

MEET THE SKINHEADS • THE LAST RADICAL

VANCOUVER

CANADA'S MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR • NOVEMBER 1998 • \$3.50

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David Duchovny's 400 Inches

SECRETS

Courtney Love's Nose

Of The City

Bill Clinton's Cigar

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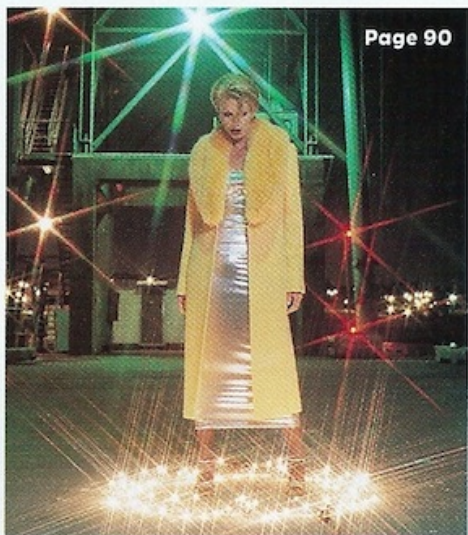
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IT SPOT Love all at the new Jericho Tennis Club BY JAMIE MAW

The Last Radical

Wayne Curry's few friends knew the East Van resident as just another embittered old hippie. They had no idea that Curry—a.k.a. John Jacobs, Weatherman—had so much to be bitter about.

TEARS STREAMED DOWN THE CHEEKS OF A DISTRAUGHT 22-YEAR-OLD AS SHE READ THE POEM "DO NOT GO Gentle Into That Good Night." It was not the first time Dylan Thomas' invocation to "rage, rage against the dying of the light" had been read at a funeral, but there had perhaps never been a service at which the words were more apt.

Seven days earlier, on October 19, 1997, police had been called to an East Vancouver basement suite where paramedics were having difficulty with an ill and angry man. Marion MacPherson, the common-law wife of 50-year-old Wayne Curry, had found him asleep when she came home that day. Beside his bed but untouched, she said, were a bottle of whiskey and a half gram of coke, his painkillers of choice.

MacPherson called for an ambulance, but by the time paramedics arrived Curry was awake and in the midst of an anguished fit. He was enduring the final stages of a cancer that had begun as melanoma and progressed to invade his brain, lungs, skin and lymph nodes. In the late stages his skin had become ultra-sensitive to touch. Using gentle diplomacy, the police were able to coax Curry out of the house and toward the ambulance. As they walked along, a female police officer patted him softly on the back and said "You're doing fine."

The comforting touch had an unexpected effect. Pain

bitches they'd ever seen."

Curry died 18 hours later. His death came as no surprise to MacPherson, the four grown children in the couple's blended family, or the few close friends he'd made during his quarter-century in Vancouver. He had been diagnosed with melanoma in 1976, and the disease had followed a slow but predictable course. Even the furious nature of his exit was not a complete shock. During the last two decades of his life, Curry had supplemented stints of blue-collar work with the money he made selling marijuana and he was known to harbour no love for the police.

But if friends weren't astonished by the events of October 19, they would be two days later. Sandy McGuire, a landscaping contractor who had first met the American expat 18 years earlier, stopped by the Curry house to see how Marion and the kids were doing. MacPherson was speaking on the phone, and McGuire overheard her saying she would have to

became rage, and Curry slugged the officer in the face before stumbling back to the house. It took another hour and another batch of police officers to strap him onto a stretcher and send him off to Vancouver General Hospital where medical staff took over. "He fought all the way," MacPherson recalls. "The police said he was one of the strongest sons of

BY KEVIN GILLIES

ILLUSTRATION BY ALAIN PILON

I see them as rooted in the



whole capitalist culture
of egotism,



INTERSTATE FLIGHT - MOB ACTION/ RIOT/ CONSPIRACY
WANTED BY FBI



... my political tendency at the time
... a "left wing anarchist" a



get in touch with the police about Wayne's real identity. They, in turn, would contact the FBI. "It was one of those spine-tingling things," McGuire, 50, recalls.

