

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

THE DEATH OF THE *OAKLAND OBSERVER*:
A STUDENTS' HISTORY OF OAKLAND UNIVERSITY IN THE SIXTIES

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“The legacy of the Student Movement is this: that freedom is necessary for the development of the human being. That you cannot have a free society without a free University: and conversely, you cannot have a free university in an unfree society,” proclaimed, Mike Honey, the editor of the *Oakland Observer*, Oakland University’s official student newspaper in 1969.¹ In the sixties and still today, most students, faculty members and administration consider Oakland University to be a “liberal” and free university – an academic environment where freedom of speech prevailed, where students were to set sail to explore education in all forms in order to become better citizens.² And yet in the sixties, were students able to express themselves freely in their writings, such as writing for a student newspaper? No. Several times students, when writing for the *Oakland Observer*, were censored at OU in the sixties. Were students allowed to close their doors in the dorms in order to study, to have privacy from others if wanted, during the day? No, they were not allowed. Were *all* students really free to stay out all night long? No, female students had curfews.

The first student newspaper of OU, the *Observer* became devoted to the freedom of students and undoubtedly asked themselves these questions and many others. Sadly, the life of the *Observer* was short – only 10 years old when it died. Its last issue was published on December 12, 1969 coinciding with the end of the semester and it was quickly replaced by a new competitor student newspaper that just sprang up a few months beforehand. This essay aims to explain: Why did the *Oakland Observer* cease to exist? How did the *Observer* report student life in the sixties? Was the *Observer* ever censored? And if so, why was it censored? Most importantly, were students in general able to

¹ Mike Honey, editorial, *Oakland Observer*, February 28, 1969.

² Gary Russi, “Liberal Education: The Foundation,” *Oakland University Journal* no. 13 (Fall 2007): 9-11. The current president of Oakland University, Gary Russi, is the shining example when he discussed Oakland’s “liberal foundation” in the *Oakland University Journal* in fall 2007.

express themselves freely? I intend to trace the issues of Oakland students through the eyes of the *Observer* and chart the development and demise of the *Observer*. By answering these questions, another larger question arises: what role did student newspapers play in sixties activism and what difficulties did they face by attempting to change the status quo? This research should be considered as a case study in student journalism and its relationship with student activism in the sixties by looking at a new small, Midwestern state university in the sixties.

I argue that the *Observer's* increasingly radical content throughout the sixties created a rift amongst the student body; also, it enhanced tensions between the OU administration and the OU community, the parents of students and politicians, with the *Observer*; this in turn, jeopardized the existence of the *Observer* and unveiled the lack of freedoms for students at OU.³ The *Observer* criticized OU's corporate partners, OU Police, and many injustices and unfair policies that restricted students' freedom. These issues, the *Observer* staff concluded, were harmful for a truly educational and democratic existence. At the same time, the *Observer* pushed free speech to new limits and promoted controversial student expression. By attempting to connect the events of the university with those of the local community and elsewhere in the U.S. and the world (Vietnam, China, Cuba), the *Observer* began to feel the pressures from the powers that were – the publishing companies, the OU administration, and the government. The short life of the *Observer* had it all: politics, sex, drugs, traveling, obscenities, religion, nudity, trials, protests, war, education, and much more. The argument will start with a brief look

³ At this time, it is necessary to define "radical." Radical American historian, Howard Zinn, in *The Politics of History*, provides the best definition of what it means to be radical: "To be truly radical is to maintain a set of transcendental beliefs (yes, absolute) by which to judge and thus to transform any particular social system." In the case of the *Observer* student journalists, they sought to transform OU and the rest of society. For more on radical history and politics, see Howard Zinn, *The Politics of History*, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 35-55.

at the historiography of OU and then the background history of OU. Then, the unwritten history of OU will be presented by telling the life of the *Observer* and the OU students, faculty, and administration who were involved with it; and finally concluding with the death of the *Observer* and freedom of speech at an allegedly “liberal” university and in Louisville, Kentucky, too.

Nothing has been written on specifically the *Oakland Observer* – save from the *Observer* staff itself and its first major competitor, the staff of *Focus: Oakland*. In the last issue of the *Oakland Observer*, entitled “11 Years After” written by former editor Mike Hitchcock and fellow student journalist Phil Boykin wrote, “criticism of *The Observer* had been almost a regular weekly feature of the letters to the editor column from the beginning.”⁴ These criticisms included: “charges of inaccuracy, bias, and failure to cover campus events.”⁵ This article traced the history of the *Oakland Observer* all the way to its last issue, when the *Observer* staff declared their intention of becoming an “underground newspaper” for the metro Detroit area.⁶

However, there have been several works focused on the history of Oakland University. The former Director of Admissions of OU, Herbert Stoutenburg wrote a doctoral thesis, *Oakland University: Its First Four Years, An Historical Analysis of Its Development And Its Administrative Policies*, published in 1968. By examining OU’s first four years, Stoutenburg provided a model for establishing a new university. While his research involved analyzing students, significant problems for OU students did not develop or were not acknowledged until after the first four years. Then, during OU’s fortieth anniversary, three articles were published (regarding OU’s foundation in the

⁴ Mike Hitchcock and Phil Boykin, “11 Years After,” *Oakland Observer*, December 12, 1969.

⁵ Hitchcock and Boykin, “11 Years After,” *Oakland Observer*, December 12, 1969.

⁶ Hitchcock and Boykin, “11 Years After,” *Oakland Observer*, December 12, 1969.

Oakland University Magazine): Cindy Hampel's "The Way We Were," recalling the days of Oakland's charter class; Gary Graff's "Old Oaks Remember," telling the tales of Oakland's pioneering professors; and Todd Haight's and Jim TerMarsch's "The Man Called Woody," painting a rosy picture of Oakland's first chancellor, Durward B. "Woody" Varner.⁷ Recently in the fall 2007 edition of the *Oakland Journal*, the fiftieth anniversary of OU was celebrated with articles submitted by the current administration, current and former professors, and former students. History professor Karen A.J. Miller submitted an article, "The Construction of the Oakland Way," which argued that OU was transformed from an "idiosyncratic place of higher education to a typical second tier public institution" due to budget problems, changing student interests, many difficulties naturally accompanied with a growing institution, and the departure of Varner: managing still to retain traces of its founding vision today.⁸ Nothing since has been written about the *Oakland Observer*. Moreover, there was not much written about student life in the sixties and the struggles and campaigns students fought to improve their lives and educations. Years later after the incident in the fiftieth anniversary edition of the *Oakland Journal*, professor Brian Murphy commented on a student-led demonstration "in support" of Chancellor Varner because students "liked him" and did not "want him to leave." Murphy added, "what a far cry from those Columbia University students (in 1968) who bounced (President of Columbia) Grayson Kirk from his presidential office!"⁹

Since not much has been written about the *Observer*, this fact illustrates how the histories of students and their struggles have been thus far best served as footnotes. The

⁷ Cindy Hampel, "The Way We Were," *Oakland University Magazine*, Fall 1999, 6-14; Gary Graff, "Old Oaks Remember," *Oakland University Magazine*, Fall 1999, 15-26; Todd Haight and Jim TerMarsch, "The Man Called Woody," *Oakland University Magazine*, Fall 1999, 26-33.

⁸ Karen A.J. Miller, "The Construction of the Oakland Way," *Oakland University Journal* no. 13 (Fall 2007): 83.

⁹ Brian Murphy, "Born and Born Again: 1969 and Its Discords," *Oakland University Journal* no. 13 (Fall 2007): 110.

epitome of this untold or unknown history is illuminated by the OU Timeline on its website. The tagline of this timeline is: “Take a look at Oakland’s most significant events throughout the years.”¹⁰ The timeline includes many events: the contributions of the founding philanthropists and their successors, the construction of key buildings on campus, the changes in the OU administration over the years, recent athletic milestones, how a small on-campus pond called “Beer Lake” got its name (when a student chucked a beer can into the “lake”), and even the “protest at Wilson Hall to keep Woody Varner, OU's first chancellor, from leaving to assume the presidency at Michigan State University.”¹¹ While a case can be made for the significance of each of these events, there is no mention of OU’s first peace demonstration and subsequent student peace movement, the administration’s censorships of the *Observer*, OU’s first anti-Vietnam War teach-in, the different campus newspapers, and most importantly for this paper – the death of the *Observer*. The official history of the university has revolved around the achievements of the administration of OU, not the students, especially the ones who anguished while trying to speak freely in a supposedly free university. A students’ history might be shameful to the OU administration. Nevertheless, this is a history that needs to be written.

In Michigan and throughout the U.S. in the fifties and the sixties, there was a greater need for expanding higher education. In Stoutenburg’s doctoral thesis, *Oakland University: Its First Four Years, An Historical Analysis of Its Development and Its Administrative Policies*, he attributed two major reasons for the demand of a new university:

¹⁰ Oakland University, “Oakland University Timeline” under “Oakland University History,” <http://www3.oakland.edu/oakland/aboutou/history.htm> {accessed March 2, 2008}.

¹¹ Oakland University, “Oakland University Timeline” under “Oakland University History,” <http://www3.oakland.edu/oakland/aboutou/history.htm> {accessed March 2, 2008}.

The first was the increase in birth rate immediately following World War II. The children born during this period were now reaching college age, and the first year to feel this bulge would be 1964 followed by a crushing enrollment in 1965. The second was a trend established during recent decades of a higher percentage of students in each high school's graduating class going on to college. This trend was the result of the mobility of our nation, the continued high level of our national economy, and the rapid advancement in technology since the turn of the century.¹²

For these reasons, the President of Michigan State University, John Hannah “had been warning the State of Michigan and the nation that higher education should prepare for the bulging enrollment ahead.”¹³ Miller added that “a strange mélange of boosterism and spite” led to the creation of OU because of the rivalries of University of Michigan and Michigan State University presidents thirst for expansion.¹⁴ All things considered, the conditions were fertile for a new university in Michigan.

Oakland University went through many growth pangs in its early history. In 1957, it was established as a charter school affiliated with Michigan State University. Alfred Wilson and Matilda Dodge Wilson donated \$2 million and their 1,500 acre estate to MSU after the Chairman of the Oakland County Planning Commission, J. Robert F. Swanson, identified their estate as the prime location for the new university.¹⁵ Originally, OU was first known as Michigan State University – Oakland. The name change did not occur till 1963.¹⁶ By 1970, OU was granted autonomy from the Michigan legislature recognizing its maturity and stature as a university.¹⁷

¹² Herbert N. Stoutenburg Jr., “Oakland University: Its First Four Years” [PhD diss, Michigan State University, 1968], 13-14.

¹³ Stoutenburg, 13.

¹⁴ Miller, “The Construction of the Oakland Way,” *Oakland University Journal*, no. 13 (Fall 2007), 72.

¹⁵ Stoutenburg, 10-12.

¹⁶ For the sake of simplicity and clarity, Michigan State University – Oakland will be referred to its eventual name, Oakland University (OU), throughout most of the paper.

¹⁷ Oakland University, “Oakland University Timeline” under “Oakland University History,” <http://www3.oakland.edu/oakland/aboutou/history.htm> {accessed March 2, 2008}.

The growth of Oakland continued to gradually increase, which undoubtedly created many problems for students, faculty, and the administration. When OU opened in 1959, there were 570 students registered. By 1965, the student body increased to 2,458. When the *Observer* died, there were approximately 6,000 students at OU.¹⁸ In order to keep pace with the growing student populace, Varner had to appeal to businesses and the state for more funds. At first, OU was a university consisting of only three buildings: North Foundation, South Foundation, and the Oakland Center – also known as the OC. On a yearly basis in the sixties, new buildings were cropping up and new additions were being built to suit the needs of the growing university.¹⁹

There was high hope for OU to be a beacon of education, from students to staff. Beverly Donato Miller was one of the 570 students who attended the opening convocation on September 17, 1959. According to the *Oakland University Magazine's* forty year anniversary edition, she was “excited and nervous” to be attending what “some” had billed as the “The Harvard of the Midwest.”²⁰ In one of OU’s founding documents, “The Matilda Wilson College of Michigan State University,” written most likely by MSU Academic Vice President Thomas Hamilton, the university sought to educate students to become

masters of the highly complex and intricate skills and knowledge necessary in our society without sacrificing the ideal of producing graduates who have been educated in the liberal and fine arts so that they may be whole men – competent in their professions, good citizens for a free society and happy in their own persons.²¹

¹⁸ Report, “Debt Service Retirement Schedule from Student Fee Allocation,” Box 7, Folder “Fee Allocation,” Durward B. Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

¹⁹ For more information on the architectural history of OU, see John B. Cameron, “The Campus Architecture of Oakland University,” *Oakland University Journal*, no. 13 (Fall 2007), 40-69.

²⁰ Hampel, “The Way We Were,” 8. The original billing of Oakland as the “Harvard of the Midwest” still remains a mystery.

²¹ Memorandum to D.B. Varner and J.H. Denison, “The Matilda Wilson College of Michigan State University” in *Oakland University Chronicles*, (Rochester, Michigan: Oakland University, 1998), 1-9. Notice the term used “men,” might suggest different expectations for women's education in the fifties.

The courses that were to be included: “Arts, Economics, History, Political Science, Psychology, English, including both composition and literature, Philosophy, and Foreign languages.” Most importantly, this founding document hinted at the freedoms given to the new faculty: “The faculty will be encouraged to explore new arrangements for improving the learning process.” In order to improve the “teacher-student relationship,” the faculty was expected to exercise “less reliance on the formal lecture and more on small group discussions and personal consultation.”²²

Despite the excellent marketing slogan of being called “The Harvard of the Midwest,” the charter school still had to succeed. As the first chancellor of OU, Varner commented, “Student recruiting was an interesting exercise. There was a lot of interest but also some misgivings. They weren’t quite sure that it would fly. They could see it and they could feel it, they could hear us talk about it. But whether the motor would crank up and get airborne was something else.”²³ However, OU had some promising attributes that did pique prospective students’ interests. For some, OU was more affordable than other universities. The idea of a new university undoubtedly did attract some students. Looking back forty years later in 1999, Hampel argued that “one of the prime reasons” why OU proved to attract students was “its focus on a classical liberal arts curriculum.”²⁴

²² Memorandum to Varner and Denison, “The Matilda Wilson College of Michigan State University” in *Oakland University Chronicles*, (Rochester, Michigan: Oakland University, 1998), 1-9. The *Chronicles* staff was convinced that Hamilton was the author of the document based upon: “the office from which the memorandum originated and the nature of its content; what is known about Hamilton’s educational philosophy and his responsibility for MSUO curriculum planning; and the document’s particular location in the archived papers of Oakland University Chancellor D.B. Varner.” In addition, the university was not going to offer a ROTC.

²³ Durward B. “Woody” Varner, interview by Paul Tombouljian, December 2, 1996, in *Oakland University Chronicles*, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

²⁴ Hampel, “The Way We Were,” 9.

