

Hoffman, at 46 he's still

by Paul Kahl
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In the late '60s when the full fury of youths' revolutionary zeal was unleashed, self-styled Yippie Party leader Abbie Hoffman was urging kids to kill their parents.

A television interviewer once asked him why he called police officers pigs and he replied, "cause on TV we can't say motherfucker." And later, he and Grace Slick of the Jefferson Airplane tried to crash Tricia Nixon's class reunion at the White House. They planned to spike the tea party beverages with LSD.

men who had to make a decision about picking up a gun and going off 10,000 miles to kill somebody in Vietnam."

Hoffman, in his frequent lectures at colleges, now discusses economic and environmental issues, ending the arms race and "re-capturing the flag and country from big business." He says coalition-building is the key to organizing in the 80's. "You have to search for the most common denominator, because you're talking about issues that affect everyone."

pollution. The group's campaign against winter navigation was successful, and Barry Freed won accolades from New York governor Hugh Carey and senator Daniel Moynihan.

"Barry Freed" then decided to turn himself in and reveal his true identity. Hoffman applied his talents to

orchestrating a big media "hurrah" to coincide with his surrender. His autobiography *Soon To Be A Major Motion Picture*, written while he was underground, was released shortly before the surrender. And just a week before, an interview with Barbara Walters was aired continent-wide on ABC's 20/20. This was followed by dozens of interviews and press conferences.

He did it because he "had an inspirational story to tell," he says. "I wanted

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This was Hoffman's self-admitted "surrealist" phase when the cultural revolutionary cum party leader invented "guerilla theatre" — a grab bag of kinky political dramas performed to make it on the evening news and shock middle class America out of its complacency.

The chaos at the New York stock exchange in 1967 when bills floated to the trading floor from the visitor's gallery before another pile was burned on Wall Street was vintage guerilla theatre.

And 1968 Democratic presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey, another victim, was served a pig's head on a silver tray.

Hoffman's exploits read like a series of newspaper headlines. New York utility company Con Edison was attacked with smoke bombs; 3,000 marijuana cigarettes were randomly mailed for Valentine's Day; a live pig was run as a presidential candidate; and army recruitment centres were smeared with stickers advocating "See Canada Now" at the height of the Vietnam War and draft dodging.

Drawing on the collective wisdom of Mao Tse-tung, Fidel Castro and media critic Marshall McLuhan, Hoffman believed that his "action-theory of theatre politics" would be the catalyst to the cultural revolution. You were a revolutionary by wearing long hair, dropping acid or grooving to rock music — a lifestyle that gave rise to the utopian Woodstock Nation.

"(It emerged from) the highly mechanized maze of class rankings, degrees, careers, neon supermarkets, military industrial complexes, suburbs, repressed sexuality, and hypocrisy of the Pig Nation," says Hoffman. Armed with his new invention, Hoffman attacked traditional leftists for failing to see beyond "footnote explanations" and effectively communicate ideas.

Balding and slightly pudgy, Hoffman at 46 still retains his knee-jerk reaction against authority and wealth. U.S. president Ronald Reagan is "the great white jelly bean" and former president Richard Nixon "showed the American people how far government is willing to lie and cheat; Reagan shows us who the lying and cheating is for."

Now Hoffman says the '60s were too confrontational "not just with the government but between young and old, blacks and whites, women and men, students versus hardhats, and so on." But he adds that "we used the cultural revolution as a vehicle to talk to young people, especially



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Hoffman's famous radical talk quickly surfaces when he explains his prison sentence for a questionable cocaine trafficking bust. For him it's "strictly a political charge."

"I'm not going to go on TV and say 'I'm against all drugs, this is right from the devil', and all that malarkey. I'm not going to say the way to change society is to put on a suit and tie and work within the system. That's what pisses them off! So I had to go to jail. It's an occupational hazard for a political activist. I've gone to jail 23 times and I've been arrested 41, and I expect it to happen again."

Hoffman claims he was only an observer of the cocaine deal that he was arrested for in 1973 while researching a sequel to *Steal This Book* (his how-to manual for cheating the system which was banned in Canada and which sells for up to \$200 on the black market for an original copy).

He was sick of jails and trials, he says. The Chicago conspiracy trial, in which he was indicted with six others for inciting riots at the Democratic national convention, made him a household name. It was only one of dozens. So Abbie Hoffman jumped bail and became a fugitive, living under numerous identities for the next seven years.

He travelled across the United States and to Europe, lived in Mexico and Montreal, and earned money from writing and odd-jobs, until 1976 when he came to the Thousand Islands of the St. Lawrence Seaway with his "running mate" Johanna Lawrenson. He assumed the alias Barry Freed, told locals he was a Hollywood scriptwriter, and in 1978 organized a grass-roots environmentalist group, Save The River, when it was learned the U.S. army corps of engineers were planning a winter navigation channel that would destroy many of the islands and cause extensive

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