

Interview with Don Villarejo

Date: 5/11/89

Place: Villarejo's office, 221 G Street, Davis

Time: 8:30 am to 10:30 am

Biographical Information:

Age: 51

Residence: Davis

Present occupation: Head of California Institute of Rural Studies, a non-profit organization oriented around grass roots political concerns.

Education: BA, MA, Ph.D., in Physics, University of Chicago; faculty appointment at UCLA from 1968-75.

Marital status: Married for 30 years, 2 adult children.

Don,

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO HAVE A COPY OF THIS. PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTION, ALTHOUGH IT DOES REPRODUCE THE ACTUAL CONVERSATION FAIRLY CLOSELY.

THANKS FOR TAKING THE TIME TO BE INTERVIEWED. I WAS QUITE IMPRESSED WITH THE EXTENT OF YOUR MOVEMENT EXPERIENCE. YOUR REMARKS ON ACTIVITIES IN THE 1950'S GAVE ME IMPORTANT INSIGHTS INTO THE ORIGINS OF THE NEW LEFT. THAN N AN ARE UNICK THE SECONDARY LITERATURE HAS NOT COVERED IN SUFFICIENT DEPTH.

Scott Jones

Introduction

This interview with Don Villarejo was the end result of suggestions made by John Lofland several months ago at the beginning of the field research seminar. Lofland knows Villarejo and realized he could provide abundant information for this project. The original plan was to contact former members of the Weather Underground, and I phoned Villarejo in January to ask his advice with regard to this. He was quite helpful despite the fact that he does not now know the whereabouts of any former WU members.

Villarejo suggested that I contact Al Haber in Berkeley and thought talking to Flacks was imperative. He also thought Greg Calvert would be good to talk to if I can find him. Gitlin, on the other hand, is relatively superfluous in Villarejo's estimation. His most potentially productive suggestion concerned a possible interview with Tom Hayden. According to Villarejo, there is a way to gain access to Hayden through two of his close aids, and he was kind enough to provide me with their names and addresses.

In our original phone conversation, Villarejo consented to a taped interview if necessary. Given the present parameters of this project in the context of the field research seminar, an interview with him seemed essential, so I sent him the cover letter and project description and followed up with a phone call a week later. He agreed to be interviewed at his office at 8:30 am on May 11.

Villarejo is a friendly person whose physical appearance gives little clue to his history of involvement with radical politics--indeed, he could easily pass for a conservative businessman. No doubt this facilitates his work as head of the California Institute for Rural Studies. After a few moments of small talk, I talked briefly about my own movement history and reiterated my concerns about confidentiality in this study. I asked consent to tape the interview and we began a productive exchange that lasted 1-1/2 hours.

The Interview

S: I would like to get an overview of your own movement involvement. I know we talked briefly about this on the phone and your activity dates back to 1955, is that correct?

V: In 1955, I became involved in student politics at the University of Chicago. I helped create an organization known as the Student Representative Party which was a conglomeration of liberals, progressives, socialists, etc. That was in the period of the so-called silent generation. We worked on a series of issues ranging from civil liberties, civil rights, and even cold war politics. Our perspective was that we could take direct action as students. We won control of student government in 1956 and also won control of the delegation to the NSA convention.

On the issue of civil rights, we would do things like challenge the segregation policies at the University of Chicago. The housing office, for instance, maintained listings of segregated housing, and we confronted the university with demonstrations around that issue. We brought Dubois in to be a keynote speaker and we also brought in Paul Robeson.

On civil liberties we had a conscientious program organized around preventing the university from furnishing information about students to the FBI, the military, etc. At that time, draft age students had to execute a very elaborate security document which disclosed all their political affiliations and those of their families. It included a checklist of over 300 organizations. We objected very strenuously to the university releasing any information to these authorities.

On the Cold War issue, we arranged the first direct student to student exchange program with the Soviet Union.

S: This sounds like pretty radical activity for the 1950s.

V: Yes, it certainly was. We also built relationships with other emerging groups. By 1958-59 there were other "grouplets" emerging within the NSA organized around the same kinds of concerns. For instance, one issue was university recognition of segregated fraternities.