Many students were not prepared, however, for the difficult curriculum. One former OU student, Ronald Miller “remembers reading three or four books a week.”²⁵ His friend at the time and future wife, Beverly Donato Miller recalled that two-thirds of her fellow students failed economics.²⁶ According to another OU student, Evelyn Adams Gehres, “The first year, the failure rate was so high that the university made a new policy: If you took a class over, the first grade was wiped out.”²⁷ In addition, OU started with 25 professors with an average age of 33. Even though they were the “youngest (professors) of any college in America,” noted Hampel, twenty three of them had earned doctoral degrees. These young professors were on a mission, which was, according to OU student Edward Gehres to create students who were “capable of being critics.”²⁸ When William H. Schwab, charter professor of Linguistics and English, commented to a friend about OU being “The Harvard of the Midwest,” his friend replied, “Bill, remember, this may be a new institution, it may be an institution with a superb faculty, but the students are going to be Michigan students. They are not going to be students who would normally go to the University of Michigan or Michigan State, or even to any of the regional colleges.”²⁹ Regardless of what the professors and students expected, OU was a challenge for all.

In the midst of the first tumultuous semester, OU students created a student newspaper: the *Oakland Observer*. The *Observer* published its first edition on October, 23, 1959. If OU was going to be a unique university, attempting to produce students to be “capable of being critics,” then the student newspaper should have been insightful – observing the educational environment around them and the world they were being taught

²⁵ Ronald Miller quoted in Hampel, “The Way We Were,” 9.

²⁶ Hampel, “The Way We Were,” 9.

²⁷ Evelyn Adams Gehres quoted in Hampel, “The Way We Were,” 9.

²⁸ Hampel, “The Way We Were,” 9.

²⁹ William H. Schwab quoted in Graff, “Old Oaks Remember,” 25.

to confront and criticize. The *Observer* staff, from the onset, did not know if the next issue they published would be their last. They had to promote their “extra-curricular” activity because the student newspaper was organized solely by students, for students. The first staff of the *Observer* confessed, “trying to publish a weekly newspaper is a difficult job when we don’t have sufficient help.”³⁰

The first issue was published on October 23, 1959; it had eight pages and was nameless. The name was to be determined by students. The student staff provided eight choices: Five Point Star, Oak Leaves, MSU-O News, MSU-O Comment, The Word, Egg Head, The Outlook, and The Oaklander. Without an explanation, the *Oakland Observer* became the choice. The *Observer*, at first, was an independent newspaper charging its readers five cents each. It was also funded by many local advertisements.³¹

For the *Observer* staff, the first few years were an attempt to find support from their main audience – fellow students. For the rest of the university students, they established many traditions to be passed on to future students while enjoying the campus life and obtaining their education, so naturally the *Observer* reported on these events. The *Observer*, additionally, reported on the formation of the Young Republicans and Young Democrats on campus.³² By the third issue of the *Observer*, the *Observer* staff complained about the “immaturity” of a small band of students who behaved incorrectly at OU’s first Halloween Dance – its theme, the “Beatnik Ball.”³³ Articles on fashion, surveys on beards, updates on the plan for a new student government, and even details of OU’s first foreign student, Aydin Ilgaz, a 19-year-old male student from Istanbul,

³⁰ *Oakland Observer*, November 13, 1959.

³¹ *Oakland Observer*, October 23, 1959.

³² *Oakland Observer*, November 13, 1959.

³³ Editorial, *Oakland Observer*, November 13, 1959.

Turkey, filled the first year's issues of the *Observer*.³⁴ Loren Pope, the Assistant to the Chancellor and the Director of University Relations, wrote in the *Observer* urging students to become critics because “the purpose of this institution is to try to develop mature, disciplined seekers of truth.”³⁵

The first signs of student activism began popping up, which the *Observer* naturally became the appropriate channel for such news. The *Observer* reported on OU's first peace march. On April 29, 1962, fifteen students and one faculty member, associate professor Dr. Robert Wisner, marched from the Pontiac Courthouse at 12:30 p.m. all the way to Birmingham – a ten mile journey. The marchers carried signs promoting peace on wooden sticks. Miss Shelagh O'Rourke, leader of the marchers and a junior at OU from Pontiac, explained that the purpose of the peace march was not to be “just a ban the (nuclear) bomb demonstration, but an effort to create world opinion. If world opinion gets strong enough both sides will be forced to stop.”³⁶ They joined representatives from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the pacifist organization, Fellowship of Reconciliation, for a total of twenty-five marchers. The Birmingham Police claimed to have been misquoted, according to the *Observer*, in news broadcasts “as promising to put the marchers in jail if they entered the city limits without a parade permit.”³⁷ The peace march went through without any major incidents and more marches were being planned afterwards.³⁸ Some students, at least, were beginning to realize that their voices could matter in world affairs.

³⁴ *Oakland Observer*, September 5, 1962.

³⁵ Loren Pope, letter to the editor, *Oakland Observer*, November 13, 1959.

³⁶ *Oakland Observer*, May 4, 1962.

³⁷ *Oakland Observer*, May 4, 1962.

³⁸ *Oakland Observer*, May 4, 1962

The first test of freedom at OU was from assistant Professor Samuel Shapiro, however. Shapiro was hired to teach and profess American history. Before OU, he taught at Brandeis University for two years and then more than a year at Tucuman University in Argentina. Shapiro's exposure to South America unveiled the poverty, disease, and privation of the masses. Consequently, Shapiro concluded that the continent was ripe for the expansion of communism unless Americans decided to take action and solve these problems. When Fidel Castro became the Prime Minister of Cuba in 1959 after an armed revolution against dictator Fulgencio Batista, Shapiro spent a few months in Cuba witnessing a new government finally addressing the plight of a poor people. After working at OU for a semester, Shapiro returned to Cuba again with approximately 300 Americans on a ten-day tour. Based on his experience and observations, Shapiro began publicly speaking about U.S.-Latin America relations and publishing articles steadily in such magazines and journals as the *New Republic*, *The Nation*, *The Economist* (London), *New Politics*, *American Heritage*, and the *Journal of Inter-American Affairs*.³⁹ However, his articles did not receive nearly as much sensational attention from the media as did his off-campus lectures and speeches. The *Wisconsin State Journal* quoted Shapiro during a speech declaring "of course the Cuban government is totalitarian. Of course it's a dictatorship! But I like it!"⁴⁰ Shapiro's pro-Castro support only went as far as supporting the improvements over the Batista regime. Shapiro supported Castro's housing developments, new schools, new hospitals, and working programs. But Shapiro expressed some discomfort over the elimination of the freedom of the press and the deterioration of the Cuban middle and upper classes lifestyles. Instead of supporting Castro wholeheartedly, Shapiro argued that, "the people of Latin America must be shown

³⁹ *Oakland Observer*, November 30, 1962.

⁴⁰ Brenda Warner Rotzell, *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 13, 1961.

that they can make progress without a Castro type revolution and without aligning themselves with the Soviet nations.”⁴¹

Shapiro’s support for Castro was nominal and definitely unconventional, but anti-communists suspected much more. Newscaster Don Potter from TV station WJIM in Lansing stated in a January 6, 1961 broadcast, that “we do not think that a state-supported institution should be a refuge for Communists or Fellow Travelers... hiding behind phrases like ‘academic freedom.’”⁴² While Shapiro immediately filed a lawsuit against the TV station and the newscaster for slander – the damage had already been done in Cold War America. Varner began receiving letters from concerned citizens and parents about a communist teaching at OU. For instance, Ernest McCord inquired about Shapiro’s statements about Cuba.⁴³ Within a week, Shapiro sent Varner a copy of his latest article “Selling Oil and Influencing People” in *Problems of Communism* (Jan.-Feb. 1961), with a note attached saying, “I have now put myself plainly on record as anti-Communist – in an official U.S. government magazine, too!”⁴⁴ This note of assurance and Shapiro’s academic writings allowed Varner to easily refute accusations of Shapiro being a communist. While Varner was able to defend Shapiro, self-proclaimed communists lost their rights to speak on MSU and OU campuses when a resolution was passed in April 1962 by the MSU Board of Trustees.⁴⁵ Then, when it was time to renew Shapiro's contract in November 1962, the MSU Board of Trustees decided to let his contract expire in August 1963.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Bill Burke, *Michigan State Journal*, January 15, 1961.

⁴² *Oakland Observer*, January 28, 1963.

⁴³ Letter from Varner to McCord, January 31, 1961, Box 18, Folder “Shapiro 1960-61,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁴⁴ Letter from Shapiro to Varner, Box 18, Folder “Shapiro 1960-61,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁴⁵ *Oakland Observer*, April 1, 1962.

⁴⁶ *Oakland Observer*, November 30, 1962.

When Shapiro learned of his rejection of contract renewal, he began asking university officials why he was being dismissed. His investigation pointed to one of his first informal faculty meetings when he delivered a speech on October 25, 1960. In front of his colleagues he called a former American ambassador to a Latin American nation “a fat slob,” alleged that U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America was “idiotic,” and that he thought President Eisenhower’s shipments of arms to the Batista dictatorship made him “an accomplice of murderers.”⁴⁷ According to Varner, the decision was based on “tenure” with many other factors contributing to the decision.⁴⁸ Other university officials claimed that Shapiro was not meeting academic standards.⁴⁹ In the *New York Times*, OU Associate Dean George Matthews was quoted saying that Shapiro’s reappointment “would have had a better chance” if he had not talked so much about Cuba and Latin American affairs.⁵⁰

Despite his controversial perspective and actions, Shapiro was well-liked among students and well-respected by many. Evelyn Adams Gehres considered him to be an “incredible history teacher.”⁵¹ The *Observer* hailed his new book, *A Biography of Richard Henry Dana, Jr.*, in February 1961.⁵² Once the *Observer* reported the dismissal of Shapiro, the University of Michigan Student Government Council “strongly condemned” OU’s action because his views on Latin America and Cuba evidently played a role in the decision and therefore represented a violation of academic freedom.⁵³ Then,

⁴⁷ Memorandum by Shapiro to Varner, December 20, 1962, Box 18, Folder “Shapiro 1962,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁴⁸ Letter from Varner to James Wright, January 10, 1963, Box 18, Folder “Shapiro 1963,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁴⁹ *I.F. Stone’s Weekly*, December 17, 1962. This is a Washington D.C. newspaper.

⁵⁰ Damon Stetson, *New York Times*, February 13, 1963.

⁵¹ Gehres, quoted in “The Way We Were,” 12.

⁵² *Oakland Observer*, February 17, 1961.

⁵³ Resolution by University of Michigan Student Government Council, December 12, 1962, Box 18, Folder “Shapiro 1962,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

approximately twenty students and Michigan socialists picketed the university's decision in front of the OC for two days in December 1962. One of the protestors, Gehres, claimed that even "the FBI came out to take our pictures."⁵⁴ Near the time of his dismissal, Shapiro announced the publication of his second book, *Invisible Latin America*, making him one of the most published professors in OU's short history. Shapiro's mailing list of publications impressively reached Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Special Assistant to JFK, and Congressman William Broomfield.⁵⁵ None of this apparently factored into the decision for Shapiro's reappointment, but instead a society scared of Communists and any academic discussion with people sympathetic to them prevailed. OU lost one of its best professors in its first five years as a new university. An atmosphere of academic freedom seemed to be non-existent for critical professors.⁵⁶

Around this same time, more OU students began to investigate their own lives, which in many ways started with the arrival of a new foreign student. In March 1962, the *Observer* proudly announced that a young Austrian, Wolf Metzger, who had originated and almost single-handedly published one of the first high school newspapers in Austria called *Perspective*, would be coming to OU with the intent of joining the *Observer* staff with the hopes of one day becoming a journalist.⁵⁷ Metzger learned of OU and the *Observer* from a naturalized U.S. citizen from Austria, Elfi Werzer, who was friends with the Metzger family before she emigrated. Metzger was the son of government minister and was a student with an "impressive academic record," according to the *Observer*.

⁵⁴ Gehres, quoted in "The Way We Were," 13.

⁵⁵ Letter from Schlesinger to Shapiro, June 12, 1961 Box 18, Folder "Shapiro 1963," Varner Papers, Oakland University Kresge Library Archives, Rochester, Michigan; letter from Broomfield to Shapiro, May 31, 1961, Box 18, Folder "Shapiro 1963," Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. Both Schlesinger and Broomfield appreciated his advice and asked him to continue advising them.

⁵⁶ Paul Turk, *Oakland Observer*, June 28, 1963. By the summer of 1963, Shapiro was appointed area studies coordinator for Notre Dame University's Peace Corps unit.

⁵⁷ Susan Bierstein, *Oakland Observer*, March 16, 1962.

Ironically, he was the one to make the *Observer* famous by testing freedom of the press at OU when he became editor later in April 1964 after a year and a half serving as a reporter and managing editor.

Metzger joined the *Observer* staff in September 1962, when the *Observer*'s future was being examined per Varner. Varner established a special faculty-student committee to address his growing concerns about the *Observer*.⁵⁸ In August 1962, the *Observer* had a small inexperienced staff. Varner wanted the student newspaper to “be more closely integrated into the on-going life of the University in its entirety.” In addition, the student newspaper needed more staff and student cooperation in order to aid in the development of the *Observer* to a “truly first-class and representative newspaper.” Another issue Varner was concerned about was the *Observer*'s \$2,719 debt.⁵⁹ All these improvements were meant to create a financially self-sufficient student newspaper. However, Varner also inquired about the necessity for a “representative student-faculty editorial board.”⁶⁰ While Varner does not elaborate on the editorial board exact duties, in all likelihood the editorial board could censor the student newspaper if it were created.

The ad hoc committee reported that the student newspaper should be allowed to develop naturally – even if it were to be a slow development. Norman Prady, one of the faculty members of the committee, argued that the *Observer*'s faults were to be expected because of the entire university's “newness.” Prady even suggested that complete autonomy for the *Observer* staff was preferable because it would be “unrealistic if we

⁵⁸ Memorandum by Varner, August 23, 1962, Box 15, Folder “*Oakland Observer* 1962-66,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. The committee was formed with a few professors and several of the *Observer* staff. Professor of psychology, Donald Hildum, was the chairman.

⁵⁹ Report on *Observer* Finances, July 1962, Box 15, Folder “*Oakland Observer* 1962-66,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. Debt was predicted to grow to \$6,569 by fall 1963.

⁶⁰ Memorandum by Varner, August 23, 1962, Box 15, Folder “*Oakland Observer* 1962-66,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

tried to paint a picture of rosiness all the time.” He further insisted that the student newspaper needed an “intellectual climate where questions may be asked, where truth may be sought.”⁶¹ Overall, the committee rejected any sort of joint student faculty editorial board, stating “faculty participation in setting newspaper policies before the fact would be an invasion of student prerogative in this matter and would destroy one of the important values of the newspaper as an independent student voice.”⁶² With regards to the financial difficulties of the *Observer*, the committee could not find an immediate solution because most factoring conditions were outside the committee’s sphere of action.⁶³ One lasting outcome of the ad hoc committee was that student fees started funding the *Observer* by paying student staff members a small salary and supporting production costs instead of relying solely on advertisements.

