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University of California
Berkeley, California

Ellen and William Sewell
Free Speech Movement Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Lisa Rubens
in 2000

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Interview with Ellen and William Sewell

Interview 1: October 24, 2000

Tape 1

W. Sewell: We were married right out of college, in 1962.

Rubens: You met each other in college?

W. Sewell: We were undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin, and we actually—we both of us grew up in Madison, but we didn't know each other then until we were in our twenties, juniors in college. We met and—

E. Sewell: We met through a friend.

Rubens: Ellen, what was your field?

E. Sewell: I was in political science and Russian as an undergraduate.

Rubens: Who made the decision to come to Berkeley and why?

E. Sewell: It was Bill's idea because he had lived in Palo Alto for a year with his folks, and he thought California was terrific.

W. Sewell: Yes. I didn't care much for Palo Alto, but I had made a couple of trips up to Berkeley, and thought this place is cool. I would—

E. Sewell: And then both of us got into graduate school there.

W. Sewell: I in history, and Ellen—

E. Sewell: And I was in political science. So, we decided to go there because both of us—He liked the idea of Berkeley, and I didn't know—I'd never been out there, so—

Rubens: Anyone particularly that you wanted to work with Ellen?

E. Sewell: No. I was too naive—I just, you know—

Rubens: How about you, Bill?

W. Sewell: I had been told there was a person who was there who would be consonant with my interests, but I didn't really know anything about him.

Rubens: Who was it?

W. Sewell: David Landes. He's an economic historian. I was going to study economic history. But, I knew that Berkeley was a fabulously good institution in

general, and a good history department. We had done enough research to know that.

E. Sewell: Not really.

Rubens: In terms of politics or culture or—was Berkeley alluring?

E. Sewell: Well, Wisconsin was pretty active when we were in there. There was certainly all the civil rights stuff. There was SDS.

W. Sewell: We knew about the Freedom Rides.

Rubens: But what I'm asking is if you had heard that Berkeley was a politically interesting place to go?

E. Sewell: No.

Rubens: Did you know about HUAC?

W. Sewell: Yes. Yes, I did. That happened, actually, the year that I was in Palo Alto, and I'd been planning to go—

E. Sewell: Oh, oh, right. Oh, we all knew about HUAC. I didn't associate it with Berkeley, though. I associated it with San Francisco.

Rubens: Yes, but many people saw that film *Operation Abolition* and—

W. Sewell: Yes, I certainly knew that it was a politically interesting place, and what was part of the appeal, I think, was that it seemed like a really politically hip kind of place.

E. Sewell: But, I didn't think of it as any politically hipper than Madison.

W. Sewell: No, neither did I.

Rubens: And had you, Ellen, been particularly active or

E. Sewell: We'd been un-particularly active [W. Sewell laughs]; that is, I marched on the square. [laughs] I handed out leaflets, had people say to me, "Why don't you go home to Russia?" That kind of stuff. But I wasn't, like, president of an organization or running anything.

W. Sewell: Yes. I think that was really true of both of us, that we were sort of on the margins of the real activists.

E. Sewell: Yes, I think I'd been involved earlier than you. I mean—I don't know—when I was a freshman or—

- Rubens: So, '62 you come out, and by '64 what is your status? Are you a second year—
- E. Sewell: [counting] '62, '63, '64, yes, third year graduate student.
- Rubens: Were you pretty clear by then that you wanted to pursue a Ph.D?
- E. Sewell: Well, I was clear when I came that I wanted to pursue a Ph.D. However, I did not understand the power of the cultural forces [laughs]. You know, the "feminine mystique," whatever. I didn't understand that, so—
- Rubens: Because we have so little time for this interview right now —I told Bill that I'll call you to fill in—let's just plunge into what you mean by the feminine mystique.
- W. Sewell: What I mean to say is that it didn't ever occur— I wanted a family. It didn't ever occur to me how we were going to manage that —that when you have a two-year-old, somebody's got to [laughs] stay home to watch it. You know? That, how much discrimination there was. How much lack of expectation there was that the women would actually complete their degree.
- W. Sewell: When I first met Ellen, she said she wasn't going to get married until she was twenty-five. I didn't see any reason to wait that long; and we didn't.
- Rubens: Did you have to talk her into it?
- W. Sewell: It wasn't very hard. I mean, we were each other's best friends and lovers from about Christmas time of 1960 through the time we got married, and ever since. So, after a few months, it seemed obvious that that was the thing to do. And as some friend of ours said--another couple who were who got married shortly after we did, perhaps the next summer--when they were explaining to their kids why they got married, when they were so young, I think he was twenty-three and she was twenty-two, "You know, we got married so we could have sex." [laughs] Anyway, so it was partly that I suppose. If we had been at Berkeley, we might not necessarily have gotten married because there people lived together without being married and all that.
- Rubens: So were a lot of graduate students that were married.
- W. Sewell: Oh, yes. Bob Price and Mimi were married.
- Rubens: Were there any other women in your graduate class?
- E. Sewell: Oh, sure.
- W. Sewell: Maybe a third, quarter?

E. Sewell: I don't know. I really don't know what percent.

John Schaar gave a lecture in which he said, "You know, we're a state school, and so we can't discriminate. But women leave disproportionately." So, he's basically saying, "We're wasting our money on you women, but we have to let you in because"— And I didn't interpret that as, "Okay, you women, we've let you in, let's go out and make it work." Now, looking back, whether John Schaar was really saying we're stuck with women, I don't know. But, I will say that I do not believe John Schaar was a feminist at that time. [laughter]

Rubens: We are interviewing more heavily in the political science department, as a kind of sample study of teacher/professor relationships. This story hasn't come up, but I'll be sure to go back and ask about it.

E. Sewell: He was a graduate advisor or something like that. So, he gave this talk to the graduate association of political science, or something like that. I don't remember what the occasion was, but it was said in front of a group.

Rubens: You heard it, you remember it. Had you begun to study with someone in particular?

E. Sewell: More or less, Sheldon Wolin. I took a graduate course with John Schaar.

Rubens: Did you emphasize a certain kind of political science?

E. Sewell: I was in political theory.

Rubens: And had you decided if you would focus on European, American, or on a specific problem or question?

E. Sewell: Not at that point. And we had to take a million different prelims [preliminaries] in all kinds of areas, so it took a while to determine a thesis area. And you had to take your language exams. I spent one entire summer studying Russian because I failed the language exam the first time.

Rubens: So in the Fall of 1964—

E. Sewell: I wasn't pregnant. I was a returning third-year student and I was a TA. in, probably, American Politics. But I don't know if that was the fall. I can't tell you if that was the fall. I never was a teaching assistant under Schaar. Maybe I was a TA for Peter Odegard, who was concerned with American political parties and interest groups. The first person I taught under was Odegard. Never met the man. Never met him. We met as TAs separately; there was a chief TA but I never was introduced to Peter, throughout the entire semester, I taught American Politics.

Rubens: Did the TAs all sit together in the front of the lecture hall?

- E. Sewell: No, we tended to sit in the back. Sometimes we didn't go. [laughs]
- Rubens: Were there Phybate notes? [Lecture notes taken by a commercial company and sold to students.]
- E. Sewell: You know, I don't remember that.
- Rubens: Some professors didn't allow that. Did it ever cross your mind that this was strange that you didn't meet the professor for whom you taught?
- E. Sewell: [W. Sewell laughing in background?] Oh, yes. I thought it was very strange. I thought it exemplified the character of the school.
- Rubens: Well, let's just switch for one minute. Bill, fall of '64—
- W. Sewell: Could I go back to an earlier point? You were asking us about politics at Berkeley and our background at Wisconsin. I think we both had the sense when we first arrived in Berkeley, in 1962 that Berkeley was less politically interesting than Madison. Not to say there were politics going on. But it turned out there was a trough between the period of the HUAC demonstrations and the FSM.
- The other big thing in California was the anti-death penalty rallies. I was actually at the vigil when Carol Chessman was executed at San Quentin? It was either '59 or '60. I don't remember whether it was fall of '59 or winter of '60. I was at Stanford that '59/'60 year.
- Rubens: Could you say something more about thinking Berkeley was a backwater?
- W. Sewell: Well, it wasn't a backwater, clearly. And, in fact, we had the sense that it was, I think— maybe I shouldn't speak for Ellen, but I think this was jointly felt, that it was a pretty politically interesting place, but we had somehow imagined it was going to be more radical than Madison and it certainly wasn't. In fact, it seemed that there was, if anything, less activism just in those first couple of years. On the other hand, it was much more— can I say— socially liberated. Students were more sexually active. Students were sleeping together, living in apartments. There was much less supervision of people's personal life at Berkeley than at Madison. Madison was more—
- E. Sewell: There was a regulation of student hours, when they had to be in.
- W. Sewell: Yes, it had hours, and undergraduates couldn't be in apartments until their senior year. There were all sorts of restrictions. So in that respect, Berkeley was a much more wide open place. But strictly politically, it was not all that terribly active even though it was still a pretty politically interesting place.
- Rubens: So, by '64, state what was your status, Bill?

