

Amir Zargari
Vietnam and Watergate
Dr. Ernst

Jeff Segal Summary

The interview of Mr. Segal began with his bail being revoked, and the federal facility in which he had to serve time in. In spring of 1969, he was moved from federal prison to county jail, in which he was present during the ^Sseven trial. Segal was found not guilty, but served seventeen months in minimum security camp in Arizona.

In prison, Jeff Segal became involved in various organizing activities. He talked briefly about Christmas, and how by cutting out pictures of Panthers and other individuals, such as Huey Newton, and by decorating them on trees, his struggle to be heard was far from over.

Segal's strong optimism and faith is remarkable. In spite of arrest, and friends who were killed in ^{the}course of demonstrations, he refused to give up the anti-draft movement. Segal had full support of his family, and even noted his young nephew, being a "regular pen pal" in prison.

In the fall of 1971, Segal was released from prison. The SDS organization was no longer functional. He soon became the office manager for a law firm. Segal later attended and gained a law degree. With his new found occupation, Segal continued his involvement with politics by organizing a draft counsel during the Persian Gulf. He also represented those who desired conscientious objector discharges.

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Fall of 71: Released from prison. The SDS is no longer functional.

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Law Cases: During Persian Gulf, organized draft counselors, and represented those who desired conscientious objector discharges.

1983-1984: Attempted to keep Jefferson county board of Ed
from providing gymnasium to the Ku Klux Klan.

Amir Zargari

Vietnam and Watergate

Oral history interview with Jeff Segal on June 23, 1997 in Louisville,

KY.

George: So I was doing time, in a federal facility, on May of 68, this was while the arrest in Oakland was ripening into a full fledged trial, so in early, sometime in spring of 69, I was moved from the federal prison in Springfield Missouri, to the county jail in Oakland, to stay in trial along with my six other compatriots, in Oakland seven trial. We were charged with conspiracy to commit three misdemeanors, like resisting arrest and creating a public nuisance. Conspiracy is a felony, so we could have got five to life for conspiring to commit misdemeanors. Non of the decisions that was made really, was that a belief on the part of law enforcement that they could do better by hitting us with state criminal charges, then federal, because obviously we could have been charged with federal charges with obstructing the draft or whatever. That the individual who was Oakland district attorney interestingly enough in retrospect was Edd Neass, who was a good buddy of Ronald Reagan, in fact the guy who actually did Oakland seven trial from the prosecutions, and with the guy who did the Reagan administration, became the head of criminal division of justice department. We had a four months trial, one of the principle attorney for the seven of us was an attorney by the name of Charley Garry, who at that point had been pretty much exclusively doing Panther legal work, but was convinced that this

was an important trial. And we put on a political defense essentially, that we took a good month to seek the jury and the trial. The work that was done around that, was some of the early jury study work, so people went out and investigated potential jurors to see what kinds of bias they had. And we were all found not guilty at the end of the trial, and when the jurors were interviewed afterwards, they all said that they openly thought that we had conspired to close down the induction center. They did not believe that we had conspired to commit these misdemeanors. And that they believed in essentially jury nullification theory, that we had argued among other things norinborg international law, and they believed that they had the right and an obligation that ultimately the prosecutions would brought and ordered to show up first Amendment right to free speech and press. And they had an obligation to uphold those constitutional rights even in the face of Californian criminal law. So it was one example of what was done among other to use these trials as organizing tools, anti war organizing tools, and that was approached. That was generally used in that point in terms of these kind of cases.

Interviewer: In these dark days where you able to maintain your optimism?

George: Oh yeah, however unrealistic they were, I mean, with all the movement that was going on, most of us were convinced that the revolution was around the corner. So spite of things like arrest, they were sad aspects to it, friends who were killed in the course of activities, it defeats the specific circumstances. It was a tremendously optimistic and heavy period, its interesting because

certainly as I worked with some student over the last number of years, that while it is in one sense an advantage that often they seem a lot more practical than we were, that there was an approach that folks took at that point, at least a lot of the friends of mine and I that we really had the power to change the universe. How naive or overly optimistic it was, it did lots of things that if you thought practically about you wouldn't bother doing. That is an element that has really been missing since, if you really put your mind to it, there is things that you can actually change. And which is true with anti war stuff, early civil rights activity, change in campus, policy all across the board, early elements of the woman's movement, we all walked up into that.

Interviewer: I understand, but from my perspective, as a historian and theorist, having to serve jail time, it must have been difficult.