As McGuire would learn that night, his friend had gone out with the same fiery anger that, at Columbia University 30 years earlier, had earned Curry an impressive name—albeit a different one. Curry was then known as John Jacobs. In the pantheon of '60s radicals he was among the most illustrious: a co-founder of the Weatherman organization, one of the masterminds behind Chicago's Days of Rage and for years a staple on FBI most-wanted posters. In the early 1970s, following a particularly bloody and disastrous period of revolutionary activism, he had disappeared, virtually without a trace, perplexing the U.S. authorities and many of his former comrades in arms.

In fact, Jacobs had quietly crossed the border into Canada, soon settling in Vancouver. As fellow activists were picked up and sentenced to short jail terms or probation, he successfully created a new identity for himself as a humble and perhaps slightly "burnt-out" ex-hippie and blue-collar worker. Eluding American justice—or "kicking the imperialists' ass" as he later wrote—would be one of his proudest accomplishments. How he died would have been another. "He got to hit a cop," Marion MacPherson says. "I told them not to touch him."

JOHN GREGORY JACOBS WAS BORN SEPTEMBER 30, 1947 IN NEW YORK STATE, THE YOUNGEST OF DOUGLAS AND Lucille Jacobs' two sons. Before leaving the profession to operate a Connecticut book store, Douglas Jacobs had been a prominent journalist, one of the first Americans to cover the Spanish Civil War. "Our parents were leftists," says J.J.'s older brother Robert, now an Oregon school-bus driver. "They were political—socially aware, politically conscious progressives of the times."

J.J.'s childhood seems to have been happy and normal, but by the early 1960s the teenager was beginning to rebel—not against his parents, to whom he was close, but against American society. In high school he became fascinated with the Russian Revolution and the writings of Marx and Lenin. A contemporary hero was also

beginning to cast a spell—Che Guevara, the Argentinean revolutionary who helped Castro take Cuba.

In 1965, after graduating from high school, J.J. moved to New York, where he worked for a leftist newspaper. In that first summer, J.J. met many politically connected people. At Columbia University that fall he would befriend many more, including a fellow freshman named Mark Rudd. A little over two years later, they would lead the infamous Columbia Student Rebellion.

1968 was a tumultuous year in the United States, kicking off with the Tet Offensive, which would result in the deaths of 50,000 American and South Vietnamese

Below: 1971 and America's most wanted. Bottom: 1994 and licensed to drive.



troops. Every American had a friend, relative or neighbour who was returned home in a body bag, and war footage dominated TV newscasts. In that year Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated, Black Panther Bobby Hutton was killed by Oakland police, and in South Carolina police killed black student protesters during sit-ins to desegregate lunch counters. On university campuses across the U.S., riots and protests were commonplace.

Rudd and J.J. were members of Students for a Democratic Society, which was in

the process of shifting from its former role as a new left protest group to one that advocated outright revolution. Rudd remembers watching Harlem burn, then roaming the streets with J.J. the night King was assassinated. "At one point we got separated and I went home," he recalls. "Later I learned J.J. had wandered the streets alone all night, reveling in the celebratory violence and anarchy."

At the time, Columbia officials were planning to build a new gymnasium in a park in the predominantly black neighbourhood near the university. To many students, it smacked of racism and small-scale imperialism. In his book *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground*, author Ron Jacobs (no relation) says

Columbia became a metaphor for the U.S. government. "At the same time they were talking principles of freedom and democracy, they were using the power that they had—strong financial power—and using the wealth of the university to basically colonize the surrounding neighborhood...."

By then J.J. was taking a leadership role in the SDS. Jeff Jones, co-ordinator of its New York chapter at the time, remembers him as a true Maoist ideologue, "very committed to not just a basic Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology, but also militant tactics—confrontation tactics—and a world view of the United States as the centre of an imperialist system."

When Columbia president Grayson Kirk tried to push his gym plans ahead, students stormed his office. In an article that appeared in *Rolling Stone* in 1982, Peter Collier and David Horowitz describe the rebellion.

"While Rudd influenced the daily flow of events at Columbia and reveled in the limelight...J.J. worked behind the scene, explaining how the events fit into a larger pattern of apocalypse that included the Tet offensive, LBJ's decision not to run for reelection and the 'revolutionary protests' in France, which, by May, nearly toppled the de Gaulle government. The corrupt structure of the capitalist world was teetering, he argued, and all that it needed was a strategically applied push to send it crashing down."

