power that myths can have. History is about what people think happened and what they record and remember; it is not necessarily about reality. The story they choose to tell often says more about them than a more objective truth would. Walth purports that Vortex got McCall re-elected. However, it was the story of Vortex rather than the concert itself that won him a second term- the story in the minds of Oregonians that McCall had saved them from another Kent State-like calamity. Regardless of the story's validity, its presence in the cultural consciousness had major implications for McCall's campaign, and, by extension, for the environmental policies of the state.

There is no way to know how many of the people at McIver would have crowded the streets or actively protested in Portland had the concert not been offered as an alternative. Nor can we make assumptions about whether those extra people, even if there were few of them, would have perpetrated acts of violence. This makes it difficult to

¹⁹⁹ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 302.

²⁰⁰ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 302.

evaluate Vortex's influence in these terms. What we can see, however, is that the Governor's office successfully caught the attention of Oregon's dissatisfied liberal youth and showed them that they could work with a government willing to listen to them. This new avenue manifested itself in the advent of new humanitarian advocacy groups. This method stands in sharp contrast to the polarizing politics of the day where cops and angry long hairs confronted one another with violence and confusion. Accurate depictions of Vortex must balance the political implications of Vortex with the less tangible cultural value of bringing dissimilar groups together in a peaceful way to herald a less culturally divided America.

Success?

Was Vortex a success? Was it really instrumental in keeping the peace in Portland? In an attempt to answer this question in the affirmative, McCall published some interesting numbers. The MLK riots cost an estimated \$53,870,275. On Aug 24th, a plastic bomb was set off at the University of Wisconsin, killing a graduate student. A policeman was killed in California on the same day. In Chicago on August 26th, policemen were lured into sniper fire. In Philadelphia on the 30th, 50 armed policemen were shot at a suspected Black Panther headquarters. A four-hour riot broke out in Los Angeles during a protest. Other policemen and protestors across the country died from less offensive provocation than the atmosphere surrounding the American Legion. Yet while hundreds of policemen and protestors across the country clashed with one another,

no one died as a result of conflict either in Portland or at McIver Park. The only casualty of the events was a broken window.²⁰¹

Part of the peace-keeping success should also be attributed to the weaponless police force. At Kent State, the fear of chaotic protesting was met with the loaded guns of National Guardsmen. Violent conflicts such as these taught the Governor how quickly peoples' self-preservation instincts could take over. Westerdahl confiscated police guns: "Anyone of them could have started a riot. We locked their guns in a hotel safe."²⁰² At Vortex it was reported that "shotguns using only bird shot, would be issued to National Guardsmen if any situation developed in which their lives could be in danger."²⁰³ By not provoking the counterculture with armed guards, they decreased the chance of a minor misunderstanding resulting in violence. The hippies and People's Army Jamboree, for their part, kept their promises and did little to disturb the Estacada community.

On the flipside though, did Vortex really dissuade the rebellious multitudes from protesting? The answer, according to Westerdahl, is- probably not. 50,000 people were not planning on coming to Portland to protest the Legion's meeting. Westerdahl stated that 98% of the people going to Vortex were just local kids looking to get away for the weekend.²⁰⁴ However, with the information McCall had at the time he made his decision to hold the concert, he felt Vortex was the most promising method to keep Portland safe

²⁰¹ Office of the Governor, *A Parallel Chronology Nationally, During the Week of Vortex I*, September 21, 1970.

²⁰² Ed Westerdahl: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 110.

²⁰³ *Oregonian*: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 108.

²⁰⁴ Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 302.

despite the personal political risk he faced. Scholars acknowledge that Vortex might not have been needed to ‘save’ Portland from violence, but the fact that the Governor took decisive action was appreciated by many voters and helped him defeat Straub in the subsequent gubernatorial election. The polling that showed that McCall came across as indecisive was thrown out the window. Now there could be no mistake: this was not a flip-floppy governor, but one that tried to find a fair solution and stick to it.