George: Yeah, I wouldn't do it voluntarily. I wasn't all that pleased, but particularly I ended up, when I was in Elementy county in Oakland, for the six months I was there, the facilities which was hardly four star. One of the things I ended up doing was to come back, after we would go through for example jury members, particularly those that we excluded and to give the back ground to the guys, most of whom are black, about these people, because they were gone to see them down the road, so I would do these little classes, and we had regular interactions with the guys inside, one of the most interesting manifestation of that. The jury took twenty-two hours before coming back with the verdict, when it did, it was seven or eight o'clock at night. I got ushered out and up to the court room and brought back, so that, among other things during

the stop the draft week itself, particularly the last day the Oakland police department had mobilized cops from all over the bay area, including a lot of the deputies who worked in the jail, so they had first hand experience about this demonstration. Even giving, over and the above their law enforcement mentality made them not very sympathetic, and so when I came back in, and I was to go through the jail of my cell, several guys started asking me, "What was the verdict?" and so when I told them that we were all actuated, the whole place went in big who-rays. And which not only was exhilarating by in of itself, but really pissed the guards off which made it even better. They were those kind of things that occurred even in the county jail, when I got to, I spend the last seventeen months or so in a minimum security camp in the middle of Arizona, to which they were lots of draft rejecters, and we did a lot of organizing activities. I had a little much of a study group, and we had an organization that did things throughout out the camp. We kept to ourselves. And just one little funny element of it, at one point I decided that I would act like a prisoner of war, and so not cooperating with the enemy and trying to tie down as much of their resources as possible and the like. We tried to make it as expansive to keep us as we could. The other was that, few months after I got there, I decided that I was healthier eating soybean snacks, and watching the news than going to eat dinner in 4:30 in the afternoon, and so we would have the count sometimes before 4:00, and I would go to the TV room and watch the news. And I would get in there initially about a quarter after 4, and would catch the last 15 minutes of this weird and bizarre soap-opera with vampires and werewolves

and bodiless hands.

Interviewer: Dark Shadows!

George: Right, running about, and so I sat out at least, but I couldn't figure out what the devil was going on with this thing, just watching the last 15 minutes. I said, "all right, I'm gona have to watch this once or twice just to try to figure out what's happening." So I did, and pretty soon I was watching it everyday, and I had about a dozen other guys watching Dark Shadows everyday. Then on be announced to me, a number of them came in to see me one day, and they said, "guess what? you have been elected president of SDS here." Which quickly in the rumor mill got around to the administration that there was SDS in their dinky little prison camp, which made them very nervous. Little did they know, that SDS, was not students for democratic societies, but Sons of Dark Shadows.

Interviewer: (Laugh)

George: But so we would do that kind of stuff, we did a lot of gorilla theater. Well, we would make up hit and run theatrical works and do them in the camp, mostly political stuff. I give you one other example, the camp before I got there had for number of years, each Christmas we would housed in dormitories not in cell blocks, this is out in the middle of dead end desert. And each Christmas, each of the dorms would be giving a Christmas tree in a modicum traditional decorations. Well one of the guys whose in my dormitory, who was a draft rejecter, real working class kid, had never been out of Los Angeles until he got chartered off to due time, and was becoming more and more politicized decided he was gona make something of the tree. So he took the white star that we got

and painted it red, and it went up to the top of the tree. And he cut clippings out of newspapers, pictures of Huey Newton and Bobby Seal and number of Panthers, and they went on the tree. And we also had a large number of Mexican citizens in the camp, so they got into it. Pretty soon the pictures of Zappata, and revolutionary Mexican symbols, slogans, went on the tree. The guards were totally incensed, but they gave us the damn tree and they said we could do whatever we want with it. And so they can hardly make anything of it. They were no presents that year for the best tree however.

Interviewer: (Laugh)

George: And so we turned it into a organizing tool again. But no, not a big heavy kind of thing, but using what it is we had available.

Interviewer: Sure.

George: So, it was those kinds of things that at least we did to buy away the time. Now I subsequently found unusual, because I figured would have happened to more of us. It's been a while, we have now had three reunions of the guys I did time with. As I've talk to more and more who did time for draft refusal, we are the only class of drafty resisters that have UNINTELLIGIBLE, have no idea what that means. But it's sort of interesting.

Interviewer: What are they like? And where do you gather at?

George: Well, most of the draft rejecters were from the west coast, that's where west coast folks were sent, and that's where I was send when the servant trial was concluded as oppose to being send to Springfield. So they had been held in California, people found out all kinds of stuff, I got a friend of mine whose in middle management at Peter Bill. One of the other guys went off to become to what I

refer to as a bee poke, working on a bee ranch. You know, they scattered out.

Interviewer: Any celebrities? Anybody that has held office?

George: Well, one of the guys who was there, he and I only overlapped for a relatively short period of time, but he has been, I know this only because I saw it on Television not long ago, a member of the Denver city counsel. But other than that, really not. David Harris was there, although he was not really in our camp. So, No.

Interviewer: What do you all talk about during your meeting?

George: You catch up on what people are doing, how many kids people have had, and mostly that kind of a thing. Folks have talked off and on. People encourage each other. Many of them do local political stuff, community organizing. One of the guys is an attorney in Portland, who for example continued to do political work. But it's mostly a matter of getting together with old comrades, swap stories.

Interviewer: What did your family think about your political activities, and the fact that you were in jail for a while. Were they supportive, or I mean, were your family supportive of the Vietnam war?

George: Well, my parents, my immediate family were very supportive. It was only subsequent to my going to jail, that my parents ended up participating in anti war activity. When I left school, the kind of arguments I would get from my parents were things like "don't you think if you cut your hair you could do what your doing better?" That kinds of things. And in fact, I was out of

the state when the indictments came down in Oakland, and so I did some telephone conversation with folks about turning myself in, and this and that. And the other thing, when I first went back to California, as we were trying to work out arrangement, I ended up staying at my parent's place, because I figured that was the last place that the cops would end up looking for me. Giving the sort of image of the alienated youth and the like.