S: In 1955 you were at what level in school?

V: I was a freshman.

S: Then your political activity began even before that?

V: My mother was a labor organizer in the 1930s and her second husband was a research editor of the United Packing House Workers newspaper for several years. Consequently, I always thought that everybody did politics and went to meetings all the time.

S: You stayed involved in movement activities throughout the 1960s?

V: Yes. In 1959 we started a magazine called New University Thought which turned out to be the first of what was later termed the New Left magazines. Of course, we didn't realize this at the time. The first issue appeared in early 1960 and had first hand accounts of what was going on in the South, primarily as a result of contacts built up at the NSA. In fact the leadership of the NSA in 1958-59 ended up being much of the leadership of SNCC and were among the first to spread the lunch counter sit-in demonstrations throughout the South.

We also had good accounts of the politics of the NSA in the magazine as well as a still relevant article on student politics in the peace movement. All of these things represented a particular phase in the student movement. It was during a period when the annual Easter peace marches were getting larger. These peace marches began in the early 1950s and students played a very significant role in the late 1950s in building them into very large demonstrations.

So, basically the magazine was a focus for our activity. We then created a newspaper called New University News which became a voice of the emerging student movement. For instance, one of the first articles reported on the formation of SLATE, the precursor of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley. It was a kind of vehicle that we saw for expression of what was emerging.

S: By this time you had graduated, right?

V: Yes, I graduated in 1959 and was a graduate student in physics.

S: Were you still at Chicago?

V: Yes, and working with many of the same people I had been working with since 1955. We rented a house for the organization and hired a full time staff person. Since the acronym for New University Thought was NUT, the house became known as the "nuthouse." It was a way station for freedom riders or for people coming from the South to raise money. Eventually it became the Chicago headquarters of the Northern Friends of SNCC and was the locus of a lot of activity.

Once a month we would have meetings with particular people who were coming through. Hayden and Haber showed up, for example, to tell us about SDS. This went on for about four years--1964 was the period in which it reached an apex.

S: When did you get your Ph.D.?

V: I got the Ph.D. in 1967. In 1965, I would say that was the point at which antiwar activities began to replace strictly student activities as the focus of my interest and that of most of the people I was working with. We published an article in 1961 on Indochina and Vietnam that basically outlined what we thought would be the course of US involvement.

S: How accurate was this?

V: Right on target!

S: You mean in 1961 you predicted the level of escalation that actually occurred?

V: Well, we said there was a choice for the American people and the course we saw as the more likely choice was that as the authorities found out it was impossible to control and contain, they would have to bring in significant levels of American troops.

S: That was pretty perceptive for 1961.

V: We had several people who were field anthropologists who were working in that area of the world and who had direct knowledge of what was going on. So our ability to talk about that was based on some direct information.

S: And you were a member of SDS at that time?

V: No, I was never a member of SDS actually, although I was heavily recruited to become one. But I felt that even though I participated in a lot of SDS meetings, my days as an undergraduate student were long behind me and that it was inappropriate for me to assume the role of an activist in what should be an organization controlled by undergraduate students.

By 1967, the older leadership of SDS had generally come to the realization that the antiwar movement was the main focus of what we should all be doing. However, the tactics that had been used up to this point were seen as not having the kind of impact that we wanted. The teach-ins and demonstrations of 1965--which were the outgrowth of the Easter peace demonstrations dating back to the early 1950s--were not effective in stopping escalation. Even though the demonstrations were getting bigger, the desired impact was not coming about.

Meetings in 1967 set the stage for demonstrations in Chicago the following year. The first focus for that was Easter when we had a very large demonstration. The experience with that was very bad in that the day before the demonstration the police pulled the permit and the loud speaker system. The march began without a permit but most people didn't know it.

When we came into the downtown area where the march was supposed to culminate, it was clear that something was wrong. Thousands of police were lined up along the edge of the sidewalk and they were keeping the marchers between the buildings and the street. Phalanxes of police were also lined up in the alleys and side streets. So when it was announced that this was an illegal demonstration, thousands of people were trapped and there were a lot of injuries and busts.

