

Voices of 1968  
Oral History Interview Notes

Interviewee: Richard Codor

Interviewer: Shaun D. Mullen

Notetaker: Rebecca Johnson Melvin

October 24, 2018

University of Delaware Library One Button Studio

Newark, Delaware

Begin Introductions. Mullen recounts Codor was a junior at UD, cartoonist at the Review (where Mullen was editor), resident of Wilmington, Mullen's roommate when Codor was a senior, so longtime acquaintances.

01:19 Remembers setting: was a junior in Recitation Hall working on art project or a cartoon. Was submitting one cartoon a week to the Review. Caught in the revolutionary spirit on campus of agitating against the war. Remembered a campus radio show at the time, eating pizza live on the radio, and getting calls to stop! Funny episode on the campus radio station.

02:30 UD campus not to be confused with Berkeley, Columbia, or other centers of student movement. Being in Newark was like being "on the outskirts of Paris." Information trickled down to "poor little Delaware" which was more or less left out of the immediate fun and excitement of protests.

03:24 The Review, which subscribed to the Scholastic News Service, provided a steady diet of news about activism to UD.

03:51 Cartooning chores. Came up with ideas, sometimes, after story conferences at the Review but really talked all week about what was going on. Worked on a Bristol pad with rapidograph pens, always testing inks and pens. Used tracing paper and light table to revise and do over. Always in a rush to submit the cartoon. Process of getting the cartoon photographed, negative made, photo print made for newspaper. Process obviously is no longer used.

05:27 Meeting Review deadlines. There was always a hole on page four, waiting on the cartoon. Signed cartoons as "Mung," not "Codor." This was a childish scatological reference that dogs him to this day.

06:20 Mullen recalls that Mung's signature character was similar to Pat Oliphant's (Denver Post) cartoon character [Punk]. Oliphant made his cartoons

available for free to student papers. Review had great editorial cartoons. Codor called Oliphant the "Daumier of our age."

08:15 Discussed subjects of cartoons: the draft, student life, various grips. Described one memorable cartoon, the Greek Rush. Another was the cartoon of Gov. Charles Terry sitting on the skyline of Wilmington, directly referring to the National Guard occupation of Wilmington after the assassination of Martin Luther King. Mullen recalls this almost got them thrown out of school.

08:56 Codor recalled cartoon of black-clad Vietnamese soldiers running across the Delaware Memorial Bridge.

Mullen recalled Dean [John E.] Hocutt speaking to the Review about opposing criticism of government and Delaware's political establishment. Board of Trustees included DuPont officials and southern Delawareans, known conservatives.

10:22 Description of cartoon strip that got Codor called into Dean Hocutt's office. Depiction of Acting President [John W.] Shirley as porcine super villain terrorizing the youth of the Delaware kingdom. Only ran one of intended three-part strip. Dean Hocutt threatened Mullen with expulsion over this one and called Codor in to his office.

12:05 Codor was in his ROTC uniform when he got the call to the Dean's office. Remembers explaining, "It's humor, sir." Was told, "Don't ever do this again." Codor remembers standing at attention, in his uniform, and clicking his heels before leaving the office.

13:07 Mullen asked if Codor was in the April Fool issue of 1968 in the photograph of someone tripping over the sidewalk chains on the Mall. Codor believes that was Erik Smith. This spoof also caused an explosion for poking fun at administration.

13:59 Question about living in Wilmington during the occupation by the National Guard. Codor lived about 25 blocks away from central incidents.

14:28 The night of the assassination, Codor was attending a Flyers [ice hockey] game in Philadelphia. The electricity had gone off and the ice was melting, so they cancelled the game. He was on the Broad Street Station train around 7 or 8 pm and went down to Washington, D.C., to visit his friend, Dave Wilson. Nothing unusual on the train. Got off the train in D.C. and walked into Hell. Right across the street, a building blew up. All kinds of groups were out on the street. There was a fire and then a second explosion. He went to Dave's apartment, who had forgotten that he was coming. Dave opened the door, surprised to see him, yanked him inside, and said, "Are you crazy?!?" Remember, these were the days of no cell phone, no immediate news. He

didn't have a clue as to what had happened. This was spring break and he stayed several days in D.C.

16:43 Remembers mother grumbling in Wilmington. Remembers jeeps. Went back to school when spring break was over.

Was not involved with civil rights as a student. Was influenced by Wilmington neighbor Ruth Colbert, who was very active picketing or always on the phone. Went with Ruth, at age 12, to an anti-war march in Washington, D.C. Remembers pictures of the crowds around the reflecting pool and one picture of Ruth falling in the water after she lost her balance.

18:51 Awareness at school? It was "like the suburbs of Paris," away from the action. Wilmington was in lockdown after minor looting. Remembers the stories in the Review.

19:43 Remembers one night, around 7 or 8 pm, when everything exploded in Newark. Was at Recitation Hall. Looked out the window and saw hundreds of people running down Main Street, chanting and making noise. [Perkins] Student Center was occupied. All the art students ran down, too. [George] Wolkind was making a speech.

21:00 Remembers Wolkind led another brief, peaceful take-over of Hullahen Hall after three faculty advisors were dismissed.

21:40 Mention of firebomb attempt at ROTC. Monsanto Corporation (Dow Chemicals) in Newark, manufactured Agent Orange. Student rumors that Monsanto had a nuclear reactor.

22:41 That one big demonstration was Newark "taking it to the streets."