In an unpublished (ca. 1962) “*Oakland Observer* Reader Survey,” 1000 questionnaires were distributed and 191 were returned.⁶⁴ There was overwhelmingly support (92%) for the continual publication of the *Observer* on campus. However, only 28% thought the *Observer* provided adequate news coverage of campus news. Most students preferred reading the editorials (97%), and a majority of students read the national and international news coverage of the *Observer* (63%).⁶⁵ It was evident that the

⁶¹ Memorandum by Prady to Varner, August 17, 1962, Box 15, Folder “*Oakland Observer* 1962-66,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁶² Hildrum, “Report to the Chancellor on the Deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee on the *Oakland Observer*,” October 5, 1962, Box 15, Folder “*Oakland Observer* 1962-66,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁶³ Hildrum, “Report to the Chancellor on the Deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee on the *Oakland Observer*,” October 5, 1962, Box 15, Folder “*Oakland Observer* 1962-66,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁶⁴ “*Oakland Observer* Reader Survey,” Box 15, Folder “*Oakland Observer* 1962-66,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. There is no date for the survey, but judging from the number of people polled and considering the issues investigated by the ad hoc committee, it is likely that it was during the ad hoc committee’s existence.

⁶⁵ “*Oakland Observer* Reader Survey,” Box 15, Folder “*Oakland Observer* 1962-66,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

Observer needed to improve its news coverage of campus news, but for the most part the *Observer* was a satisfactory student newspaper.

In tune with the demands of the students, one of Metzger's first articles was coverage on the extended hours for female students in the fall of 1963. Before Metzger's story is unfolded, it is important to understand the condition of students' lives in the sixties at OU. According to the MSUO Student Housing application for the fall 1961 semester, students had to live on campus, or commute from their parents or guardians residence, or live in a "list of approved off-campus housing." If a residence was not on the "list," then the students had to "vacate said rooms and move into approved housing two weeks after notification by the university."⁶⁶ Any residence that had an "existence of conditions which are not conducive to good study, sound health and wholesome morals will be considered justification for denial or removal of university approval." These rules included open inspections by university officials, no co-ed rooming – men and women were not allowed to enter each others rooms, and students were to conduct themselves like a "lady or gentleman."⁶⁷ Moreover, female students had curfews, requiring them to be in their residence halls by 10:30 p.m. on week nights, 1:00 a.m. on Friday nights, and 1:30 a.m. on Saturday nights.⁶⁸ Most, if not all, of these rules and regulations were still applicable to OU students in 1963 when Metzger wrote an article about female students new curfews were now at midnight during the week and 2:00 a.m. on weekends.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Roy J. Alexander, "MSUO Student Housing," Fall 1961, Box 13, Folder "MSU – Campus Planning and Maintenance," Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁶⁷ Alexander, "MSUO Student Housing," Fall 1961, Box 13, Folder "MSU – Campus Planning and Maintenance," Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁶⁸ *Oakland Observer*, March 23, 1962.

⁶⁹ Metzger, *Oakland Observer*, September 13, 1963.

Not only were students' lives dictated with regards to their residency, but Metzger's first act as editor of the *Observer* illuminated that students were not allowed to have sex and even if they did, never to talk about it. Metzger's next act as the *Observer* editor was to conduct a survey of the sexual activities of OU's students in the dorms. The results and the intended publication of the sex survey in the *Observer* created a controversy that quickly spun out of control. The survey was conducted by Metzger, another staff member of the *Observer*, and three volunteer students acting as *Observer* representatives.⁷⁰ The *Observer* claimed the survey "tried to explore sexual activities of dorm students before and after moving into the dorms. One section asked students to indicate the location (on or off campus) of their sexual activities, if they had any."⁷¹

According to Metzger, the controversy began when Varner met with him "to discuss the possible effects of the results of the *Observer* survey." Varner ordered Metzger not to publish the results and he questioned "the *Observer*'s right and qualification to conduct a survey of that nature;" moreover, Varner warned, the "still unknown results would automatically damage the reputation of every girl living in the dorms."⁷² Metzger defended his survey, arguing that "eighty percent of all students polled filled out the questionnaires completely, and my personal impression, by distributing and collecting the questionnaires in Fitzgerald House was that most students were quite serious about the survey. Other reports indicated the same." Metzger then asked theoretically what would happen if the *Observer* defied Varner's order. Varner's response indicated that Metzger would be suspended from the university.

⁷⁰ Flyer by Metzger, "Open Letter," Box 31 "Student Life, Government," Folder 17 "Flyers," Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁷¹ Flyer by Metzger, "Open Letter," Box 31 "Student Life, Government," Folder 17 "Flyers," Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁷² Flyer by Metzger, "Open Letter," Box 31 "Student Life, Government," Folder 17 "Flyers," Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

Like a good reporter should, Metzger indeed dropped the sex survey story and decided to report on something else: censorship. Varner's "threat" became the lead story of the May Day 1964 issue of the *Observer*. The *Observer* staff argued that "in the past five years, the *Observer* has continuously been in financial difficulties, (even) received support from the administration, and, physically, always operated under severe limitations. But never has its editorial freedom, so much in line with avowed objectives of the University, been questioned by an angry administrator's or (any) outraged students." The *Observer* suggested that Varner's censorship was an "end of a tradition" and illuminated a university in crisis, which reflected his "desire to keep OU kids better informed about standards at Harvard and Radcliffe than about Oakland."⁷³ After the issue went to press, Varner learned about the story and concluded that the "spirit" of the sex survey still existed. The *Observer* reported that Varner's reasoning was that "the prohibited story's content would only serve to whet the appetites and curiosity of readers, and would be just as inflammatory as more specific news of the survey results."⁷⁴

While the paper was still at the printing shop on Friday, May 1, 1964, Varner tried for three hours to convince Metzger not to distribute the papers. Earlier that day, Varner had met with several members of the Faculty Senate Publications Committee and they all decided that the distribution of this issue "would be unfortunate." Therefore, Varner attempted to shut down the press. He met with the chief legal counsel for the MSU Board of Trustees, Leland W. Carr Jr., who advised him also not to allow the distribution of the newspapers because the university might become enmeshed with students and parents offended by implications of the survey. Shortly thereafter, Varner ordered all

⁷³ Flyer by Metzger, "Open Letter," Box 31 "Student Life, Government," Folder 17 "Flyers," Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁷⁴ Howard A. Coffin, "Varner Fires Metzger Over Sex Survey Dispute: Censorship Charge Issued by Metzger," *Oakland Observer*, May 14, 1964.

copies of the May 1, 1964 edition to be destroyed.⁷⁵ On Monday, May 4, 1964, Metzger found out that he was suspended from his editorship of the *Observer* and was ineligible to participate in any other campus publications.⁷⁶ Close friends of Metzger indicated that he would nevertheless continue to stay at OU and complete his degree requirements.⁷⁷

The Metzger mess was not finished, however, because by Monday night “all of the local news media, as well as by the Associated Press and the United Press International wire services” started reporting on the sensational story.⁷⁸ The story presented by the outside media, according to the *Observer*, overwhelmingly sided with the OU administration. Many students and faculty questioned the merit and the validity of the survey. Ann Schultes, a junior student who lived in the dorms, claimed that “just about everyone gave fictitious answers,” and that she knew of “only two or three kids who filled it out honestly.”⁷⁹ Several professors then expressed their opinion that Varner had made the correct decision. One such view was from Assistant professor of psychology and former chairman of the ad hoc committee, Dr. Donald Hildrum, who argued that “there’s bound to be a bias” because getting survey results in this way – through anything but face-to-face interviews – gives you fuzzy results, at best.” Hildrum cited the American Psychological Association’s study of the Kinsey Report as support to his criticism of the survey. Furthermore, any percentage higher than zero would have

⁷⁵ Flyer by Metzger, “Open Letter,” Box 31 “Student Life, Government,” Folder 17 “Flyers,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. On the second page of the flyer is the original text of the May 1, 1964 Oakland Observer that was banned and destroyed.

⁷⁶ Letter from Varner to Metzger, May 4, 1964, Box 15, Folder “Oakland Observer 1962-66,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. Varner sent Metzger this message: “In view of the events of the past few days, I have become convinced that the best interests of the students of Oakland University and the institution itself will be served if another person serves as editor of the *Oakland Observer*. Effective today, you are relieved of any association with the *Oakland Observer*, and you are not to be a part of any publication on this campus while you are a student here.”

⁷⁷ Coffin, “Varner Fires Metzger” *Oakland Observer*, May 14, 1964.

⁷⁸ Coffin, “Varner Fires Metzger” *Oakland Observer*, May 14, 1964.

⁷⁹ Coffin, “Varner Fires Metzger” *Oakland Observer*, May 14, 1964.

caused anxiety for parents, speculated Hildrum.⁸⁰ On Tuesday, May 5, 1964, approximately 75 students nevertheless organized a protest supporting Metzger's position, which was the day that Metzger released his "open letter" to students and faculty, which contained his version of events and the editorials of the destroyed May 1, 1964 edition. They called for his reinstatement as editor of the *Observer*. An UPI reporter, Harold Maertz, commented on his mixed feelings because he felt that Varner "was right in not allowing the survey to be published, (but) he should have let Metzger publish the news story" on May 1, 1964.

The Metzger sex survey incident had serious consequences for the *Observer*. Most importantly it revealed Varner's and other OU administrators' distrust and distaste for free student expression. Not only did Varner feel this way, but the *Observer*, in its destroyed May 1, 1964 issue, reported that "Varner repeated comments by persons outside the University that the *Observer* is the most destructive element in the development and progress of the University."⁸¹ Consequently, Varner created another ad hoc committee of four students and four faculty members to review the structure and policies of the paper. While Varner insisted that the committee would not regularly review the content of the *Observer* prior to publication nor supervise it, this new committee represented oversight that should not exist in any "free" newspaper. The entire Metzger sex survey incident illuminated that students did not have a free voice in their affairs. When one student tried to express it as Metzger did, it was easily repressed. Three student members of the *Observer* Tom Soldan, David Liggett, and Hannelore von

⁸⁰ Coffin, "Varner Fires Metzger" *Oakland Observer*, May 14, 1964.

⁸¹ Flyer by Metzger, "Open Letter," Box 31 "Student Life, Government," Folder 17, "Flyers," Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

Zittwitz all resigned from the *Observer* due to the censorship, the firing of Metzger, and the new ad hoc committee.⁸²

During the whole controversy, no one seemed interested in why Metzger thought the sex survey was important to campus affairs. Metzger was replaced by Bill Connellan and Daniel Polsby, who ran the *Observer* without any controversies at first until they both resigned because Metzger's abrupt departure left many vacancies and lingering problems concerning freedom of the press. Once the furor over sex and censorship died down, the problems of sex on OU's campus still existed. While Metzger did not publicly state his exact reason for surveying sexual activity at OU, Polsby noticed that a good many friends of his were "railroaded into shotgun marriages" once they found out about an unplanned pregnancy. A few months after the Metzger sex survey incident, Polsby suggested to the administration that OU "must come to grips with the unquestioned problem which exists" – pre-marital sexual intercourse.⁸³ It was one of the freedoms that college students and other young adults already exercised, but society frowned upon the results. Instead, the Varner administration and faculty supporters vehemently attacked Metzger's ground-breaking sex survey, reinforcing a nanny administration and ultimately censoring the student newspaper. Loren Pope, who was now the former Assistant to the Chancellor, supported Metzger in a letter to the editor of the *Observer*, by declaring that:

Metzger should be applauded and that the Chancellor should be censored for exposing attitudes inimical to those of a university. This was a bald and flagrant

⁸² Letter from Tom Soldan to Varner, May 5 1964, Box 15, Folder "*Oakland Observer* 1962-66," Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan; letter from David Liggett to Varner, May 5 1964, Box 15, Folder "*Oakland Observer* 1962-66," Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan; letter from Hannelore von Zittwitz to Varner, May 6 1964, Box 15, Folder "*Oakland Observer* 1962-66," Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁸³ Memorandum by Polsby to Dean Sells, Box 15, Folder "*Oakland Observer* 1962-66," Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

case of violation of freedom of the press. This violation of freedom was and is the only issue. Sex and surveys are marginal, irrelevant, and diversions... Wolf Metzger did his reportorial duty, and did so in the face of danger... (while) the university's leader failed to offer the minimum intellectual example: how to act like an adult. There had been no sensationalism, only the courage of a foreign youngster who takes American ideas seriously to stand up to a university head. This affair traduces the whole idea of a university. If a university isn't big enough to accommodate a little freedom of the press, it is by definition not a university.⁸⁴

With the possibility of the *Observer* falling apart, Varner appointed John MacLellan as Director of Student Publications. MacLellan was an OU student who worked for newspapers such as the *Detroit Times* for nearly 30 years. His task, according to Varner, was to work on a part-time basis and provide guidance to “eager and sometimes thoughtless students.”⁸⁵ MacLellan recommended that the *Observer* be expanded to eight pages from four pages, in order to cover more news representative to campus affairs.

In March 1965, sex and protesting once again became headline news for the *Observer*. While nearly sixty OU students were protesting in front of a federal building in Pontiac against police brutality in Selma and calling on President Johnson to intervene, a male and female student were suspended from school when discovered sleeping together in the male's residence hall at 4 a.m. The male student unnamed, at the time, was Lee Elbinger. This was the first offence of many Elbinger would commit during his academic career at OU. At the time, he was a second semester freshman who offended the OU administration and OU community for having an intimate affair behind close doors. The *Observer* reported the potential consequences of this new student sex scandal.

⁸⁴ Pope, letter to the editor, “Supports Metzger,” *Oakland Observer*, May 5, 1964. Pope was Varner's right-hand man who was in charge of mainly the public relations and recruiting students for OU. Pope resigned before this incident due to differences with Varner.

⁸⁵ Letter from Varner to Paul Averill, October 1 1964, Box 15, Folder “*Oakland Observer* 1962-66,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

This incident and others “led to a re-evaluation of the effectiveness of the honor system now operating in the dormitories.”⁸⁶ According to the *Observer*, fifteen female students were “netted” after nightly policing was instated after the discovery in Elbinger’s room. While nothing drastically changed in the residence halls, the students realized that their lives were controlled by the OU administration when they lived on campus and that it seemed they were powerless to significantly change their own lives. One RA told the *Observer*, “if the girls don’t shape up a tight system of sign-out will have to be instituted.” Another student commented that another incident could “easily mean the end of any chance of liberalizing women’s hours or rules.” By March 1966, the problem was still addressed by the *Observer* because students did not have a place on campus where “couples may be alone without official disapproval of campus opinion.” On the front page of the March 25, 1966 *Observer*, a large photograph of two college students aggressively making out on a couch was captioned with “the problem and no answers.”