During these events, J.J. became known for his commitment to the dictum "auda-



city, audacity and more audacity." Rudd chuckles, recalling how Mathematics Hall, taken over by J.J. and his cohorts, became known as the Hall of Crazies. They also invaded the president's office. "There was a famous story of a discussion among the occupiers of what to do when the bust was imminent," says Rudd. "J.J. suggested putting Columbia's rare Ming Dynasty vases on the window sills to deter attacks from that direction. That was vetoed. Then he suggested pushing the cops off the window sills 'non-violently.'"

Unlike many peace activists, the occupiers weren't protesting war itself but rather the role of the U.S. as a capitalist aggressor. "We were all Guevarists," says Rudd. "We were all in the cult of Che. Cuba represented a departure from Soviet Marxism, and Che was the most romantic and heroic of the bunch."

With J.J. busy working behind the scene, and Rudd handling the media, the events at Columbia intensified. According to Collier and Horowitz, "As the conflict at the university deepened, [J.J.] became a legendary *nom de guerre*." Their article quotes Rudd as saying, "He had brains, vision and the ability to talk. When he was on, he was brilliant. Nobody else ever came close." More

than 700 were arrested in the Columbia rebellion, and a student strike shut down the remainder of the school year. J.J.'s revolution had begun.

BY EARLY 1969, JACOBS WAS CEMENTED WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ULTRA-LEFT-WING ACTION FACTION, WHICH WAS PREPARING FOR the SDS's national convention. That June, Jacobs' manifesto, "You Don't Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows," was published in the SDS newspaper, *New Left Notes*. The manifesto took its title from a line in the Bob Dylan song "Subterranean Homesick Blues," and predicted a political armageddon, tying the struggles of black Americans into a world revolution that would attack U.S. imperialism and racism. "For better or worse he was the author of the Weatherman paper and the underground armed-struggle strategy," says Rudd. "He had the anti-imperialist vision."

The Last Radical

A small leadership group that included J.J., Rudd and Jones as well as Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn and a handful of others quickly became known as Weatherman, and began to plan a demonstration to take place in Chicago—the Days of Rage. As J.J. wrote, Weatherman would shove the war right back down "their dumb, fascist throats and show them, while we were at it, how much better we were than them, both tactically and strategically, as a people. In an all-out civil war over Vietnam and other fascist U.S. imperialism, we were going to bring the war home. 'Turn the imperialists' war into a civil war', in Lenin's

Wayne Curry in his usual garb: "A Fagan of the '90s," according to one friend.



words. And we were going to kick ass."

Thousands of angry young Americans were expected to descend on Chicago, but far fewer made the trip. "We had set the tone and the level of militancy so high that only a couple of hundred people were willing to come and participate in a demonstration on those terms," says Jones. The demonstration quickly became a riot, with students taking on police in hand-to-hand combat. Rudd regards the protest as a test. "I think the Days of Rage was a rite of passage for us," he says. "J.J., if I remember correctly, led one of the actions and got arrested right away. He passed his test."

Later, in analyzing the low turnout, the Weather Bureau looked to their model, the Cuban Revolution. "I was very, very depressed, realizing that so few of our expected troops actually came to Chicago, and that the arrests were so many and costly—also that so many people had been injured, mostly by the cops," says Rudd.

"But we rationalized the defeat by analogizing to Fidel's Moncada," in which the armed effort was initially defeated but eventually triumphed. J.J. urged the other Weatherman members not to be discouraged but rather to take the movement underground. His argument won the day, explains Rudd. "And that was what we then set out to do."

There was no turning back. On the eve of the Days of Rage, Weatherman had blown up a police statue in Chicago. A few weeks later the group fire-bombed some Chicago police cars. During the next year, bombs would be set off in the National Guard headquarters in Washington, the headquarters of the NYPD, the Presidio Army Base in San Francisco and in several other American cities.

But along the way, the renamed Weather Underground made a terrible "military error," one that would both affect J.J.'s status within the movement and saddle him with a weight of guilt he would carry to his grave. On March 6, 1970, a homemade bomb, made of nails wrapped around an explosive centre, detonated at a New York residence occupied by several members, killing three of them. Eleven days later federal indictments came down

against surviving members for their role in the Days of Rage. Leaders of the Underground analyzed the events and made several decisions. One was that J.J. would have to leave the group.