Out of that came a kind of galvanizing of the peace movement in Chicago, and the following week they were able to get the support of local church groups and liberal mainstream organizations to reassert the right of freedom of assembly to protest the war. It was a momentous event in a way because we were able to get about 10,000 people to come back the following week for a repeat demonstration with legal sanction.

S: Did the police behave themselves?

V: Yes, they behaved themselves this time, because they were completely outmaneuvered by the leadership of the Chicago peace movement.

S: This was pretty important as far as setting up the Chicago convention demonstrations?

V: Absolutely. It has actually been written up, although not in book form. The Chicago Council of Churches issued report that was prominently featured in the press that dealt with the details of what had occurred during the first demonstration. We now know in retrospect, from the FOIA and Pentagon Papers, that Johnson and Daly had been in communication and that Daly agreed to stop the peace demonstration at all costs due to the critical state of things in Indochina after Tet.

What we had decided, in conjunction with discussions with those who were in contact with the Vietnamese, that this was indeed a crucial period during which to show solidarity for ending US involvement.

S: You weren't aware of the extent of the coming attack before it occurred, were you?

V: No, certainly not, but the word did come through that this would be a critical period in which some kind of activity was planned in Indochina which would cry out for international solidarity. So there was some very rough advance knowledge that this would be a period when support would be requested and we should be prepared.

S: 1968 is a big year, to say the least. You've got your Ph.D. by now and are no longer a student, is that correct?

V: Yes, but I remained in Chicago on a post doc until summer of 1968 when I went to UCLA to accept a faculty appointment.

(A certain amount of material has not been transcribed at this point. This dealt with 1) SDS internal organizational efforts in late 1967 to early 1968; 2) the details of Villarejo's move to UCLA; and 3) his early teaching experiences.)

S: What was your attitude toward the overall developments in SDS during the late 1960s?

V: What was happening in SDS at this point (1968) was beyond the ability of any of the older generation members to influence. My feeling about it was that since it was impossible to have any direct influence on those events, and since those developments were, in my view, isolating for the student movement, I should be working with local groups within California to help make them mass oriented. This is something that goes back to my parents. The point was not whether you or I can develop the most radical analysis of society--that changes nothing except our minds. The point is to get large numbers of people in motion, because that is what changes the direction of history.

In Los Angeles I worked with large numbers of students and faculty members and was active in the peace movement within California as a whole. In 1968-69 there were major demonstrations on UC campuses, particularly in early 1969. The issues involved were ROTC, war research on campus, the role of the defense industry in the California economy, and disproportionate numbers of Chicanos who were being drafted and dying. Something like 30% of the deaths in Vietnam were Chicanos.

S: What about Blacks?

V: Blacks were a high proportion, but Chicanos were actually a higher proportion. That was a major issue and we worked with a group called the Chicano Moratorium, which was a movement among Latinos in California to organize draft resistance and protest of the war in all the Latino enclaves of the state--there were demonstrations in probably 20 cities. The biggest one was in LA where there were probably 150,000 people. We furnished a flatbed truck with a full sound system for this demonstration, all of which was destroyed in the ensuing police riot. The leader of the Chicano Moratorium had in fact been the UCLA student body president in 1968-69.

So you can see there was a whole different constellation of forces out here in California. All the factional fighting within SDS at the convention in 1969 and that kind of thing seemed in my mind to be very distant and irrelevant. Although I knew some of the principals involved in RYM II, which became Weatherman, my feeling was that they were becoming less and less relevant to the antiwar movement as a whole and to society as a whole.

The way one of my friends described it was like this: You begin life neutral, then you discover that there is injustice and you become a liberal. Then you discover that liberalism doesn't work, so you become a radical. Then the question becomes, what kind of radical are you? Are you a socialist, a communist, an anarchist? You choose that, and then you further refine your analysis.

All of this time you think you're making progress, but the progress is entirely within your own head. In fact, you're becoming more distant from the majority of the American people. If you're trying to change the course of history, if you're trying to organize a mass movement, that development within your own head is not a great deal of value. This is what we saw happening in SDS.