Metzger, the student who attempted to shed light on the sexual problems at OU in spring 1964, was set to graduate on August 22, 1965.⁸⁷ Less than a month before Metzger's graduation, Varner rescinded Metzger’s publication ban at OU. Metzger, then, interviewed the current editor of the *Observer* at the time, David Johnston. In addition, Metzger reported on how, since he started at OU, there had been nine editors, four advisors and four chairmen of the publications board.⁸⁸ And yet, through all this the *Observer* had survived. According to Pope, Metzger years later became a journalist for the *Wall Street Journal*.⁸⁹ It was a shame that Varner banned him from student

⁸⁶ *Oakland Observer*, March 5, 1965.

⁸⁷ “Oakland University August Commencement,” August 22, 1965, Box “Commencement Programs 1963-1977,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

⁸⁸ Metzger, *Oakland Observer*, August 6, 1965.

⁸⁹ Pope, interviewed by Paul Tomboulion, March 20, 1998, Oakland University Chronicles, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

publications while a student at OU. Indeed, it is a strange concept of a student not allowed to publish his thoughts, but still allowed to seek an education at a liberal university.

While Metzger left, Elbinger returned to school after being suspended for the rest of the semester completely rejuvenated and reinvigorated. His first semester back coincided with the scheduled visit of the Vice President, and who was a personal friend of Varner's – Hubert H. Humphrey. Elbinger, who was opposed to the Vietnam War, spontaneously and single-handedly formed the O.C.T.G.O.H.H. – the Oakland Committee To Gross Out Hubert Humphrey. According to Elbinger, his task was to get the entire student body to think about using a strange tactic – passing gas – to express their opposition to the Johnson administration's war policy in Vietnam.⁹⁰ This tactic at the time was being described as “using gas to fight gas.”⁹¹ Elbinger stated, “The idea of 2,000 Oakland students passing gas in the Baldwin Pavilion is so absurd that it might give Mr. Humphrey a hint about how draft-age students feel about traveling thousands of miles to shoot at Asian peasants”.⁹² For one reason or another, “the University administration, the FBI, and the secret service questioned Elbinger about his activities as chairman of the O.C.T.G.O.H.H.,” Honey “reportedly” claimed.⁹³ Following the questioning, Elbinger reportedly came out with a “We Will Not Use Gas” flyer stating the plan had “certain unsavory drawbacks” ultimately leading to the abandonment of the plan.⁹⁴ Elbinger later confessed that he was not, “even for a minute, serious about grossing out H.H.”⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Elbinger, Enchiridion, *Oakland Observer*, October 29, 1965.

⁹¹ Honey, editorial, *Oakland Observer*, January 10, 1969.

⁹² Honey, editorial, *Oakland Observer*, January 10, 1969.

⁹³ Honey, editorial, *Oakland Observer*, January 10, 1969.

⁹⁴ Honey, editorial, *Oakland Observer*, January 10, 1969.

⁹⁵ Elbinger, Enchiridion, *Oakland Observer*, October 29, 1965.

Elbinger, however, was just beginning to leave a mark at OU. During this time, he began his own column in the *Observer* called “Enchiridon,” which broadcasted his perceptive and odd outlook on student life.⁹⁶ In his first publication, he wrote about the current role of youth in America. Elbinger proclaimed, “the kids have been rioting this summer. They have been drinking, fornicating, disturbing various peaces, etc.” One day, these same students will have to reach “maturity” and fulfill society’s expectations. Elbinger elaborated that “the college kids will go to their suburbs, the drop-outs to their respective jail cells, every peg in every slot, (and) every cog in place,” once their youthful wild days are over and they enter the “mind-sleep of maturity.”⁹⁷ The problem, according to Elbinger, was that the “Mature Individual in a Sick Society is a master of rationalization and self-deception.” Elbinger lamented that someday students “will rejoin the tribe” after briefly escaping from childhood obedience.⁹⁸ Elbinger apparently decided that this youth phase should be expanded at OU. The rest of the semester, he used his column to voice disapproval of registration regulations and dissent against the Vietnam War. Elbinger frequently expressed disgust of “rules” and the people who worshipped them.⁹⁹ Some articles were accompanied by a drawing of a priest with a halo above his head and a cross behind him saying, “I think we should drop the bomb.”¹⁰⁰ When it came to the issue of Vietnam, Elbinger asked some brilliant questions: “Why did (the U.S.) install a rich Catholic regime in a poor Buddhist country? Why hasn’t there been a free election in Vietnam for over a decade? Why do we bomb North Vietnam?”¹⁰¹ Perhaps

⁹⁶ Elbinger, Pilaster, *Oakland Observer*, September 23, 1966. Elbinger chose the title of his column, “Enchiridion,” not because of its “Webster meaning” that defined it as a manual or handbook, but instead because of an “esoteric whim.”

⁹⁷ Elbinger, Enchiridion, *Oakland Observer*, September 17, 1965.

⁹⁸ Elbinger, Enchiridion, *Oakland Observer*, September 17, 1965.

⁹⁹ Elbinger, Enchiridion, *Oakland Observer*, September 24, 1965.

¹⁰⁰ Elbinger, Enchiridion, *Oakland Observer*, October 8, 1965.

¹⁰¹ Elbinger, Enchiridion, *Oakland Observer*, October 22, 1965.

his most thought provoking question was “can a nation (Vietnam) democratically vote away its freedom?” To put in proper context, if South Vietnam were allowed to have free elections for a unified government, then it would almost certainly vote “communist.”

Elbinger accurately pointed out that the U.S. was abandoning its ideals in order to force “democracy” (he understood the meaning in its Orwellian sense - capitalism) on it.¹⁰²

During the winter semester of 1966, Elbinger embarked on three months of independent study in New Orleans. His friend and *Observer* colleague, Mike Honey, noted that by this time Elbinger was “well into Existentialist Philosophy, poetry, perhaps even into W.B. Yeats.” In addition, Honey described Elbinger as “one of the most well-read freshmen” who “was at that time one of Oakland’s most promising students.”¹⁰³

Elbinger earned twelve credits for his independent study in New Orleans with the assistance of several Oakland professors.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, Honey credited Elbinger as the student who raised interest in other students for more independent studies and they subsequently “submitted a petition to the Administration asking for the institutionalization of such (independent) study” when he returned to campus in the fall of 1966.

While Elbinger was in New Orleans, a new student organization began to form at OU: the Oakland Chapter of Students for a Democratic Society.¹⁰⁵ According to the *Observer*, “the main purpose of the organization is to get people to become more aware of what is happening in the world around them.”¹⁰⁶ The Oakland Chapter was joining the strong student movement in Michigan, which had SDS chapters at MSU, University of

¹⁰² Elbinger, Enchiridion, *Oakland Observer*, October 22, 1965.

¹⁰³ Honey, editorial, *Oakland Observer*, January 10, 1969.

¹⁰⁴ Honey, editorial, *Oakland Observer*, January 10, 1969.

¹⁰⁵ For excellent histories pertaining to SDS, see Todd Giltlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993); and Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity* (Oakland, CA: Oak Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁶ *Oakland Observer*, September 23, 1966.

Michigan, and Wayne State University as well as many other colleges and universities throughout the country. Every registered club at OU required a submission of a student president, and SDS OU elected Honey as the first president. Honey was already an *Observer* reporter, which allowed SDS OU to advertise easily through the student newspaper. Before his involvement with SDS, the *Observer* frequently featured articles by him that were also anti-war and focused on the plight of African Americans.

While students were beginning to organize, the *Observer* found a way to joke about their dissatisfaction of Varner and his nanny administration – an April Fool’s edition. On April Fool’s 1966, the *Observer* announced in a front-page headline: “Chancellor Varner Quits! Charlie Brown Gets Post.” The owner of the small convenience store located in the OC, Charlie Brown, was the shocking choice by the MSU Board of Trustees. In a related fake story, newly appointed Chancellor Charlie Brown supported the decision of the OU health service to give female students birth control pills.¹⁰⁷

Under the editorship of Norman Hale during the fall of 1966, the *Observer* also added SDSers David Black and Marc White as student journalists. White spent the summer of 1966 in Vietnam working for the Associated Press. After observing first-hand the carnage and chaos of the Vietnam War, White reflected that the press had to continue reporting all the facts of the “most difficult and confusing war in (U.S) history.”¹⁰⁸ One of White’s first articles when he returned from Vietnam was “Student Table Makes Storm” on October 10, 1966. White reported that SDS OU had a literature table in the main hall of the OC presenting alternatives to the military for students being offered by a Naval Aviation recruiting team. Administrators were afraid of a potential conflict

¹⁰⁷ *Oakland Observer*, April 1, 1966.

¹⁰⁸ White, “Reporter Sees War-Torn Vietnam,” *Oakland Observer*, September 16, 1966.

between student groups and the military recruiters with SDS, so they recommended that SDS OU move their table to the opposite end of the hall farther away from the military recruiters. SDS OU ignored the request and nothing troublesome occurred. Neither the SDS OU table nor the military recruiter's table attracted much business, which both SDS OU and the recruiters joked about to each other. Several professors complimented SDS OU on their good taste and effectiveness during the one and a half days of tabling. However, the OU administration decided to start providing military recruiters rooms in order to isolate them from protesters and reduce student alternatives. White concluded that "this university is attempting to deter dissent."¹⁰⁹ After putting events in Vietnam and OU together, White deduced that "there is a journalistic conspiracy in this country... that lies to the people of this nation 24 hours a day."¹¹⁰ Black, on the other hand, reported on the university's first anti-war fast. For 24 hours, almost 30 students staged a sympathy fast protesting the war in Vietnam. The students planned to remain together for the entire 24 hours in the Vandenberg lounge with the exception when a few students had to leave for class. A problem arose at midnight when the Vandenberg lounge was supposed to close, but the administration decided to allow the students to continue their united fast by spending the night in the OC with two chaperones.¹¹¹ These notable additions of Black and White, shifted the *Observer* even more to the political left because Honey continued writing for the *Observer* and Elbinger returned with a new column, the "Pilaster."¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ White, "Student Table Makes Storm," *Oakland Observer*, October 15, 1966.

¹¹⁰ White, "The Elusive Goal of Journalism – The Truth," *Oakland Observer*, November 4, 1966.

¹¹¹ Black, "Student Fast Protests War In Vietnam: 'Act of Conscience Symbolizing Peace,'" *Oakland Observer*, February 18, 1967.

¹¹² Elbinger, Pilaster, *Oakland Observer*, September 23, 1966. Elbinger chose the word "Pilaster" because "after a year of observation and growth," it was time for a change indicating more openness.

After New Orleans, Elbinger traveled throughout the Midwest and the East Coast, which further advanced his understanding of society and the youth movement. When he returned to OU for fall classes, he immediately started writing controversial articles advocating the legalization of marijuana, discussing the benefits of coupling marijuana with sex, and expressing delight that SDS was now at OU.¹¹³ In addition, Elbinger wrote a play called “The Thirtieth Birthday of Peter Pan,” which was performed at OU. According to Honey, the play was partially censored into a “less lusty version” by the administration.¹¹⁴ By the winter semester of 1967, Elbinger’s writing became too much for the administration. He wrote “several pieces,” according to Honey, for the student literary magazine, *Contuse*, and the publication was terminated by the administration in March 1967 due to the usage of “four-letter words.”¹¹⁵ The *Contuse* suffered from accusations of using “objectionable” material and therefore denied the magazine’s already appropriated funds from the university and was not allowed to be published on campus.¹¹⁶ The next edition of the *Contuse*, in April 1967, had some notable changes. First, the name had to be changed to “Kontuse.” The name change was insisted by the University administration in attempt to disconnect any affiliation with the university. The new independence of the *Kontuse* allowed new freedoms – part of the cover had a female student posing nude. Inside the *Kontuse*, prose, dialogue, poetry, photography, and artwork filled the rest of its pages just like before, according to the *Observer*.

Observer reporter, Monique Dufour, called Elbinger’s interview of Ed Sanders,

¹¹³ Elbinger, Pilaster, *Oakland Observer*, September 23, 1966; Elbinger, Pilaster: “Drug Guide,” *Oakland Observer*, February 10, 1967.

¹¹⁴ Honey, editorial, *Oakland Observer*, January 10, 1969.

¹¹⁵ Hale, “*Contuse* ‘Offends’ – Banned!” *Oakland Observer*, March 10, 1967; Honey, editorial, *Oakland Observer*, January 10, 1969. The first volume of the *Contuse* was published in June 1962 containing prose, dialogue, poetry, and artwork. Only the first two volumes can be found in the Kresge Library Archives currently.

¹¹⁶ Hale, “*Contuse* ‘Offends’ – Banned!” *Oakland Observer*, March 10, 1967.

proprietor of the Peace Eye Bookstore and lead singer of The Fugs, the “most volatile item in the magazine.”¹¹⁷

After the banning of the *Contuse*, the presence of SDS, and the still unresolved problems of student couples, a fledgling student movement began. Honey, who was the spokesperson for the anti-war fast in February 1966, reported on developments in Vandenberg House for the *Observer*. The Vandenberg House Council ran a survey around the time of the anti-war fast that asked student residents whether they wanted an open lounge policy in the dorm. The residents responded overwhelmingly (83%) in support of an open lounge. However, the students were rejected by the administration, which stated that the university had to control behavior in the dorms and provide security by not opening a lounge to other students. In support, the administration cited “cases of girls being molested on the campus in the past, of a beating last year, and of a recent stabbing.”¹¹⁸ White, Black, and Hale all met with Varner and his nanny administration discussing student rights as students were increasingly wanting changes.¹¹⁹ In March 1967, Varner created the Commission on Student Life. The Commission consisted of 21 members, 7 elected students (elected by only students), 2 administrative staff members, 11 faculty members, and 1 appointed student by Varner. Honey received the most votes and Black was also elected.¹²⁰ The purpose of the Commission was to make recommendations to Varner in order to improve student life on campus. One of the first orders of business of the Commission was the focus on students’ freedom of

¹¹⁷ *Oakland Observer*, April 7, 1967.

¹¹⁸ Honey, “Student Lounge Proposal Is Rejected By Administration,” *Oakland Observer*, February 24, 1967.

¹¹⁹ Honey, “An Answer To Unrest: ‘Student Life’ To Be Examined,” *Oakland Observer*, March 10, 1967.

¹²⁰ *Oakland Observer*, March 17, 1967.

expression.¹²¹ However, not much was accomplished during the first year because the semester ended the following month.

In the February 24 and March 3, 1967 *Observer* newspapers, the staff had released results from another sex survey at OU. This time the survey asked male students general questions about their knowledge of and opinions on sex and sexual relations. Some results included: only 26% claimed to know what it took to impregnate females and what did not; students underestimated the frequency of male masturbation; about 30 percent of males thought pre-marital sex was a good way to discover whether or not the couple is anatomically matched and 95 percent of male students were concerned that an unplanned pregnancy could lead to a stronger commitment (possible marriage) than originally anticipated.¹²² No controversy erupted this time. The most likely explanation of Varner allowing this sex survey to be published was because the students were beginning to organize and another sex survey controversy added onto the frustrations of students would have caused an even greater student movement at OU. In addition, the *Observer* staff wittingly announced a “sex survey” ahead of time on January 27, 1967; and then released on February 3, 1968 results of the Registrar’s Office total registration figures for the winter 1967 semester, which included more women (1586) than men (1385).¹²³ The *Pontiac Press* took the bait, and immediately called the university to get the scoop only to find out a week later no dirty news was being developed.¹²⁴ Then, the *Observer* published something certainly more resembling of a dirty sex survey.

