

Free Speech

It's the summer of 1965. I'm at home with my parents in New Jersey, after spending my freshman year at Berkeley. So much has happened since I got off that Greyhound bus at the corner of University and San Pablo the preceding September---and so much of it needs to be hidden from my folks. Were I to tell them that I smoked pot, got busted along with 800 others at Sproul Hall in what became known as the Free Speech Movement, spent the night at Santa Rita Prison, and nearly flunked out of school due to all the time I spent at demonstrations, marches, meetings, and other decidedly extracurricular activities, I'm sure they would disown me. (My father votes Republican, and has long been vehemently anti-communist. His heated arguments with my brother, Aryae, who took part in the Civil Rights demonstrations in San Francisco in the early '60's, have driven a wedge between them that will take years to overcome.) Without their financial assistance, I won't be able to afford going back to Berkeley. And if I'm not a student, I'll probably be drafted, and shipped off to Vietnam.

One evening in late July, coming up the back steps of our home after hanging out with some old friends, I know right away that something's wrong. My parents, who no doubt heard me park the car, are standing in the kitchen, a concerned look on their faces. "We wanted to ask you about this," my father says, holding up a business-size envelope. "We

opened it by mistake. It's from a lawyer in California. Are you in trouble?" I take a deep breath, not sure what I'm going to say. After a silence that seems to last forever, my father clears his throat. "We wish you had told us about being arrested in Berkeley," he says. "If there is anything we can do to help, anything at all, we hope you'll let us know."

I learned a lot of things that first year at Berkeley. But what I learned that summer night in New Jersey was perhaps the most important thing of all.