



Linden in Lincoln: Protests end in jail, reacquaintance

By Mark Nemeth
Staff Reporter

"Chevec, it's 8," Chevec Weinberg's mom said.

Chevec lived with university home economics professor Joyce Marx, his mom. It was 8:01 a.m. Today he would protest the proposed university budget cuts on campus.

"Chevec, it's 8," his mom said.

It was 8:05 a.m.

Chevec was 28 years old, seven years into school and one year away from a master's degree in classics.

The door next to Chevec's closet door opened. Through that door came Chevec's mom.

"Chevec, it's 8," his mom said.

It was 8:11 a.m.

"OK, thanks mom," Chevec said.

Chevec got out of bed, showered, dressed, got onto his bike and rode toward the university with University Fountain on his mind.

Roykill Plaza they called it, in memory of Roy Stalin, the student who got stuck on top of the fountain for 14 hours before he died, while university administrators held meetings concerning the issue of turning the fountain off.

Nearing the fountain, Chevec remembered his dream: students jumping from University Union, the empowering sounds of protest, Naomi Collerberg's tongue in his ear. A sense overwhelmed him of what he thought politics should be.

"This isn't a fantasy," he whispered to himself.

The sun was out. Students passed Chevec, and Chevec passed students, letting the moments of conversations he heard shape his mood and identity as a student spokesperson.

"Chevec! Over here!" yelled Julia Cruse, fellow protester. Over there went Chevec, igniting a protest party that would last until late afternoon, with Chevec and eight others in jail for interfering with state Sen. Jesse Kiner's announcement of his candidacy for president. Two hours later, Kiner apologetically arranged for their release.

Back at University Fountain, these nine students found the union as full as when they had left it. Damn Straight, a college country western band, was singing about wheels and spokes.

Jill Coptic entered Roykill Plaza five minutes after leaving her Modern and Postmodern Literature class, within which she was taught one

person's interpretation of a group of ideas concerning the histories and predecessors of 20th-century literature. Leaving this class produced a heightened version of the same frustrated alienation that leaving most Lincoln University classes produced.

A tall man in mostly brown, with brown glasses, a beard and blond hair handed Jill a red piece of paper.

"They put me in jail," he said. "Protest the proposed department cuts."

Jill looked at the paper. Nice graphics, she thought. She looked up at Chevec Weinberg and smiled. His face was straining, and his eyes were squinting.

"You're Jill Coptic," he said. "You're Chevec Weinberg," Jill said.

"Right. Have we met?" Chevec asked.

"Lincoln," she said and smiled. "Yah," Chevec laughed. "I have a class with Linden Lemon."

"I haven't seen him for a while," Jill said. "Do you ever feel like you've been banging your head up against a wall?"

"I always feel like that. Should we get some coffee?" Chevec asked.

Jill smiled, and they walked west to the industrial section of the city and into the Market of Hay.

"At night, not being able to go on and banging my head against the wall, trying to find a way, not from self-confidence but because of being sentenced to search," Jill said.

"You don't sleep well?" Chevec asked.

"It's Georges Bataille. Have you ever read anything by him?" Jill asked.

"I saw Barton Fink last night," Chevec said. "That sentence reminded me of it. There's been more than one tortured artist throughout history."

Though mentally exhilarated from the physical exhaustion of the day, Chevec was a little nervous.

"What is there but to describe the beautiful and horrifying moments? To crap and vomit your person and to go beyond that," Jill said.

"Changing things," Chevec said, unsure of the spaces between his personality and his politics, and yet sure Jill Coptic saw them like primary colored Building Blocks.

"Right," Jill said.

Inside the Rue de la Grind, Chevec saw Sylvia and Jill saw Linden. Together they drank coffee.

Blues

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I found a seat by a middle-aged couple. We shared stories and bought each other drinks. I came out ahead, as they both had been students once and had great jobs now.

He was a second-generation American who spoke native English and Spanish. He taught Spanish and loved teaching.

A sultry brunette at the table mentioned a desire to ride in a truck. Where had she come from? I don't think she was there when I sat down.

The teacher replied, "I rode in a truck once. I was at a bar with a girl I barely knew, and this guy I barely knew offered us a ride in his truck. The next thing I remember, we were stuck, crossways in a ditch with cops all around. I remember they asked him if he had a license, and he handed them one. They arrested him for not having a truck license. I bailed him out with the cash advance on my credit card and he paid me back with a check."

"It bounced, right?" I asked.

"No, the check was good. But we took him back to my apartment to dry out, and the girl locked herself in my spare room. It was a strange night."

His current girlfriend, who was once married to an attorney, recommended that I go to Europe and hang out, rather than go to law school.

"You're such a nice guy. You would be brainwashed there."

This, the first conversation, was the only one to survive the two-day

vodka filtration intact. I remember dancing with a beautiful woman, too young to be there by her own admission.

I remember talking with a hooker sometime the second night. I said something like, "Huh?" She repeated herself, and I replied, "Oh, fine, I'm a student. You?"

I know we talked for quite a while before I realized that she was trying to sell me something. I said I wasn't in the mood. She said she wasn't either. I supposed that explained why she'd been talking to me for nearly an hour.

We danced a few times, talked some more, and she even bought me a drink, saying, "I make good money." Later, she left the bar. I stayed till close and walked back to my room in the rain, comfortably numb.

I said Jesus done left Chicago, now I'm stuck here on my own.

My baby done left me, like I always knew she would.

Deep inside I know she loves me, but you know, I ain't no good.

I went downtown to hear the boys play, and lost all my sense of time.

I done spent all my money, and drunk up all my wine.

I saw no point in sunlight, and was nearly left behind.

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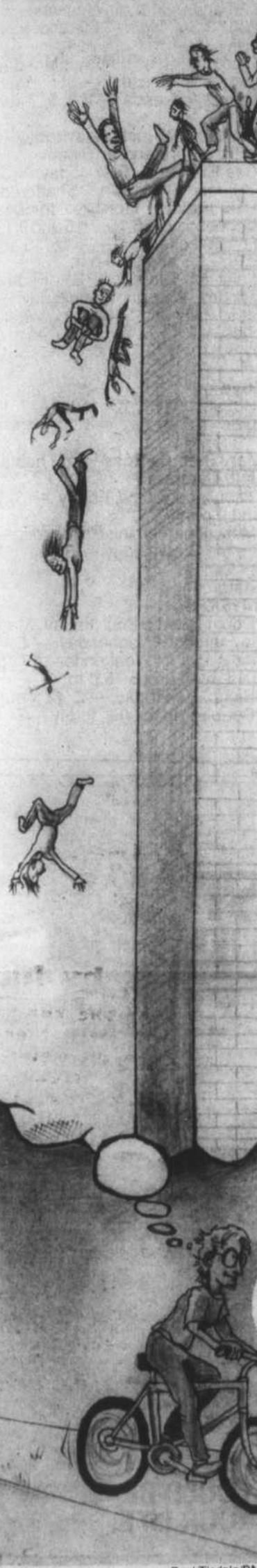
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