- W. Sewell: I was in my third year of graduate school. First two years, I guess I'd had fellowships, but the third year I was actually teaching western civilization, under Robert Brentano for the first semester, and— or was it second semester? I forget. But anyway, that turned out to be important for participation in the Free Speech Movement because, as you well know, the strike during the Free Speech Movement was basically done by graduate students, and so my main activity in the Free Speech Movement was really that.
- Rubens: Well, we'll get to that in just one second. So, you were still taking courses. You had not begun a dissertation?
- W. Sewell: No. No, I was still taking courses. I'm trying to think; it was probably the following fall that I took my general exams. Yes, it was, because it was just after Jessica was born in 1965. So it was in, like, November or December, '65 that I took my general exams.
- E. Sewell: And when I was supposed to be taking exams, before Jessica was born. [both laugh]
- Rubens: So you had gotten that far?
- W. Sewell: Oh, yes. She took her exams the following year.
- E. Sewell: But I should have taken them the week Jessica was born.
- Rubens: Now to skip ahead pretty quickly -when did you become aware of a contest over a strip of land and the right to free speech?
- E. Sewell: Probably in the *Daily Cal*, would be my guess.
- W. Sewell: The *Daily Californian*.
- E. Sewell: Yes, it was *The Cardinal* is in Madison. Yes, I remember reading —now I can't remember what it was we were reading about— but I'm thinking it was probably the first announcement from the university that they were going to close down that space. And I remember two aspects of this. One, reading about it and saying they can't get away with that. We can't let them get away with that. And then, going and talking to people.
- And it was, like, one of those Durkheimian moments, which I didn't identify as Durkheimian then, but I saw it as everybody separately came to the same conclusion. It hit us all. You know, we all said, "They can't get away with this. This is impossible." We weren't in any of the organizations that were specifically involved, like SNCC or CORE, or the DuBois Club, or socialist clubs. I mean, we might have gone to student meetings of something like a YIPSL meeting.

- Rubens: "Durkheimian moment?" Great term. [W. Sewell laughs in background] What was that moment?
- E. Sewell: What I mean by that is just that all of us in our separate little houses get the same thing, like some social phrase or phrase or--
- W. Sewell: We have an insight and say, "But they can't do this!"
- E. Sewell: We all had the same reaction. That was my feeling. And I just reacted immediately. I said, "But, they can't get away with this."
- Rubens: Do you remember discussions when about it when you came to class? Did Odegard ever say anything in the early days of the conflict? [W. Sewell laughs] Did your fellow TA's talk about it?
- E. Sewell: No. I don't remember professors talking—
- W. Sewell: I don't either.
- E. Sewell: Except later.
- W. Sewell: But, you know, we didn't have that much to do with professors. In some ways. I mean--
- E. Sewell: Well, you did.
- W. Sewell: Yes, I was taking a reading course at that time with Neil Smelser, who disagreed entirely with sit-ins and all of that. So we had some rather interesting, but fairly civil, discussions about that. In fact, during the sit-in around the police car—we had been sitting for a while—and I had my appointment with Neil; I was doing a tutorial--a kind of Oxford-style tutorial. And I thought, Oh, my God. I'll feel terrible if the cops move in when I'm gone. But there were a lot of people, and I thought, okay, I can go for an hour. Smelser and I basically then talked about that, and he sort of gave the chancellor-type line that the university shouldn't be used as a staging area for protests, etc., etc. And I disagreed. And so, we had that discussion. I went back, and joined the sit-in. [laughter]
- Rubens: Did he know at that point there were thousands of students around a car?
- W. Sewell: Oh, sure he did and he was against it.
- Rubens: But he didn't worry you?
- W. Sewell: No. No, he's a very mild fellow, actually. He didn't have much anger about that.

- Rubens: Ellen, how did you first encounter the car? Is that where you would say you were first politically active?
- E. Sewell: No, we did—. You know, I can't remember the sequence. One friend of mine was in one of those mill-ins earlier. A good friend of mine stayed overnight one night in Sproul Hall.
- W. Sewell: There's something before the police car.
- Rubens: I think it was a mill-in, as they called it; then they sat in at Strong's office, demanding to be seen. They were trying to get an appointment with the dean. It didn't happen, and finally they agreed after four hours or five hours to leave.
- E. Sewell: Yes. I don't remember specifically. But I remember that my friend had stayed in Sproul; she was a fellow student in political science. She's now a political scientist at York.
- Rubens: Was this the wife of Joe Pfaff?
- W. Sewell: No.
- E. Sewell: No. Her name was Liissa Lukkari North. [spells it]. It's Finnish. And she's at York. I've just talked to her. I haven't been in that regular contact with her, but I happened to just talk to her about?
- Rubens: When she told you about that sit-in do you remember your reaction or how you felt about it?
- E. Sewell: Well, I think I probably talked about it before. I mean, we were--
- W. Sewell: Oh, sure. Yes, we sort of knew what was going on.
- Rubens: But did you wish you had milled in also, or did you think this was cool.
- E. Sewell: It's one of those things where you participate in different ways. There are lots of different things going on, and you did this or that. Now one of the things that we did at one time —and I think this was before the police car, but I don't remember— is that we signed something saying that we had collected signatures.
- W. Sewell: That we too had been at the tables; or wanted to be cited.
- Rubens: "We had violated the"—
- W. Sewell: Yes.

- E. Sewell: And we got this letter from Katherine Towle, the dean, that said, "We recently have received"--
- W. Sewell: "We have received the document to which it would appear and your name has"--
- E. Sewell: "To which, comma, it would appear, your name has been affixed." [W. Sewell laughs] That's how the language went. So I'm sure this document exists somewhere.
- Rubens: You don't have it among your papers?
- W. Sewell: No, I don't think so.
- Rubens: Would you just explain for the record what does that mean? What was the implication of your name affixed?
- W. Sewell: Well, what we were doing was we were claiming that just as various people had been cited, that we were doing the same thing. Right? This was so that the administration couldn't crack down on a single person. And I remember that it was a little scary. I thought, well, okay, if I get kicked out of here, where will we go to graduate school?
- E. Sewell: And one of our friends, I remember, pretended to sign it and didn't. I didn't know that. But I won't--
- W. Sewell: Yes, don't say his name.
- E. Sewell: --say his name, but somebody who had signed it said, that he had actually signed a different name because he didn't want to be kicked out of school.
- Rubens: So, this was something that you knew was a risk. Were you ready to take the consequences, even if you worried about where you'd go next?
- W. Sewell: No question, yes. It was definitely a risk.
- Rubens: I wonder about the word "affixed;" my first thought is that the administration was saying to you: "We don't think someone like you would do this. Someone's put your name on it."
- W. Sewell: My interpretation of that was it was phrased ambiguously so that you could disavow it if you wanted to.
- Rubens: It gave you the leeway?
- W. Sewell: Yes, but of course nobody took it.

- E. Sewell: I thought it was because the university doesn't know what in the hell to do with all these people. You know, it didn't want to kick out all the people who signed this, but it did want to kick out a few people.
- W. Sewell: That was exactly the point.
- E. Sewell: So, it's just being— you know, not like you were violent or something, you know. It was pussyfooting around.
- Rubens: Do you remember trying to convince fellow students to sign it, or conversely, being pissed at those who wouldn't? You didn't know about the guy who said he did and didn't.
- E. Sewell: No, I thought he had signed for sure. Yes, I think we did try to get other people to sign.
- W. Sewell: Oh, we certainly talked with our friends about stuff. So there was sort of social pressure. I mean, that's why this guy signed it, because we were all talking about this; exhorting the university, saying and they can't get away with it; that this was the right strategy, for everybody to claim responsibility since we figured they didn't want to kick out half of their graduate students.
- E. Sewell: Well, it wasn't just graduate students who signed it. It was all kinds of students who were signing the—
- W. Sewell: Yes, I know. But, you know, whoever. So, he was there with our friends, right? So the reason he signed was that there was social pressure. He was ashamed not to.
- Rubens: I am so interested in that. This is what hasn't been talked about in the histories of the new left or the rising student movement: how the culture worked. The concept of the movement to my students doesn't particularly mean much; but I think they would understand social pressure.
- E. Sewell: We never understood that either, that is "the movement". [E. & W. Sewell both laugh]
- Rubens: Say something about that.
- E. Sewell: Henry Mayer, our friend and graduate student in history, used to refer to Barbara Garson, I think—
- W. Sewell: No, it was Nancy Stein.
- E. Sewell: —that they were building a movement in their backyard, and he kept looking in his backyard to see how "it" was doing.

- W. Sewell: Except they were particularly talking about building a movement, and he wondered if they were erecting it in their backyard. [E. Sewell laughs]
- Rubens: Were they talking about a movement before the car?
- E. Sewell: I can't remember when it was.
- W. Sewell: I imagine so because—
- E. Sewell: I think that was after.
- W. Sewell: The Free Speech Movement term came after the car.
- E. Sewell: But building the movement—
- W. Sewell: But the movement was the big movement.
- E. Sewell: Anti-war and all that stuff.
- W. Sewell: It's the big movement. It's the anti-war, it's the Civil Rights, it's movements for social justice. I mean whatever. There was a lot of that going on. And the movement, we always thought, was this great, abstract sort of thing; that's what they were talking about.
- E. Sewell: And we understood the Free Speech Movement, and we understood the Civil Rights movement. But I think they were more right about the movement than we were. I mean, I think there was the movement that I didn't understand at the time.
- Rubens: How can we develop some more about this concept of the movement? Did it trouble you because it was an ill-defined, amorphous concept? Why did Henry say erect?
- W. Sewell: Why was he joking about it, because we know he was such a sympathetic, political person?
- Rubens: Yes. Because of the language or the nature of the people who identified as being—
- W. Sewell: No. I think it was partly the kind of quasi-religious piety with which people talked about building the movement, and I guess we didn't feel that reverent about it.
- E. Sewell: Well, I think also that the people who are talking about building a movement were talking about linking up all these things. It was more structural, it was more systematic.