S: This brings us right into the heart of what most of my research is focussed on--trying to account for this process in which people get radicalized, and also for those who go beyond that by getting involved in organized violence. Two of the things I've focussed on in my research are the effect of interaction between white radicals and ethnic minorities and contacts with the Vietnamese revolutionaries in pushing activists toward violence. You mentioned contact with the Vietnamese previously, could you expand on that?

V: Hayden and others had visited North Vietnam, as you know. You have to understand that this whole period was one of a climate of violence which had been perpetuated against people's movements. This goes all the way back to the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955. I remember King visiting the North in 1956 and he spoke to a relatively small audience in Chicago. He alluded to the systematic and organized violence to destroy people's movements, which was the bottom line lesson that I learned in that period.

This continued throughout the 1960s, whether it was the Civil Rights Movement, demonstrations against HUAC, the antiwar movement, or whatever. The lesson was that the authorities would always use organized violence against us.

S: So in your mind, this was the overriding factor in the response of the Left?

V: I don't think it was the overriding factor, but it was certainly a realization on the part of many people that whenever movements start to become strong, there would be a process in which liberalism would take off the kid gloves and bring out the steel fist. And this happened repeatedly. What we underestimated was the extent to which this would be done in a sophisticated fashion.

S: This is off the subject, but do you feel this is still the case in this country?

V: I feel that people's movements are very much weaker today and so there is less need for that, but if they were to get strong again there is no question about it. In retrospect we've learned a lot about what was going on.

(At this point Villarejo related a personal story about police brutality in conjunction with a demonstration to protest the conviction of the Chicago Seven. This was a significant event in that it later became known that the "activist" who precipitated the violence by leading the charge against the police line was in fact an undercover police sergeant.)

V: Violence by agent provocateurs was quite extensive and this has been well documented since the FOIA. The overall climate of violence, then, was a combination of organized repression, provocateurs, and movement activists who were sincerely committed to revolution. There was a lot of discussion as time went on of the correct strategy and tactics. Some stressed organizing for self defense, for instance. This was pretty heavy stuff for people who came out of a tradition of nonviolence.

In addition, I think you should give a lot of attention to world revolutionary movements, especially Paris 1968. There was a widespread feeling in 1968 that young people in France precipitated what was damn near a successful revolution in that country. People went to the barricades, it was thought, because that was the only way.

S: Did you have direct contact with representatives of the European student movement?

V: Yes, I had contact with many who were visiting the United States. In fact, we had several anarcho-syndicalists in our house in Los Angeles--they were really funny people.

S: This has been an element in my research, and I've found The Imagination of the New Left, by George Katsiaficas helpful. This is more or less his major thesis, that the New Left was a global phenomenon and individual movements cannot be adequately comprehended in isolation. Beyond that, I've not found a whole lot written on this subject.

V: There was not a whole lot of contact, but what little there was, was significant. I knew Americans who had been in Paris, and there was a delegate from SDS who went to Germany. This individual brought back a wealth of information on the student groups there. The sense was, on the part of a lot of people, that students could play a very important role in precipitating large scale action.

There were people who were arguing the "action faction" position--the way to make revolution is to make it. Organizing has nothing to do with it, you go out there and do something and that will precipitate the police response. Then, when the police come down that will polarize the situation and from that point on, everything goes.

This was a serious line that we had to contend with at UCLA: the way to bring out large numbers of students was to provoke a demonstration that would bring out police violence. In the spring of 1969, a group of students surrounded a meeting of the Regents in the faculty center. The LAPD tactical unit was there and soon things started being thrown and the large plate glass window of the center was broken. The campus was surrounded and all this occurred simultaneously with the climax of the People's Park demonstration. When the word came down that someone had been killed in Berkeley, the place just went wild. This was seen, in terms of the crude analysis that people had, as a validation of escalation and violence.

S: What about your own feelings with regard to this, were you still oriented towards nonviolence?

V: My own feeling, which was fairly unsophisticated, was that to the extent that we made it impossible for ordinary people to take some simple action that did not risk a great deal to them in order to protest the war, it was a mistake. I thought we should be trying to get the largest number of people possible to protest the war, and if we risked that by what we were doing, we were risking the breadth of the movement. So I was in a distinct minority, but nevertheless supported all the demonstrations, participated in them, and often was the principal speaker.

