

# Noise and the Environment

At one point during the student disruptions of the late Sixties it was suggested that demonstrators in Washington might raze the Pentagon with the collective noise of assembled rock bands. The idea is not really so far-fetched, after all, Joshua did it at Jericho, and research has shown that noise can damage everything from massive stone structures to delicate glassware as well as the mental and physical health of human beings.

In the case of buildings and

depends on culture as well as individual tastes. It is said that when a Westerner hears a dissonant chord, his immediate reaction is to wait for resolution into resonance, while the Oriental hears the sound as complete in itself. Similarly, what is disturbing noise to one culture may be pleasing to another.

It is the information that makes the difference. If sound carries a message, it attracts attention and causes a response. However, if it carries no information as with

windowpanes and cracked plaster to actual structural damage. Some of this destruction is threatening a few of man's most unique creations. For example, sonic booms have damaged prehistoric cliff dwellings in the Southwest and shattered the delicate glass flowers in the irreplaceable Ware Collection at the Harvard Botanical Museum.

Noise also damages life. In laboratory experiments sudden and prolonged sounds

Basically, noise is a disturbance of the air that is created by an event of some sort such as the firing of a piston in an internal combustion engine or the act of drawing a bow across a violin string. The sound thus created radiates from the source in waves in the same way that ripples spread from a pebble dropped in a still pond. The waves are registered as sound when they strike the eardrum. This sets up a series of reactions within the delicate bone structure of the middle ear which are then transferred via the inner ear to the brain which interprets whatever information the sound may carry.

It is the information, or lack of it that counts, because noise is a relative thing. Just as an unwanted flower is referred to as a weed, unwanted sounds are called noise. Generally, when the frequencies of the sound waves are carefully selected as in the chords of a symphony, what you hear is pleasing, but when they are random, as with trucks and snowmobiles, the sound is disturbing. On the other hand, to some, the painfully high whine of a snowmobile across a winter landscape is pure music. Response to sound, however,

unless overly loud, is rarely disturbing. In fact, "white" noise is sometimes used like perfume to mask other more disrupting sounds.

Noise is on the increase in this country. New sources such as supersonic planes are surfacing daily and it has been calculated that the present rate of increase amounts to one decibel per year.

Not that noise problems are anything new. Writers from Juvenal to T.S. Eliot have complained about their noisy environments, and legal action concerning noise abatement dates back to Julius Caesar who instituted laws to silence chariots that rumbled through the streets of Rome at night. However, somehow our present situation seems more pervasive. It is almost impossible to find silence. Of all the forms of pollution, noise is the most psychologically disrupting. We never seem to benefit directly from its production - unless, of course we are making it.

Unfortunately, noise pollution is not just a question of being disturbed. Damage to buildings from loud noises ranges from minor loss, such as broken

breeding and eating patterns in small mammals and in some cases have even caused death. Research on wild animal populations is not complete, but it is a safe guess that excessive noise affects wildlife, especially animals which have highly sensitive ears, such as owls.

It is a well-known fact that sudden loud noises cause sea birds to leave their nests in a panic. Cliff-nesting sea birds often spill their eggs from the ledges in such instances and in 1969, after a season of exposure to almost daily low level sonic booms from military planes, sooty terns on Dry Tortugas experienced a 99 per cent hatching failure.

Most dangerous of all is the lack of knowledge. If SST plans are completed, almost half the North Atlantic would be blanketed with sonic booms daily. The problem is that nothing is known about the effect of loud noise on the breeding and migratory habits of commercial species of fish. Thus, for the sake of a few hours saved by a few persons in crossing the Atlantic, we could be blindly destroying one of the earth's major food sources.



John P. "Jack" Bond III pensively takes care of city business.

## Chronicle Profile

### What Its Like Being A Part Of The "System"

"When I was hired by the "system" I became suspect among my people." Those words are often heard from blacks who have managed to move up in a world that is most often white. Some blacks feel, however, that to work along with the system is to "cop" out.

But, many black professionals are doing just that: working within the system to make changes that will benefit everyone. Few, however, hold the position that Jack Bond holds for the city of Winston-Salem.

Bond is the Assistant City Manager and probably is the second most powerful person in city government. "The black community saw me as "the BLACK assistant city manager," Bond remarked in a recent interview. "But, those who hired me and I saw me as simply the assistant city manager."

Often times, Bond commented, blacks demand more from a person because he is black. But, he added, "usually, the role and function of the position is such that one is limited as to what he can do." In addition, many blacks are just not aware of the difficulties involved with over night, wholesale changes.

He said he saw no difference because of color. "Hopefully, we're beyond that stage." Bond, sitting comfortably in his huge office amid Washington Redskin banners, was perplexed over the sharp criticisms he has gotten. "A lot of people were just waiting for me to move out of the neighborhood I live in," he said, shaking his head. "I've lived with black folk all my life," he said, "why would I want to move now?"

Bond probably is the second most powerful man in city government because Winston-Salem is a council-manager form of government.

Eight aldermen make up the Board of Aldermen and, along with the Mayor, make up the city council. The City Manager is responsible to the board and is in charge of all of the cities departments. He is, of course, assisted by the assistant manager, Jack Bond.

Contrary to what people feel, the Mayor has no real power. He is a voting member of the city council, but has no managerial duties. As the elected head of the city, the Mayor presides at all meetings of the Board of Aldermen, nominates the members of appointed boards and commissions, and represents the city at all important functions.

The City Council hires the manager and "the manager hires everybody else," Bond explained. "All we do is carry out and administer the policies of the Board. We are paid professionals who administer their policies and they're a good group to work with."

Bond, who lives on West 25th Street, said although the city has begun to respond more to the needs of the total community, there are still problems. "One of our (the city) distinct problems is communicating with 35 per cent of the city... the black community.

"It's a problem because of the black culture. The city has not identified that one of its major problems is 'Education' of all of the people."

Bond admitted that it is difficult to appeal to such a diversity of people. But added, "We are trying to develop a program that does send out messages to the minority population. A program that gets to all of the people; specifically the black population."

He said, however, that the city is more tuned in to problems of the people than ever before:

"The city took a somewhat passive attitude before, but now we take an advocacy role in delivering services. Today, 50 per cent of the aldermen are black. Ten years ago," he continued, "the only black you'd see was an elevator operator. But now you can see qualified, competent blacks in top level positions."

Bond cited Ms. F. Creque, head of the Human Services Department, and L. Jones, Public Safety Legal Advisor, as examples of the changes that have come about recently.

On the next-to-the-last shelf of Bond's long, crowded bookcase is a small plaque that reads: "Big Things Happen Quietly; It's The Insignificant That Are Always Accompanied By A Lot Of Noise." He subscribes to that philosophy, he said, by "maintaining a low profile."

Bond, 36 is married to the former Carol Sawyer, a Winston-Salem native. He has two children; Phillip, nine, and Johanna, 10.

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