- W. Sewell: Right. We were more spontaneous. Or something. Disorganized.
- E. Sewell: Well, I don't think I understood or--
- Rubens: Or you were not affiliated, you didn't join specific organization?
- E. Sewell: I don't think I understood that -the non-affiliative special character of the movement. And then, of course, they thought they were building it with workers and peasants, or whatever. There was a sect--that wasn't FSM--there was a sign. When we arrived at Berkeley, there was a sign for some organization inviting the Berkeley workers and peasants to meet--
- W. Sewell: Toilers and Peasants of Berkeley [E. Sewell laughs] Come to such and such a picnic.
- Rubens: '62? Was it YPSL [Young Peoples' Socialist League]?
- W. Sewell: No, not YIPSL. They were more—
- Rubens: YSA? [Young Socialist Alliance]
- W. Sewell: Yes, it could have been YSA, or--
- Rubens: Now Marge [Frantz] had been in the Party earlier, and she was working as a kind of, quote, secretary or assistant, and she started organizing professional, non-academic people at Cal during the FSM.
- E. Sewell: Oh, yes, and there was Hal Draper of course, he was a union person.
- Rubens: So, you were able to joke about the movement, about aspects of leadership and at the same time hold that the university can't get away with this?
- W. Sewell: Yes. Oh, yes. And we were completely pro-civil rights, and liberties. It's not that we were against any of the movements that they were talking about, it was just the times.
- E. Sewell: I think there's a timing thing. I mean, I think the Free Speech Movement preceded the talk about--
- W. Sewell: About movements.
- E. Sewell: --in my experience--preceded the talk about building a movement. That was later. I think our humor or sarcasm was linked to war and all that stuff. I mean, maybe there was some discussion during FSM, but in my own experience, when I'm talking about when we were joking about it that was definitely after '64.

- Rubens: Yes. Of course we talked about "the movement" as including the Civil Rights movement and the New Left movement. And as you mentioned earlier, there was this social pressure, a fierce loyalty and commitment over politics; and it was a politics that incurred risks, which interfered with people who were genuinely pursuing a degree or a course of study, who were looking for a job to support their family.
- W. Sewell: Yes, well, we were pursuing our degrees in a very serious way. And, as I said, after signing that thing, I remember thinking, well, if I get kicked out of here, where will I go to graduate school? I didn't want to quit going to graduate school, but it was a risk that I was knowingly taking.
- Rubens: Did you have a few answers to that in your mind?
- W. Sewell: Oh, sure. There were other places that I could have gone.
- Rubens: You were preparing?
- W. Sewell: Yes. Yes, so I was preparing in case that happened.
- Rubens: And you, Ellen?
- E. Sewell: I wasn't. [laughter]
- Rubens: Why don't we talk more about surrounding the car? The irony is that I've always known who you both were and Henry Mayer wanted me to interview you. But it wasn't until I met your daughter Jessica, who told me about the front page picture of you in the *S.F. Chronicle* at that time, that I hurried up to arrange this interview.
- E. Sewell: Well, there's a still [photo] of us in that movie *Berkeley in the Sixties* around the police car. But, the only people who could recognize us are people who either knew us then or know very, very much what we look like. And my kids could recognize my jawline. But the day after the car incident, it must have been October 3; I was in a *Chronicle* front page photograph.
- W. Sewell: I think we both were, probably, but you were the centerpiece of it.
- E. Sewell: And my mouth seemed to take up three quarters of my face, which was looking up. This cop was going across me to the car.
- W. Sewell: He was wading through the crowd as if moving from stone to stone, picking his way through the crowd.
- E. Sewell: Yes. You know, it's like they were switching. Jack Weinberg was in the car, and this cop was coming across the crowd. And I can't tell you how terrifying

it was to be sitting there and having a cop climbing over you. And I said if he had touched me, I would have screamed, "Police brutality." [laughs]

- Rubens: What was the terrifying part? How long had you been there? It was noon, and people were passing by and some started saying, "Sit down."
- E. Sewell: I came very fast. It was a very small crowd when I was--
- W. Sewell: She was, like, in the fourth row or something.
- E. Sewell: Bill came upon the sit-in quite a bit later. I don't remember if he had class or something.
- W. Sewell: Yes, I had class.
- E. Sewell: And I was just hoping that he'd find me; that he'll figure out where I am.
- W. Sewell: Right, I came into Sproul Hall Plaza, over there by the fountain, where the car was. I saw what was going on, so I just immediately went there; and, you know, they were making speeches, and I saw Ellen walking. I don't know who saw who first, but we found each other. So then, I just went and sat down by her, and that's where we spent most of that day.
- E. Sewell: In answer to why did I sit down? It seemed necessary. Again, it just seemed like, Okay, we're going to stop them--
- W. Sewell: It was an example, again, of our sense that they can't do that.
- E. Sewell: We're going to stop them from taking Weinberg away in that car.
- Rubens: Did you see anyone you knew when you sat down?
- E. Sewell: Probably, but I don't remember.
- Rubens: Many people have said they didn't, that they were swept in by the enormity of it.
- E. Sewell: I don't remember.
- W. Sewell: I don't think you talked to anybody about doing this. It certainly was a spontaneous response to the police car.
- E. Sewell: Oh yes. There was not any planning at all. It was totally like I had no second thoughts. I saw them sitting around the car, and I just went and sat down. I just didn't have any second thoughts. And it wasn't like strategizing: Am I going to go in Sproul or not? I just didn't have second thoughts. I just sat

down. It seems to me I remember talking to people when we were sitting down, but I can't think who.

- Rubens: Had the policeman stepped over you before Bill came upon you?
- W. Sewell: No. I was there when it happened, actually.
- E. Sewell: Yes. But, I want to say that the policeman was a ballet dancer. The policeman went through that crowd with the greatest of elegance, and didn't appear to touch a soul. He didn't touch me at all.
- Rubens: Do you think there was a certain care taken by the police? Certainly the students tried to be polite: they took off their shoes when climbing on the car; they collected money to repair the car, once it was clear that the roof was caving.
- E. Sewell: No. I don't think the administration had anything to do with the fact that the policeman was a ballet dancer. I think the policeman didn't want to make trouble. The policeman was just going to go and stand by the police car.
- W. Sewell: Yes. I would actually say the campus police were pretty discrete, that they weren't trying to provoke anything; they didn't want a riot or anything like that. So they were actually pretty discrete.
- E. Sewell: But I don't know what instructions the administration gave them.
- Rubens:: Was this uniformed, campus police?
- W. Sewell: Yes. But when the Alameda County Sheriffs amassed around the whole thing that night, when the resolution finally came, that was scary. Those guys didn't look like they were going to be very nice.
- Rubens: How long did you remain around the car?
- W. Sewell: I think it was there through that night; and it was the following night that it actually was resolved. Is that right?
- Rubens: The fraternity boys came down and were throwing beer cans that night. It was an all-night vigil, and somewhere around four or five o'clock the next day it ended. But a lot of people went home.
- W. Sewell: Yes. We went home. We slept in our beds that night, I'm sure.
- E. Sewell: No, but I remember walking home from—. [speaks slowly, as if tracing the movements in her head.] I remember leaving the police car, running into Eric Levine and Steve--

W. Sewell: Steve Weissman. Right.

Rubens: You knew him already?

W. Sewell: Yes. Yes, he was a graduate student in history.

E. Sewell: I didn't know him well.

Rubens: And he would go on to form the GCC. He was a strategist.

W. Sewell: Yes, he was definitely a political strategist.

Rubens: But you ran into him.

E. Sewell: What I remember is running into Eric and Steve and going to Steve's--

W. Sewell: --apartment, right.

E. Sewell: --with Eric. And that was whenever the strike ended. I can't tell you what time of day or night it was.

W. Sewell: As I remember, it was about dark, but I think we went home the first night, and then we came back and rejoined the sit-in and--

E. Sewell: And then went home with Steve the next night, after the compromise had been made.

E. Sewell: Are you telling me those cops stood there for a day and a night?

Rubens: They rotated.

W. Sewell: But Jack stayed in the car the whole time.

Rubens: Yes. Funny, I never asked the question if he ever fell asleep. Probably didn't.

E. Sewell: I remember them passing him a bottle so he could pee.

Rubens: Yes. That was famous.

E. Sewell: [laughs] Infamous.

Rubens: What happened at Weissman's? Why did you go there?

