

## **Carter Camp Day**

**In the spring of 73 I was regrettably living with my parents and working at a huge avionics factory making guidance systems for nuclear weapons. Neither of these were anywhere near what I wanted to be doing. I was a long-haired, anti-war, anarchist leaning hippie, but I had been busted twice for cannabis in the previous eight months, and was on probation. So, I had very limited options. But there were some exciting things going on in terms of anti-authority people power.**

**The most exciting had been the takeover of Wounded Knee, South Dakota on February 27<sup>th</sup>, by a brave and dedicated group of Oglala Warriors and American Indian Movement activists. Every day I would scan the paper and watch the news to see how these courageous Native Americans were doing in their quest to regain some control over their ancestral lands. They were up against overwhelming firepower and manpower.**

**The Feds came in the day of the occupation and brought helicopters, armored personnel carriers, .50 caliber machine guns, assault rifles, sniper rifles, grenade launchers, and some 133,000 rounds of ammo. The Natives had a few assault rifles but were mostly defending their position with the same guns**

**that they used to put food on their family's tables. For over seventy days the Feds tried shooting, starving, and cutting off power. They also launched a smear campaign aimed at dividing the Warriors with lies that some of them were informants. At one point the activists sent an envoy to the United Nations in an attempt to get recognition as a sovereign entity.**

**Every day I checked out the updates and every day I cheered for the Indians to hold on and to survive the onslaught. By the time a truce was reached seventy-five days later on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1973, I was utterly astounded by their level of fortitude, courage, and perseverance in the face of the withering assault by the Feds. There had been remarkably few casualties on either side considering how many rounds had been expended. As part of the conditions of the truce, the activists were allowed to leave the scene without being detained. The indictments came later. Over four hundred Natives were arrested including seven identified as leaders, on federal conspiracy charges. Those included AIM co-founder Dennis Banks and AIM National Director Russel Means. Also indicted for on federal conspiracy charges were Lakota Medicine Man Leonard Crow Dog and another AIM Co-Founder, Carter Camp.**

**Means and Banks were tried with a small group in federal court in South Dakota and found not guilty on all counts. In**

frustration the federal prosecutor decided to seek a more conservative venue and the second group was slated to be tried in federal court in Cedar Rapids, Iowa before Judge Edward Mc Manus a “law and order” Democrat, and a man thought to be more favorable to the prosecution. As a young boy, I had met this man sitting at my grandfather’s kitchen table as Granddad was the head of the Tama county Democratic Party and Mc Manus was running for governor. This trial was scheduled for the summer of 75.

Between the winter/spring of 73 and the summer of 75 I had gotten my life going in a direction more to my liking. I had met a young woman working at the factory named Jean. We eventually rented a house with her twin sister Jane, Jane’s husband Mike and my best pal Mick.

It was a charmingly funky place on a dead-end street that butted up against a huge cemetery. We grew organic veggies and marijuana as our romantic relationships became casualties of the seventies’ sexual climate. Jean and I were waning, Jane and Mike had gotten divorced, and Jane was dating her Graphic Arts teacher at the community college. When she informed me about the state-of-the-art printing set-up she and her instructor/boyfriend had access to, my devious mind immediately went to “Fake IDs” which I had amateurishly dabbled in, in my college dorm. She talked to

her boyfriend/Instructor, Ken T., about my idea, who was immediately all in.

After Jean and I split, I moved to a small commune on a hundred-and-eighty acre farm in NE Iowa owned by a man named Jim who had recently been paralyzed from the neck down, in a diving accident. I brought with me a hundred sets of the newly minted blank fake IDs including driver's licenses, draft cards, social security cards, and private security IDs. My cut for coming up with original idea. They were very high quality due to the state-of-the-art equipment at the community college and the instructor's ability to order the exact same security paper that was being used on the genuine dox, for his "class needs". I stashed these away and only supplied them to folks "in need" i.e. those, who for a variety of reasons, needed to establish a new identity to avoid persecution and/prosecution.

Jim and I spent a lot of time together as I had become his primary caretaker. Other members of the commune pitched in as well, but I had a knack for it and never complained about things like butt wiping, bed sore tending, and catheter inserting. We also spent a lot of time just hanging out, smoking lots of herb, and quaffing numerous brewskis. One day while in hang out mode we were listening to the local public affiliate of NPR's news programming. They related how

approximately two hundred supporters of the indicted Native co-conspirators on trial, had arrived in Cedar Rapids to show their solidarity during the trial. The newscaster further reported that the county had indicated that the Indians were welcome to camp in the county park for two weeks, but no longer as per park regulations.

After a brief discussion Jim stated that he would like to extend an invitation for the group of supporters to camp on his land for as long as the trial went on. He asked if I would be willing to be do the leg work. His farm was ninety miles from the site of the trial, so we knew that the logistics were not ideal, but we would make the offer anyway.

The next day I traveled to Cedar Rapids to seek out the leaders for a face-to-face meeting. It was not easily accomplished. I did not feel like it would be wise to just show up at their camp in the park and say “take me to your leader”. After a few dead ends, I found out that one of the local churches was providing support services for the group. I went to the church and was directed to the member of the church that was acting as a liason with the Natives. He was not willing to introduce me or tell me where I could find any of the leaders. But he was willing to pass on a message. I told him about Jim’s offer and gave a local phone number where I could be reached for the next two days. The next day I got a

call from a man named Allen A.. He stated that he was the main aide for Carter Camp, one of the seven indicted “co-conspirators” and that Mr. Camp was interested in our offer. I knew who Carter Camp was from following the news. We agreed to meet the next day for a drive up to the farm so that they could see the land and talk to Jim.