¹²¹ Honey, “Board On ‘Expression’ Proposed: Commission On Student Life Splits Over Report,” *Oakland Observer*, April 7, 1967.

¹²² Mike Werensky; *Oakland Observer*, February 24, 1967; Werensky, *Oakland Observer*, March 3, 1967.

¹²³ *Oakland Observer*, February 3, 1967; Editorial, *Oakland Observer*, February 10, 1968.

¹²⁴ Editorial, *Oakland Observer*, February 10, 1968.

After a year of student activism, Honey, Black, and Elbinger decided to study abroad in Hong Kong with brief stops in Japan and Taiwan during the fall semester of 1967. They joined 41 other Oakland students in the “Oakland Semester in the Orient” group. Since they were active in the *Observer* before, they continued in contributing in a series of articles called “From the Orient.”¹²⁵ As student activists, their perspective of Asia had prospects of being invaluable. First, the students went to Japan. For a day, they had the opportunity to live like Zen priests. In an *Observer* article, Black described their experience during the hour-long meditation as “an unusual and worthwhile experience.” For an entire hour, the students crossed their legs and sat firmly straight, silently meditating. Black noted that “two priests walked around with wooden poles beating anyone who had fallen asleep or wasn’t concentrating.” Afterwards, their Zen teacher-priest explained the relationship of Christianity and Zen as being similar to “snow, ice, rain, and hail all melting and becoming the river’s water.”¹²⁶ During their short time in Japan, the *Observer* travelers fell in love with Japan’s “beauty” and “the friendliness of the people.”¹²⁷

The next stop was a brief four day visit in Taiwan. Honey did not express any sadness leaving the “exhaust-fumed air of the military state that is Taipei.” The *Observer* travelers witnessed poverty, privation, and misery among the masses. The Taiwanese people, according to Honey, were “silent, staring people, pock-marked and empty-eyed.”¹²⁸ Their impressions of Taiwan made them anxious to leave for Hong Kong.

The *Observer* travelers would spend the rest of the two and a half months of the semester in Hong Kong. At this time, Hong Kong was still a British Crown Colony.

¹²⁵ Black, “From the Orient,” *Oakland Observer*, September 22, 1967.

¹²⁶ Black, “From the Orient,” *Oakland Observer*, October 6, 1967.

¹²⁷ Black, “From the Orient,” *Oakland Observer*, October 13, 1967.

¹²⁸ Honey, “From the Orient,” *Oakland Observer*, October 20, 1967.

Black noticed the Chinese Communist influence in this “large and strange city” with many places “sporting pictures of Chairman Mao and of armed workers.”¹²⁹ The *Observer* travelers became friends with the crew of the Phoenix, an American peace ship attempting to go to North Vietnam and deliver over \$5,000 worth of medical supplies, while it was harbored in Hong Kong.¹³⁰ Besides exploring Hong Kong and making friends, the Oakland students continued their formal education. Since there were only forty-three students and two professors, there was a constant “Community of Learning” and freedom. All students were taking classes in the same general field: Chinese Area Studies. This brought the group closer while they were sharing common experiences and working on similar projects. The freedom, Black noted, was something that did not always occur 7,000 miles away in Oakland University. In Hong Kong Black noted, “there is no administration, no Deans, no police force, no R.A.’s” that were constantly restricting their personal relationships and education. Black argued that OU should start a new program of sending small groups of students and professors “to spend semesters away from the University, to form ‘learning communities’ to study subjects within one particular major field.” Black offered the possibility that “25 political science majors and one professor could travel to Washington D.C. to study for a semester.” Moreover, not only would programs like this “give students a greater feeling of freedom and flexibility,” but they could “eliminate over-crowding of the dormitories.”¹³¹

The *Observer* travelers returned from Asia with a greater awareness of the world and the general atmosphere of Asia during the Vietnam War. During their travels, they discovered it was nearly impossible not to bump into American serviceman on vacation,

¹²⁹ Honey, “From the Orient,” *Oakland Observer*, November 10, 1967.

¹³⁰ Honey, “From the Orient,” *Oakland Observer*, October 27, 1967.

¹³¹ Black, “From the Orient,” *Oakland Observer*, November 17, 1967.

also known as “R and R” for Rest and Recreation. Black reported that “R and R is a very profitable business for the local bar owners, bar girls, taxi drivers, hotel owners, and tailors.”¹³² The female OU students found out that the R and R personnel “make far superior dates than the typical Oakland male” because they were able to take the women out to “fancy restaurants and night clubs.” The male OU students discovered that they shared many common interests with the servicemen due to the fact that many of them were the same age. The *Observer* travelers talked to the servicemen about the Vietnam War and they got a wide variety of perspectives. According to Black, some advised him to never become a G.I., while one black soldier from Detroit “went so far as to tell me that he was glad people were demonstrating against the war, and that he hoped their efforts would be soon successful so he and his buddies could go home.” Black wrote that the “pro-war” soldiers usually said that “the war is just and someone has to fight it and this responsibility has – unluckily – fallen on them.”¹³³

Black and Honey returned to OU for the winter semester of 1968, but Elbinger continued trekking to Burma (now Myanmar), Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and India until he returned for his last semester in fall 1968. When Black and Honey returned, they found out that not much had changed at OU. Varner was still attempting to vent out student frustrations by encouraging dialogue and discussion. By February 1968, Honey had enough. Honey had the epiphany during one of Varner’s Forums that forced him to leave halfway through it. The problem for Honey was that the students were there just to “talk.” While Honey was not against talking about student problems and how to properly solve them, he realized that “talking about Oakland’s problems does not excite me anymore, because the problems that were being discussed at the Forum were problems

¹³² Black, “From the Orient,” *Oakland Observer*, December 8, 1967.

¹³³ Black, “From the Orient,” *Oakland Observer*, December 8, 1967.

that were being discussed last year about this time – some of them were left-overs from my freshman year (three years before).”¹³⁴ A short time later in April 1968, the Commission on Student Life produced shocking results. Varner surprisingly accepted the Commission’s recommendation of eliminating all Women’s hour – including freshmen students.¹³⁵ Since students started the movement that led to this reform, it should be considered their achievement.

As the Vietnam War escalated in 1968, approximately 150,000 graduate student deferments were rescinded at the urging of the Johnson administration. This was a sharp increase from the 14,000 in 1967.¹³⁶ Consequently, the majority of Oakland professors suspended classes on Monday, March 18, 1968, for a series of panel discussions about how the Vietnam War would affect students. The *Observer* urged a mass turnout at this unprecedented action by professors on the OU campus. Professor Henry Rosemont explained the motivation of the teach-in: “the panel discussions would provide a vehicle whereby students will be assisted in making their own independent decisions concerning this most crucial issue of our times.” This action, according to Rosemont, was consistent with the Oakland’s “excellent tradition of being strongly committed to its students.”¹³⁷ The results of the teach-in were an increased awareness of the Vietnam War for students and how they can influence politics on a national level. The students were advised to seek counseling from the Draft Counseling Center, which Honey was one of the contributors.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Editorial, Honey, *Oakland Observer*, February 23, 1968.

¹³⁵ Memorandum from Commission on Housing and Residence Hall Life to Commission on Student Life, March 21, 1968, Box 38, Folder 10, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester Michigan.

¹³⁶ “150,000 Graduate Students To Leave For Vietnam,” *Oakland Observer*, March 8, 1968.

¹³⁷ *Oakland Observer*, March 15, 1968.

¹³⁸ *Oakland Observer*, March 15, 1968.

In 1968, the *Observer* saw more contributions by student journalists Mike Hitchcock and Norman Harper. The entire *Observer* staff dedicated an edition to Martin Luther King Jr. when he was assassinated on April 4, 1968. The MLK edition tackled racial issues on campus after an emergency meeting was held by all concerned students on April 6, 1968. During two hours of heated discussion, it became apparent that racial problems on the Oakland campus “were far larger than any white students had realized,” observed the *Observer*.¹³⁹ One black female student disclosed during the discussion, “I didn’t hate white people before I came here (to OU). You people made me hate you.”¹⁴⁰ In addition, around this time new female journalists Karen Walkowitz and Honey’s future wife, Martha Allen, joined the staff. Walkowitz reported on the Poor People’s March on Washington in spring 1968.¹⁴¹ Honey had the honors on reporting on the Columbia University’s student takeover April-May 1968.¹⁴² Back on campus, White wrote a front-page article called “Reflections on SDS” for the June 21, 1968 edition of the *Observer*. While Honey, Elbinger, and Black were studying abroad, White took over as the leader of SDS OU. In “Reflections on SDS,” White commented on the current state of SDS after the annual SDS convention held at Michigan State University, June 9-15. According to White, SDS was “ultimately committed to the destruction of imperialism and therefore committed to the requisite destruction of capitalism; that our movement is a part of the revolutionary vanguard painfully forming from the depths of America” and SDS needed restructuring in order for progress within the movement.¹⁴³ SDS OU was confronted with a specific task in this restructuring. White acknowledged that their

¹³⁹ “Students Discuss Racial Problems,” *Oakland Observer*, April 10, 1968.

¹⁴⁰ “Students Discuss Racial Problems,” *Oakland Observer*, April 10, 1968.

¹⁴¹ Walkowitz, “The Poor March To Washington,” *Oakland Observer*, May 17, 1968.

¹⁴² Honey, “Students Seize Columbia...,” *Oakland Observer*, May 10, 1968.

¹⁴³ White, “Reflections on SDS,” *Oakland Observer*, June 21, 1968.

chapter had done practically the same as many other SDS chapters. They held numerous meetings and workshops on the war, distributed anti-war literature, held programs on the black struggle, and agitated for university reform and student rights. Frustrated by nominal accomplishments, White argued that OU has “a liberal ruling class who invented a commission which successfully co-opted a fledgling student movement a year and a half ago.” The “mickey mouse student affairs,” as White called the actions of the Commission of Student Life, had successfully tricked the students. “The continuation of the Vietnam War; the prospect of genocide against American blacks; the fantastic increase in U.S. counter – insurgency in Latin America; the heightening contradictions in capitalism in both the economy and the state” all demanded more action from SDS OU and Oakland students, argued White.¹⁴⁴

At the same time, the *Observer* increased its radical reporting. The summer of 1968 marked a new campaign for the *Observer*: to disarm the Oakland cops.¹⁴⁵ Two incidents sparked a negative view of the Public Safety Department. The first occurred in the summer of 1967 when a “minor scuffle” in the university parking lot involving a white Oakland safety officer and several black employees of the university. The officer fired upon the fleeing vehicle. Immediately afterwards, SDS OU posted flyers on campus claiming “Oakland is becoming a police state and our local police are armed and are dangerous.”¹⁴⁶ Even though the posters were approved for posting, two administrators admitted tearing them down and by the next day most of the posters were removed.¹⁴⁷ Later, all charges were dropped against the youths and no one was injured.

¹⁴⁴ White, “Reflections on SDS,” *Oakland Observer*, June 21, 1968.

¹⁴⁵ Walkowitz, “Police Disarm – Campus Made Safe,” *Oakland Observer*, September 13, 1968.

¹⁴⁶ Flyer by Black and White, “Public Safety News,” Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

¹⁴⁷ Flyer by Black and White, “Public Safety News,” Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

The second event involved another white Oakland safety officer harassing a black woman, Augustine Wright, who was a secretary on campus.¹⁴⁸ Many students were also concerned about the recent events at Columbia University when the police brutally quelled the student rebellion. Walkowitz investigated a list of nine of the members of the Public Safety Department serving under Tom Strong, the head of the department.¹⁴⁹ The Public Safety Department of OU, reported Walkowitz, has since its creation in the early sixties “undergone a great deal of criticism by both students and faculty.” Varner decided to form yet another committee to advise him and the Director of Campus Security about appropriate reforms. Honey was one of the students who were recommended to serve on the committee. However, he and a few other students rejected another committee. Honey stated, “I do not wish to serve in an advisory capacity concerning the police force. I have already given my ‘advice’ thru the newspaper.” His earlier recommendations argued that “the reality of our situation is that it is dictatorial, non-democratic, and denies the sanctity of the individual as a thinking, responsive human being.”¹⁵⁰

Varner responded to the dissatisfaction of Oakland’s student leaders with what he termed some “revolutionary changes” in the department of Public Safety. These changes included: campus security personnel no longer wearing traditional police uniforms, but instead wearing “blazers with the proper identification and slacks with normal civilian headgear;” they were no longer allowed to carry pistols until after 3 p.m. and only then in concealed shoulder holsters while other traditional weapons would be locked in campus security vehicles; tear gas canisters would not be carried normally by campus security

¹⁴⁸ Black, “A History of Public Safety at Oakland,” *Oakland Observer*, January 17, 1969.

¹⁴⁹ Walkowitz, “Strong Urges Campus Peace Treaty,” *Oakland Observer*, July 19, 1968.

¹⁵⁰ Walkowitz, “Police Disarm – Campus Made Safe,” *Oakland Observer*, September 13, 1968.

personnel or stocked in their vehicles; and when in the vehicles, and when in the judgment of the officer it was necessary to establish their identification, they would use a properly painted helmet.¹⁵¹

Meanwhile, other students discovered that there was no freedom while working on campus as student-workers either. On July 18, 1968, twelve students employed at the Trumbull Terrace as food service employees walked out on their jobs due to a hat controversy while working for the university.¹⁵² These students asked their supervisor if they could write anti-war slogans on their hats and their supervisor gave her permission. Some of these slogans were “Resist the Draft,” “The Only Thing I Regret Is That My Country Has No Life To Give Me,” “End the War,” “Hell No I Won’t Go,” and “Not With My Life You Don’t.”¹⁵³ The hat controversy arose when one customer complained to the supervisor, reportedly asking “do you have cages for these animals?” after he was offended that his tax dollars could be permitted to silently express anti-war opinions. The same customer did advocate pro-war slogans after some questioning.¹⁵⁴ As a result of the customer’s complaints, workers were asked to remove their hats or punch out and go home. The students thought they should, as human beings and students with the right to think critically, have the right of free expression while working – so they walked off when confronted with this diabolical and undemocratic choice.¹⁵⁵ The twelve students started a campaign to increase awareness of the event that transpired. First, they decided to visit Varner at his home, but he was not there. The next day the group rallied nearly

¹⁵¹ Walkowitz, “Police Disarm – Campus Made Safe,” *Oakland Observer*, September 13, 1968.

¹⁵² Ruth Louisell, “Hats Cause Controversy,” *Oakland Observer*, July 26, 1968.

¹⁵³ “This Is Important: Trumbull Terrace Student Workers Walk Off The Job,” *Oakland Observer*, July 19, 1968. This was an accompanying flyer inside the July 19, 1968 issue of the *Observer*. Undoubtedly, it would have been printed normally in the newspaper if the current technology allowed quicker a quicker printing process.