E. Sewell: We just--you know, you felt like talking with people about it. Eric was in SDS and maybe was even the head of SDS. Lovely, lovely guy, who was in political science. And he had been up negotiating with--

W. Sewell: Clark Kerr.

- E. Sewell: Yes, with Clark Kerr. Mario Savio, Bettina, etc. Steve said he thought it would have been nice if there'd been some violence and that would have really forced the administration. Well, I guess not, it would have built--
- W. Sewell: It would have had.
- E. Sewell: Now, I'm remembering. Steve thought it would have built a movement. He thought it would have radicalized the student- body, and so on. And Eric felt the opposite. He said, "Look, when we were up there in Clark Kerr's office, Clark Kerr looked out the window"--
- W. Sewell: The bastard.
- E. Sewell: --and said, 'Look at those officers.'
- W. Sewell: He was looking at the cops, you mean, he was talking about the potential for violence.
- E. Sewell: Yes. Eric said that Clark Kerr had said, "I don't know if I can control them." And Eric felt that that was putting an onus on the students: If somebody gets killed, you kids are to blame. And Eric said he was ready to fold up. And Mario Savio spoke up and said, "Well, you called those police, and"--
- W. Sewell: Right, "the blood will be on your hands." Mario called his bluff.
- Rubens: Mario didn't play Kerr's game. When he looked out the window and said I don't know if I can control them, was that clear he meant the police--
- W. Sewell: Yes.
- Rubens: --and not the students?
- W. Sewell: Yes. Oh, everybody knew he couldn't control the students, by then.
- Rubens: Really? You knew that, did he know that?
- W. Sewell: [sighs] Who knows. Who knows.
- E. Sewell: I don't know. Yes, he knew that. He knew he couldn't kick out all the students, of course. He was trying to control the people with whom he was negotiating. And it was interesting--and I really believed this happened because Eric was an extremely trustworthy, honest person. I really trusted him, and he really did not want to have somebody's blood on his hands.
- Rubens: Eric told you this at Weissman's apartment, after you all ran into each other. Was there a discussion back and forth?

- W. Sewell: Yes, Eric was recounting what had happened.
- Rubens: Do you remember other people at all at the apartment?
- E. Sewell: The only people that we were with were Eric and Steve.
- W. Sewell: I think it was just them.
- Rubens: Did you know Jo Freeman? She was part of that negotiating group with Eric and Mario, and she was later accused of selling out the students; of making a back-door deal. She was in political science.
- E. Sewell: She was an undergraduate, I think, but I don't remember anything about her role.
- W. Sewell: I think that's right.
- Rubens: Did you feel strongly about Steve's or Eric's position?
- E. Sewell: Yes. I did not favor Steve's position. But, when Eric was saying he was ready to cave in, he was very glad that Mario hadn't caved in. That Mario had--
- W. Sewell: That Mario had understood the real logic of the situation and had been tough enough to--
- E. Sewell: And had been tough enough to *stick it out*.
- W. Sewell: To stand up to Kerr.
- E. Sewell: He didn't come back regretting that they had sold anyone out.
- W. Sewell: No, not at all.
- E. Sewell: He felt that he had been wrong, and glad that Mario stood up. That was my take on it.
- W. Sewell: Yes. Mine too.
- E. Sewell: But Eric was really worried that somebody could get killed. Because when you looked out there and you saw the numbers of people sitting and standing and the cops looming, it was quite terrifying.
- W. Sewell: And it was terrifying from where we sat down there on the plaza around the police are.
- E. Sewell: But I don't think I could tell we were as many; or that the sheriffs were in the background. You know, when I've seen pictures from above, I was kind of astonished.

- W. Sewell: No, but we knew it was huge. I mean, everywhere you looked and on top of all the buildings there were people, and you could see some of the cops in the back. I thought it was a really scary situation. It seemed obvious to me that there could be bloodshed. If the cops had charged, it could have been really awful.
- E. Sewell: And I don't think I seriously thought about--
- W. Sewell: --thought that they would?
- E. Sewell: Yes.
- W. Sewell: Yes. I never thought it was possible that the cops would charge in.
- Rubens: Of course they did come into Sproul Hall. December 2. And the 1960 HUAC rout of students at San Francisco was not that far past -but I guess it was a new generation sitting around the car, and the moment was not anticipated either.
- E. Sewell: Yes. And nobody was killed in San Francisco. They just carried people out one by one, knocking their heads on the stone stairs.
- Rubens: Were the cops particularly menacing?
- W. Sewell: Not the university cops, I would say, were quite tame.
- E. Sewell: There were cops on the terrace. So, you can say the situation of their being there was menacing, but it wasn't that they--
- W. Sewell: Yes. It's not that they were attacking anybody. But they were in riot gear too, as I remembered, whereas the university cops were just in their regular daily clothes.
- Rubens: Bill you had kept an appointment with a major professor. The next day, October third, did you go to classes?
- W. Sewell: No. I don't think so.
- Rubens: Did you Ellen?
- E. Sewell: You know, I have no recollection what I did. Was the strike right then?
- Rubens: No. But the night you're in the apartment with Steve and Eric, the steering committee of FSM is being formed, largely based on representatives from organizations, for instance CORE, the United Council of Churches. Brad Cleveland represented unaffiliated people, and there were some SDS people.

- E. Sewell: Yes, I didn't have much contact with those people.
- Rubens: I had not heard of SDS myself, before then.
- W. Sewell: No, it was later that it became a force, though it had been formed in Michigan earlier.
- Rubens: Of course there were Young Americans for Freedom, SNCC, Young Democrats.
- E. Sewell: What was that organization with the woman who was the Society for Individualism?
- Rubens: Yes, Mona Hutchin.
- E. Sewell: No, that doesn't sound familiar. She was the one who stood up on the cable car later that year.
- Rubens: Yes. That's exactly right.
- W. Sewell: It was a wonderful event. [laughs]
- Rubens: Do you remember any other particular speaker or moment around the car?
- W. Sewell: Oh, lots of things.
- E. Sewell: I remember Dusty Miller.
- Rubens: I will be interviewing him later.
- E. Sewell: There were a lot of different people who spoke, including people poets.
- W. Sewell: There were some Oski Dolls out there.
- E. Sewell: --sorority girls got up and said, "Why don't you go home?" And nobody would shout them down. Now the funniest that I remember was--
- W. Sewell: Seymour Martin Lipset
- E. Sewell: Lipset, the well-known sociologist who'd written on union democracy and theories of pluralism and so on. He spoke. And his theory was pluralist--I wish I could expound it now --but it was an argument for pluralism, for all *expressing* their views, and the different arguments, that really requires a vote. The theory as a whole proposed that the system can't work if people can't actually vote.
- W. Sewell: Exercise their franchise.

E. Sewell: And so, he was trying to expound his theory up there on the police car, and he said--

W. Sewell: "And students like this are not--they're anti-democratic."

E. Sewell: And so, he was expounding his theory, and people shouted back at him, "But we can't"--. You know, he said, "The university is pluralist," and blah, blah, blah, blah. And then, people shouted, "But we can't vote!" [E. and W. Sewell both laugh] And he looked, and he looked out at the whole crowd.

You know, he took that seriously. So then, he started a different tact because he realized he couldn't get very far with that argument. And then he said, "Well, but you've committed violence." And people said, "What violence?" And then he said, "Well, you've destroyed property." And people shouted, "What property? We haven't destroyed any property?" You know, people would shout back. And he said, "Well, this police car. You've done at least a thousand dollars-worth of damage." And people shouted, "You're standing on it!" [W. Sewell laughs] And he stood there like this. [assumes a posture] He's a sort of heavy man. He's probably the heaviest person who stood on the police car all afternoon. And he looked down at the police car. [E. & W. Sewell laughs] And then--

W. Sewell: Then he climbed off, I think.

E. Sewell: I don't know whether he did something else or he climbed off, but it was absolutely hilarious. I mean, I felt for him. He was, in a sense, honest and when an argument wasn't going to make it, he stopped. But the argument about the police car was so hilarious because--

Rubens: I haven't this story.

E. Sewell: Anyway. It's hard to even remember--

Rubens: Well, you were remembering these crystal moments. Are there any others that you could think of? Was there anyone you knew who you were surprised got up there?

E. Sewell: No.

Rubens: Bill, any other memories that stand out?

W. Sewell: Somehow, again, the person I remember is Dusty Miller. He was almost like the moderator of the debate on the police car. He was funny and very kind of engaging, charming character. So I associate him especially with the car incident.

- E. Sewell: I actually just read just a portion of Max Heirich's book and he reminded me of his name, otherwise I might not have been able to recall his name. But I do specifically remember him. I certainly remembered seeing Bettina speak--
- Rubens: Had you encountered Mario Savio before October 2, before the car? Had you particularly formed any opinions about him or his--
- E. Sewell: Oh, I think so.
- W. Sewell: I think so.
- E. Sewell: I think so. Because we went to Sproul. If there were things on Sproul Hall Plaza at noon, we went to them.
- W. Sewell: We'd go and listen. Right. My memory was that Mario emerged as the kind of the golden throat orator of the Free Speech Movement right at the beginning. That was just remarkable.
- E. Sewell: I remember Art Goldberg.
- W. Sewell: Oh, sure.
- Rubens: What do remember about Art?
- W. Sewell: I remember that he was a kind of a big sloppy guy with bad enunciation, and that--what can I say I can't remember specifics. I can remember aspects but not specific things that he said.
- Rubens: Oh I think this is wonderful. We know these are impressions, and general aspects help to illuminate the sensibility of it all.
- E. Sewell: I remember him as being kind of obnoxious.
- W. Sewell: Yes, right, being--
- E. Sewell: But I don't remember if I thought that in the Free Speech Movement or later because I had remembered him involved in the Filthy Speech movement.
- W. Sewell: He was kind of loud mouthed, or something, right?
- E. Sewell: And I remember his sister--
- Rubens: Yes, Jackie.
- E. Sewell: And my recollection is that they brought food from a sorority.
- Rubens: She was in, or had been in a sorority.