23:00 Mullen appreciated Codor's DNA as a troublemaker and his career as animator, editorialist, traveler. Asked Codor, "How did 1968 inform your life?"

24:00 Question government and government motives. Take a stand. Along with 30 million baby boomers, was influenced by the changes of the Sixties.

24:37 Took a road trip with friends Chris Straley and Dave Wilson to Chicago for Democratic National Convention and then to San Francisco and back. Chaos and agitation informed everything.

25:12 Mention of psychedelics. Incident of being duped in San Francisco, before heading back to Delaware, when plan to purchase dope went awry. The "three rubes" bought a bundle of oregano and saw their vision of profit

disappear. Drove back in 48 hours because they didn't have money for food, only gas.

- 27:27 In Chicago, was able to get free housing by signing up with [Eugene] McCarthy supporters. Stayed with a nice Catholic Worker type family. Remembers crowds in the Park, speeches, police dogs, tear gas. Saw Jean Genet speaking to one group. Saw Ralph Abernathy speaking to the Poor Peoples March.
- 28:14 Saw Abbie Hoffman speaking to another group of Yippies. Different groups. Police militarism and chaos with the tear gas, jeeps with barbed wire. It was surreal.
- 28:53 Remembers two very funny things. Was hiding in a bush to get out of the way. Someone also hiding in the bush, said, "Hey, didn't I meet you in a hostel in Switzerland last year?" Then, in a second bush, realized that Peter, Paul and Mary were also hiding in the same bush. At the time, Mary was married to the cousin of Mark Goldfus, a friend and fellow UD student. (Mullen added: and an alumnus and current professor of economics.)

Remembers looking for his friends Chris and Dave. At one point a bus full of kids drove by, shouting out the windows, "Power to the People!" Then a bus full of police drove by, shouting out the windows, "We're going to beat the hell out of you!" It was weird and surreal.

- 30:18 Was looking for friend Chris. Trying to put money in a parking meter and a friendly cop advised him on parking. Met some guys who wanted to use Codor's car to drive to a farm to bring back a 1,000-pound pig. This was him mom's car so he said no. Turns out that the pig was "Pigasus," the Yippies' presidential nominee. The appearance of Pigasus prompted the arrest of the Chicago 8 at the Civic Center Plaza and the escalation of the police violence.

Remembers seeing the same cop from the parking meter now yelling at him, "I'm gonna kill you!"

Remembers hearing Abbie Hoffman trying to make a speech but no one was listening and Hoffman giving up, walking away in disgust.

Yippies were provocateurs. There was chaos everywhere. Was not afraid due to being naïve and young. These were police-controlled riots. Remembers George and Leo were in Chicago. George was in jail. This was not like the Watts riot in Los Angeles. In Chicago, there was a class division between blue collar police who had trained for riots and middle class intellectuals and activists; this added to the situation.

34:14 After Chicago. SDS approached Codor to join. Codor not a joiner. Not so much involved with The Heterodoxical Voice. Remembers Lew Bennett.

San Francisco Art Institute supported resistance to war by admitting draftable men for student deferrals. Ohio – the four students were killed in May 1970. Remembers Nixon masks.

36:29 1968 was a catalyst for political and social change.

37:00 Haight-Ashbury – the summer of love was over. Ruined. Everyone was stoned. Had a scheme to make money, bought weed for \$100 which was all they had. (Turned out to be oregano.) Drove 48 hours straight. Couldn't afford to eat. Remembers driving a shift and waking up in a ditch with a moose looking in the window.

39:50 Faculty remembrances? One professor, Irving Ribner, a Shakespearian in the English Department, had been refused membership at the Newark Country Club because he was Jewish. Remembers separate areas of “colored people” on Ray Street and New London Road. Mary Warner (active with black students) wrote for the Review. She was called “Maryjuana” in the April Fool's Day issue of the Review. Essentially no people of color on campus. Students didn't “do” civil rights. Was aware of Mrs. Colvert (sp?) and her demonstrations – it was more like “we are all feeling the pain.” Vietnam War was heating up.

42:00 Remembers when Martin Luther King was shot, first reaction was sort of like, “Is he still active?”

42:17 Mullen reminder of Greek system, which was very active. 10 fraternities on different lines, for example, KA was “Southern and bigoted”; Sigma Nu was the jock frat; Alpha Epsilon Pi was the Jewish community. Believed AEPi and connections were more tuned into the world at large.

43:56 Codor knew a lot of the guys from Mt. Pleasant and P.S. DuPont high schools. Had great parties; everyone argued, big part of student life. Friend Mark Goldfus went to Israel, then to D.C. Codor went to Israel and stayed. The fraternity building was condemned. Was located south of campus, on West Park Place (was the Red Men's Lodge, now home of First Church of Christ Scientist). David Kreitzer was a member.

46:25 Question about Robert Kennedy's assassination. More shock and gun violence. Remember, though, that students were cushioned. Information was slower, so news took a while to sink in.

47:57 1968 events: LBJ not running, MLK, RFK, DNC – remember that these events all took place either during spring break or over summer, so separated from peers during this time.

48:59 Three main ways to get the news: television (Walter Cronkite), newspaper, radio. All the top 40 stations had news on the hour. Read Village Voice and Ramparts and Workers World. Phone calls cost money.

Faculty influence? Bob Stein in art didn't stay. Victor Spinsky, art faculty, was politically aware.

Art and style influence? Looking at New York, English influence. Magazines – Pushpin Studios – Matt Glazer – Peter Max. Great color.

53:18 Interview cut short by arrival of next studio reservation.