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Back Cover. This full-color chromolithograph served as the eye-catching cover for the Sunset Seed & Plant Catalog. To read more about it, see "New Acquisitions Spotlitged" on page 29.

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Footprints } The Legacy of Harold Adler in Photographs *By M. Patricia Morris*



Harold Adler is seen here as a young man in the mid-1960s. He doesn't look so very different today.



© 1971 *Naked Gallery*

In the summer of 1970, the most renowned of all Beat poets, Allen Ginsberg is seen here, the central figure among four musicians who are performing in San Francisco's Union Square to help free actors imprisoned in Brazil.



During the People's Park riots stones were thrown intentionally through some windows like the Bank of America and car dealerships. Adler believes the rock that went through this flower shop window was a mistake. The owner's poetic message reflects the desires of park advocates to create a place of beauty.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

M. Patricia Morris is the Foundation's outstanding copy editor, frequent contributor to the Bulletin, and expert on California history.

Some books we read influence us in a personal way and impart ideas that stay with us. For Harold Adler, a book by actor Peter Coyote called *Sleeping Where I Fall* has had that effect. It is a memoir of Coyote's counterculture journey during the '60s. In it, Mr. Adler said, "he talks about footprints, the footprints we leave behind." During a varied career, Harold Adler has been a radio producer, theatrical agency owner, and is currently director of Art House Gallery and Cultural Center in Berkeley. But it is in his work as a photographer that Adler's own footprints are most notable: photographs of the protest movements in Oakland, Berkeley, and San Francisco in the '60s and '70s; the aftermath of the Oakland firestorm in 1991; and most recently a humanitarian project in Nicaragua. As a means of preserving the culture and history he has recorded on film, he intends to will his photograph collection to the California State Library.

Adler's association with the California State Library goes back many years. The plan to bequeath his collection to the Library was actually formalized in 1994. Gary Kurutz, director of the State Library's California History Special Collections at the time, said about the acquisition, "The photographs taken and archived by Harold Adler concerning this volatile era form one of the proudest collections in the California History Section of the California State Library. Because of their critical historical content, these brilliant images deserve to be seen by as wide an audience as possible." While the collection is physically at the Library now, it will not be available for viewing until it is officially acquired according to stipulations of the bequest. However some of the photographs have been released, and may be seen by Library users upon request.

On April 1, 2015, I interviewed Harold Adler to learn more about the generous gift that will eventually become part of the Library's collection. We spent more than an hour in the California History Section



Harold Adler photographed the devastation from the October 1991 East Bay firestorm as seen in the charred hulk of this Cadillac. It was a poignant experience for the photographer who loved the Oakland Hills and had hiked in the area in his youth.



A crowd gathers in August 1970 for the funeral of two young Black Panther members killed in a shootout the week before. While the Black Panther Party advocated the use of violence to achieve its goals, it earned sympathy in the Bay Area African American community for the social services it provided.

staff rooms surrounded by his photographs and other memorabilia.

Early in the conversation, I asked Adler how he got his start in photography. When he was a young boy, he recalled, he collected stamps and rocks, but these pastimes faded. What he really liked to do was take pictures. His father, he said, was a good amateur photographer, and his mother had learned how to use a dark-

room when she was a young girl. When they were on family vacations and he asked to take pictures, his father showed him how to use a camera and a light meter. His uncle Harry gave him a Bower X camera, and his mother showed him how to use a darkroom. When he was about ten, he won a prize for a photo he took of a waterfall behind a bridge. By the time he was eleven or twelve, he was processing prints



Many groups participated in the April 1971 peace march in San Francisco, including Vietnam veterans, as is evidenced in this photograph. The banner next to them reads "The GI's Are Still Dying to Come Home - Vets say: U. S. Out of S. E. Asia Now."

On April 24, 1971, Anti-Vietnam War demonstrators in San Francisco made their way down Geary Street. It was the largest march of its kind Adler remembers seeing.



in the basement bathroom of his home with the enlarger on top of the toilet bowl and the chemicals in trays on the floor.

Then, in the '60s, he hung out with other photographers who taught him techniques for processing images and improving the quality of prints. "I never went to school for photography at all. I just learned by basically doing it, by taking a lot of film, taking some good shots and blowing a few. But to this day, I am still learning," Adler said.

As a young man attending Oakland City College, he was positioned in a time and a location that would see more than a decade of protests against American involvement in a war in Asia and social injustices of many kinds. I asked him how he got started taking photographs of protest movements. He said that, although he was a good student and got good grades, he was bored with school. When his friends would tell him there was going to be a march, protest, or demonstration, he wanted to hang out with them and take pictures. He thought his participation in these events was important. "I didn't have any idea about how important it was going to be in retrospect," he said.