- E. Sewell: Yes, but that the sorority brought food and that must have been around the police car because I remember it being at night.
- Rubens: She brought food to the crowd?
- W. Sewell: To the crowd.
- E. Sewell: I think this food came from the sorority, and everybody's clapping because--
- W. Sewell: Yeah, sorority!
- E. Sewell: Because the sororities--yes, the sororities were even getting behind the movement. [laughs]
- W. Sewell: That was remarkable, actually.
- Rubens: You remember that?
- W. Sewell: Oh, absolutely. In the sense that all of these people who have not been involved in politics--you know, they've watching it I suppose--but the police car incident just pulled them in.
- Rubens: Or at least pulled them into taking some kind of public position -for instance the Oski Doll, saying, "Don't do this"?
- W. Sewell: Yes, there were sorority and fraternity kids who got pulled in, yes, as participants in the movement, in different ways.
- Rubens: I think it's so important to talk about the rhetoric you heard on the steps. We know the chronology. We know what the administration did. I interested in painting in a background, to sort of fill out the story: for instance, if you went through any personal transformation, if you had observations on speakers, the nature of the--
- E. Sewell: I was thinking that Barbara Garson or--
- W. Sewell: Marvin Garson.
- E. Sewell: Or Marvin Garson. Some of the Garsons I remember, but I can't remember was it that occasion?
- W. Sewell: Well, I especially remember the debate about the crackdown, where it was Marvin Garson against John Searle. Now, I can't tell you when that was-- probably '65. John Searle was obviously very sharp, and I had lots of admiration that anybody would go up against him and debate. And Marvin Garson wiped him out with his opening statement. He said, "What's a crackdown. What does a crackdown mean? A crackdown means you've got a

rule on the books. It's been there for a long time, and then all of sudden you enforce it. And that's what's going on here."

- E. Sewell: It certainly is good to know the meaning of words. [laughs]
- W. Sewell: And everybody knew that, "Yes, of course, that's what we mean by crackdown." And Searle had no defense for that because of course that was what was happening. So it was really hilarious to see this great genius professor be almost at a loss for words because this funny graduate had tripped him up.
- Rubens: This story in essence is not that different from what you were saying about Lipset. [W. Sewell laughs] Regarding the faculty and FSM, of course they finally got involved after the sit-in of Sproul Hall and the police hauled the students out. That was the last straw for a majority of them.
- E. Sewell: I'm sure there were some faculty who were involved earlier individually.
- Rubens: Now, I think the history department publically was more involved than the politically science department.
- E. Sewell: Yes, well, there were a lot more sympathetic people like [Carl] Schorske and [Lawrence] Levine. Do you remember Bill?
- W. Sewell: Well, Reggie [Zelnik].
- E. Sewell: Yes, Reggie was brand new.
- W. Sewell: He was brand new. He was an acting assistant professor.
- Rubens: He could not vote in the academic senate.
- W. Sewell: He may have been an instructor. He might not have had his Ph.D. yet.
- Rubens: He did not. That's why he couldn't vote in the academic senate.
- E. Sewell: I didn't know that, but--
- Rubens: They wouldn't let him in [W. Sewell laughs] the academic senate--
- W. Sewell: Right.
- E. Sewell: Oh, I didn't know that.
- Rubens: Had you had personal encounters with your professors. You talk about the Oxford-kind of tutorial with Neil Smelser. One of the claims of the students-- and for some of them, like Mike Rossman, it had been an ongoing dialogue--

was issues of reform of the university: the impersonal nature, the multi-university; for instance you, Ellen, never having met Odegard. Had you formed any ideas about the educational practices before or during FSM

- W. Sewell: Oh, definitely. I mean, I remember when--
- E. Sewell: I actually read Clark Kerr's book.
- W. Sewell: --the *Multiversity* book came out. We both read that book and were shocked and horrified by it.
- Rubens: What was it particularly that shocked you?
- W. Sewell: The whole notion that the function of the university is to sort of serve the commercial and industrial interests of the surrounding society--
- E. Sewell: Well, the other thing was that he--
- W. Sewell: --rather than be a critical forum and a place for free circulation of ideas and all of that.
- E. Sewell: There was no sort of core notion of anything else that the university stood for. I learned that early on. I mean, we were probably reading that in political science classes, because almost all of political science here talked about dollars and cents. Someone in the rhetoric department taught it regularly, once it came out.
- But I want to say at Stanford they had— You know, we were a little too idealistic about Wisconsin, which had this motto that I can no longer recall, but it had something to do with continuance of sifting and winnowing which is an agricultural metaphor.
- W. Sewell: By which alone the truth rules, and can be founded.
- E. Sewell: Truth will prevail.
- W. Sewell: This was some statement in behalf of academic freedom and freedom of speech.
- E. Sewell: And it was very much touted at the University of Wisconsin. So there was some sense that this was a core value.
- W. Sewell: And in defense of the University of Wisconsin, it continued to tout this value right through the McCarthy years. There was an active Socialist club and a--I forget the name--
- Rubens: There was no loyalty oath controversy there.

- W. Sewell: No, absolutely not. So, during hard times they really did live by that motto, by their principals. But of course in the 1960s, they went the way of all the other universities, in fact and became much more bureaucratized.
- E. Sewell: But so, Clark Kerr had seemed extremely--
- W. Sewell: Crass--
- E. Sewell: --crass and functional and without any delineation of any core values, just purely utilitarian.
- Rubens: Do you recall any discussions with your professors about this particular issue?
- W. Sewell: Well, yes. I had pretty good kind of mentoring relations with professors, with this guy David Landis, who in fact was gone in 1964. He had already gone to Harvard and wrote some blistering denunciation of the Free Speech Movement from there.
- E. Sewell: Carl Schorske said that the only thing he had ever gotten in support from the faculty senate was faculty parking. [laughter]
- Rubens: Stanley Fish just said that yesterday in my interview with him. "I was not going to do anything about this [FSM]. This was not the purview of the faculty." He did talk about the problem of parking on campus. [laughter?]
- W. Sewell: Right. This is a big issue.
- E. Sewell: Was Stanley Fish at Berkeley?
- Rubens: Yes, he was.
- E. Sewell: I didn't know that.
- Rubens: He was not active at all. He was just carving out his territory in Milton. But now that he's ended up being such a national figure--
- E. Sewell: Was he on the faculty?
- Rubens: Yes, in the English Department. He already had his Ph.D. and had taught a couple of years. He played no role in any of it. He was opposed to any of that agitation on the campus. The only time he became particularly involved in university politics was when he advocated a plan for an eight floor parking tower on campus. [W. Sewell laughs]
- E. Sewell: I have no idea. I never heard about that.

W. Sewell: Anyway, you were asking about Schorske. He was my advisor. I was in economic history. I met with him regularly. I had very good relations with him, and in the small seminars we had to take and so on. Then, when he left, I took up with another economic historian in the economics department— Nicholas Riasanovsky--who later became dean of faculty at Harvard. He became very famous when he was at Harvard as an administrator. He did economic history of Japan. And in general, I had pretty good relations with faculty by that time.

Rubens: And Robert Brentano, you were a TA for him? That was a huge class; had you met him?

W. Sewell: I most certainly had.

Tape 2

Rubens: You had just said Brentano was a great professor.

W. Sewell: Yes. He was really a kind of model professor in that kind of lecture situation, who got to know all the TAs and was very helpful to us in all kinds of ways and just an extremely friendly guy. But you know, there's a lot of variation in the style of professors. I mean, the Odegard thing was outrageous and I don't know if any--

E. Sewell: Yes, Aaron Wildofsky exercised a lot more control.

W. Sewell: Well, he exercised more control and you all knew Wildofsky. He was okay in that respect.

Rubens: How about moving to the formation of the GCC because so many history people and so many poli sci grad students were in it. Ellen, you already knew Steve Weissman?

E. Sewell: Yes. He wasn't a particular personal friend. Eric was a personal friend. But I don't remember much about the strategy of the GCC. You mentioned there was an early, failed strike at one point -after which Buddy Stein got involved. But I just don't remember that. I'm sure if there was a first strike, we participated in it because we participated in all the strikes, but I just don't have a specific recall about it. I don't have any specific recollection about the organization, GCC. I just remember going to meetings. And doing the one strike--and I don't remember which one that was.

Rubens: Probably the one after the Sproul Hall mass arrests.