¹⁵⁴ Louisell, “Hats Cause Controversy,” *Oakland Observer*, July 26, 1968.

¹⁵⁵ “This Is Important: Trumbull Terrace Student Workers Walk Off The Job,” *Oakland Observer*, July 19, 1968.

100 students in the OC. White was one of the working students and became the leader of the rally. The students were thinking about organizing a union to face future threats, but luckily, Varner's administration made a favorable decision to allow students to wear any slogans they desired for the time being.¹⁵⁶

In the September 13, 1968 edition of the *Observer*, Black wrote an article titled “Who Rules O.U.?” The very top of the power structure was the MSU Board of Trustees because they had the authority to hire or fire all the key personnel of the University – remember Shapiro in November 1962! Black noted that “the board members are selected by popular state-wide election; most of those elected have traditionally been representatives of either big business or big labor.”¹⁵⁷ The State Legislature and the State Board of Education, however, could potentially interfere with OU matters by overriding internal decisions. Since the State Legislature provided the bulk of the operating capital for OU, they also have a powerful voice in determining the quality of education for Oakland students. President John Hannah of MSU, while in the past did give OU a great deal of autonomy, technically must approve all the proposals by the Oakland administration before they even can come to the attention of the Board.¹⁵⁸ Varner’s relationship to these distant gods of OU can be best described as them giving Varner his divine right to rule OU. His jobs at OU have ranged from being the chief fundraiser to managing campus affairs, censoring student publications, and dictating students’ lives at times. Black’s article then tackles the upper echelons of the Varner administration all the way down to the lower levels. At the very bottom of the university were the students.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Louisell, “Hats Cause Controversy,” *Oakland Observer*, July 26, 1968. It is unclear if a student workers’ union was ever created.

¹⁵⁷ Black, “Who Rules O.U.?” *Oakland Observer*, September 13, 1968.

¹⁵⁸ Black, “Who Rules O.U.?” *Oakland Observer*, September 13, 1968.

¹⁵⁹ Black, “Who Rules O.U.?” *Oakland Observer*, September 13, 1968.

After winning freedom of expression in the student workplace, SDS OU began organizing for the fall semester. Following the events of the August 1969 Democratic Convention in Chicago where protesters and students clashed with police, Democratic Presidential Nominee Humphrey was rumored for a return visit to OU to reach out to the public. A few SDSers learned of the organizing and began extensive planning of their own to “welcome” him. According to White, Humphrey eventually cancelled due to “fear” of SDS plans. All the planning was not in vain, because Humphrey's running mate, Edward Muskie replaced him for the scheduled visit on October 3, 1968. SDS held its first meeting on September 23, 1968. White expected a small turnout because the recruitment during the summer was considered a failure. To his surprise, the first meeting attracted 300 students! White noted, “while it is clear that the majority of those people showed because of Muskie (announced visit), this type of turnout was not unique nationwide” because SDS chapters which normally had 30 students attend meetings now were suddenly faced with 800.¹⁶⁰

However, SDS OU first staged a prelude event when marine recruiters visited the campus on September 26, 1968. Approximately 50 students marched from inside the OC to the placement office where a marine recruiter was conducting interviews. The students sat-in with anti-recruiting and anti-war signs and began a discussion of the nature of the placement procedure, war, and corporations. Then, the students attempted to talk to the recruiter, Captain O’Connor, but he locked himself in his small room when the students came walking down the hallway to the office. Dean of Students Thomas Dutton asked the students to move out of the hall, but the students refused and requested that they be

¹⁶⁰ White, “Don’t Mourn – Organize: Some Comments on Oakland SDS, the Movement, and Some Ideas (A First Rough Draft),” Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

allowed to talk with the recruiter. Dutton went into his office to contact O'Connor by phone. Without a prompt response from Dutton, the students left and held a brief rally outside Wilson Hall.¹⁶¹ White considered the demonstration a success because Dutton came along and “made a fool of himself” by showing the true interests of the university.¹⁶²

For SDS OU, this success carried onward to the major event of the day: the Muskie visit. On Thursday September 26, 1968, OU was the place to be. Typically Thursdays were one of the quiet days on the campus; for example, commuting students could easily find a parking space. However, Muskie was scheduled to speak on campus. After arriving a little late, Muskie was greeted by 2,000 people packed in the campus gym. According to Black's article in the *Observer*, while most people gave a “standing ovation,” a section of nearly 200 students in the back seats of the gym chanted “Dump the Hump” and “Hell no, we won't go!”¹⁶³ The chants and the cheering continued for almost five minutes and then there was an abrupt silence.

When Muskie began to speak, he told the crowd “he would only speak for three minutes and leave the rest of the time for questions and answers,” reported Black.¹⁶⁴ Once the three minutes passed, a brave student stood up and politely “informed Mr. Muskie that his three minutes were up.” Muskie finished what he was saying, but he seemed to be “a bit shaken by this interruption,” observed Black. After receiving prolonged applause, Muskie recommended that the student who interrupted him be allowed the first question and the audience expressed no objections. The student first

¹⁶¹ “OU Students Protest Marine Recruiters,” *Oakland Observer*, October 4, 1968.

¹⁶² White, “Don't Mourn – Organize: Some Comments on Oakland SDS, the Movement, and Some Ideas (A First Rough Draft),” Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

¹⁶³ Black, “Muskie At OU,” *Oakland Observer*, October 4, 1968.

¹⁶⁴ Black, “Muskie At OU,” *Oakland Observer*, October 4, 1968.

told how he had traveled to Vietnam and had seen “all the blood and carnage.”¹⁶⁵ Then, according to Black, he “asked Muskie if he could give some assurance that the war would soon come to an end.” Muskie responded by giving a long interpretation of the roots of the Vietnam War that did acknowledge mistakes were made, like not trying to settle the war through the 1954 Geneva Agreement, but that there would be no concessions made by the U.S. to the communists until a negotiated peace settlement would be accepted by both sides. Muskie claimed the enemy has shown no willingness to make concessions.¹⁶⁶ To the anti-war members in the crowd, it was undoubtedly absurd to ask the Vietnamese to make concessions when their homeland was being occupied. Muskie’s argument for continued support for the war must have sounded like the Vietnam War was a symphony of catastrophe for the warmongers and it unmistakably suggested that he was a war candidate.

A few more questions were asked by the demonstrators and Muskie responded with long historical questions. Finally, Muskie allowed Norman Harper, an Associate Editor of the *Observer*, to ask the final question. Harper urged the audience and Muskie along with other Michigan Democrats near the podium to “stop and think of what is going on in North and South Vietnam and what is happening to our brothers and sisters in the streets.”¹⁶⁷ Then, the *New York Times* reported that Harper called for 10 minutes of silent reflection. Muskie ignored the silent reflection by talking about how he had been one of the most active Senators. Several students shouted back: “We asked for silence.”¹⁶⁸ Undeterred, Muskie continued to talk through “two short blasts on a whistle”

¹⁶⁵ This student could have been White or Elbinger because they both traveled to Vietnam before this.

¹⁶⁶ James Ritz, *The Royal Oak Daily Tribune*, September 27, 1968.

¹⁶⁷ Douglas E. Kneeland, “Students Ask Muskie For Silence To Think Of War,” *New York Times*, September 27, 1968.

¹⁶⁸ Kneeland, “Students Ask Muskie For Silence To Think Of War,” *New York Times*, September 27, 1968.

and while a few hundred students quietly got up and walked out during his utterances.¹⁶⁹ Muskie quickly finished his response and then announced that time was up – he had to go. The student activists, however, refused to allow Muskie to leave without giving ten minutes of his time for silent reflection. According to White, they “spontaneously” decided there would be a ten-minute silent vigil in front of Muskie’s car and they would thereby at least keep him on campus for those ten minutes.¹⁷⁰ Ten minutes later, the students left and Muskie quickly left the campus after an applauding crowd of 50 persons remained near his motorcade.¹⁷¹ The students were evidently extremely energized during the silent vigil and the successful demonstrations earlier because two student leaders, White and Walkowitz, had to insist that the students leave due to the presence of bodyguards and police.¹⁷²

The Muskie visit had far-reaching consequences for SDS OU and the *Observer*. This was arguably one of the most prominent figures OU had ever invited to speak on the campus. The fact that Harper ignited the potentially consequential situation shows that the *Observer* staff went beyond merely writing articles, reporting and observing what was relevant to just the students lives, but that they had attempted to connect the OU community to events throughout the world – particularly in Detroit and Vietnam. It was another example of the quasi-alliance of SDS OU and the *Observer*. According to White,

¹⁶⁹ Black, “Muskie At OU,” *Oakland Observer*, October 4, 1968.

¹⁷⁰ White, “Don’t Mourn – Organize: Some Comments on Oakland SDS, the Movement, and Some Ideas (A First Rough Draft),” Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

¹⁷¹ Kneeland, “Students Ask Muskie For Silence To Think Of War,” *New York Times*, September 27, 1968.

¹⁷² White, “Don’t Mourn – Organize: Some Comments on Oakland SDS, the Movement, and Some Ideas (A First Rough Draft),” Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan; Kneeland, “Students Ask Muskie For Silence To Think Of War,” *New York Times*, September 27, 1968. The Karen identified in the *New York Times* was most likely Karen Walkowitz.

the tactics that SDS OU used polarized the student body.¹⁷³ They tried explaining, unsuccessfully, to many moderate and conservative students that Muskie deserved this reception as a war candidate and how he was part of the repressive establishment that attacked kids in Chicago during the August 1968 Democratic National Convention. To make matters worse, SDS OU did not take advantage of the sympathetic students by pushing ahead. Instead, SDS OU took a brief respite.

Meanwhile, the *Observer* was censored again in 1968. Interlakes Press was contracted to print the *Observer*, but its parent company, the Pontiac Press, decided to not print four pages of the *Observer*'s October 4, 1968 issue. The spokesperson from the Pontiac Press, Howard Fitzgerald, called the pages censored "pure trash" and said that the language used – more "four-letter words" – jeopardized the second-class mailing permit of the Pontiac Press. This "pure trash" was a supplement, entitled "Painted Black," by an Oakland black student's diary giving her reactions to the racism she had experienced.¹⁷⁴

Honey commented about the censorship:

I think what is perhaps closer to the heart of the matter is the content of the material involved: most whites would probably rather not hear the things this black student had to say. If there is any obscenity involved, it is in the truth this person was revealing to the public as a black student. It is American Racism that is obscene, not what she said.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ White, "Don't Mourn – Organize: Some Comments on Oakland SDS, the Movement, and Some Ideas (A First Rough Draft)," Box 30 "Student Life and Clubs," Folder 6 "Flyers, Political," Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. It must be noted that some students, despite all of these events, were not aware of SDS OU. White, on several occasions, was asked to speak to OU classes concerning the student movement and SDS. According to White, these classes studied the movement as "an abstract historical thing." They read and write papers on the Port Huron Statement and other important SDS documents, but "everything is done on a superficial level." White was shocked to learn that students claimed that they did not know SDS OU existed. In addition, only one student ever participated in SDS activities due to White's exposure in those classrooms. White concluded that these students were being taught to destroy SDS by being exposed to it, but not encouraged to participate in it.

¹⁷⁴ "Observer Censored," *Oakland Observer*, October 4, 1968.

¹⁷⁵ "Observer Censored," *Oakland Observer*, October 4, 1968.

When SDS OU started up again with regular meetings, it immediately started a few campaigns with local Oakland County groups.¹⁷⁶ According to White, an internal conflict emerged with SDS OU. Some SDSers began to identify themselves with “Abbie Hoffman and the Yippies.”¹⁷⁷ Adding to the conflict slightly was the growing national SDS divisions. During these tribulations, SDS OU continued to help surrounding high schools and community colleges to start new chapters, like at Oakland Community College.¹⁷⁸ On the OU home front, SDS OU staged Election Day activities in November 1968. Anti-war movies were featured during this two day event. On the first day, White led a tour to the Department of Public Safety at Oakland, where he questioned Strong about the descriptions of student radicals found in one of the FBI magazines. The next day there was a “Festival of Life” featuring rock bands and more movies. Hitchcock reported on these events for the *Observer* and also on the recurring activity called the “guerrilla theater,” which was designed to attract attention to the other SDS events. Led by Elbinger, who White acknowledged as “the official SDS OU swami and mystic” by this time, a few other students went on “search and destroy” missions, with a toy machine gun and a flute, seeking to hunt down “Communist agents.”¹⁷⁹ Meanwhile, signs advertising the SDS OU events were torn down by unknown perpetrators.¹⁸⁰ SDS OU

¹⁷⁶ White, “Don’t Mourn – Organize: Some Comments on Oakland SDS, the Movement, and Some Ideas (A First Rough Draft),” Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

¹⁷⁷ White, “Don’t Mourn – Organize: Some Comments on Oakland SDS, the Movement, and Some Ideas (A First Rough Draft),” Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

¹⁷⁸ White, “Don’t Mourn – Organize: Some Comments on Oakland SDS, the Movement, and Some Ideas (A First Rough Draft),” Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

¹⁷⁹ White, “Don’t Mourn – Organize: Some Comments on Oakland SDS, the Movement, and Some Ideas (A First Rough Draft),” Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan; Hitchcock, “Films, Tour Shape SDS Election Day,” *Oakland Observer*, November 8, 1968.

¹⁸⁰ Hitchcock, “Films, Tour Shape SDS Election Day,” *Oakland Observer*, November 8, 1968.

membership continued its ups and downs as some of its supporters and leaders were nearing graduation in fall 1968 and 1969.

While the student body was increasingly becoming polarized politically, the *Observer* managed once again to upset Varner. A “Special Obscenity Issue” was printed in November 15, 1968 addressing college papers being censored or persecuted by administrators, advisors, and printers due to “four-letter words” and other content.¹⁸¹ Not only did the *Observer* report on the nation-wide attacks on student newspapers, but it also used the word “fuck.”¹⁸² At the same time, the *Observer* found a way to embarrass Varner. Underneath the articles on the front page was a small section dedicated to Varner and his wife, Paula, celebrating their commemorative awards for 10 years of university community service, with two pictures of them accepting the awards.¹⁸³ A month later, Varner received a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Steven Nisbet, one of the members of the MSU Board of Trustees, who congratulated Varner for winning the award by sending him the clipping of the *Observer*. Varner responded in a return letter:

My pleasure in your sending this clipping to us is somewhat dampened by the realization that right above this pictorial bit in *The Oakland Observer* was one of the most offensive stories I’ve ever read in a college newspaper. I continue to be puzzled about what we can do about this, but I am increasingly of the opinion that if we continue to get this kind of obscenity we should recommend to the Board that it direct us to cease collecting the student fee for the support of the newspaper. I realize, of course, that this will cause a commotion on campus, but it may be that we are going to have to face this one and get it cleaned up.¹⁸⁴

It is evident that Varner was once again thinking about censoring the *Observer* one way or another.