Interviewer: This is in Chicago?

George: No, they moved to California. My immediate family moved to California, in the mid 60s. I got two younger brothers, one eleven years younger than me, who was in grade school, and then in high school when all of this was going on. He became active with student political stuff for a while. And I know that there was a lot of debate amongst relatives, some of whom were supportive and some of whom who were not supportive of me. But it mainly was around the war, although I suspect most of them would oppose from what I can tell, oppose the war in Vietnam. And in fact, I went up there, from Chicago to see my parents, in early 68, to prepare them for me leaving the country. And I remember going up for a drive with my father, and we started talk about these kinds of stuff, and he was the one that suggested that I cut out.

Interviewer: Why didn't you?

George: Well, because my lawyer screwed up. I mean when I went in to court, in May of 68, we were under the belief that there would be a brief hearing, and a preparatory to, because the case was on appeal. And instead, what happened was that the US attorney came in, and listed off all these places around the country that I been

believed to have been ceased. My bail revoked, so the judge revoked my bail. But I didn't know that was gona happen. If I did, I would not have gone. Good, bad or indifference, I went into court one time too many. And in fact, one of my nephews who was, may be about in 7th or 8th grade, was a regular pen pal when I was in prison, which was very nice. And my parents, several times came down to visit me in Safer, Arizona, which was a long track from the San Francisco bay area, and in fact I also had an uncle who lived in Tulsa, which were a pretty conservative part of my family that came to visit me in Springfield several times.

Interviewer: What did your dad do for living?

George: He worked for FMC. Used to be food machinery corporation, one of these big fortune five hundred companies. If I remember correctly at the time, keeping time for the guys out in the line, and in fact my mother also went to work, when after they moved to California, in the documents room of FMC, so they were both working. FMC at that point was where they also were making tanks.

Interviewer: Interesting. Is there any more moments or events that stays with you? More compelling than the others that you often think about on occasion, that came out during this period of time or experience. What stays with you the most? The time in jail? Or the open seven trial? Or some other event?

George: Well.

Interviewer: If there is one. There might not be.

George: Well, certainly one of the things was not the trial, but actually being out on the street, in downtown Oakland, during those

demonstrations. We had decided that we were gonna come prepared to repel the police, and so we had organized ourselves to what we called the monitor squads, which were meant to provide structure to each a couple of hundred demonstrators, and because of the variety of odds and ends, we also had provided instruction for how to deal with things like tear gas and clubs. There were large numbers of people who had our instructions, and came prepared with motorcycles and helmets on, and wrappings around their arms and bodies. And shields that we had made, similar to what the Japanese students had done as well to repel. And we were running around the street. One of the most exciting things was when we got finished, and go running home to watch the news, because we would see all kinds of incredible stuff that we hadn't seen. I still remember very vividly watching pictures of eight or nine people having been pushed into the entrance way to a store, with some guy with a shield holding off two or three cops, who were just bailing with their beacons. That kind of stuff, the exhilaration of the demonstration, because it was really much different than even the sort of sitting demonstrations. That was quite exhilarating, and potentially, obviously, dangerous as well.

Interviewer: Did you ever fear for your life? Was there ever an altercation where you almost had been beaten to death?

George: That could have happened, but No. Actually the closest I've come to at least believing that might be the case, was in Georgia. Me and one of the other organizers of the UNINTELLIGIBLE organizing committee left while all these stuff was going on, to travel to Atlanta the night before King's funeral, and got stopped by

Georgia state trooper. And there were few seconds in which I thought we were gona end up in a shoot out, so that's really the closes.

Interviewer: Was it all whites? Or where you with African Americans too, when you were stopped?

George: No, there was just two of us. Me and a young woman. And there were bumper stickers on the car. If you wanted to, you could single us out. And I had big purely hair. But that was the closes that I could really remember. Even giving the variety of arrest in the variety of places.

Interviewer: What did you do after you left prison?

George: Well, by the time I got out, which was in the fall of 71, SDS for all practical purposes was dead. And I got myself paroled out to the bay area, and was approached by an attorney who at that point, she and her law firm were representing George Jackson, who was a famous black prison inmate in California, who he and two others had been involved with, had been charged with attempted prison escape and the like. I was asked if I would come and do some organizing work around the case. I became essentially the office manager of this law office. It was a left wing movement office, and for a couple of years were involved in an attempt to turn itself into a collective, to which there were numbers of these attempts that were made during that period of time around the country. So I was a legal worker for several years, when I got off parole, and when the experiments sort of petered at, I moved to New York city, worked for a period of time, at the Guardian newspaper, as a journalist, and then at the center for the constitutional rights as a legal worker,

handling the books and helping to run the office and the like. It was during that period of time, mainly in a response to lawyer UNINTELLIGIBLE, that I decided to go to law school.

Interviewer: Have you continued with political work to a degree?