"IF YOU FEEL YOU ARE UNDERVALUED, MAKE YOURSELF SCARCE." THE PROPHETIC WORDS DOUGLAS JACOBS HAD ONCE SPOKEN TO HIS youngest son came back to J.J. The Weather Underground was now truly underground, the subject of a massive FBI search. For a couple of years J.J. wandered around the continent—mostly in California and Mexico—under a variety of identities and usually alone.

"Life is admittedly lonely and sad," he wrote in a never-mailed letter to Rudd. "But you can't blame that on being a political fugitive. Life was already lonely and sad before we got involved in politics. We were so naive at the time.... I know that for myself, part of (CONTINUED ON PAGE 100)

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(CONTINUED FROM 86) what I wanted from the political movement was friends, family and community. Somehow I thought that among people who were working together for social change, the values of the better society they were fighting for would be manifest in better social relations among themselves.... So after I had lost, killed, alienated or driven away all my friends and comrades, I found it hard to be relevant or effective politically."

One constant in J.J.'s post-Weather life was the battle between conflicting feelings of guilt for pushing friends to militancy and being scapegoated for the townhouse explosion. "He felt guilty about a lot of stuff. Being the leader he felt guilty about the deaths," says MacPherson.

Meanwhile, the FBI continued to track him, almost catching him a couple of times. Once, in California, agents burst into a house where he was staying, but he went through a window, clambered over a roof and disappeared into an alley, leaving behind everything he owned, including a passport that revealed the false identity he had been using. J.J.'s brother, Robert, was attending Simon Fraser University at the time, and J.J. decided to venture north for a visit. The FBI was aware of this possibility and had notified the RCMP to keep an eye out. "There were a couple of incidents where they opened my friends' mail and tapped my friends' phones, and they were actively looking for a certain period, but obviously not successfully," Robert Jacobs recalls.

J.J. lived mostly on Vancouver Island for a couple of years, working as a tree planter but donating a considerable portion of his income to the construction of a Buddhist retreat on Salt Spring Island—perhaps as a sort of atonement, though he never said as much. The brothers avoided being seen together because of their similar appearances. The alias Wayne Curry was a name J.J. "just pulled out of the air" as the two were walking down Fraser Street one day after he'd returned to the city. Almost immediately Curry met a woman and together they had two children. By the end of 1977 the family had settled into a nice little rental house on the 500-block of East 28th.

From his various writings, it is clear that Curry's life in Vancouver was constrained by his fugitive status. Although his political views had scarcely become more moderate, he avoided contact with local left-wing groups for fear of being identified. And, despite having a young family that


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he yearned to support, he was reluctant to pursue any sort of career. After his first relationship ended in the early 1980s, he lived alone for a period until 1986, when he met MacPherson. Together they moved into a house at 562 East 27th Ave., just a block away from his first place.

"Wayne more or less staked out the basement turf for himself and lived as Wayne did with stacks and stacks of newspapers," says his old friend Sandy McGuire. Among the things he carefully clipped were reports of how his old student movement compatriots one by one got caught or turned themselves in to authorities. Most received short prison sentences or probation.

Curry, meanwhile, was staking out a meagre living selling marijuana and occasionally taking on odd jobs as a labourer or stone-cutter, often for friends. In 1987, McGuire hired him to work on the construction of Mayfair Lakes Golf Club in Richmond—a country club, the very antithesis of what he believed in. "I'd go over and pick him up every morning," remembers McGuire. "He'd wear baggy, baggy clothing. I knew he'd usually have a little bag of pot with him and he'd always have a book—a big, fat book. And he'd take extended trips to the washroom. I knew he'd be in there reading his book and smoking a joint."

One day, one of the owners of the project came out with a video camera to record the birth of his golf course. "I come driving along and here's Wayne, steam's coming off the top of his head," McGuire says, adding that he wanted to know why his friend was so mad. "He's 'Rrrr. Who does he think he is? Nobody gave him the right to take pictures of other people without their consent.'"

Guessing that Curry had been in trouble with the law, McGuire joked, "Whatever you did, I'm sure the FBI isn't hot on your trail now, Wayne." As he says now, "Little did I know."