S: You were, in effect, a voice of sanity?

V: Sometimes, yes. Sometimes the only voice. There were people who believed the world was in flames and that all we had to do was take action and the whole thing would go up.

S: This ties in with the direct focus of my research--how did these people come to adopt such a position, and of those who adopted it, not all that many went in for organized violence. There was a fair amount of spontaneous violence, but not all that much planned violence, and few actually joined "terrorist" groups. Getting back to the global New Left activity, was there any contact with non-European student movements, e.g., Mexico, Uruguay, or even China?

V: Certainly the one that had the biggest impact was Paris and that was because it was the one case that came the closest to making a genuine revolution. The model that most of the people that I knew had in mind was the view that students were the immediate agents to get something rolling, but the real force in society were the workers. If the workers started to participate, that was taken to be the sign that something very serious was going on. So the fact that in France the workers did get mobilized and did take over was significant.

S: But in the aftermath of Paris 68, the workers more or less sold out genuine revolutionary change. What was the reaction to that?

V: That was certainly the case, and the reaction was that people hadn't gone far enough. In fact I still have a button that says "Be realistic, demand the impossible." That saying was very popular and reflected the belief that you had to make extreme demands to get anything in motion.

1968 was a time when the sense of a significant number of student activists was that the whole world was literally in motion and that our responsibility here in the US was to do similar kinds of things. Never mind that there wasn't anything like the Communist party of France, or the CGT, or other organizations in the US. Nevertheless, the thinking was that if the students took the lead, if the students took the greatest risk, if the students precipitated large scale activity, then things could be put in motion.

Now, one thing I think you should pay attention to is the fact that right after the period of 1969 when things started

falling apart, quite a few students left the campuses to organize the workers.

S: There were debates in SDS about this. This was the position pushed by Progressive Labor, wasn't it?

V: That's right. There were significant numbers of people who decided to do that and had decided that students were basically bourgeois. They needed to get where the "real" people were, and since there was little response on the part of the working class in the US, the correct strategy was to organize them.

S: When you say "significant numbers" is this based on your own experience?

V: Yes, I would say there were about 50 people at UCLA who left the campus, formed a collective, and began to organize among the workers.

S: What about as a nationwide phenomenon?

V: There were people in Seattle who did this, people in San Francisco, Chicago, certain parts of the South, and so on.

S: Weatherman was also into something like this for awhile, right? They didn't go for the workers, though, instead they targeted underclass youth.

V: That's right. What happened in general was that the student leaders of the 1967-69 period left the campuses and tried to build some sort of alternative organizations. Some of them became directly involved in assisting Weather Underground people. Some of them were actually directly involved in bringing in munitions for such things as blowing up ROTC buildings.

The sense among these people was that the real struggle was not with students any more, the real struggle was with the "people." You sort of have a mentality developing that since the rest of the world is in motion, and since students are too conservative or bourgeois to be moved quickly enough, you have to find ways to precipitate something. It became almost a

macho competition between given individuals in a collective about who would advocate the most radical thing.

S: Yes, I remember that well--"more radical than thou."

V: Yes, more radical than thou and more precipitous than thou. When you start getting into that mode, there's no end to it and you can really spin out and become so involved in trying to out do the other person in coming up with fanciful notions about what to do. You really become irrelevant in lots of ways.

Among the folks who did this there was a mix. Some of them became very discouraged--I recently renewed a friendship with someone like that. He couldn't handle it psychologically and developed a compulsion that none of his friends knew about.

S: What was that?

V: Gambling. That was his way of escaping this contradiction. He couldn't step back and look at it from a healthy point of view, he just couldn't handle the pressure. Some of the other people, for instance those involved in the auto industry in LA, actually became union leaders. Others became leaders of the women's movement. Some began living collectives with the idea that maybe they couldn't radicalize the whole world but they could at least radicalize themselves by smashing monogamy, etc.

Many became consumed with this effort to radicalize themselves, but some of it was fairly healthy activity in the sense that it resulted in concrete assistance to people through such things as lawyer's guilds. Nevertheless, there was this mentality that you had to precipitate some kind of action and that would polarize the situation.

