

# Fifties or seventies?

by Ted Friedman/AFS

There seems to be a theory loose in the land about a return on campus to the (silent) fifties. While news of this trend first appeared in a recent page one story in the NEW YORK TIMES, anyone could have seen it coming long ago.

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First came the popularity of all those corny love-story-type movies; then soft, acoustical guitar music won out in popularity over blaring acid rock, and the lyrics became embarrassingly romantic, some would say mawkish. Concurrently, there was a wave of nostalgia which encompassed the fifties and included more than a passing interest in such fifties phenomena as Bill Haley and the Comets.

Next, lots of people started wearing sneakers, which were the number one footwear in the fifties, some in combination with corduroy sportcoats, a dead giveaway. The sneakers aroused a lot of suspicions about a return to the fifties.

The rest of the theory about a return to the fifties revolves mainly around historical and economic comparisons. The forties, the theory goes, produced a generation in the fifties which felt the need for respite from years of war and personal displacement; and we are seeking the same thing in the seventies, produced by the sixties.

The lagging economy contributes to the picture by freaking out students who fear they won't get a job, so they have to bear down and study hard, thinking—rightly or wrongly—that this will help them land a gig. (Students in the fifties were bearing down for more or less the same reasons.)

Since students have to study harder to get a job, they also need to relax harder, which means—as most students understand it—getting loaded one way or another. But the pressure to blow grass is no longer as strong as it used to be, according to the fifties theorists, so it's no longer necessary to do dope (as if there were no reasons other than social pressure), and students are returning to their number one love, anyway—the juices. Because they're juicing, they're compared to students of the fifties.

So much for the theory. Now for the evidence. A sophomore at Brandeis University named Josh Peckler, of Massapequa, Long Island, observes. "It seems like a return to the nineteen-fifties." That's not all he says, but let's stop here a minute and examine his amazing statement. Being a typical sophomore, Peckler was born in 1952. Well, he missed the first two years of the decade about which he is commenting, but never mind, he was a wizened seven-year-old boy by 1959. Once you realize this about Peckler's precociousness, the rest of his observations should take on more authority.

"There's more booze," Peckler continues, "more nice clothes, the music is become less radical and softer—Carole King and James Taylor—and people seem to be getting into their middle-class shells and not worrying about the future."

Peckler stops short of saying whether this situation is good or bad, but a fellow sophomore, by the name of Susan Giavaris, is less restrained. In what may well go down in cultural history as the birth of the "new hip," Giavaris gushes, "Socially speaking, Brandeis is coming together, which is incredible. It's getting straight, baby. There's a whole new influx of skirts and sweaters. It's an incredible freak-out. All of a sudden this summer I went out and bought dresses. Why? I felt like feeling good."



... 'Cultural revival?' What about...?

## Media's china shambles

by linda hanley

programmed to behave according to a scenario prepared in advance." Similarly, the first reaction of the Washington press to Chinese dress was a resounding "drab." Later in the week, sightings of more colorful clothing were suggested to be "plants" by the Star's reporter.

Occasionally reporters would not even go through the motions of playing down their disdain for China's political lifestyle as when Hugh Mulligan of the Associated Press described Ms. Nixon's hotel kitchen visit in a February 23 report:

"All the little chefs in their little white Mao caps beamed with revolutionary pride as the President's lady tasted at random in the spotless white kitchen."

NBC's Herbert Kaplow toured a People's Liberation Army encampment outside of Peking toward the end of the week and ominously warned the viewing audience that this army "does more than shoot guns and throw hand grenades." It turns out that their other activities include the raising of their own livestock and food and attendance at political education classes.

They are, in other words, self-sufficient. But Kaplow concludes that these are somehow controls designed to guarantee that each succeeding Chinese Army "will be dedicated Communists."

If Kaplow knows of another military system in the world that does not encourage devotion to national politics, he is apparently keeping the information to himself. The value judgment on China, however, is clear.

What the American Press in Peking demonstrated it knew of history and revolutionary movements in particular, was matched in presumptuousness only by its ensuing clash with an Oriental Culture openly viewed as alien.