George: Well yes, some of the work that I do, with legal aid society, I certainly consider political. During the Gulf War, I helped organize draft counselors and represented about fifteen war resisters at Fort Nox, who were seeking conscientious objector discharges. A number of years ago, must have been around 83 or 84, me and an attorney in private practice, ended up in court, attempting to keep the Jefferson country board of Ed from providing a gymnasium to the Ku Klux Klan, for a rally in valley station. So there have been a little bit of this, and a little bit of that, to a degree of those activity here.

Interviewer: Did your views on Vietnam ever change?

George: No. I believe then, and I still believe now, that it represented one more aspect of American Imperialism.

UNINTELLIGIBLE to attempt to stop the war as we did, now obviously we could have done this or that better, but I think that it was the ultimate manifestation of American foreign policy. I will say that I find it both self serving and inaccurate for those among others, like Robert McNamara, to now be saying that it was a mistake. I mean when now they say it's a mistake, because the United States lost the war, that it was clearly part of an unfolding foreign policy that was consistent with that policy. You have a long discussion with the history of all of that, but United States certainly lead the beginning of the period, after the French defeated

Dienbienphu, attempted to move in and fill a vacuum, for its own international economical and political interest. The fact that they were unable to do what they wished, and bitten and bite by it, doesn't make the policy, doesn't make the war an aberration or mistake in that sense. Now clearly it had tremendous impact here, and whether certainly Johnson, UNINTELLIGIBLE would have traded off, which is what happened, is domestic policy for these foreign policy interest. Whether it was possible to make those decisions, it was impossible to tell, obviously, it seems to me that the pursued of the war meant to totally disrupt the rail. Poverty, whole string of domestic initiative to which the democrats were attempting to engage in at the time.

Interviewer: What do you think about UNINTELLIGIBLE?

George: Well, I've read that in bits and pieces. And I've seen them on Television, and I guess it's best, I find them totally dis-ingenious. Just to take one aspect of it, that he claims that part of the problem was they didn't have good enough information and intelligence, well I don't know, at the time, there were numbers of people with tremendous amounts of expertise, on the situation in Vietnam, both outside as well as inside the state department. So was hardly, for a lot of people in the United States, with an understanding of the situation in Vietnam that lead to what he claims to be policy failures. So that he either doesn't remember, or he chooses to ignore that fact. I am glad that somebody from his statures said some of the things that he said. The State department, the United States government went into that situation with tremendous amounts of knowledge about it, and decided to pursed anyway.

Interviewer: You use the term self serving with McNamara. Cleansing soul, or making money, or doing both?

George: Well, I suspect its more the sort of soul cleansing then making money. I can't imagine that proceeds from the book make a whole hell of a lot of difference. So I think that its more of the former than the latter, the interesting thing is that his subsequent activities are consistent more with the character of the Vietnam war that I certainly find so reprehensible than what he is saying about the Vietnam war. World Bank certainly then, if not still now, continues to act as a enforcer of major American and International economic interest around the world. The difference is, instead of sending Marines, they played with dollars. I don't find it in that sense less reprehensible that he and folks at the World Bank were able to bully the Jamaicans into aborting their revolution, or dozens of other countries to do what's in the interest of major international economic interest, and now then their own interest, by using aid money instead. And one does not hear anything about that. That works to be the appropriate "peaceful" activity.

Interviewer: Do you like the way the anti-war movement has been portrayed in history books? Do you have an opinion on that?

George: I certainly believe that there is a tremendous attempt, to some extant successful, on the part of conservative journalists/historians, now politicians, to rewrite that history. It run the gamut from this sort of glib of ex-historian/Gingrich, to paint the movement of the 60s as hedonistic, self absorbed individuals, onto military histories, that rationalize the way significant American military defeats, by saying that North Vietnamese and the NOF used

propaganda plays and the like. Now it significantly clouds even the most recent history. I go to see Hollywood films and cling, read books and say "oh god, this is terrible." I don't know what I can do about it, but I have become most unhappy and disturbed by a lot of what there is.

Interviewer: I think I'm done with you. You got anything you want to add?

George: Not that I can think of. No.

Interviewer: Oral history interview with Jeff Segal on June 23, 1997 in Louisville, KY.

George: Jeffery Segal, I am an attorney.

Interviewer: I am going to ask you some broad question did any professors support your position?

George: There was some support from some faculty. There were a couple of young faculty members in the history department. In fact one of them was the paper advisor, he would write us these little advisory notes every once in a while, some to the conclusion that urged us on to do what we were doing. It wasn't William Randolph Hurst's technique, but his politics that was bad and stuff like that. There were many faculty members and most of the administration

Interviewer: Oral history interview with Jeff Segal on June 23, 1997 in Louisville, KY.

George: Jeffery Segal, I am an attorney.

Interviewer: I am going to ask you some broad questions and maybe a few specifics, and you just run with them wherever your mind wants to go and if there is something you say I'll get back to it, the idea is for you to talk and me say little. I guess the first the question is something we started at lunch, I'm just curious to what led you to oppose America's involvement in Vietnam in 1964?