Another friend says that Curry went out of his way "to look like nobody. He had the black cap pulled down, the old army jacket, dirty jeans and work boots." He was, says the friend, "a Fagan of the 90s."

He was, though, a Fagan who never let go of his political ideals. Under at least three assumed names, he earned As and Bs in university classes such as Political and Social Problems of Latin America, Government and Politics of China and Western Imperial Presence, Middle East/North Africa. According to his brother, most of

VOLKSWAGEN'S November 1998 One-Day Adventure: GABRIOLA ISLAND

Because there is no direct ferry service to it from Vancouver, Gabriola Island is one of the more rarely visited of the southern Gulf Islands, at least by Vancouverites. Getting there is easy, though, and once you've arrived you're rewarded with country roads, ocean views, eagle aeries and ancient petroglyphs.

Take BC Ferries from Horseshoe Bay to Departure Bay, then drive south into Nanaimo and the Gabriola ferry dock, near the preserved Hudson's Bay bastion. The ferry ride to Gabriola takes 20 minutes; there are sailings every hour.

When you disembark at Descanso Bay, head south along South Road. As you near False Narrows, scan for bald eagles—up to two dozen of them make their winter homes in the trees overlooking the narrows.

Shortly after the road turns inland you come to the United Church. If you're interested in petroglyphs, mysterious carvings etched into the soft sandstone thousands of years ago, stop here. Behind the church is a path that leads through the forest to a rocky clearing where the stone has been inscribed with dozens of imaginative images.

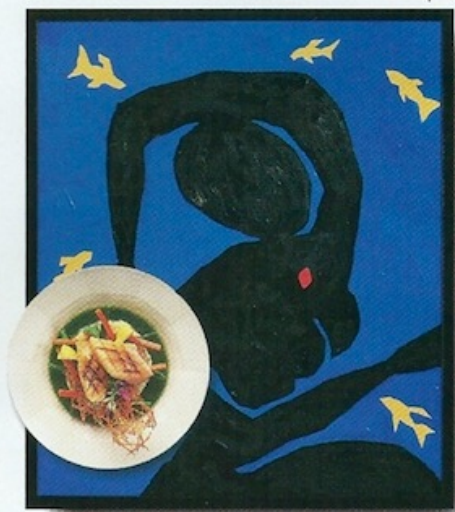
South Road swings around the southeastern tip of the island, offering fine views of the ocean, then turns back and heads inland as North Road. Follow it to the Folklife Village, Gabriola's hub. Have a cappuccino at Raspberry's Books or continue on to the ferry dock for a bite to eat at the White Hart pub. If you want to stay longer, drive up Taylor Bay Road and turn left on Malaspina Drive. At road's end, get out and walk a short distance to the shore, where the sandstone resembles huge frozen waves. If you want to stay overnight, continue down Taylor Bay Road to the turnoff for the Surf Lodge. At the end of the sideroad, a cheery inn with a great stone fireplace awaits you.



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his pot-buying customers got a lecture on the current state of world affairs. "It's a pity. Most people who knew him considered it a waste that he didn't utilize his smarts and energy in some more socially meaningful, politically conscious way in his latter years."

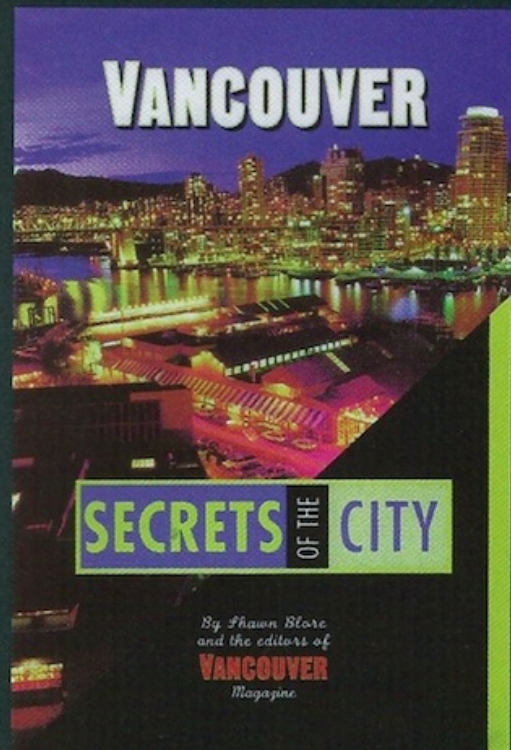
Instead, he gardened. Says McGuire, "He'd move in and have a backyard barren of undergrowth. By the time he left there, the neighbours wouldn't be able to see in. It would be like having a small Vietnam; it was almost like the Ho Chi Minh Trail. He'd grow bamboo and walnuts and all the stuff that grew like a foot per month." That's where he was happiest: hidden away in his jungle.