W. Sewell: Yes. It was after the Sproul Hall sit-in.

- Rubens: The whole university basically shut down. What about the fellow you mentioned who pretended to sign a petition?
- E. Sewell: Oh, he probably participated in the strike. [laughs]
- [cross-talking]
- W. Sewell: There were more anonymous students.
- Rubens: No paper trail.
- E. Sewell: You know, I can remember arguing with one guy in political science who was very conservative, and he wanted to--. What was his name?
- W. Sewell: John Stemple?
- E. Sewell: Yes. Stemple.
- Rubens: Student?
- W. Sewell: Yes, he was a student.
- E. Sewell: And he was president of the Graduate Association of Political Scientists and he threatened to resign or--. We wanted the Graduate Association of Political Scientists to take a stand, and he threatened to resign. I was like vice president of that group, and I did not want to have to *[laughing, so words are not clear]* run it all by myself. So, I don't remember what transpired, but I remember arguing with him. You know I was basically in agreement with people in political theory. I mean, there was nobody conservative in political theory. We didn't have any students who were Straussian.
- Rubens: What do you mean by Straussian.
- E. Sewell: That's a conservative--
- W. Sewell: Leo Strauss, is a very conservative political theorist.
- E. Sewell: There's a group of political theorists who follow Leo Straus's theories about Aristotle, and they're politically very conservative. And there was for a while-
- W. Sewell: There was one faculty member.
- E. Sewell: --one faculty member, but there were no students who were followers of that school.
- Rubens: Except this Stemple?

- W. Sewell: No, Stemple was in some other field.
- E. Sewell: He was in IR or policy. He--
- W. Sewell: International Relations.
- E. Sewell: He went to Washington.
- W. Sewell: Yes.
- Rubens: What did it mean to be part of that association?
- E. Sewell: That was just an association of political scientists, it was a political organization. They didn't do much of anything.
- Rubens: Brought speakers, maybe?
- W. Sewell: Brought speakers and they were sort of liaisons between the department and the graduate students.
- E. Sewell: Yes, we had an interesting group of talks by professors about their fields, in which for instance, Herb Mcklosky was very defensive in trying to convince people to--you know, they shouldn't all be in theory; they're never going to get jobs, and so on. And then Wolin gave his: "My mother didn't raise her son to be a political theorist." And then David Apter came -the African specialist; and he's kind of carrying a spear, you know, since he had just gotten off the plane. And David says, "I've just been to see the president of Senegal. I've been going to cocktail parties in Africa."
- W. Sewell: "I've toured the Senegalese palace and hobnobbed with the rich and famous."
- E. Sewell: Comparative politics was wonderful and it was very funny because these internal debates and hostility between these people that were called behaviorists and the people--
- W. Sewell: --pluralists--
- E. Sewell: --who were quantitative and the theorists were so heavy and afterwards I'm just like--
- Rubens: Floating above this, sort of?
- E. Sewell: Yes. I'm floating above it. I'm living the good life here. [laughs] It's lots of fun. I'm writing my theoretical works and doing my thing. And Stemple could ignore this? I don't remember what year that was. I don't remember if that was after or before FSM.

- Rubens: But that's the kind of thing that the graduate association did?
- E. & W. Sewell: Yes.
- E. Sewell: And some of us wanted it to take this political stance, and I no longer remember whether it did or not. But Stemple was head of it, and he did not--absolutely didn't want to get behind. He was set to--he got his Ph.D. done in record time and went to Washington--in my recollection.
- W. Sewell: Probably went straight into the CIA would be my guess. [both laugh] He was really made for that.
- E. Sewell: I don't know. But, anyway.
- Rubens: Were you aware of any students just devoting full time to the FSM who said--used this perhaps as an excuse to abandon their studies? Now neither of you—
- W. Sewell: No, I don't think either of us were ever tempted to do that. There were a couple of people--. I mean, I think Steve Weissman did that.
- E. Sewell: And I know there was another guy.
- Rubens: How did you meet Henry Mayer?
- E. Sewell: We met him through a friend from Wisconsin who was in American history.
- Rubens: Were you the same year?
- W. Sewell: No. No, we were there a year before Henry and this friend --it's pretty funny--he was actually my pledge son in a fraternity. [laughter] And he came to graduate school the year--at Berkeley--the year after we were there.
- Rubens: You were in a fraternity at Wisconsin?
- W. Sewell: In Wisconsin. Yes Ellen was in a sorority.
- Rubens: This is what people did in those days? It wasn't so--
- W. Sewell: Well a lot of people joined. I was personally pretty alienated from it by my senior year. Ellen had lots of good friend there.
- E. Sewell: We were tolerated as the green-book-bag kind of students.
- W. Sewell: Yes. We were the kind of quasi-beatnik-green-book-bag-toting crowd.
- Rubens: Did a lot of people have those bags at Wisconsin?

- E. & W. Sewell: Yes.
- Rubens: They were used at Berkeley, but amongst certain crowds. There were no backpacks yet.
- E. & W. Sewell: No.
- W. Sewell: No, no. No, backpacks were not used.
- Rubens: And most of the girls carried books in their arms. And I guess the boys--
- E. Sewell: Like in high school.
- W. Sewell: Yes, my pledge son. His name was [Carl Bergren]. So he turned up in American history our second year, which was Henry's first year. And sometime during that year at least he was Henry's roommate. And I'm pretty sure that it was [Carl] who introduced Henry to us and we immediately hit it off. And became friends. Ever since.
- Rubens: Life-long friends.
- E. Sewell: Yes. We moved to Grove Street. 1812 Grove Street. Grove [later was named Martin Luther King, Jr. Way.
- W. Sewell: In the summer of '64, actually.
- E. Sewell: Yes. And Henry lived on Hearst, about a block and a half away.
- W. Sewell: Right, just about two blocks away on Hearst Street. Yes, that's right. We were at--
- E. Sewell: But we interacted with Henry all the time on this stuff--you know, with the GCC and stuff. So we were always involved.
- W. Sewell: Yes, just constantly.
- Rubens: He became the GCC rep from history and Bob Starobin was another one?
- W. Sewell: I don't really remember who the reps were.
- E. Sewell: I just remember us all going to the meetings.
- Rubens: Were you the rep from poli sci?
- E. & W. Sewell: No.
- E. Sewell: I remember Henry was always making clever, witting fun of a lot that went on. There was a story about those "three little finks" from school [I forget who

they were, people who had negotiated with Strong or Kerr] and voting court reactionaries?

- W. Sewell: Yes. Under the chancellor's tutelary. Gilbert and Sullivan.
- E. Sewell: We probably did it with him.
- W. Sewell: Probably, yes.
- Rubens: Because it was fun? Because you were wordsmiths? Because your minds were quick?
- E. Sewell: Henry and I used to both compose doggerel. Now in fact, Bill was very good at it.
- W. Sewell: No, taking songs and making new lyrics for them is something that came from--my dad used to do that all the time. When it turned out Henry did that, then we would do these things together.
- Rubens: But so there was this sort of meeting of the minds and hearts and--
- E. Sewell: The type of thing that you do when you're making up words to the very model of a modern major general--whatever, you know--with your own--
- Rubens: I was raised on Gilbert and Sullivan.
- E. Sewell: Henry's observations were always apt, very funny and humorous, so he always kept--. He had little titles for everyone. I don't know whether we should repeat all those.
- Rubens: Oh, do and we'll edit them.
- W. Sewell: We can repeat one. Martin Malia, the Russian Historian, at some point was involved in whispering things to the chancellor and all that. So Henry started calling him Martin "Cardinal" Malia. [laughter]
- Rubens: There was humor and satire—
- W. Sewell: Well, that was characteristic of the whole Free Speech Movement. I mean, you know the record of Free Speech Christmas songs.
- E. Sewell: Marvin Garson was hilarious.
- W. Sewell: Yes, Garson was particularly hilarious. Right. But it really was part of the whole current of revolt I think. And part of what we--
- E. Sewell: And make the university look absurd.

- W. Sewell: Well, and part of what we disliked about sort of "Clark Kerr's university" was this kind of cold, bureaucratic, unimaginative, deadly sort of way of being.
- E. Sewell: Hierarchy.
- W. Sewell: Yes. That's right. All of that. And I think that the generation of laughter and having fun at the same time that you're being politically serious and intellectually serious was partly--that was partly an act of opposition to that--you know, to the kind of stultifying, bureaucratic stance of the administration.
- E. Sewell: And the other thing is that we were bringing together lots of different folks. You know, there wasn't a common political agenda.
- W. Sewell: No.
- E. Sewell: It was really— And people were very respectful. You know, nobody booed anybody down from the police car. That was like the greatest sin. This was about free speech.
- W. Sewell: It was amazing. Yes.
- E. Sewell: Nobody booed anybody down or tried to prevent anybody from talking at all. It was extremely open.
- W. Sewell: There was a lot of idealism about free speech.
- E. Sewell: And there was probably idealism about civil rights. I was going to say that we had participated in the Sheraton Palace and Auto Row demonstrations. At the Sheraton we sang Malvina Reynold's song "Little Boxes" to ladies who were there still wearing their hats [laughs]
- E. Sewell: We weren't sitting in to wait to be kicked out. It was to--
- W. Sewell: Just to be part of the demonstration.
- Rubens: Did you sit in Sproul Hall?
- W. Sewell: No, we didn't.
- Rubens: Did you hear Mario give his famous speech?
- W. Sewell: Absolutely.
- Rubens: You were actually there?
- W. Sewell: Yes. You mean about, "There comes a time when the machine--
- Rubens: "The machine becomes so odious"--

W. Sewell: Right. "Makes you so sick at heart but you can't take part. You have to put your body on the wheels, on the gears and the levers" and all that.. Yes. That was a terribly moving speech. It picked up that— this is related to what I was saying about the laughter— that part of what the whole spirit of the Free Speech Movement was about, I think, was this kind of anti-bureaucracy, anti-sort of stultifying, conformist, corporate, bourgeois America. And I think that particular metaphor about the machine— There was all this stuff about, you know, "We don't want to be IBM cards. We're students."

