

The real '60s

Television can't do revolutionary decade justice

WATCHED this TV movie last week — The 60s. I usually hate watching movies or sitcoms or anything that has bell bottoms in it, or peace and love, or drugs, or free sex, or baby boomers. It's all such a cartoon, for the most part. It was then and it hasn't changed much. For me, it was personal.

I was born in 1946. I can't help that. I lived it. For me, it was real. It was life. It was complicated. It was also history. There are so many memories.

Watching TV. 1965. Seeing myself on the small screen. Sitting on the stairs of Sproul Hall at UC Berkeley after an anti-Vietnam War rally wearing a pleated, long, paisley tan, brown, gold made-in-India dress.

I was thin then; long, shiny hair nearly down to my waist. I knew it was nice and long when I could reach behind my back and grab a handful.

Mario Savio went nuts because he was the only one filmed when he got up to inspire action with his "cogs in the wheel" speeches.

They never shot pictures of Bettina Apethecker, who gave the theory behind the free-speech dialectics. She wasn't pretty. Her father was the major theoretician for the American Communist Party.

People used to take pictures. Local colour, wherever we were.

Or, someone might threaten. One time I was in a restaurant with my boyfriend, Richard, and a few friends in Concord, just over the hills from Berkeley. Didn't know it was cracker country.

We were celebrating the purchase of Richard's new Fender Jazz bass. (I'd earned most of the money working as an art model.) Richard was then playing with the Cleanliness and Godliness Skiffle Band. He'd been playing washtub bass for Country Joe and the Fish



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when they were a jug band, but had been replaced, because Joe thought Richard was too hung up with politics.

Richard had been arrested in Sproul Hall during the free-speech sit-in. He was a Russian history major. Later on, he joined the Communist Party, but quit because they weren't radical enough. He never dressed like a hippie.

He was a politico. He wore Levi's, blue workshirts, long sideburns, wire-rimmed glasses. He'd marched in Mississippi before coming to Berkeley from New York in his high-school graduation present, a cherry-red Chevy Impala.

Didn't matter to the guy in the restaurant who stood up and said: "Look at those hippies. Walkin' in here just like niggers. I'm gonna whup their asses. I got a shotgun in my car."

I froze. Our friend, the owner of the local music store, stood up. He was dressed in a suit, short hair, and weighed in at about 250 pounds. Tall. He took off his jacket and rolled up his sleeves. Silence.

We got "doggy bags" and went back over the hills, home to Berkeley Safe.

No easy, happy Hollywood endings. Longer, more complicated. More embarrassing. More grand.

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