

SUMMARY

1. Introductions and Setting the Stage

Participants begin by introducing themselves, often noting where they live now and that they have attended previous reunion sessions. Some mention having limited specific memories left to share.

2. Early Reflections on the Willard Straight Hall Takeover

1. Shock and Confusion at the Armed Exit

- One participant recalls walking near the Straight during the takeover weekend and being shocked to see students exiting with rifles and bandoliers. He admits to being naïve and tried to ignore the turmoil while continuing normal routines in Olin Hall.

2. Initial Exposure to the Takeover

- Another participant recounts warnings circulating in student housing, including fears that gunfire could reach nearby houses—warnings she found bizarre.

3. Centrality of the Takeover to Class Memory

- Several note that despite major national issues (Vietnam, Kent State), the Straight takeover remains the most searing shared memory from their college years.

3. Experiences Inside Barton Hall

1. Atmosphere, Misinformation, and Goodwill

- Participants recall that inside Barton Hall the atmosphere was surprisingly calm. Sharon Schatz notes ABC News reported violence and guns inside despite the peaceful environment she witnessed.
- Many remember sleeping on the floors and feeling a sense of solidarity.

2. Media Narratives vs. Lived Reality

- Some felt national media exaggerated events; some disagree, arguing coverage was largely fair given the turbulence of the moment.

4. Journalism, Media, and Campus Turbulence

1. **Student Journalism's Role**
 - A third participant describes being a Cornell Sun reporter, first on the scene at the Straight takeover, and later an AP and *Daily News* campus correspondent. Those events launched his journalism career.
2. **Media Competence and Bias**
 - He believes outside media exaggerated but were not unfair, and that the Sun did the best reporting.
3. **Testing Institutions**
 - He reflects that administrators, trustees, faculty, and students were tested and many “fell way short.”

5. Vietnam War, Draft Anxiety, and Antiwar Activism

1. **Personal Encounters with the Draft**
 - Men recount the fear of receiving low lottery numbers and watching the draft drawing collectively in fraternity houses. The drawing day is described as deeply unsettling—“the one time you didn’t want to win.”
2. **Attempts to Avoid Conscription**
 - Participants describe peers losing or gaining weight intentionally, begging doctors for notes, or abusing drugs to fail physicals.
3. **Impact of Vietnam on Students**
 - Many knew friends or classmates who served; some died or suffered long-term effects such as PTSD or Agent Orange exposure.
4. **Antiwar Protests**
 - Students participated in demonstrations, slept in tents on the Arts Quad, protested Kent State, Washington marches, and opposed Cambodia bombings.
 - One participant recounts being arrested during the 1971 May Day civil disobedience action in Washington, leading to a realization of governmental power.

6. Reflections on Campus Culture: Civility, Dialogue, and Social Interaction

1. **Era of Greater Civility**
 - Participants emphasize that civility was “sacred” during their time, in contrast to today’s climate.
2. **Communication Skills and Openness**
 - Many reminisce about engaging openly with people who held different views.

- Michael Stone notes that today many cannot hold conversations across political difference; he believes social media undermines interpersonal dialogue.

3. Proposed Lessons for Today

- A suggestion is raised to include training for incoming students on how to talk with people who disagree—a skill seen as eroding.

4. Friendships Across Differences

- At the end, a theme emerges that Cornell helped students be open and communicate despite divergent backgrounds.

7. Comparing Then and Now: 1960s–70s Protests vs. Today's Movements

1. Complexity of Issues

- Some argue today's campus protests (in response to Middle East tensions) involve more "intractable" and globally complex issues compared to Vietnam, which they felt grew obviously senseless over time.

2. Labels, Identity, and Social Media

- Dale Cohen believes today's students arrive with fixed identities and labels, while their generation was still forming theirs.

3. Attitudes Toward Modern Protests

- Some express disapproval of the tone and tactics of current demonstrations. Warshauer calls some recent protests in New York "repulsive."

4. Generational Optimism

- Sharon Schatz says their era felt more optimistic than today; others question whether that is accurate.

8. Additional Recollections and Lighter Moments

1. Woodstock and Positive Memories

- Someone notes that not everything was turmoil—Woodstock represented a "great love-in" and joyful part of the era.

2. Humor and Aging

- Closing comments include jokes about age, being grateful to still be here, and evolving perspectives.