And so, I think that was a particularly sort of brilliant and moving metaphor that really captured the sense of much of what was wrong with the university was that it was this stupid machine and it was being used as—. You know, the great lyrics of the song were, "The knowledge industry turns out more GNP without your subversion on its property." It was that kind of sense. And I thought that was part of what Mario was getting at in that speech.

E. Sewell: The concept of a power structure, we didn't have that. There was C. Wright Mills and so on, but we didn't have that frame. We thought of it as a general kind of ethos, although in effect it looked like there were very specific members of the power structure that the university was trying to please. And it was so hypocritical. The whole thing was so hypocritical in the first place that you just had to laugh.

Rubens: I'm not sure the term "the system" was being used either yet.

W. Sewell: Yes. Probably--

E. Sewell: And none of us, nobody knew what going to happen next. I mean, we we're all playing it by ear.

W. Sewell: It was tremendously exciting in that way. That you felt like you were on uncharted territory, and you have no idea what is going to happen next. You wanted to find out when you got to campus in the morning. You wanted to find somebody to ask "Well, what do they know and what is--? Has such-a-such a group met or not and what did they say." It's like you were constantly looking for leads of what was going on. Very exciting in that way.

Rubens: We're doing pretty well on time for the outline. I think about ten more minutes, then that'd be nine o'clock, and that's an hour and a half. The Greek Theatre: Do you remember being at the all University meeting after the students were arrested?

E. Sewell: Was that when Scalapino was chancellor for a day?

Rubens: Yes.

- W. Sewell: Again, that was another of Henry's titles; he called Scalapino chancellor for a day. I think we were there way up high, as I remember. That was when Mario tried to get on stage and then the police grabbed him.
- Rubens: It was so astounding for people is that people really expected Clark Kerr to say something significant. .
- W. Sewell: Right. They just didn't get it, over and over and over again.
- W. Sewell: Yes. Yes, they were good at that. [laughter] At ineptness.
- Rubens: So no particular vivid memory of this meeting?
- W. Sewell: No.
- E. Sewell: Oh, I remember. I mean, we all remember the Greek Theatre. If I'd been asked these questions maybe even then years ago, I'd remember the sequence, but my mind is--not just from old age, but from chemotherapy--it really--it was in the last year I really feel like it's been a great decline and I just have holes in my memory.
- W. Sewell: We do have one story about the strike that we should probably tell: I was the official statistics central for the strike. That is, each of the--and Henry's apartment was where we went. And each department had somebody who was in charge--
- Rubens: Tallying how many--
- W. Sewell: They were tallying how many went on strike and how many in the classes were going to strike.
- E. Sewell: They're tallying it by courses.
- W. Sewell: Yes, course by course. And they were calling these numbers and then we were taking them down. I was an economic historian and I believed in using numbers honestly.
- E. Sewell: Henry made a first estimate.
- W. Sewell: Henry said, "Ah, you know, I'll bet it's 75 percent. Let's just say 75 percent [laughter] I said, "No, no, Henry. I'm going to do this properly." So I added up all the totals--80 percent was the total, as it turned out. So we called the *Chronicle* and whoever and gave them the total. Or maybe we just called it back into whoever was handling press.
- E. Sewell: I don't remember. Henry was handling that.

- W. Sewell: Yes, Henry was doing that part.
- So, we were feeling pretty good about that, and then it was midnight or so-- after midnight, probably--we walked out and we wanted to see if the first edition had hit the newsstands. And picked up this first edition. And it said, "Strike Fizzles," or something to that effect. And we were astounded because we'd been there. We knew the strike hadn't fizzled. Moreover, we'd done the count. So then we started reading through the article, and the first paragraph was about the strike fizzling. And as you got farther down, then you actually got some of the real information.
- E. Sewell: The headline was belied by all the information which told an opposite story.
- W. Sewell: --and that 80 percent of the students in social sciences and humanities have gone on strike and da da da da. And so, we were shocked. I mean, we were naive enough at that point to imagine that the press was going to actually tell the truth.
- E. Sewell: Be accurate.
- W. Sewell: Right. And also pissed off. And so Henry--
- E. Sewell: He called Ned Tater. Ned Tater was someone who was on KPFA.
- W. Sewell: He was the news director at KPFA I think at that point.
- E. Sewell: He was a graduate student.
- W. Sewell: He was a graduate student in history as well. Yes. And anyway, Henry called Ned. Ned called this guy. You know, basically woke him up out of bed and said, "You know what the headline on the first edition says?" He was outraged because he had actually written the story and then whoever does the headlines and stuff made an improper headline and improper first paragraph. And so, he apparently then called back the people at--you know, his boss--
- E. Sewell: Whatever, but the later edition--
- W. Sewell: --because the later editions didn't say that. So we sort of felt good that we had managed to turn around this stupid headline.
- Rubens: You must have volunteered at some point? There were these jobs that needed to be done and you said, "I'll do this."
- W. Sewell: Yes. Oh, sure.
- E. Sewell: Well, basically, Henry was probably doing this, and Bill pronounced himself "Statistic Central" because Bill wanted to do it with the numbers, and I think

Henry was responsible for — I mean, we knew the numbers. We knew that it was successful.

- W. Sewell: Oh, yes. I mean, everybody knew. Everybody who's been on campus knew that the place was shut down. In fact, it wasn't functioning.
- Rubens: Now the number crunchers in many academic disciplines weren't they the sustainers of a certain kind of conservatism and bureaucracy?
- E. Sewell: We thought that. I don't really know.
- W. Sewell: Not universally. I think Herb McClosky in political science was the major number cruncher because I remember he was on the right side on December 8, I mean for the students.
- Rubens: So there was this notion that the quantifiers, in the political science department at least, were the conservatives, and the non-quantifiers weren't. But it wasn't really all that accurate. For instance, Mike Rogin, the radical political theorist, his first book was based on quantification, right, but he was a left-winger. So, how was he talked about by his fellow political science professors? They regarded him as a theorist. It was a self-fulfilling prophecy, or something. But there was this kind of weird conflation between method and politics in political science.
- E. Sewell: Yes, and they'd call —it was a dirty word, you know to call somebody a theorist. [laughs.]
- W. Sewell: Right. And I don't think that was true in the same way, say, in sociology. I mean, there were plenty of —there were splits in sociology, but I don't think that it was a--it wasn't this kind of perfect magic between the methodological split and politics
- Rubens: Before we stop for now, is there anything else you'd like to comment on?
- E. Sewell: One thing I was going say now: After one of the strikes, I was in--I'm remembering now that I was teaching Comparative Politics under the man who was Yugoslavian or Czech or--
- W. Sewell: Hungarian —Janos.
- E. Sewell: Andrew Janos, yes.
- W. Sewell: He may have just retired.
- E. Sewell: Yes. Anyway, my class of students was--they started out--. You know, there was a guy in ROTC and he'd wear his ROTC uniform. And I can still remember when he came in one day, and I think he was still in his ROTC

uniform, but he had bare feet. And I can still remember the looks of the young woman in front of him as she looked down and could see his bare feet. [laughs] And after the strike —after one of the strikes— students said they wanted me to call them by their first names because we were all called mister. and missus and miss. And so, I was Mrs. Sewell. Ms. wasn't invented. Anyway, they asked if I could call them by their first names because they were on the picket lines together and then they didn't even know one another's names. So, I said, "All right, we can do that. But now you and I were parallel. You call me by this title and I call you— so you'll have to do the same in relation to me."

Rubens: You called your students by their surname?

W. Sewell: Yes. That was normal practice.

E. Sewell: Yes. They were all called Mr. or Mrs. Or Miss. And so, I agreed to go along with this. You know, there was discussion and whatever. And I agreed to go along with it. But they couldn't say Ellen. At that point they were so used to the formal title. They would have to make some ploy to get my attention. [laughs] So they wouldn't say "Mrs. Sewell," and they wouldn't say Ellen. So, it was funny because I really can date that time when that transformation was made, and now people almost always call undergraduates by their first name, which was not done then.

Rubens: I would like to revisit your statement about the power of cultural forces you referred to in the beginning of this interview.

E. Sewell: I think the cultural forces reference had to do with the women's— All the things that were working inside me and in the larger society that led me not to have the confidence to get a topic I could really work with and believed and train myself and proceed with a dissertation. I wasn't able to do that. And I guess I could attribute it to personal weakness, but I really feel that it was part of that whole place of women. That you just had no idea. You didn't understand it, didn't know it was working on us. You didn't understand it until a lot later.

Rubens: Well, you had a child and you did continue; you took your exams.