S: Could we turn to the subject of Black nationalism for a moment. You no doubt had contact with groups like the Panthers.

V: Yes, there were two Black Power groups involved in infighting at UCLA for control of the Black Studies program. Karenga was the leader of the faction oriented toward cultural nationalism and there was actually a shooting on campus where a very important student leader was killed.

We were in direct contact with radical Blacks. When there were significant actions which were focussed on antiwar activities on the campus, the leadership of all the minority group factions would be brought in. For example, in the spring of 1969 there was a student strike to protest the killing of James Rector at Berkeley (this followed the demonstration at the faculty center). On the steering committee were places for all the factions, and the demands of each group were incorporated into a united platform. The same thing happened in May 1970 after the Cambodian invasion. This was the broadest based student activity that I had seen; there were, nationwide, 1-1/2 to 2 million students involved.

S: Do you feel that groups like the Panthers had a hand in radicalizing the white student activists?

V: There is no question that a contribution was made along those lines. The posturing with weapons and things like that was constantly being thrown out with the attitude of "how serious are you?" or "how far are you willing to go?" That kind of challenge hit some of the young student leaders, but it not only hit them, it also hit people like Angela Davis.

(Villarejo went into considerable detail with regard to the Angela Davis case at UCLA. The main point was that Angela was constantly being challenged by Black nationalists to show her revolutionary commitment, with the result that the mainstream faculty effort to support her was undermined. Being an academic was seen as incompatible with true revolutionary ideals.)

S: You previously mentioned Chicano groups--I haven't been able to get much information on this subject.

V: Rosalio Munoz is the person you want to talk to. I don't know where he is, but it's probably somewhere in LA. He was the student body president at UCLA in 1968-69. I vividly remember an address he gave to a rump academic senate meeting at the time of the spring 1969 strike. He was quite eloquent and spent the next three years of his life going around to all the towns in the Central Valley trying to organize. There was contact with those folks and this mostly revolved around trying to provide whatever help was requested.

Of course, there were in the Chicano movement those who were inclined to try to precipitate things, but this was much less so than in the student movement. Their agenda was much

broader since they were working with Ceasar Chavez and the farm workers movement.

S: So the Chicanos were not nearly as prone to espouse violent rhetoric as the Panthers?

V: They were inclined to be militant in ways that were, on the one hand, uncompromising and, on the other hand, were based in the reality that Latinos had to face. In other words, if you were in direct contact with the farm workers movement, then you knew the local sheriff was someone you had to contend with in your everyday life. They knew where you lived, they knew where your family went to school, they knew everything about you and you had to contend with that. There was not so much of the kind of depersonalization that occurred among those who went into Weatherman--you were not divorced from the normal aspects of people's lives. Nevertheless, there were precipitous actions taken, there were fires set to growers sheds and other serious actions.

S: You knew actual Weathermen and women, and presumably you knew some of these people before they joined the organization, as well as others who you met only after they had joined?

V: I had no direct contact with weatherpeople during the time they were underground. I knew several people who were leaders of SDS who eventually went underground and I've had some contact since they've reemerged.

S: Since you had contact with some of these people before they went underground, do you have any "pet theories" about how it happened that people made that kind of commitment?

V: I think they were caught up in this perception that action was what was needed to precipitate large scale movement in the society. As you know from this discussion, that was fundamentally in conflict with my views. So we had interesting discussions, but we never really got anywhere in those discussions. My perception was that they were frustrated at their sense of powerlessness.

There was also an element of romanticism about the way ordinary people conduct their lives. There was a misperception that the average worker has high consciousness and all they have to do is find a mechanism for acting it out. There was a feeling of powerlessness such that what was needed was a way to

directly show force to the authorities and that would be symbolic of them having power.

The Days of Rage were a clear example of that. My perception of the Days of Rage was that it was a bunch of fairly affluent white kids trying to be like the students in Paris, but they ended up beating up a bunch of Chevys. That was just silly, but nevertheless they were very serious about it at the time and felt this was the way they could show that they had some real power. They could destroy property, they could disrupt the functioning of the city, and they could take some kind of revenge on the city. It was right after that Weatherman was formed.

S: What was your reaction when you heard about the first Weatherman bombings?