When we met in Cedar Rapids the next day, we agreed to take their vehicle as it would seat the three of us (Carter, Allen, and me) a lot more comfortably than my beat-up pick-up truck. I wasn't sure what their stance would be about smoking pot and drinking beer while driving, which I usually did, but they were all in. With them sitting in front and me in back, we quickly attained full party altitude. I was fascinated to hear their stories about the occupation, from the planning, to the details of the take-over, to the militarized federal response. They told me about bullets whizzing all about their encampment but never into the sacred sweat lodge. They believed that it was protected. After hearing the news accounts, it was incredible to hear the actual play-by-play from the folks who lived it. I felt like I was getting a rare glimpse of unfiltered history.

I was a little put off by them throwing their empty beer cans out the window and told them to just give them to me to dispose of. They did so, but stated that the “land is already

**polluted so what difference does it make ?". I agreed that the land was already degraded but that it wasn't any of my garbage laying on the ground. They conceded the point and I became the official "keeper of the empties". I was pretty sure that they made this designation with their tongues firmly in cheek.**

**By the time we reached the farm we had become jolly good friends. I introduced Jim who also appreciated the significance of being in the presence of people that were making history and hearing the story from their own lips. After a long talk and the ceremonial passing of the joint, Carter, Allen, and myself went for a hike around the property. They loved the beauty of the land with its tall limestone bluffs and lush wooded valleys. I made sure to take them by the sweat lodge that my friend Donnie and I had built by the creek. I pointed out how we had a little slide from the door down to the creek so we could cool off if we got too hot. They pointed out that the correct procedure was to utter a native phrase that basically meant "brother please let some heat out", at which point the flap would be opened for a few minutes, then closed again with no one exiting the lodge. I still preferred the muddy slide into the astonishingly cold spring fed creek. What a rush.**

**On the ride back to CR, Carter stated that they really appreciated the offer, but the distance was just too great for his supporters, many of who drove unreliable vehicles. He also mentioned that many of them were driving without the benefit of state sanctioned driver's licenses. I explained to him that I might be able to help out with that situation. I then offered to supply thirty full blank sets, which was the number of folks he indicated could benefit from said IDs. The sets included driver's licenses, draft cards for the guys, social security cards, and the security personnel IDs. They were very surprised and very grateful. I arranged to meet them in three days, with the goods, at their camp in the county park.**

**When I arrived three days later at the park, the place was in the process of being abandoned. Allen explained to me that there had been a gunfight back at the Pine Ridge reservation and two FBI agents had been killed. The Natives feared a reprisal massacre and were headed back there to protect their community. Leonard Peltier was later arrested on charges of murdering the two FBI agents. He was subsequently tried and convicted. For the past forty-some years he has maintained his innocence. For the past forty-some years he has been incarcerated and serving a life sentence. As Allen A. was telling me what was going on, I passed him the thirty sets of IDs. He thanked me and went back to work breaking camp.**



The rest of the folk's that were involved in the community college fake ID ring used said IDs to fund a trip down the Gulf of Mexico in a stolen sailboat (another story). The whole experience had been relegated to the back of my mind as summer had passed thru fall into winter and I had moved on to other true-life adventures and was focused on those. Until one day when I made a trip down to CR to visit friends and conduct some marijuana business. I had key privileges at a good buddy's house, so I was able to let myself in when no one was home. I grabbed a cold beer, shook off my coat, and turned on the tube. The news happened to be on and the story that was being broadcast at that exact moment was about the newly formed task force who were investigating a fake ID ring being run out of the local community college. They mentioned that two full time detectives were assigned the case and that the IDs had turned up all over the country. Apparently, those Native Americans had really gotten around. Since the quality of the blank IDs was so good, I suspected that they had not been filled out with the same Selectric typewriters that were being used at the Iowa DMV and myself. As I crunched the numbers, I was getting a very sick feeling. Two full time detectives, everyone but me safely sailing down the coast of Mexico equals two *full time* swinging dicks looking for yours truly. I poured the beer out, indicating that this was not a drill. I put on my coat and headed back to my car which thankfully had not had time to cool off. I drove straight back to the farm, no smoking, no drinking, no

**exceeding the speed limit. This was serious shit with a capital S.**

**I stashed the remaining IDs with a friend from off the farm that was very low key when it came to illegal activities, then warned Jim that I might be hot and could potentially bring the cops to our door. He insisted that I stay and we brainstormed some safeguards that would make us fairly impervious to a police raid, such as getting all vehicles off of the property that were not legally registered and plated, and keeping the weight of our pot stash under what would be considered “possession with intent to sell”. I implemented all safeguards on the farm and stayed the hell out of CR. The cops never showed up and my adrenaline levels eventually returned to normal.**

**Carter Camp, Leonard Crow Dog, and the rest of the group on trial in CR were all convicted. Carter split and was on the lamb for several years. The group appealed the ruling and got the conviction overturned. Even though Carter was then free of the original charge he was still on the hook for jumping bail. He eventually turned himself in and served a short prison sentence. Upon release he spent the rest of his life as an effective activist leader for Native American causes. He passed away in 2013.**