Perhaps McCall’s version of the story has been focused on because political history is more tangible than cultural history. It’s easier to trace the lines of cause and effects. Governments leave paper trails that are much easier to keep track of than the concert poster crinkled by the rain and swept up by the wind. ‘Cultural Attitudes’ elude strict measure or paths to follow.

Matt Love attempted to nail down the cultural history with a collection of primary resources.²⁰⁵ The compilation of interviews, tid-bits, and primary source documentation is rich and compelling, but lacks the framework to put it in context. Without understanding the historical and political framework informing peoples’ statements, the intricate web of cause and effect is severed, leaving behind an itemized list instead of a story.

Conclusions

Part of what catalyzed the peaceful meeting between the rebellious, counter-cultured youth and the Right at the Vortex concert was the shared exasperation both sides felt about the perpetual gulf between them. Throughout the late ‘50s and ‘60s, a cultural

²⁰⁵ : Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), entire book.

gap existed between youth and the rest of society. Their parents, having survived the scarcity of the Great Depression and the atrocities of World War II, strove to provide amenities for their children that they never had themselves. Thus, adolescents never worried about material necessities and were free, through their parents' hard work, to more deeply analyze and indulge in personal introspection than previous American generations. Parents in this era, however, did not understand the change in their children's priorities and emotional needs; they thought their children were just ungrateful lunatics.

By the time the early '70s rolled around, however, parents realized that they could no longer try to 'common-sense' their children back into the home. Furthermore, using force by confronting their progeny with armed guards only ended in tragedy. The children, for their part, saw the lack of change their energies were precipitating. Michael Finley writes in his 1998 book *A Helpful Pointer*, "I was a hippie, but not an especially optimistic one. It was already 1970, and most things I had assumed would come to pass - the collapse of the military-industrial era and the ushering in of [an] Aquarian one - had not come true."²⁰⁶ They were also tired and scared by the consequences of violent protesting, such as the protest bombing at the University of Madison that unintentionally killed one graduate student. It is this fear and exhaustion that may have been influential in The Family's split from the PAJ.

²⁰⁶ Michael Finley, *A Helpful Pointer*, 1998 : Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 179.

Timing was also on Portland's side in that both the Right and the Left had time to plan what their reactions to the other's actions would be. Whereas the MLK riots came without warning after the sudden death of MLK, the confrontation seen at Vortex was expected and prepared for. Governor McCall also had a vast array of previous violent protest conflicts to learn from. He had a collection of data from which it was easy to see that countering protests with armed guards was a colossal mistake.

Before the start of Vortex, Tom McCall acknowledged that the venture was “political suicide.”²⁰⁷ Nothing could have been farther from the truth. McCall was re-elected the following year by a larger majority than during his first election. Even the militant Bogorad admitted to liking the governor:

“McCall...he was a good governor even if he was one of those [Republicans]...even I knew at the time he was a good governor...He use to be a newscaster before he was governor so he was sort of trusted that his journalism was good...when he became governor he was a straight speaker. He wasn't a politician of the kind that would, you know, you'd ask him a question, he'd answer it. And matter of fact...I liked the way he supported Oregon.”²⁰⁸

It seems that people appreciated the moderate Republican's ability to speak to both sides of the aisle. Some people thought that ‘peaceful rock concerts’ may become the model for future demonstrations, but there was no Vortex 2 or any other similar program. For all the anxiety surrounding it, and worry about degrading morals, there seem to be no long-term moral consequences of the concert. Other than the re-election of McCall, the political consequences of Vortex were also minimal. It was reported in other parts of the

²⁰⁷ Tom McCall, *Tom McCall: Maverick*, ed. Steve Neal (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1977), 144.

²⁰⁸ Rebecca Bogorad, interview by author, Portland, OR, July 14, 2010.

country, but those articles concentrated more on the potential and then lack of conflict in Portland rather than on Vortex and its strong points.