V: My feeling was that they would probably destroy a lot of toilets, but no airplanes. I was very cynical about that--I felt that if you were going to do that sort of thing, you should go after B-52s or tanks.

S: Of course, that's a little more difficult.

V: It sure is, but if you're going to do that sort of thing, let's be effective about it.

S: Then you must have been a little more positively inclined when students in Wisconsin tried to bomb a local army depot with a private plane.

V: I didn't know all the details about that. But in general I would say that those who engaged in violence were going through the process that I described earlier to clarify their own thinking, find the right line, and find the right method for getting people into motion. But in doing this they so removed themselves from the thinking of ordinary people that the only thing left to do was to engage in this sort of activity.

S: They evidently identified quite a bit with Third World guerrilla movements and there was contact with Vietnamese cadres. In a recent interview, another former activist stated that these cadres were very firmly opposed to the use of violence in the antiwar movement. At the same time, my own

feeling is that this emulation of the Third World guerrilla was nevertheless significant in the turn to violence. Based on your relations with people who had direct contact with these cadres, was it true that they in fact pushed nonviolence?

V: Absolutely. In fact all of the contact we had with the Vietnamese resulted in a conviction that we should be organizing the broadest possible opposition to American intervention, that it should always be focussed on things that ordinary people deal with in their everyday lives. By 1972 we had been able to emerge with a healthy (in my view) antiwar movement in part because the more extreme elements had spun out into irrelevance. Various elements coalesced around an organization called the Indochina Peace Campaign.

The tactic that was mainly used--in conjunction with demonstrations and public protest activities--was to figure out where the swing votes were in Congress and to pressure these legislators. I had long hair for awhile in the late sixties, but I cut my hair, cleaned up my act, and went after a Republican who represented Santa Monica. We organized a long campaign to get him to change his vote on appropriations, which he eventually did. But it was clear that the breakup of SDS and the formation of all these factions was actually quite positive--we didn't have to deal with those folks anymore.

S: One specific question I have which I would like more information on was raised by Gitlin in his recent book. One thing I sort of admired about Weatherman was that they didn't kill anybody outside of their own in the bomb factory accident. But Gitlin maintains that the townhouse cell was building antipersonnel weapons when the explosion occurred. Do you know anything about that?

V: No, I have no direct knowledge about the townhouse incident.

S: Did you ever hear anything about the possible use of antipersonnel weapons?

V: Never. There are several people who are public now who you might want to talk to in regard to this. Dick Flacks would probably know how to reach some of those folks. In fact, I would say Dick is the key person to further your research. If you can get him interested in helping you get access to people, that would make an enormous difference. There is no one else who is in that position. He can give you a much more fleshy

account of what was happening inside people's heads when they made the kinds of decisions that led to involvement in violence.

S: I've got some specific questions with regard to the methodological aspects of this study. Obviously, it's going to be difficult to get former weatherpeople to talk for various reasons. They may have sensitive positions in the community or whatever and may be reluctant to talk candidly about their former activities. Do you have any thoughts about that?

V: I think getting the support and backing of some key people like Dick is essential. Also, I would give prospective interviewees advance copies of every question you want to ask with the understanding that they can delete anything they find problematical. They would then have essentially the ability to control the line of questioning.

Part of the reason there is a lot of concern is that there were a great many people who were the personal friends of weatherpeople who took significant risks in helping to provide them with shelter and financial support, as well as other mechanisms to keep them alive during that period. I have no idea what the statute of limitations on this stuff is. I know several people who provided this kind of support, and there is a great deal of concern even today--20 years later--about providing this kind of assistance.

S: It's my view that taped interviews with former weatherpeople are not very practical. It might work after a long period of informal contact, but certainly not in the same manner that this interview was arranged.

V: It might work at some point, but I would think that knowing in advance what kinds of questions are going to be asked would be essential.

(In concluding the interview, Villarejo gave me the names and addresses of two former activists in the immediate area who he felt would be able to provide productive information. He then reiterated his view that the turn to violence had been a strategic and tactical mistake. Because of this, it is his view that former participants may find it difficult to come to terms with the fact that a large portion of their lives have in effect been wasted).