

## A DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

1951 was a very busy year for me. My mother died in March, I graduated from the ILGWU Training Institute in May, and received an MA from CCNY in June. I had two summer jobs, one in July and one August. In September, I was admitted to the NYU Graduate School of Art and Science, and I started work as an organizer for Local 38, ILGWU. And in December, Sylvia and I married.

Having just found my NYU class notes, this piece will describe my graduate school experience that began in September 1951, ended in January 1954, and resumed again in February 1956. What follows is another example of chutzpah, at which I was becoming more and more proficient.

I enrolled in graduate school to keep out of the army. I was not the only one attending school as a way of avoiding the draft. There must have been thousands of us. We were in the midst of the Korean conflict, which did not have the same draw as World War II. It troubled me to realize the inequity between those who were able to go to college and those who weren't. It was the poor and those not in a position to get college deferments, who made up the bulk of our armed forces then. Paying tuition was the cost of avoiding the draft. It was unethical; it was a violation of the idea that we all must serve. I was troubled when I equated my behavior to that of corporations that violated laws, and when they were caught and fined, wrote it off as a cost of doing business. I wrote off my tuition payments as the cost of remaining a civilian. If I remember correctly, tuition at the time was \$20 a credit.

As a full-time graduate student, I carried four three-credit classes each semester. My earliest classes began at 4:15. The other classes started at 6:15 and 8:10. My classes met one day a week. I would try to group my classes so that I would have two classes an evening, twice a week. Clearly, NYU tried to accommodate graduate students who held full time jobs. But most of the other graduate students who worked full time jobs did not carry 12 credits. Classes were usually two semesters long, beginning in the fall session and continuing in the spring. I am sure the NYU Graduate School must have had classes during the day as well. It was a highly regarded university, although, at CCNY, we used to say that when a student dropped out of CCNY and went to NYU, he raised the academic standing of both schools.

My life pursuing a PhD at NYU wasn't much different in terms of "setting" than Stuyvesant or CCNY. Each institution was located in Manhattan. Stuyvesant's campus was 15<sup>th</sup> Street. CCNY's campus was Convent Avenue, and NYU had Washington Square Park. I commuted to each school, and at each school I did whatever I could get away with. In fact, I was a more serious student at Stuyvesant and CCNY. I felt like a fraud at NYU. Most of my classmates were committed graduate students. They studied, they spent a great deal of time in the library. I was not committed; I did not study; I was almost never in the library. In fact, I never really learned my way around the school. All I knew was how to get to the buildings which housed my classes.

I started out by noting that I was motivated to write about my NYU experience after finding the notes that I took in class over the five semesters. (A definition of notes: something that goes from the instructor's notebook to the student's, without passing through the mind of either.) Where I previously took notes in the usual 8 1/2x11 inc notebooks, I kept all my notes in a small

(3 ½ x 6 inch) pocket note book. I wrote with a fountain pen, and the script was quite small. Fortunately, my handwriting was better then than it is now. I may have used a pocket note book so that I would not be seen as a “student” while working as an organizer. It slipped inconspicuously in my pocket.

If my high school and college experience was frenetic, life was even more frenetic going to NYU. I frequently left for work around 7 am to arrive before 8 am at the shop I was “organizing.” I would try to speak to the workers. and hand them leaflets as they were entering the shop. When everyone was in, I would go to the union office, and plan the rest of the day. I also did the reading for my classes at work. Many of my classmates read in the university library. I rushed from my job to class, and I rushed from class to home, with no library stops.

Majoring in labor economics, I met several other students taking the same courses. Two of them, who were also working for unions, became good friends: Ed Schneider of Local 91, ILGWU, and Tom Donahue of Local 32B, BSEIU. Ed went on to become the manager of Local 91, and Tom moved on to the AFL-CIO as an assistant to President George Meany, and then was elected Secretary-Treasurer.

Reading my newly discovered notes, I began to question whether I really learned Business Cycles with Otto Nathan, or Labor and the State with Emanuel Stein, or The Collective Labor Agreement with Herman Gray. For the five semesters that I went to graduate school, I did the least that I could get away with. I was an active participant in the labor classes, but that was because I knew the material, and I managed to pass the tests.

I had hoped that I would continue getting away with doing the minimum. I took every graduate labor course that NYU gave, but then my “advisor” Prof. Emanuel Stein, caught up to me. He knew that I was working full time and taking 12 credits, but he also expected me to do the work that the courses demanded. Further, he expected me to take the more difficult, theoretical, economics courses. If I was going to get a Phd., I had to know more than labor relations, labor history. I took a couple of tough courses the next semester. They required work, and I didn’t give them the work they required. I skipped the final exams, and I received incompletes. It was the beginning of the end. I threw in the towel in January 1954, and was drafted later that year.

It felt strange, reading my notes, 60 years after taking all those courses. It felt even stranger, and embarrassing, realizing that I was unable to understand much of what I had written. All those facts. All those numbers. All those dates. All that jargon. I believe someone said that education is what is left after all the facts are forgotten. Anyway, I never claimed to be an economist.

I was amused to discover, as I worked my way through all those notes, that there were notes from the spring 1956 semester—on the same 3 1/2 x 6 inch, six hole note paper. I had done the same nefarious act in February 1956 that I had committed in August 1951. I conned the NYU Graduate School authorities into believing that I intended to resume my studies for a PhD. However, instead of keeping out of the army, I used NYU to get out of the army 90 days sooner. This too is described in another piece. I lied to the army, and I lied to NYU. I was supposed to serve 24 months and be discharged May 31, 1956. Instead I served 21 months and was discharged February 29. Again, I found a job with the ILGWU, this time with Local 99. I completed one more semester, and resigned. A few months later, I resigned from Local 99 and

accepted a job with the Jewish Labor Committee. During that strange period, again taking classes at NYU, and working for the ILGWU, it felt as if very little had changed. As the months dragged on, I became more and more unhappy with Local 99. Looking for another job, I put a resume together, and under the heading "Education," I listed a BS and an MA from CCNY, and five semesters of study toward a PhD at NYU. Pretty impressive.

(Going through my notes, I began wondering, why am I keeping them? I concluded, in order to write this. Now that it is written, I can throw them out. It will be difficult, but I will do it.)

Revised 10-10-12