George: Well I started undergraduate school in the fall of 1959, and quickly became involved in student politics on the campus at Roosevelt University, which is in Chicago. While there had been a history, particularly of civil rights activity, one of my predecessors in fact as student body president became the first black mayor of the city. Because of the McCarthy era, by the time I got there in 1959, the campus was pretty dead, so there was a small crew of us in fact that initially got involved in civil liberty activities in opposition to the House on American Activities Committee. Then civil rights activities, many of us ended up going to Karo, IL in, I believe, '63 as part of an integration effort and so there was a fair amount of activities. It was during this period of time that I became a Marxist and an anti-imperialist. So as we saw things happening elsewhere in the world there was a focus on Vietnam. I guess one of the other things that certainly was useful in terms of my development during that period was large numbers of particularly South American and African foreign students to whom there was a lot of conversation and discussion and debate. They were much more radical than most of the student body at the university, so there was a tremendous educational experience from that. In early '64 a number of us had what was then a small student political party that ran candidates for student government. We also for all practical purposes controlled the student newspaper, and began to write articles about the war in Vietnam. My opposition to the war, American involvement, was very early in that sense. In fact, one of the things, during the summer of '64, we had decided to editorially come out in opposition to the Vietnam War, to American involvement and had made a decision that we would try, we ran a weekly newspaper to print a casualty box with both

American and Vietnamese casualties on the front page. We had sources so that we could in fact, relatively easily get Vietnamese casualties, National Liberation Front, North Vietnamese casualties. So we went about to try to get American numbers and after about a week making phone calls I ran into, as I remember, Colonel Dickery in the defense department, who said that while they didn't normally do that he would send us numbers. He did, and I can only but assume that at this point that he was in fact an early opponent of the war inside the military. He said that however, if they stopped coming it meant that he had been shipped to Vietnam. We ran it for several months and somewhere around early November they stopped coming. We attempted, we were going to call him and something happened with regards to the newspaper but was never able to reach him. That's really the early involvement that I had in terms of opposition to the war. Shortly after, in early '65, at the beginning of '65 I dropped out of school and went to work for Students for Democratic Society in New York City, and my draft notice followed me.

Interviewer: Did you get your notice before, or as you dropped out you got notice immediately?

George: Within a couple of months; as it turns out it had been in the works for a while. I ended up going in the end of '64 from being a full time student to a part time student. As it came out in my draft trial the University administration was really hot to get me off campus, so they sought the selective service system on me, so it was initially an attempt by the university administration to get rid of me, they cause my, to get my draft notice.

Interviewer: That was going to be one of my questions, in '64 how did the administration look upon the student paper and yourself, did you have any support to from the new left emerging, on who were not very happy with the amount of activism that had come to the campus. As I discovered several years later, and I would not have believed it myself if I had not seen it, that the leadership of the faculty and the administration believed that I had the power to destroy the university, and were indeed quite upset. I was the student body president during this period of time and a crew of us ran the school paper, so they were not very happy with what we were doing many times.

Interviewer: How acceptant were the students themselves as a whole, did you have any reaction to the position you all had taken?

George: Well they were growing numbers, most people certainly around the Vietnam War, had little idea what was going on. The thing that really brought stuff home was when more and more of the guys facing and dealing with the draft. There was a very large business school which tended to be very conservative. If there wasn't some committee out of the business school every semester or so with the purpose of reforming The Torch, which was the school paper, we thought that we weren't doing our job sufficiently. So we sort of egged them on as well. So there was a lot of debate and the like. We generally got support from a lot of the foreign students who were pretty left. It varied from place to place. The other thing that made things certainly different than a lot of places were at the time I was a student there it was an all commuter school, so

people didn't stick around, once they came downtown for classes they went back home. So some of the organizing activity was more difficult.

Interviewer: Did you have any rallies, protest?

George: Oh yeah, yeah, there would be rallies and the like, periodically all the time. Most of the antiwar and the anti-draft activity that occurred at Roosevelt really occurred after I left the campus. So there were in like '65, '66, and '67.

Interviewer: So when Vietnam heats up?

George: Right.

Interviewer: So how do you move into SDS?

George: Well I met several of the SDS folks when at summer conventions of the National Student Association. At that point the organization was little more than a liberal lobby within these kinds of activities. In late '64, a friend of mine from the University of Chicago became the national secretary. Through him I got the feeling that there was a likelihood that what was then anti-Communist disclaimer in the SDS constitution was going to be eliminated which made becoming active much more palatable. The other was that really by the end of the fall of '64 I had become much more concerned about the war in Vietnam. Really the escalation of the war that led me to drop out school at the end of '64, about eight hours shy of my bachelor's degree, and frankly I looked around to see what kind of organizational vehicle was likely to be able to be used to mobilize folks. It seemed to be the one potentially successful vehicle. So I dropped out of school, moved to New York, to begin with, to do most of the press work for SDS, initially to do some organizing around an anti-apartheid demonstration in New York City. I attended the SDS National Council meeting in New York City at the end of '64 in which there was a decision which was a significant departure from what SDS had been doing in the past, to organize both an anti-apartheid demonstration which was at the anniversary of the Sharksville massacre in New York City in March. Then in April '65 March on Washington to oppose the war in Vietnam which became the first national demonstration against the Vietnam War and that was pretty exciting to me. There was a lot of debate about whether or not to exclude communists from the march. The decision was made for the march not to be exclusionary. So I decided to check school and become a full time activist.