Vortex 1 was a product of its time. It was the natural result of the lessons and trauma of the 1960s. The stress the 1960s placed on both the Left and the Right made both sides more willing to compromise. Vortex 1 is a direct result of that compromise. Because both factions sponsored the festival, members of both parties felt more included and comfortable than they would have otherwise. It is doubtful that McCall's aides would have been cooking rice with hippies had it not been a government sponsored event. It would also have been completely implausible for hippies to talk seriously with far Right-wing Christians about religion had they not felt the comfort, 'home-turf' atmosphere of a commune-supported project. The compromise gave people the opportunity to interact with the other side one-on-one in an atmosphere free from stereotypes. Right wing parents read about the new youth culture in the newspaper and even attended the festival themselves. Their tentative acknowledgment of the concert fostered the acceptance of the counterculture back into the mainstream social strata. Estacada residents' acknowledgement of some of the concert attendees as 'clean' or 'kind' further demonstrates the shrinking of the gap between the two groups. The hippies also grew up and began to perceive the world with a less argumentative attitude, both due to their desire to settle down and the lack of obvious results from previous demonstrations.

While there is support for this interpretation of the results of the Vortex concert, in the end the culture of a society during any specific time is made up of individuals. And individuals, especially Americans, rarely agree on anything. Many diverse opinions

regarding Vortex have been documented, each one colored by the storyteller to fit their own philosophy.

This variety of opinions is even reflected in the assortment of different nicknames that Vortex has amassed over the years: “A biodegradable festival of Life,” the “Governor's Ball,” “Bullshit 1” etc.^{209 210} It was called a sellout, a chance to promote peace, to get stoned, a chance to learn about youth culture. It was lawless. It was an intense exchange of ideas; a sea of unresponsive high people. Yet Vortex was also more than the sum of its parts, more than the drugs and nudity so publicized and philosophized. More than the pleasantly surprised local citizens. The Vortex music festival was a new way of approaching opposition. Instead of just doubling the guards around the American Legion and crossing their fingers in hopes that no one would start shooting, the Governor and The Family took proactive measures. They communicated with one another and those conversations sparked many others between hippies and straights, making both sides understand one another a little bit better. If there is any moral to this story it is this: that rational conversation can be used as a tool to keep the peace. Hopefully this lesson of treating the opposition with respect, with open ears and arms, can provide a model for conflicts in the future.

²⁰⁹ Bacon, Leonard. “Vortex ‘Governor’s Ball’ all just L-O-V-E.” *The Oregonian* 24 August 1970, Sec C: 23.

²¹⁰ *The Oregonian*: Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Oregon City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004), 192.