"HE WAS SCARED TO TURN 50 BECAUSE THAT'S WHEN HIS MOM DIED," SAYS MACPHERSON. "HE ALWAYS SAID THAT HE'D DIE ONCE HE TURNED 50." Fulfilling his own prophecy, he expired three weeks after his 50th birthday. Everyone around Wayne Curry knew it was coming. Those who knew him as John Jacobs did not.

"I wish someone had called me. I would have gone up to see him," says Rudd, now a college instructor in New Mexico. In 1977, after seven years on the lam, Rudd turned himself in to face misdemeanor charges of aggravated battery, mob action and obstructing a police officer. His penalty included probation and a \$2,000 fine.

Two years after Rudd surfaced, Bernardine Dohrn and Bill Ayers came out of hiding. Dohrn faced assault and battery charges, and received a \$1,500 fine and probation. Today the woman who once hailed Charles Manson for his anti-imperialist valour is the director of Northwestern University Legal Clinic's Children and Family Justice Center. Bill Ayers, who is married to Dohrn, is now a professor at the University of Illinois-Chicago. Jeff Jones was arrested in 1981, and has gone on to become a prominent environmental activist, currently involved with Canadian aboriginal and environmental groups fighting Hydro Quebec's mega-dam project in Labrador.

Virtually all the former Weather members found ways to rejoin American society as important contributors without disavowing their pasts or abandoning their beliefs—a trick their one-time ideological leader was not able to manage. In fact, eluding justice or "kicking the imperialists' ass" may have been the biggest of J.J.'s many mistakes. His life as a functioning mem-



VANCOUVER

SECRETS OF THE CITY

By Shawn Blarc
and the editors of
VANCOUVER
Magazine

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ber of society, as a person able to make his own choices and influence the choices made by others, essentially ended the day he went underground in 1971. "How many of those surrounding him in the last days knew who he was—the last Weatherman?" Rudd asked in a pained letter to a friend the day he learned of J.J.'s death.

At home in his private jungle Jacobs did indeed remain the last Weatherman. In one of his letters to Rudd he describes his vision of a revolutionary communist's homecoming: "I can see myself like a photo I saw once of the Cuban revolution; some fat, middle-aged guy walking down the street into Havana with his machine gun, returning some day victoriously."

Jacobs' victorious return never happened in quite the way he thought it would, but in the end he did make it onto the streets of his beloved Cuba. After Wayne Curry died, his body was cremated and his ashes scattered, some here, some there, all around the world. The remains of John Jacobs now mingle with the waters of English Bay, with the soil in his East 27th Avenue backyard, at a spot in Oregon he remembered fondly from his days as a fugitive—and finally with Che.

Beside the historic grave site of Che Guevara in Santa Clara, Cuba, a photo of a younger Jacobs, wearing khakis, a beard and collar-length hair, is attached to a plaque that reads, in part:

"John Gregory Jacobs, known in the United States revolutionary movement of the 1960s as 'J.J.,' was born September 30, 1947, and died October 20, 1997.... He organized protests against the Vietnam War in many parts of the United States; and was a principle author of what became known as the 'Weatherman Statement.' After SDS broke up and the 'Weatherman leadership' were indicted for 'conspiracy to incite riots,' he split from that organization but remained an underground fugitive for the rest of his life. Though he never got to Cuba in that lifetime, the leadership of the Cuban Revolution were his models. His family and friends are extremely grateful to the Cuban government, the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party, and others for the honor and respect shown him by allowing some of his ashes to be spread at the monument to Che Guevara.

"He wanted to live like Che," it concludes. "Let him rest with Che." ❖

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