Interviewer: How soon after that did you receive the draft notice?

George: Well I moved to New York in January of '65 and in February my draft notice arrived. I wrote them back and I said, "I just moved to New York City, and if they wanted to see me they would have to send me the money because I didn't have any." They wrote me back and they said, "We'll transfer your induction to New York City." I wrote them back and said, "How am I supposed to do that?" So they wrote me back with the instructions. At that point their anti-

apartheid action had taken place and it included a sit-in in front of the Chase Manhattan Bank. So I had gotten myself arrested as part of this demonstration. I went to the induction center with all my little papers and the like, and I said, "Oh by the way I got arrested two weeks ago," and they said, "Well." They shoved all that stuff back at me and they said, "Come back when the trial has been resolved," and I said, "fine." Unfortunately I didn't get any of that in writing. So we move, and I didn't hear anything until May of '65 when we moved the SDS office from New York City to Chicago. About a week after the office and I arrived back in Chicago, we had two FBI agents come to the office and arrest me for failure to report for induction.

Interviewer: What were your duties for SDS, how did you all finance your activities?

George: Well, early on there was financing from a fair range of sort of a liberal some foundations, we got, the SDS got, money originally from the UAW to help support what were then community organizing activities. As the organization got more militant, a lot of that money dried up. SDS initially started as the Student Department of the League for Industrial Democracy which had been around since 1905, it was a social democratic organization, violently anti-Communist. It was very slow in opposing the war in Vietnam, so that part of the move to Chicago was really a slow effort to divorce ourselves from our erstwhile parent summer. So it was those kinds of things.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about that first march on Washington and bring it back up to when you got arrested and they followed you to Chicago?

George: It was as you can imagine a major effort, the call of the march was for the withdrawal of American, of U.S. troops. At that point it was before a small contention of South Koreans, Australians, and the like, so the only foreign troops were American troops. In fact as part of the organizing activities, several of us went to talk to Baird Breton, who was the principal organizer of the 1963 civil rights march and was associated with the LID. So we went to talk to him about, to get some tips from the preeminent organizer of marches on Washington. We told him what we wanted to do and what its purpose was. He said, "Well why, how come you haven't come out and said the withdrawal of all foreign troops." A couple of us looked strangely at each other and said, "What do you mean, the only foreign troops we know of that are there at this point are American troops." He says, "What about the Chinese." We said, "Well, not even the United States State Department is saying there are Chinese troops there." We got this, "But they are everywhere." So we knew we weren't going to get any support. We proceeded, in fact one of the things that happened as a consequence of the decision for SDS to be the sole sponsor as opposed to getting a whole list of organizations, and that it would not exclude communist in particular, but it would not exclude anybody was that the march was attacked that spring from what the old line pacifist, social democratic anti-war movement. They said that we would never get very many people there without their support. A friend of mine proceeded to order a train, and people thought that we were crazy, that we would never fill up a train. We filled two trains besides all the buses that went down. The week before the march they came out with a public

condemnation, a whole crew of people in the Socialist Party, a whole line of pacifist organizations made a public condemnation of the march. It didn't matter, at least for most of the students. One of the consequences of their attack was they aggregated their leadership to the antiwar movement at that point. They made themselves irrelevant to most of the student organizing. The second element was that prior to the march on Washington, outside of a large chapter at the University of Michigan that oh I'd say eighty to ninety percent of the members were in those elite private schools in the line between Washington and Boston. As part of the organizing around the '65 march, march committees sprung up all over the place, particularly in lots of state schools, land grant schools. Most of those turned into SDS chapters, so it incredibly broadened out the membership of the organization, both geographically and by class. It made ultimately a significant difference in the tenure and the activities of the organization. That was one of the reasons why we decided to move to Chicago to make the national office, at least by perception, more accessible to students around the country. Those was some of the immediate circumstances that came out of that. We had 25,000 people in Washington, that folks did not believe that we could ever mobilize. It was a tremendous march from the Washington Monument to the Capital Grounds, which folks for a minute of two thought people were just going to swarm into the capital building. It was quite a morale riser, and it made, at least on the initial level, it expanded our interest in the war and the American involvement. I guess the one other factor, and it is often lost, that had a significance beyond the initial impact, was in the early part of '65 the American invasion of the Dominican Republic. A leftist had been elected president, and it looked like it was going to be another Caribbean country falling into the Soviet sphere. There was this invasion, it came and went very quickly. There wasn't much to hit the papers, but for many students it became sort of another aspect of what was going on in terms of American foreign policy. That was followed fairly quickly, if I remember correctly, by the Gulf of Tonkin Resolutions, in which at least we speculated had all been a setup. It turned out that we in fact were correct when all of that was looked upon many years later. Actually the one other sort of interesting historical event, that in spite of this demonstration being one really pulled together by young people and students, and in spite of the attacks by the older generation of peace organizations, that one of the people that we did get to participate and speak at the march was Senator Ernest Greening. To those who were not there, to which it isn't often written in history books, it was when the chips were down, there were two Senate members, and only two who opposed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. One was Greening, who was from Alaska, and the other was Wayne Morris. So that is why we went out and tried to get him, and he agreed to come and speak. We did have a real live member of the United States Senate that appeared at our first effort at a national anti-war demonstration.