E. Sewell: I took my exams, but I didn't finish the dissertation. And then I worked on two different topics. And I later realized that I didn't —this is really another subject— but I never really thought that political theory was— It was being presented as a universalist kind of term, and I basically didn't buy that, but I didn't understand that. So, it was very difficult for me to frame my own topic, to do my own vocabulary, whatever, because I basically didn't buy it. And it wasn't until I read some cultural anthropology on kinship after Bill was teaching in Chicago in the seventies, that it came to me where I was conceptually and what drives a notion of an historically constructed state,

sense of justice, whatever. It doesn't mean that it's constructed for just fifteen minutes and then they construct a new one. So it can have a very long stretch of history, but it's still not like universal justice, or whatever. And I also felt that at some level Wolin himself probably had this problem too. He and Schaar had this idea that they wanted to write a political theory, and I think what held him back from writing a political theory was that they just didn't really believe in the premise of just writing one. Like what's-his-name at Harvard who--

W. Sewell: John Rawls

E. Sewell: Like John Rawls who believed he could write a general history of a theory of justice.

W. Sewell: I could actually say something about the Free Speech Movement and sort of what influence it had for my later work. It was living through a revolution. In some ways it was a tempest in a teapot, but you had the sense that the whole kind of structure of your local world was up for grabs. And you had no idea what was going to happen next. And there were these various moments when you had to decide to take a risk and put your life or your career, or whatever, on the line. And that experience —and the result was not actually a huge transformation of the university, although we won the small battle about free speech, but a huge transformation in the politics and the culture of that moment and then, indeed, of the country and in some ways the world. That the phenomenon of the sixties was effecting the—

E. Sewell: '68.

W. Sewell: '68 seemed to us, you know, like, “Well, we've already seen this.” But later in my career, I went off to Marseilles to study the working-class movement in, workers in Marseilles. And I'd gravitated toward the revolution of 1848. I hadn't actually initially gone there to work on the revolution, but that was what sort of got my attention. And in fact, most of my work since that time has been on revolution. And I know that I carry around inside myself, a model of what experience of revolution is like. But based on this Berkeley experience. And so, when I study other revolutions, I'm probably tapping into that sense from my own experience.

E. Sewell: However, there were no shots from the barricades.

W. Sewell: There were no shots from the barricades, nobody got killed, but not all revolutions have that in them.

E. Sewell: No, but it's that sense of opening.

W. Sewell: It's a sense of this radical opening of possibilities. That's the thing that was most extraordinary about it, and that's something that I see in all of the

revolution I've studied. And that people who take a true sort of political approach, what are the groups and what did they achieve, part of what they miss is that extraordinary opening. And a lot of the work that I've done on revolution has been based on trying to figure out how that opening worked in different revolutionary efforts.

E. Sewell: It's not just the rising bourgeoisie.

W. Sewell: It's definitely not just the rising bourgeoisie. And even if there is a rising bourgeoisie, that doesn't tell you anything about what the revolution was and what possibilities came into being as a result of the revolution.

E. Sewell: What did Carl Schorske, the intellectual historian who was at Berkeley in 1964, what did he call the rising bourgeoisie?

W. Sewell: Eternal yeast.

E. Sewell: Have you interviewed Schorske?

Rubens: A colleague at ROHO has interviewed him for a study of the Department of History. He has not authorized the transcript to go on-line. It's a lovely interview

E. Sewell: I don't remember his position on FSM.

There were some professors from some other fields that we weren't or I wasn't familiar with. Someone in math.

Rubens: Surprisingly, there were quite a few faculty supporters in math.

W. Sewell: Yes. John Searle in philosophy was pro until he became a dean.

E. Sewell: I remember John Leggett in political science. He was a radical.

W. Sewell: Yes. He was one of the most outspoken radicals. He was young.

Rubens: Ellen, you're working now?

E. Sewell: Yes. I'm not in a very revolutionary position. Or you could call it a revolutionary position. I'm a legal counselor to the City of Chicago Board of Ethics. But I'll be taking some time off because of my illness.

Rubens: Well if you think of anything else that I should know about—

E. Sewell: You know, it's funny. You're talking about the question as if we try to persuade people. And I didn't remember—. You know, it's like you sort of remember all the people around you being on

W. Sewell: The same trip.

E. Sewell: Yes.

W. Sewell: Sort of, yes.

E. Sewell: And I think I must have talked to other TAs, so we] must have been persuading some.

W. Sewell: Yes. I have fairly vague memories of talking with TAs, and some of them were a little more hesitant, although I think we had a hundred percent in the western civ course. That was the one I was teaching. I think everybody eventually joined the picket lines and stuff. But I can remember that there were some who were a little hesitant about if should do this or not, meet their classes on campus, or what should they—

[Interview is interrupted by a phone call]

Rubens: While Bill was on the phone just now, you mentioned something about graduate students being more— or you said undergraduates were—

E. Sewell: Oh, I said the undergraduates did the drugs and sex; and that drugs simmered up to the graduate students. I remember one graduate student went off to teach at Franklin and Marshall. This was not Henry Mayer. I think it was Franklin and Marshall. Somewhere in Pennsylvania.

W. Sewell: Oh, yes. George.

E. Sewell: He was father of a child married and so on. And he had to Xerox all these things to take with him because he hadn't finished his thesis. And he packed all his cigarettes with marijuana in the middle. [laughter] And then he carried this thick package of cigarettes; and then he would xerox and he would smoke [laughter] because the xeroxing is so mindless.

W. Sewell: It wasn't Xerox because that didn't exist then. It was microfilming.

E. Sewell: Microfilming, okay. So, I remember that.

Rubens: All these leaflets were put out by—

W. Sewell: By mimeograph or ditto.

Rubens: I need to talk to more people about sex, drugs and rock and roll then.

[tape interruption]

- E. Sewell: You knew that Henry had dedicated his book to us?
- Rubens: I do know. *Son of Thunder*, about Patrick Henry and James Madison.
- E. Sewell: And I was so moved. I mean, I never really exactly knew why. I'm sure the fact that I had a deadly illness was part of what inspired it, but I just really never knew why. I was just so flabbergasted and so touched.
- Rubens: Well, you certainly had been friends for a long time.
- E. Sewell: We saw him in the summer. And he visited us in Chicago. He was the first person to ever baby-sit Jessica.
- Rubens: Didn't Jessica recently get her Ph.D.?
- E. Sewell: Yes. At Berkeley. He and his wife gave a party for Jessica. And, you know, so it's been a long time. And anyway, he just was part of our lives at all these different stops. Sometimes we were closer than others. Well, I think Bill expressed it. Henry was a little anti-academy. And so, Bill was pretty academic, so there were times when there was a kind of tension, you know, he would talk down post-modernism, you know, all that kind of stuff. And he sort of came around to all that stuff.
- W. Sewell: Yes. Maybe he had a little chip on his shoulder about walking away from academia. But he was very successful as an historian and writer.
- E. Sewell: I said earlier that Berkeley was more Californian than, at that time, than Wisconsin.
- Rubens: Did you know James Weinstein at Wisconsin, who was the editor of *Radical America*?
- W. Sewell: I knew who he was. He was in the *Studies on the Left* crowd; I didn't actually know him.
- E. Sewell: I met a bunch of those people who were in *Studies on the Left*. John Coatsworth, the Latin American historian had been active in politics.
- W. Sewell: Right. Yes, I remember we saw him giving a speech in the Great Hall of the Memorial Union at Madison.
- E. Sewell: That's what I recall. And for full disclosure we should say that Bill's father was chancellor of Madison in '68.
- W. Sewell: '67/'68. Yes. William H. Sewell –I'm William Sewell, Jr. He was an historian. He was chancellor during the Dow Chemical protests. My old man called in

the cops, and the cops came out and busted people's heads and stuff. So it was pretty—

E. Sewell: And there's a movie on Madison.

W. Sewell: Called *The War at Home*.

Rubens: Do we see your father in it?

E. Sewell: No. Not a mention. [laughs]

Rubens: Ellen, were your parents concerned about you at Berkeley? I mean, did they know you were—

E. Sewell: No. My mother had died when I was thirteen and I had a stepmother, so she had to take what she got. No, they weren't concerned at all. And I remember a family friend saying, "Oh, you know, your mother would have been out there defending free speech. When we read about it, we thought of you."

Rubens: Had your mother and father been particularly politically active?

E. Sewell: They were Democrats and progressive. And my mother was very pro-union and ideological. She wouldn't let the *Chicago Tribune* into her house. She wouldn't let us buy non-union bread from this company that busted the union. And was very, very hostile to Richard Nixon.

Rubens: Did she work?

E. Sewell: No.

Rubens: What did your father do?

E. Sewell: He was a lawyer. He was an assemblyman for one term. And then Madison was divided into three assembly districts, and we were in the Republican end. But my mother was head of the Dane County Democrats. So, she engaged in getting candidates and, you know, nitty gritty work.

So my mother was very— you know, League of Women Voters. She was very active. And my dad was active too, but it's those days when the mother's supposed to stay at home. So she basically really did a lot more politically than my dad, I don't think my father was the least concerned. I think he thought it was fine. [Addressing W. Sewell] You know, I don't remember about your dad. I don't remember them expressing worry.

W. Sewell: About going to Berkeley? Certainly not.

E. Sewell: No, I mean about being in the Free Speech Movement and everything.

W. Sewell: No.

Rubens: Ellen, you just keep going, and I don't want you to get worn out.

E. Sewell: Okay.

End of Interview