Figures



Figure 1: Oregon Governor Tom McCall



**Figure 2: Police and students
clash at PSU Campus, May
1970**

**Figure 3: Portland citizens
march to city hall to
protest police violence**





Figure 4: McCall working with secretary of state on bottle recycling law



Figure 5: Ed Westerdahl, McCall's assistant



Figure 6: McCall giving Vortex radio address



Figure 7: J. Milton Patrick, American Legion Commander

Figure 8: Current map of McIver State park

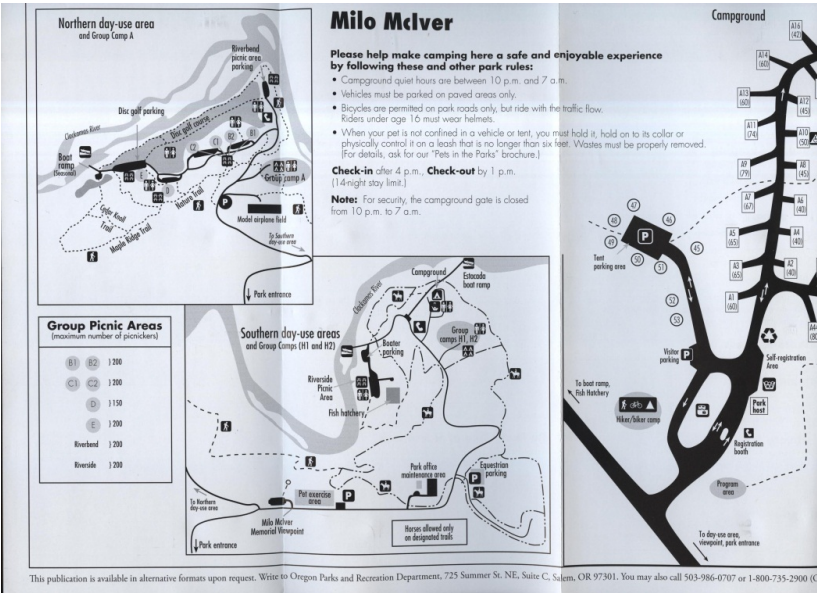


Figure 9: Ariel view of McIver Park shortly before Vortex



Figure 10: Youth heading to Vortex



Figure 11: Concert attendees eat free rice with their hands



Figure 12: Vortex stage with performers



Figure 14: Friends after visiting the mud sauna at Vortex



Figure 13: Vortex drummer



Figure 15: View from Vortex stage



Figure 17: State Senator Betty Roberts



Figure 16: American Legion march; protestors on sidelines

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Notes on Love's *The Far Out Story of Vortex I*

Love's book is one of my most frequently cited sources. It is a rich compilation of primary sources that includes interviews, newspaper articles, pamphlets and much more. Without the research he did to compile this anthology, this project would have been practically impossible. Furthermore, it is the only secondary publication I could find exclusively devoted to this topic. While I quoted extensively from his book, the conclusions I draw, and narrative of this paper are completely my own.

That said, there are parts of the book that are not strictly scholarly. The organization can be confusing and his citations are not as scholarly as one would desire. At times he quotes newspapers by their title neglecting their authors, or even dates. This makes them difficult to track down. Where possible I have tried to find the original source to cite in this paper.

Figure Citations

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This website has lots of good photos and information on PSU riots that I did not find till the end of the research project.

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Figure 6: The Oregonian In Walth. Brent. *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story*. Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1999: 298.

Figure 7: "Legion Head Believes In Dissent When 'Responsibly Expressed'" *The Oregonian*, 29 August 1970: unknown.

Figure 8: Oregon State Parks, *Milo McIver Campground*. Estacada: Oregon State Park Nature History Discovery, March 2010.

Figure 9: *Vortex I: Oregon Experience*. Oregon Public Broadcasting, 2010. Web. 7 May. <<http://www.opb.org/programs/oregonexperience/programs/28-Vortex-I/slideshows/19>>.

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Figure 11: Cooper, Ron and Gerry Lewin, *Vortex I*. Salem: Adolphson's Printing Company, 1970.

Figure 12: Oregon Historical Society Research Library bb003056 In *Vortex I music festival*. The Vortex Encyclopedia, 2012. Web. 2012. <http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/vortex_i/>.

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Figure 14: Love, Matt. *The Vortex Baptism* . PowellsBooks.Blog, 2 Sept. 2010. Web. 7 May 2012. <<http://www.powells.com/blog/on-oregon/the-vortex-baptism-by-matt-love/>>. (Also in Love, Matt, *The Far Out Story of Vortex 1*. Pacific City: Nestucca Spit Press, 2004.) (Image originally in Cooper, Ron and Gerry Lewin, *Vortex 1*. Salem: Adolphson's Printing Company, 1970. Love's version from the internet was used because it is a sharper image.)

Figure 16: Lewin, Gerry. *Statesman-Journal* In Walth. Brent. *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story*. Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1999: 302.

Figure 17: Oregon Blue Book 1975-1976 In Roberts, Betty. *With Grit and by Grace: Breaking Trails in Politics and Law, A memoir*. Edited by Gail Wells. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2008: 150.