Interviewer: Afterwards you all moved to Chicago?

George: We moved to Chicago, I got indicted for draft refusal. In early '66 there was a decision to launch a full fledged anti-draft program. There were two people initially who were asked to run this effort, both of us because we were in the midst of some kind of legal altercation with the

selective services. One was me and there was another young man who in fact as a consequence of kneeling in front of a federal court house in Cincinnati his draft word was, "Split for Canada." So I ended up being the sole organizer of SDS's national anti-draft program. In the summer and early fall of '65 before this I had been SDS national secretary. So I went from that to doing anti-draft activities in '66.

Interviewer: Is that where you traveled from campus to campus?

George: yes, yes

Interviewer: Was the decisions you made to kind of remove you from where the legal problems were at?

George: Well no, most of it, well I did alot of traveling organizing around the march on Washington. It seemed appropriate for me as in fact a draft resistor if nothing else symbolically to be the one representing the organization in terms of the its anti-draft efforts. Subsequent to my arrest, I became alot more knowledgeable about the draft laws and was also able to provide advice to folks facing the draft. But I then did a tremendous amount of traveling. Typically I'd loading up into an old VW bug with a bunch of literature in fact a fair amount of grass and enough money to get to the first campus and I'd sell, collect memberships that would get me from campus to campus. Did alot of organizing in '66, particularly one of the things that came out of the effort what were campus draft resistant unions in which mostly young men banded together, signed statements, we won't go statements. So those statements and these organizational forms were adjacent to SDS chapters and were used then to launch a whole range of anti-war and anti-draft activities. Many of them would go down and protest in front of induction centers, hand out leaflets. At Roosevelt where I was at it was really that formation that ended up at one point with a series of demonstrations at the school. One of, actually the president of the Roosevelt board of trustees was the president of the company that created and administered the draft test. There was a period of time in which young men of draft age were required to take this test and it helped array them in the scheme of things with regard to the draft. This was I think before the lottery took place, so it provided a perfect target for that particular campus, but there were folks all over the country. The other was that it became a mechanism for engaging in a different political mindset than one other that was also springing up. One of the other organizational form particularly around the draft during '66 and '67 was the thing called the Resistance. One of the founder was David Harris who was at that point the student body president at Stanford. It was largely a pacifist approach that they advocated, young men turning in their draft cards and also engaged in some demonstrations and sit-ins at induction centers in which they would scream and shout at inductees. We thought that was on two grounds, I and the folks I was working with felt that was inappropriate and ultimately self-destructing politically. One was we had no interest in either urging or teaching people to turn themselves into the government. In that sense I didn't care how people were going to get out of the draft as long as we eliminated somebody from being shipped to Vietnam and used as cannon powder whether

they faked their physical or signed statements or whatever, it didn't matter for us. The other was that by screaming and shouting at inductees, baby killers and the like, it really boiled down to class and race differences. The guys able to get out of the war were guys who stayed in school, went to graduate school, became teachers like Phil Graham. It was poor and working class stiff who believed, correctly or incorrectly, that the only choice they had was to shuffle off to the Army. So we wanted to do something different. That different approach was what led in certainly '67 to look at urging people to close down induction centers. I went around the country talking to folks more and more about the idea of closing down induction centers. The initial, and in one sense the most successful effort, was out in the bay area. I had been in and out of there talking to folks and got them and a number of people to buy into the idea and then went out there in the fall to help them do the actual organizing work. What happened there was that people there did a tremendous amount of work organizing politically, but they had no idea what they were going to do when they got to the induction center. So I remained to become with what we called at the time the military organizer. We organized a whole week worth of demonstrations that we designed to close down the induction centers by essentially using 20,000 people in the street to block traffic. The last days of the demonstration the people got on the streets and pulled park benches and garbage cans out in the middle of the intersections and built barricades and the like. At least for that one day we officially closed the induction center. Ronald Reagan was the governor at the time and near the end of the day declared us an official riot and called out the National Guard. We went around then to tell the people we hadn't come to mix it with the local police, we hadn't come to fight the National Guard, it was time to go home. Afterwards, seven of us were indicted on conspiracy charges and faced trial out of what was called Stop the Draft Week. That took place in October of '67, and as it turns out was the week before the big Pentagon action where thousands and thousands of people were ultimately arrested. There were a number of attempts around the country after that, Kansas City for one, New York City to close down induction centers. The approach we took politically was that not only did we want to stop, not only were we telling people that they ought not to exceed to be drafted or enlist, but we were going to stop the machinery, at least symbolically.

Interviewer: Were you one of the seven that were indicted?

George: Yes, I was one of the what was called the Oakland Seven that in May of '68, actually in the spring of '68 I did a fair amount of traveling. I went south for the first time at the invitation of what was the white spin-off of SNICC called the Southern Student Organizing Committee. I was invited to come south to do organizing around the draft. In the course of which was Martin Luther King's assassination. So we became involved in a series of demonstrations at Duke University in Durham, in which about half of the students ended up sitting in a UNINTELLIGABLE and ultimately seized the administration building there for several days. Then on to the University of Georgia at Athens and became involved in a three day seizure of the administration building there over women's rights. Then up to New York City and became involved in the demonstration around the building of the gym site that led to the mass building

seizures in Columbia and several other places during a period of a couple of weeks. The U.S. Attorney in Chicago went into court in May of '65 and got the judge to revoke my bail, excuse me, the May of '68, so my bail was revoke. I had initially planned to go underground and leave the country, but I ran into court one time to many, and the judge said, "Take him away." That is when I started to do time was in May of '68.