¹⁸¹ *Oakland Observer*, November 15, 1968.

¹⁸² *Oakland Observer*, November 15, 1968.

¹⁸³ *Oakland Observer*, November 15, 1968.

¹⁸⁴ Letter from Varner to Mr. and Mrs. Steven S. Nisbet. Box 13, Folder MSU – Board of Trustees Correspondence 1967-1968, Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

The very next edition, on December 6, 1968, the *Observer* reprinted an article from the *Rochester Clarion* newspaper, entitled “SDS Gains Voice By Default.” The *Clarion*’s editorial attacked the *Observer* arguing that the student paper had been “taken over” by SDS. Furthermore, it recommended that “there appears to be only one answer to eliminate the stranglehold that the SDS has on the *Observer*. That is for the university to stop collecting student fees and switching them to the Meadowbrook Press – or any other publication that is willing to put the ‘news’ back in an Oakland University newspaper.” Freedom of expression was being threatened by a mainstream newspaper. Editors Honey, Black, and Harper of the *Observer* rejected that any of them were currently members of SDS OU because they do not “make a habit of either organizing SDS activities or even going to its meetings.”¹⁸⁵ Since SDS OU was a legitimate student organization on campus, there should not have been an issue regarding which students were writing for the *Observer*. While the editors at this time were no longer members of SDS OU, they still had a cordial relationship with SDS OU. Either way, their denial of these accusations did not matter because events at OU were going to attract nation-wide attention once again.

Little did the students and the *Observer* know that OU’s biggest scandal was next: the Lee Elbinger nude incident. Elbinger was anticipating graduating in the fall of 1968. According to Honey, his plan after graduating was to return to India and become a Shavite Monk in order to transcend the “birth-death cycle” because he had a “vision” that he was the “reincarnation of Yeats.” He spent his last few weeks “giving away all his worldly possessions” and he bought a one-way ticket to India.¹⁸⁶ While he was scheduled to meet all of the requirements needed to graduate, he failed to understand that OU was

¹⁸⁵ *Oakland Observer*, December 6, 1968.

¹⁸⁶ Honey, editorial, *Oakland Observer*, January 10, 1969.

not a free university and neither was American society when he presented his final class project on the poet Yeats' concept of freedom.

On the evening of December 10, 1968, Elbinger began his presentation with two other students. According to the professor, Thomas Fitzimmons, who hosted the presentation in the Barn Theatre, they attempted to “dramatize by means of theatrical presentation the close relationship of Chinese, Indian, and early Christian approaches to the problems of dualism, guilt, shame, and freedom, all pre-occupations of the poet W.B. Yeats.”¹⁸⁷ Near the end of this 40 minute presentation, Elbinger removed all of his clothing and remained nude for several minutes in front of a crowd of about 50 people, including two professors and some children. *Observer* reporter Black stated that once Elbinger was naked, he “munched on an apple and explained that he, unlike Adam and Eve after they ate their apple, was nude and yet unashamed.”¹⁸⁸ After the lecture, Elbinger remained naked and passed out candy to the audience. He even asked other students to join him naked – none accepted his generous offer.¹⁸⁹ It should be noted that Elbinger's public nudity was planned in advance and it was not the first time he stripped naked at OU, but only a few students knew his exact plans.¹⁹⁰ His professor, Fitzimmons had no idea that Elbinger was going to strip naked because student their projects were kept “secret” in order to enhance “dramatic qualities.”¹⁹¹

The Elbinger nude incident quickly reached national attention when news media and the Associated Press became informed that an OU student did strip nude in class

¹⁸⁷ Fitzimmons to Varner, Box 7, Folder “Elbinger – Correspondence File,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

¹⁸⁸ Black, “The Incredible Tale Of Immortality As OU, And How Oakland Was Rescued From The Clutches of State Senator Huber,” *Oakland Observer*, January 10, 1969.

¹⁸⁹ Fitzimmons to Varner, Box 7, Folder “Elbinger – Correspondence File,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

¹⁹⁰ “Girl Defends Nude,” *Troy Eccentric*, January 9, 1969.

¹⁹¹ Fitzimmons to Varner, Box 7, Folder “Elbinger – Correspondence File,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

based on an anonymous tip the following day, December 11, 1968. On December 12, 1968, the Associated Press story was published around the world. The December 13th edition of the *Observer* distributed approximately 4,000 copies with a picture of Elbinger nude sitting down with his legs crossed covering his genitalia. Also on this day, State Senator of Michigan, Robert Huber, a Troy Republican, demanded an investigation. During interviews, Huber claimed he had extensive evidence on OU students showing that “the morals at the University are going to pot,” including obscenities in the *Observer* (referring most likely to the earlier “Special Obscenities Issue”), illegitimate pregnancies, a report of 12 unmarried students living together, and that several students were living in caves on the back part of the campus.¹⁹² While it was certainly true that the *Observer* did use obscenities, the manner in which students lived should only have mattered if it hindered their education; and regarding the accusation of the caves, no substantial proof was ever provided even though local Channel 7 did film the caves, the result was never shown on television probably due to the inaccuracy of the claim.¹⁹³ Huber considered “stripping in class” worse than protesting in the street or taking “over the president’s office” and he decided to go on a moral crusade to clean up OU.¹⁹⁴

However, Huber’s crusade did not last long. State Democratic Chairman Sander Levin said that Huber “jumped in with generalities about the university based on one case, and did so without even bothering to consult with the university.” On December 30, 1968, a meeting of county commissioners was convened at the Oakland Center. Varner had to sell his case that OU was investigating the incident and would deal

¹⁹² Black, “The Incredible Tale Of Immorality As OU, And How Oakland Was Rescued From The Clutches of State Senator Huber,” *Oakland Observer*, January 10, 1969.

¹⁹³ Black, “The Incredible Tale Of Immorality As OU, And How Oakland Was Rescued From The Clutches of State Senator Huber,” *Oakland Observer*, January 10, 1969.

¹⁹⁴ Transcript from WJBK-TV News Interview, December 17, 1968, Box 7, Folder “Elbinger – Correspondence File,” Varner Papers, Oakland University Kresge Library Archives, Rochester, Michigan.

appropriately with Elbinger – even though the student was in India. Varner was able to deflect the accusations by proving that one nude man does not make an immoral university. All the politicians at the meeting, including Huber, walked away assured that OU was handling the matter properly and that the moral tone on the campus was adequate. In a confidential letter from Dean Dutton to Elbinger at his off-campus residence in Birmingham, Michigan on December 23, 1968, he would have learned – if he was not in India – that his name was removed off the January commencement list because he was being charged with “disrobing.”¹⁹⁵

Once the Elbinger nude incident died down, the *Observer* continued reporting on SDS OU news.¹⁹⁶ SDS OU and the Association of Black Students announced that they were to be hosting a “Radical Education and Action Week” at OU at the end of January 1969. The goal of the events was to show students what the student movement was all about. SDS OU planned to explain the nature of the university, the ruling class that the university served, and the racist ideology pervading American society. Students were scheduled to speak about the history of the working class. Dena Clamage, a Wayne State student who recently returned from a trip to Cuba, was scheduled to talk about the Cuban

¹⁹⁵ Letter from Dean Dutton to Elbinger, December 23, 1968, Box 7, Folder “Elbinger – Correspondence File,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan; Black, email with author, April 5, 2008; Honey, email with author, April 5, 2008. Elbinger did live in the student dorms when he attended school. It is unclear whether or not Elbinger heard of these events in India or later when he returned. According to Honey and Black, his true path was working for the U.S. Foreign Service, not his path to remaining to be a monk. According to the Fall 2012 *OU Magazine*, Elbinger CAS '69 “retired from the U.S. Foreign Service in November 2011. During his 27-year career, he had 16 overseas assignments and served in nine countries: Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Germany, Kenya, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, India, and Turkey. His domestic assignments included the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, the Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan and service as acting political adviser at U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Florida. Elbinger is the co-founder of the East West Ashram in Himachal Pradesh, India.”

¹⁹⁶ Richard Burke, conversation with author, at Oakland University, Rochester, MI, March 20, 2008. Burke was a philosophy professor at OU in the sixties and he recalled that Elbinger did eventually get his diploma approximately 6 months later, but the specific time remains unknown.

revolution. Diana Oughton, a regional organizer for SDS, also was scheduled to speak about women's liberation.¹⁹⁷

Meanwhile, the *Observer* expanded its radical coverage. The first Women's Issue in *Observer* history was published on February 7, 1969. The front page of the February 21, 1969, issue of the *Observer* featured a large picture of Malcolm X. White published his research exposing Oakland's connections to corporations ever since its foundation. White's conclusion was that "the university needs funds, industry needs contracts, and the ruling class and the military need information, systems of social control, and weaponry. The University, then, easily becomes the prisoner of the ruling class and the state."¹⁹⁸ One of the first major grants, according to White, was from the National Science Foundation, a federal agency. The NSF "does studies on scientific and engineering manpower in socialist nations, notably China, for such agencies as the CIA," White reported. Many more corporations and foundations were cited by White, including the Kettering Foundation, the Air Force Missile Development Center, and the Ford Foundation.¹⁹⁹

In March 1969, students learned that the *Kontuse*, the independent student literary magazine missing since 1967, had died when Black reported that students were never able to sell enough copies of the seventh edition to pay for its "inflated" printing bill.²⁰⁰ The *Observer* staff decided to call the literary magazine published in the March 21, 1969 *Observer* issue "Kontuse Eight" to hopefully revive students' interest in a student literary

¹⁹⁷ "SDS Plans Education-Action Week," *Oakland Observer*, January 17, 1969. Nearly a year later on March 6, 1970, Diana Oughton died in a New York City townhouse explosion along with fellow members of the Weatherman faction of SDS Ted Gold and Terry Robbins, while attempting to make explosives for "armed propaganda." For more information, see "When Students Attack: The Logic behind Bringing the War Home, Violent Revolution, and an Underground Movement," written by Michael Westphal.

¹⁹⁸ White, "University Research Policies Examined," *Oakland Observer*, February 28, 1969.

¹⁹⁹ White, "University Research Policies Examined," *Oakland Observer*, February 28, 1969.

²⁰⁰ Black, Editorial, *Oakland Observer*, March 21, 1969.

magazine. Black accused the “puritan administration” as the perpetrators responsible for the censorship and ultimate banning of the *Contuse*.²⁰¹ Their noble attempt to revive it was unsuccessful.

With the *Contuse* clearly dead, Varner discussed, in a February 1969 speech, the composition of the radicals at OU and throughout the country to 266 members of the Senior Men’s Club of Grosse Pointe. He explained that “the current uprisings” were not “Communist inspired.” Of the 5,000 OU students, most were “typical” and “only 1-2%” made up “the radical-SDS breed which wants to tear everything down.” Giving more details, Varner said “among the militants” were “rebels (10-20%) who go around shouting obscenities and invading the President’s office” in order to inflate “their egos.” While there was a “very minor” far-right reactionary group, the rest of the “50-70%” students were non-participating students.²⁰² In the newsletter, the members of the Senior Men’s Club called this “cheering news.”²⁰³ Varner’s assessment of the student movement was insightful and mostly accurate (the students inflating egos seems degrading), which must have proved useful in the behind-the-scenes actions he probably would later take against the *Observer*.

There were only a few months left of school when Honey and the rest of the *Observer* staff decided to publish the second April Fools issue of the *Observer*. The March 28, 1969, edition featured the headline “Students Seize Oakland.”²⁰⁴ It

²⁰¹ Black, Editorial, *Oakland Observer*, March 21, 1969.

²⁰² “The Newsletter of the Senior Men’s Club of Grosse Pointe Incorporated,” March 1969, Box 19, Folder “T-Correspondence and Documents 1961-1968,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

²⁰³ “The Newsletter of the Senior Men’s Club of Grosse Pointe Incorporated,” March 1969, Box 19, Folder “T-Correspondence and Documents 1961-1968,” Varner Papers, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

²⁰⁴ “Students Seize Oakland,” *Oakland Observer*, March 28, 1969. Believe it or not, after the first few readings of this article, I thought students actually took over OU for a day. Looking backward, I wanted to believe it was true. Strangely, the second April Fool’s edition of the *Observer* did pique my interest in writing about the *Observer* so much that I continued reading every *Observer* article in the late sixties. Because of this, I changed topics in my history capstone class.

humorously reported the story of a small group of students, who after walking out of a class during a dull lecture, decided to take over North Foundation Hall “while administrative offices were empty during the morning coffee break.” Once the students established a beachhead in NFH, the students rallied more students to “liberate” South Foundation Hall. This “spontaneous” student uprising lasted for 8 hours. No one was injured as building after building was liberated. The Department of Campus Security officers were not sure which laws were being broken, so for a brief time students were able to escape arrests. Finally, the students occupying NFH began to get hungry by dinner time and a consensus was reached that led the movement to liberate the dining halls of Vandenberg Hall. The students left Varner “directions” in his office, which they hoped he would do what he was paid to do: “administrate.” Varner was to start following the orders of the students, who demanded a “total deconstructing” of OU to make it more habitable for students.²⁰⁵

After the April Fool’s issue, Honey reflected in “Looking Back Four Years at Oakland” on his experience at OU in the *Observer*. Originally, Honey came to OU because it was a small school that would have close relations between students and faculty. As a freshman, Honey received high grades, ending the year with a 3.6 grade point average. He lived on campus and joined the student newspaper. After supporting President Johnson in the election of 1964, Honey became disillusioned by the escalation of the Vietnam War and quickly became an anti-war protester. This led him to become involved with SDS OU. When a student movement led Varner to create the Commission on Student Life, Honey ran for a position to represent the students and received the most votes. Honey claimed much time was wasted on “arguing over punctuation and content

²⁰⁵ “Students Seize Oakland,” *Oakland Observer*, March 28, 1969.

of resolutions with faculty members” and that little was accomplished. This was not the “participatory democracy” that he wanted. While studying abroad in Hong Kong, Honey surprisingly found what university life should be like. The only problem was that it seemed unlikely back in Michigan that OU could ever change into a free university. By the time he was a senior, Honey became disinterested in getting good grades, even when he earned a 4.0 two semesters in a row. During one final exam, he simply walked out because “it didn’t make much sense to take it.” His senior year was dedicated to the *Observer* to publish something relevant and productive: something that would undermine the community’s morals. The *Observer* became “the weapon to deal with three years of oppression at the hands of the community morals.”²⁰⁶ The prime example of agitation and attacking the community’s morals in this issue of the *Observer* was an artistic drawing of Jesus with the caption: “Wanted: Jesus.” Jesus was wanted for several crimes, including: having an appearance similar to a “hippie,” urging love not war, being anti-capitalist because He urges followers to sell everything and give to the poor, and is probably on drugs because He “is given to visions.”²⁰⁷

Black and Honey graduated in the spring of 1969 and Hitchcock took over as editor in the fall after a hiatus for the entire *Observer* newspaper during the summer. By the beginning of the new academic year of 1969-1970, the *Observer* faced competition from a new bi-weekly student newspaper: *Focus: Oakland*. Their editor was former *Observer* student journalist, Larry Good. Their mission, as their title indicated, was to focus on OU, instead of the radical politics of the *Observer*, but the real reason why the *Observer* became really radical in the first place can be traced back to the restrictions of freedom of expression and the puritan administration at OU. Either they did not know

²⁰⁶ Honey, “Looking Back: Four Years At OU,” *Oakland Observer*, April 9, 1969.