Since virtually no one in the U.S. group knew Chinese, interpreters were a necessity. Chafing at this reportorial disadvantage, Herbert Kaplow proved himself not above racial epithet when he complained on the air:

"The description of inscrutability is true." Kaplow, it seems, could not figure out if his interpreters were telling the truth simply by monitoring their "facial expressions."

The encounter with a society where Western sex roles and inequality have been eliminated met with similar hostility. Barbara Walters, though far from being liberated herself, did on an occasion attempt to raise the issue of women's equality in her reports from Peking. More than once she found the subject being suddenly changed by the anchormen back home and at one point, while discussing the questions Chinese women put to her about the situation in America, Frank McGee sneered half-way around the globe: "And what did you tell them Barbara?"

At other times Ms. Walters herself chimed in on the general derision. "That's what's known as (sexual) equality," she said in describing a group of men and women working against the snow storm together. "You can all chop ice together."

Even more shaken by the scene, Herbert Kaplow offered this prediction for history:

"That will probably be the biggest difference between East and West -- the ability to tell men from women on the streets."

Quite possibly an incident during the Presidential visit to the Ming Tombs will go down as most representative of the American presence in Peking last week. An audio newsman, eager to catch Nixon's every word as a sightseer at the tomb, went so far as to rest his long microphone on the head of Chinese Deputy Premier, Li Hsien-Nien, where it remained until another People's Republic official reached over and removed it.

Now Giavaris' observations raise more questions than they answer. What does she mean by 'straight'? What does she mean by 'baby'? How would she define feeling good? But suffice not to say that she has a well-developed sense of irony and that when she says straight, she really means hip—a new kind of hip.

What all this comes down to is the seemingly-confusing notion that what used to be considered straight is now hip, and vice versa. Now clearly this sort of standard is going to catch a lot of people up short, namely all the people who thought they were hip. But for all the people who considered themselves hopelessly straight, it should prove a stroke of good fortune. In fact, unlike Giavaris, who had to run out and buy skirts and dresses to make the scene, some of these people by virtue of never having been anything else than what they are—will be ultra hip; or, to borrow a phrase from the late fifties, so far out they're in.

For example, three years ago, the student government at a small college in Kentucky circulated a petition denouncing the school's liberal administration for pressuring students to "do our own thing." Said the students, "We don't know what our own thing is but even if we did, we doubt that we'd be able to do it." I mean, can you imagine how hip, ultra-hip, those people would be today?

Following are further examples of the new ultra-hip. The names of students and their colleges are suppressed to spare both of them any embarrassment. You've got to understand that these people don't know yet that they're ultra-hip.

—At a small college in Ohio, a student complained, "I have been disturbed by the amount of hostility I sense between the guys and the girls. Not only are we separated physically on opposite ends of the campus, but there seems to be psychological separation as well. Girls complain that they don't get dates and then



go to meals with their security blanket of 20 other girls. Guys complain that there aren't enough tough girls on campus and go out and get potted. I feel that the raids (panty, etc.) that have gone on are an expression of the frustration that results from this segregation."

—At a small college in Rhode Island, a student says, "The big issue on our campus today is that of whether or not the students feel there is need for a pet if only to relieve. There are many cases in which keeping a pet has stimulated the student."

—At a college in Washington State, students celebrated homecoming with a Volkswagen stuffing contest, pie-eating contests, bed race, Pep Rally and bonfire. Greek weekend at a Maine college began with a smoker and ended with an all-Greek keg party. At an Illinois school, homecoming was celebrated with a tug of war and a three-legged race. Sigma Nu, however, didn't have a Homecoming Queen entry because they mistakenly entered a sophomore when the rules required either a junior or a senior.

—At a New Jersey school, a fraternity and sorority paired up to present their first annual Las Vegas Party; and an Iowa school held an after game dance entitled, "Hot Pants Nite." The same school had a successful hay ride, Nov. 6.

Now that all these people have finally arrived, there is the danger that, in their headlong rust towards progress, they will catch up with everyone else just in time to be straight—again!

(Reprinted from the Mary Washington College Bulletin, Feb. 28, 1972.)