Interviewee: There are I guess several trends, streams that come in and out with regard to the history of the anti-war movement. Noting at least in general one is that, is that, as part of the result of the kind of politics that we went that we began with. For example, there was a great deal of concern amongst SDS people fairly early in the anti-war efforts about the history of what happened in the aftermath of the defeat at Dien Bein Phu in France. Actually both that and the defeat of the Algerian war, that is, the creation of the secret arms organization and a right wing response on part of the ex-military people, and we wanted to try to avoid that. I mean it was conceptually so that there was efforts to stop the politics or stop the draft for the weak that was one to try to ally one's self with anti-war GI's ex-GI's so that even by early sixty-six there were some successful attempts to bring in returning GIs who one knew what was going on there and came back critical about the war and so that there was attempts to do that as supposed to keeping them at arm's length. It helped, I think, too spare on what were became larger and larger fairly militant anti-war organizations, like VVAW, Vietnam Vets Against the War, who had their own structure. I mean, so, we did our stuff and they did there's, and I think that was an important aspect in terms of seeing an impact of the war in general of the anti-war movement in particularly, so that, not only was there the concern about domestic tranquility that you see often on experts from Richard Nixon's White House tapes. One of the other aspects was to look at making the military more unreliable, and so that there was that piece to it that I think was very important both at the time and as time went by. The other was that there was is well totally, I'm really at a parallel track, anti-war and anti-draft work amongst particularly Catholic activist both lay people, Jesuits, Nuns, and alike. To play that important, although sometimes unsung role, many of them took a militant stand and one of the difficulties in looking at this stuff is that you don't find often the, from my point of view, the successes because these things that now folks are beginning to talk about. So for example, there was a big trial in Buffalo to which I participated after I got at of jail on the part of several people who were caught trying to break in the Selective Service System so that they can destroy service records. What is not in the general history is the fact there was a number of people who successfully broke into major selective service office on the south-side of Chicago totally destroyed the records. Consequently leaving to resulting in thousands of black kids from the south-side never having gotten' drafted because the records were destroyed. Well because it was a successful action you do not know about it. I mean it would have been you would have known about it if people was arrested and tried. So that there were those kinds of things all of which that helped mock up the machinery which was the purpose of all of that. And I will say that, I mean, as much as I thought it was silly at the time, you end up with you know the whole array. I mean we all know because of the Watergate tapes that those solitary pickets in front of the White House, which I thought at the time was totally useless activity, produced at least in Richard Nixon conniption fits. I mean and you know the results at which, I mean there was results in the context of the war. And I guess ultimately the element of this, which we sort of believed at the time, that the war was going to be won or lost on the battle field in Vietnam. What we had some power to do really was to hold down the

United States, provide distraction maybe long enough to provide a window of opportunity over there. I mean it's that kind of thing, I guess, one saw in terms of at least in contribution with regard to the character of the war itself. I mean if you want literary allusions, we were hobbits. I mean we weren't warriors. We did enough to provide the aid and comfort to those who did the actual fighting to make a difference. And I think, well certainly that part of the element that we saw and the lesson that at least I would draw of this that even though, I mean, if there are things important enough to do one does them. Regardless even if you are by yourself because you never know the ultimate consequence of those acts are, and whether there for kids sitting once in a lunch counter in Greensborough, North Carolina, or three people standing out in a picket line in front of the White House, or twenty-thousand people closing down the induction center. It was ultimately the combination and accumulative activity of all of us together that made the real difference for us in that context. I mean I think that is true today as it was then. I mean people have to get back out in the street and do those things that demand changes be made. It is you know one doing this and one doing that that in some collective sort of sense is what ultimately will make some difference.

Interviewer: Do you think there is a lack of political activism now that people stand up saying that this is right or wrong?

Interviewee: Well, I think there is a degree of greater activism now then there has been! I mean maybe out of being more optimistic than I should, but certainly amongst younger people there seems to be more of an attempt trying to find whether its voluntary array of other things. What there is really lacking is some focus. I mean one of the advantages of, certainly early on you didn't see that, was that there was a relatively simple national focus that in that sense is lacking. I mean there are things looking very complicated now. And so you know you end up with lots of people doing this and doing that and the like. The other is that which one of the sixty's is the character or the continuing character of identity politics has built circumstances in which there has been an inerrability to see lots of commonalties. There has been lots of things lots of activities carried on by SDS chapters and individuals. But there was a place, organizationally, where they can come and while we all did not do some of the same things we were in the same boat. And there was some general critique of the social order that they all fit whether it was the war or civil rights, student rights that fit into the general social order, and provided both strength and inability to cooperate that seems to be lacking.

Interviewer: Well, I guess were done.

Interviewee: Alright.