²⁰⁷ *Oakland Observer*, April 9, 1969.

OU's history, or they did not accept it, or it did not bother them. *Focus: Oakland* had four goals:

1. accurate news reporting
2. in-depth analysis of events and actions of importance
3. the encouragement of free expression of all types of ideas
4. quality – both in content and form²⁰⁸

The first editorial of the *Focus: Oakland* staff explained why they started another student newspaper, or as they called it, a “news magazine.”²⁰⁹ First, *Focus: Oakland* was offering variety for the OU readers. Second, the *Focus* staff “ran into the recurring sentiment that many functions of a newspaper were not being fulfilled by last year’s *Observer*... (and) while they didn’t want another Activities Bulletin, they did want news and features relevant to their existence, stories dealing with Oakland University.”²¹⁰

The *Focus* staff adopted a pro-administration tone. When Varner was considering leaving OU for the MSU presidency nearly 2,000 students protested to keep him at OU. *Focus: Oakland* reported the incident with favorable pictures of the student protesters.²¹¹ Conversely, the *Observer*’s Davis Catton criticized the students for paying “subconscious tribute to the man, who more than any other administrator, has been responsible for diverting radical energies into the safety of approved, sanctioned, liberal-committee channels.”²¹²

On October 8-11, 1969, approximately 800 students in a campus of nearly voted in a referendum to decide whether OU would support student publications.²¹³ The decision to pull the plug on the *Observer* was made by the 638 students who voted against it, effectively ending financial support for the *Observer* after the fall semester of

²⁰⁸ *Focus: Oakland*, September 10, 1969.

²⁰⁹ *Focus: Oakland*, September 10, 1969.

²¹⁰ *Focus: Oakland*, September 10, 1969.

²¹¹ *Focus: Oakland*, September 24, 1969.

²¹² Catton, “Students March On Varner Regime,” *Oakland Observer*, September 26, 1969.

²¹³ Hitchcock and Boykin, “11 Years After,” *Oakland Observer*, December 12, 1969.

1969.²¹⁴ The referendum originated from the Commission on Student Life in February 1969. The Commission issued a “Proposal for the Allocation of Responsibility for Student Publications,” advising a more democratic process in electing student editors instead of the past appointments of editors. Once elected, the editors would have been free from censorship. In addition, the Commission rejected the idea of an “editorial review board” in favor of recall elections to insure better student representation. The proposal suggested the continuation of the mandatory two dollar publication fee paid by the students each semester: the major change was that student publications would still be supported by the university without any faculty and administration role.²¹⁵ Somehow, this proposal was reduced to a referendum on whether or not students wanted to support student publications by October 1969. The MSU Board of Trustees approved the results of the referendum.²¹⁶ Varner and the MSU Board of Trustees were finally able to look forward to a future without the *Observer*. Paradoxically, it is true that the *Observer*, at first, supported the referendum (perhaps out of over-confidence), but judging from the death of the *Observer* it would seem unnatural for the *Observer* to commit suicide.

The *Observer*, meanwhile, found a new obstacle to printing. The *Observer*'s printing company at the time was Keystone Press. When Hitchcock submitted the October 10, 1969 issue to the press, they simply refused to print two key articles in the *Observer*. The first was a commentary by Eldridge Cleaver, who was at the time leader of the Black Panther Party that contained several curse words. The other article urged for

²¹⁴ “Interview With... Mike Hitchcock: Editor, *Oakland Observer*,” *Focus: Oakland*, October 29, 1969.

²¹⁵ Commission of Student Life, “Proposal for the Allocation of Responsibility for Student Publications,” ca. March 1969, Box 38, Folder “Old Agenda,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

²¹⁶ OU Staff Bulletin, “Students Vote ‘No,’” October 20-26, 1969, Staff Bulletin Box, Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. Due to research constraints, a definite explanation has not been found. Future research hopefully will shed some light to this mystery.

Americans to help Cuba and explained how to join the Venceremos Brigade, an opportunity for Americans to learn more about Cuba and revolutionary politics while traveling throughout Cuba.²¹⁷ During this time, Hitchcock was taking on many of the responsibilities of the *Observer* printing tasks. This led to a busy schedule. In return, this started affecting his school performance and personal relationships – causing him to be severely depressed. For every issue, Hitchcock drove from Rochester to the printing press in Dearborn. During one of these visits, Hitchcock crashed his 1962 Chevy into a stalled car still in the road and then into another car. While he was physically unharmed, no longer having a car changed his ability to get around. More importantly, because he did not have insurance, the other drivers' insurance companies were attempting to collect the damages from him.²¹⁸ As one can imagine, this worsened his depression.

Ironically, *Focus: Oakland*, in trying to live up to its goals, could not ignore what was happening to the *Observer*. They decided to interview Hitchcock about the recent censorship. When Good interviewed Hitchcock, he discovered that Hitchcock intended to drop out of school, that the *Observer* was at the time being printed in Waseena, Ohio because many local Detroit presses refused to print the radical political articles, and that Hitchcock thought that the OU community “sucks.”²¹⁹ In the October 31, 1969 issue of the *Observer*, Hitchcock submitted his “student withdrawal clearance” sheet completely filled out – the editor of the *Observer* dropped out.²²⁰ Hitchcock was replaced by Catton,

²¹⁷ Good, “Censored *Observer* Protects O.U. Students: Subversive Story Cut By Printer,” *Focus: Oakland*, October 29, 1969; “*Observer* Censored By Printer,” *Oakland Observer*, October 10, 1969.

²¹⁸ Hitchcock, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2008.

²¹⁹ “Interview With... Mike Hitchcock: Editor, *Oakland Observer*,” *Focus: Oakland*, October 29, 1969.

²²⁰ *Oakland Observer*, October 31, 1969; Hitchcock, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2008. After dropping out, Hitchcock could not find a factory job in Rochester, so he escaped the jurisdiction of Rochester to avoid his debts and finally got a job as a janitor in Boston. He returned to Rochester after about four months in Boston and, according to him, became a “bum.” Still suffering from depression, he became a drug-addict taking “massive amounts of illegal drugs, primary marijuana and mescaline.” By 1971, he ironically wrote a few articles for *Focus: Oakland*. Then, he traveled to Alaska with his soon to be wife. After traveling some more, he settled down in San Francisco, where he finished his education at

who remained the editor until the end. *Focus: Oakland* continued covering Oakland news, while the *Observer* expanded coverage to the Vietnam Moratorium – monthly nation-wide protests against the Vietnam War. However, the *Observer* was running out of time. The last edition was published December 12, 1969. The *Observer* staff released plans that they intended to start an underground newspaper for the metropolitan Detroit area. Regrettably, nothing ever materialized – the *Observer* died.

The next edition of *Focus: Oakland* on January 16, 1970, adopted the newspaper format of the *Observer* instead of its magazine format. *Focus: Oakland* continued publishing as a struggling self-financed student newspaper. The consequence of the decision to make all student newspaper independent was clearly evident in the seventies. By 1975, there were four independent student newspapers and none of them could support themselves. OU was without a student newspaper. It was recommended by William W. Connellan, Assistant to the President and Director of Public Relations, and Jack T. Wilson, Dean of Student Life, to reinstate university financial support in 1975.²²¹ The current student newspaper in 2008, the *Oakland Post*, has this luxury.

Varner finally left OU February 1, 1970 to be the chief administrative officer of the entire University of Nebraska system. While Varner claimed to have a “strong commitment” to Oakland, he thought ten years was long enough for one man to remain “president or chancellor of a single campus.”²²² Varner’s decision to leave clearly ignored the protests that were designed to influence his decision to stay, which arguably showed his lack of concern for student opinions.²²³

San Francisco State University and now he teaches geography at a community college.

²²¹ Memorandum from William W. Connellan and Jack T. Wilson to Kenneth H. Coffman, “Student Publications,” April 17, 1975, Varner Papers, Box 19, Folder “Student Publications Committee,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

²²² “Varner Resigns To Take Nebraska Job,” *Focus: Oakland*, January 16, 1970.

²²³ Varner passed away on October 30, 1999. While this essay has been extremely critical of Varner’s authority, he must be honored in establishing OU and founding an institution of higher learning

Meanwhile in Kentucky, Honey and Martha Allen, were arrested in January 1970 for “embracery.”²²⁴ After graduating, they had joined the staff of the Southern Conference Education Fund (SCEF) and were also coordinators of the Kentucky Chapter of the Southern Committee Against Repression, both organizations assisting and supporting blacks in Kentucky. They were specifically charged with jury tampering because they distributed letters to the people of Hart County, Kentucky in support of six black leaders, who were indicted for conspiracy to destroy private property in June 1968 after a black community protested police brutality and poverty of blacks in Louisville, Kentucky.²²⁵ The case was originally supposed to be heard in Louisville, but due to widespread protests in both Louisville’s black and white communities it was moved out of Louisville to Munfordville, a predominately white community seventy-five miles to the south of Louisville. A flyer was distributed at OU by William Brewster, Roy Kotynek, and Black claimed that a Louisville newspaper (also circulated in Hart County) editorialized on “one of the same points” as their letter did. They concluded, “thus it appears that only crime Honey and Allen is that they exercised as citizens (rather than as a capitalist enterprise) their constitutional right to free press – the right to state their opinions in print.”²²⁶ Honey and Allen stated in their controversial letter mailed January 1, 1969:

that I was fortunate to have experienced.

²²⁴ Flyer by William Brewster, Roy Kotynek, and David Black, “Repression In Kentucky: The Honey-Allen Case & The Black Six,” Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

²²⁵ Flyer by Brewster, Kotynek, and Black, “Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. According to the flyer, this protest led to a general uprising when “police cars sped into the meeting area (as the rally was dispersing) Then, “patrolmen jumped from their cars with guns drawn and clubs raised.” Twenty-five black people were shot, two unarmed youths were killed, one by a policeman and the other by a merchant as a result of the uprising.

²²⁶ Flyer by Brewster, Kotynek, and Black, “Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

The prosecutor in Louisville knows he doesn't have evidence for a conviction, and that is why he is dumping this case on you... The state claims that these people caused the Louisville uprising of '68. This is a lie... the politicians are trying to jail these six people because they spoke up about unemployment, bad housing, poverty, and racism.²²⁷

A short time later, both were in four by seven foot cells and were harassed by jail keepers and police. While they were in jail on bonds set at \$2,000 each, their home in Louisville was ransacked by detectives confiscating "literature, files, wedding pictures, letters, and many personal belongings."²²⁸ Allen defended their decision to distribute the letters:

Most people don't own big newspapers, and the newspapers often don't print what we say. Our only recourse is to do what we did – print our own views ourselves and distribute them. If we are jailed for that, there is no freedom of press for us, or for most citizens.²²⁹

The Black Six were finally acquitted, which led to the charges against Honey and Allen being dropped.²³⁰ This incident illustrated those OU graduates, who successfully became "critics" outside of the OU community and still inside America, were not any freer!

The *Observer* printed thousands of pages throughout its ten year presence at OU. Many students contributed as staff members, as by sending letters to the editors, as guest columnists, and as avid readers. The *Observer*, Oakland's first official student newspaper, overcame many obstacles to become a creative and critical newspaper. However, the life of the *Observer* proved that freedom of expression cannot exist in an unfree university and an unfree society, as Honey argued in 1969. Distinguished scholar and activist Noam Chomsky once told a student journalist,

²²⁷ Flyer by Brewster, Kotynek, and Black, "Box 30 "Student Life and Clubs," Folder 6 "Flyers, Political," Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

²²⁸ Flyer by Brewster, Kotynek, and Black, "Box 30 "Student Life and Clubs," Folder 6 "Flyers, Political," Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

²²⁹ Flyer by Brewster, Kotynek, and Black, "Box 30 "Student Life and Clubs," Folder 6 "Flyers, Political," Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

²³⁰ Flyer by Brewster, Kotynek, and Black, "Box 30 "Student Life and Clubs," Folder 6 "Flyers, Political," Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan; Honey, e-mail message to author, April 5, 2008. Currently, Honey is a well-published historian at University of Washington, Tacoma.

Elites don't control the student press, but I'll tell you something. You try in the student press to do anything that breaks out of conventions and you are going to have the whole business community around here down on your neck. The university is going to get threatened. Maybe they'll give no attention, that's possible. But if you get to the point where they don't stop paying attention to you the pressures will start coming – because there are people with power, there are people who own the country, and they are not going to let the country get out of control.²³¹

Evidently, the democratic society that SDS OU fought for and all of the articles the OU students wrote in order to radically change society were swept away by the pressures of the few that do have power – whether it is the few of the administration or the few who own the printing presses. They tried to break out of convention, and this revealed the invisible hand behind the curtains of the play we call freedom of expression in the U.S. The foundation of OU was built on hopes and dreams, but for some of Oakland's brightest students and even professor Shapiro – OU became a nightmare. Students like Metzger, Honey, Elbinger, White, Black, and Hitchcock risked their educations to fight for freedom of expression, student rights, and peace. The *Observer* fulfilled Oakland's founding purpose: it allowed students to become critics worthy of living in a free society. What OU students did not know at first was that they were supposed to fail and, as Elbinger would have said, become the “cogs” and “pegs” of the lifeless undemocratic machine that is America.²³² The radical reporting and investigating of the *Observer* staff created many powerful enemies on and off the Oakland campus, which culminated in the *Observer*'s untimely death in December 1969.

While the atmosphere of OU has not changed drastically since the death of the *Observer*, the student historical memory of OU as an institution has been lost and forgotten. Damage has been done by retelling the myth of Varner. This has been a

²³¹ *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*, directed by Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick, Zeitgeist Video, 1992.

²³² Elbinger, Enchiridon, *Oakland Observer*, September 17, 1965.

concise history of OU in the sixties with a major emphasis on freedom of expression. Hopefully, students will re-examine their roles in society like some of the students of the sixties did. In an essay reflecting on the conditions of SDS OU in 1968, White wrote that “the potential is there. Oakland and every place like Oakland can be organized. They have to (be organized) – if we are serious about building a movement.”²³³ Today, there is still poverty, ignorance, war, racism, sexism, environmental destruction, homophobia, nationalism, exploitation, and the inhumanity of human to human – these are all pieces of the same puzzle that needs to be solved for a lasting peace and prosperity for all. And if students are serious about making a change, then it is necessary to carry on the radical tradition that threatened the powers that still be.

²³³ White, “Don’t Mourn – Organize: Some Comments on Oakland SDS, the Movement, and Some Ideas (A First Rough Draft),” Box 30 “Student Life and Clubs,” Folder 6 “Flyers, Political,” Kresge Library, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan.

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