This afternoon, representatives of the Dow Chemical Company will visit MWC campus in an attempt to recruit seniors for the military-industrial complex job market. And seniors, panicked about moving into the real world, will trade their blue jeans for a dress and try to out-impress each other out of a job.

It is understandable that seniors should be concerned about the increasingly narrowing job market and its effect on how they will live. But to allow normal self-concern to control how or whether others will live, is criminal.

Dow Chemical has long been the main producer of napalm used to murder and mutilate Vietnamese women, men, and children. As such, it should be completely shut down. Whether one works in the typing pool or in the research laboratory, one is still supporting murder and mutilation.

The BULLET has always supported every individual's right to choose, whether between birth control or children, marriage or independence, etc. But choice is not so absolute that it should be allowed to jeopardize people's lives. The Dow Chemical Company should not be on this campus. No student should even consider working for them.

Sadly, many of those who will show up this afternoon will probably be the same ones who support civil rights, peace, welfare, and all those other "liberal causes." But those are things that are safe during these four years of limbo when we don't have to worry about eating or paying the rent. When we can afford to take an extended vacation to think and act; to be free and to stand up for what we believe. But these are all qualities which don't make it in the real world. Things which don't make money or make friends, which don't get you elected or don't get you a promotion. It's fun to play the compassionate free thinker and student activist, but that's all a part of the ivory tower existence where everything is a little easier.

If we haven't learned to respect the lives of others, then we haven't learned much. If we haven't learned to respect our own selves, then we haven't learned anything.

So go ahead ladies, show up to politely express your burning desires to work for Dow Chemical Company. Go ahead and spread your fingers, not in a peace sign, but to reach the "a" and the "f" on the typewriter keyboard. And if you're really liberated, maybe you'll get a job developing more effective napalm instead of just filling orders for it. It's your life... and thousands of others.

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# FORUM

...The American press corps traveled 16,000 miles to see the Chinese wife of Mao Tse Tung, looks "far prettier and more elegant" than the clothing is "drab," and Pat Nixon wore a red fur lined coat to kiss the Great Wall and a beige fur coat for shopping in Hangchow. ...learn that the President loves Chinese food but usually chews with a fork in Washington, and NBC reciprocated with the egg roll for his first Peking breakfast. ...the primary technological sense of providing live color coverage of Nixon's administration - and the American press corps set additional milestones only in the way of patriotism and arrogance of its coverage. ...means the first media extravaganza we have seen in the history of the press has been thrown back on its own coverage of a sustained major event. The coverage was decidedly lacking. ...the electronic media whose value is not in the value of saying but in the value of being said. Irrelevantly, the people from whom most of us get our news are the phenomena their media has created and the quick analysis, the distortion of the "live, now" images and commentary... to communicate but without official feeds of personal knowledge of the situation. ...between confusion and irrelevance. NBC's John Chancellor of Chou-En-Lai's handshake while Stanley Karno attempted to read world significance into the People's Daily coverage of the event. An article in the Washington Evening Star (Feb. 23) weighed in with this second paragraph lead: ...which has been thin so far pointed to previously expected. ...had been limited to just being meaningless, in Peking would not have been that the spaces lent themselves as showcases for the articles of the American reporters - and in this regard, all previous records. ...ignorance of history - all couched in the name of not exceptions, but the rule. ...Barbara Walters of NBC sat her Chinese cameras to grill him on his recent experience at the Peking School. Over and over again Ms. Walters asked the guide's children - even after he had told her the family's hometown. ...appalling situation was made obvious by the child, incidentally, is under the care of a woman for a few hours in the evening when in ...judgement according to The American Press the Washington Post contemptuously cited "the press" for not commenting editorially on the February 24 while failing to mention that his comment since the President's arrival in ...initially small Chinese coverage of the visit on the impression that some sneaky Communist ...Chinese regime in Taiwan had completely ...event and banned foreign magazines and ...duration of the visit was reported in a two ...works and in some cases, the Asian scholars ...joined to tell us that both the Chinese ballet ...usually everything else in sight) were "by our ...the visit, the American standard was politics. ...the revolutionary theory or practice of China, ...sense, often inconsistently. If crowds seemed ...this was viewed as the result of a ...Chinese people, the Post's analysis was not ...reported "apparently been selected and