One of those events was the People's Park riots. The University of California at Berkeley had purchased land and houses on property near the campus with the intention of building student dormitories. The houses were torn down and budget cutbacks brought the project to a halt. The block sat empty over the next year or so, and the site became as Adler described it, "a muddy parking lot." "People parked their cars there." Adler said. "And then some people in Berkeley decided 'let's make this into a beautiful park.'"

The idea for converting the land to a "user-developed" park originated with Michael Delacour, who lived directly across from the eyesore. Student and activist, Wendy Schlesinger and a group of others agreed with him. The concept gained

momentum with support from a diverse group of people in the community, including local merchants. Wendy Schlesinger and others raised money for tools, flowers, and grass. On April 20, 1969, without University approval, hundreds of people showed up ready to work, to create a park. Without listing the whole chain of events, on May 15, 1969, the University put up a fence. Riots ensued. At one point, 2,700 National Guard Troops were brought in. The Alameda County Sheriff's deputies used shotguns to control the crowds. In the confrontations with police and troops, many people were injured, and one student was killed.

Adler said, "They put up the fence. We tore the fence down. They put up the fence. We tore the fence down. Back and forth." Among the pictures he took during the days of turmoil, some were of students tearing the fence down. He shot a picture of a man running from tear gas on Telegraph Avenue. He took a photo of a sign in a florist's shop with boards across the windows with the message, "Forgiveness is the fragrance of a flower when trampled upon."

The day I interviewed Adler, he brought with him several books including one entitled *People's Park Still Blooming 1969–2009 and On* in which some of his photographs of the park's turbulent beginnings appear. Today visitors to Berkeley find that the People's Park remains open to the public.

In the tumultuous '60s and '70s, Adler also covered protests against the Vietnam War. We looked at his photos in a book called *What's Going On?: California and the Vietnam Era*. One of them is of a Latino contingent at an antiwar rally in San Francisco in 1970. Another is of the "Stop our Ship March" down Geary Street in San Francisco in 1971. Shot in black and white, Adler's preferred choice of film, these images of people coming together to express in one voice their opposition to a perceived wrong are powerful and dramatic.

Adler was present the day Huey P. Newton, co-founder the Black Panther Party,



Adler took many pictures on April 24, 1971 in San Francisco. Shown here are military police (MPs) guarding the Presidio. Marchers laid a wreath at their feet to honor the soldiers who had died in Vietnam.

was released from jail on August 5, 1970, after his acquittal on charges of murdering a police officer. When Newton emerged from the courthouse, Adler was so excited, because he knew it was going to be a pivotal shot, he forgot to set his exposure. To his chagrin, the picture was overexposed and not usable. He also took photographs at the funeral of Black Panthers Jonathan Jackson and William Christmas on August 15, 1970. The two were killed in a shootout with police in a failed attempt to free two prisoners on trial in a Marin County courtroom.

How was Adler able to place himself at the right place at the right time to cover situations involving sometimes hundreds and thousands of people? He confided to me that he was "fast on his feet." He was a jogger and able to move quickly to get into position and sometimes avoid injury. However, he did tell me a story about an unfortunate and painful encounter with a canister of tear gas.

Many of Adler's photographs were published in the *Berkeley Barb*, an underground weekly, in existence from 1965–1980. On the desk in front of us, Adler showed me a photo of Max Scherr, the *Berkeley Barb's* burly, bearded founder and editor. One day in 1971, Scherr said to Adler, "Allen Ginsberg is going to be in San Francisco protesting something in Union Square."

Adler replied, "Oh, that's cool. I'd like to go." For two days, he photographed the most renowned Beat poet of all, Allen Ginsberg, on the streets of San Francisco, along with others, including poet, playwright, songwriter Michael McClure, as well as Lawrence Ferlinghetti, poet, painter, and co-founder of City Lights Booksellers and Publishers in San Francisco. They had come together to raise money to free The Living Theatre actors who had been jailed in Brazil on drug charges.

The Living Theatre was an experimental theatre company based in New York, whose members had gone to Brazil to perform at Carnival. The great fear was that the imprisoned actors would be tortured. Adler not only took photographs, but he met with Ginsberg and volunteered to organize a fundraiser to get the actors out of jail. He put together a reading featuring Ginsberg, McClure, Ferlinghetti, and another Beat Generation poet Diane Di Prima. On August 19, 1971, the reading took place in Pauley Ballroom in UC Berkeley's student union building, which holds 500 people. It was packed, Adler told me, and they had to turn away as many people as there were seated in the room. "That's the biggest benefit I ever produced," Adler said proudly. They raised \$2,000 which went to The Living Theatre's legal defense