

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Woodstock, 1969

Woodstock, 1994

O H 1699

DANIEL WEIMER

Interviewed

by

Chris Helm

on

August 19, 1995

DANIEL WEIMER

Daniel Weimer was born on May 5, 1971 in Youngstown, Ohio. He is currently finishing a Master of Arts Degree in history at Kent State University and works part time at the Ohio Department of Transportation. Dan's interview differs from all previous interviews of this project in that he attended the Woodstock Festival 1994, not the original in 1969. He provides a modern, youthful outlook on music, society, and culture. This different vantage point opens up this study to the differences between the culture, music, and politics of the two concerts and those who attended them.

Music continues to play a key role in Dan's lifestyle and activities. He enjoys a number of styles ranging from "classic rock" bands such as the Grateful Dead to 1960s, 70's, and contemporary jazz. He also discussed an affinity for classical music and National Public Radio (NPR).

Originally, Dan Weimer had no intention of attending the Woodstock Festival of 1994. Rather, he planned to spend some time with his brother in Buffalo, New York. After hearing that the concert would be free admission to anyone starting Saturday or later, Dan and his brother decided to go. He hoped to catch the Allman Brothers, another particular favorite.

Upon arrival, Dan encountered a great deal of traffic (not an uncommon sight for either 1969 or 1994). Middle class, clean cut youth wearing tie-dye shirts and looking for a good time scurried everywhere. The majority of attendees being younger than he, Dan and his older brother primarily kept to themselves. Although he encountered no violence, the landscape was scarred by tons of trash and vast fields of mud.

Dan characterized the 1994 spectacle as a well-orchestrated event marked by "posers"

(people who act like something they are not) and commercialism. He praised the lack of violence but was disappointed at the general lack of harmony and congruity that permeated the original festival. Dan attributed this to the social ills and problems of the 1990s (a lack of political activeness, the encouragement of violence against society by several music artists, etc.). Although he is generally happy he attended the Woodstock 1994, his heart lies with the long-gone, magical event of 1969.

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INTERVIEWEE DANIEL WEIMER

INTERVIEWER Christopher Helm

SUBJECT Woodstock, 1994

DATE August 19, 1995

H This is an interview with Daniel Weimer for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Woodstock, 1994 in relation to Woodstock of 1969, by Chris Helm, on August 19, 1995, at 6369 St Andrew's Drive, at 8 00 p m

Tell me who you are and where you were born.

W My name is Daniel Weimer I'm 24 years old and I was born in Youngstown

H Who are your parents?

W My parents are William and Lilian Weimer. I live on the west side of Youngstown

H Tell me, what's life like for you now, generally?

W I am in attendance at graduate school, completing my masters in history at Kent State University in diplomatic history. I work for the Department of Transportation part time

H What do you do there?

W I'm a counselor I give people directions on the freeway

H What does that entail?

W What does my job entail?

H Yes

W People come into the rest area and come over to the area where there is travel information I hand out a lot of maps, and ask them where they're going I give them directions, and tell them about certain things they might want to see in Ohio

H Now we are rounding out the summer of 1995, but what was the summer of 1994 like for you?

W I was working a lot, and camping a lot I tried to go to as many Dead Shows as possible

H Do you like the Grateful Dead?

W Yes I do, very much

H Tell me about it. What is it about them you like? That will be an interesting topic Actually, I'm interviewing you about the most recent festival I've conducted a whole bunch of interviews on the older one It would actually be a pretty interesting topic

W First of all, I like the music I love the guitar and I like Jerry Garcia's playing a lot. I like their free form attitude and their variations of style, jazz, and folk They kind of fuse it together It's a really fun crowd that goes to the shows I collect a lot of tapes

H Does that get expensive?

W No, not really As long as you buy blanks people trade tapes for free People will tape them for you for free I trade with a man in Kinsman, Ohio I send him tapes about every month All I do is send him postage for them and he mails them back to me He has a whole list of shows that he has on tape and I just mark off the ones I want.

H Would you say that conforms with the general neighborly attitude of the 1960's?

W Yes I would At least now, though I wasn't alive during the 1960's, most of the Dead fans I know are very generous There is a camaraderie with most of them.

H Describe a show, actually, if you attended one recently Describe what they are like now

W As of now the band is no longer in existence The last one I went to some of my friends and I that I went to college with drove out to Indiana and camped out for a few days at a camp ground that was full of dead heads. You hang out, you party, and drive to the show There is a lot of vending there A lot of people sell stuff like homemade crafts, beads, t-shirts, and food It's kind of almost like a festival or carnival type atmosphere Everybody is real excited about the show

H With Jerry Garcia's recent death some people in the media are saying that the sixties are coming to an end and that a lot of people with the Grateful Dead in particular trying to extend a worn out era How would you respond to such criticism?

W I will respond first of all in saying that the whole political atmosphere is shifting to the right They are kind of using that as sort of an excuse to discredit anything that they disliked about the sixties Now with the Dead gone they are finally going to put the sixties to rest which I find rather disturbing because you can't erase an era that is part of our history It had an impact and you can't get rid of it I think the Dead's reach and the sixties reach has been too far and too permanent and it is still ongoing. I don't believe in what they are saying now, "The sixties are going to be dead " I just think there are going to be slight mutations

H Let's go back to last summer Describe a typical day for me.

W If I was working I'd get up work 8 00 to 6 00 p.m. I drove out to Hubbard where I worked I would come home, because I still lived with my parents, and most likely go run down in Mill Creek Park Then I would usually do some reading, or some school work that I was working on over the summer. Most of the time I just went and hung out with my friends, listened to music, and talked

H Do they listen to a lot of the same thing you do?

W Yes, they do There is a whole big group of us That is one of our main activities

H Along that vein, what role does music play in your life?

W. It is a huge role It is inspirational I would think that I am addicted to music I do not have it on constantly, but I listen to it every day I like the creative process of music and how it effects moods. I play the guitar I find that as a creative release, and a stress release

H You mentioned the Grateful Dead Are there any other bands or types of music you like?

W I like jazz, a lot I like Miles Davis. I like classical I listen to the public station here I like the Almond Brothers, Dillan, Neil Young, and Credence Clearwater Revival

H It sounds like you should have been at the first one (Woodstock, 1969)

W Actually, yes, I wish I would have I wish I was around then.

H: How did you first hear of the first Woodstock, 1994?

W It was kind of hard not to hear of it It was publicized so well. I think almost a year in advance we knew it was coming. They just didn't know exactly which location Within a good half a year I would say they had everything planned It was really heavily promoted They were promoting it as a big event, so I think most people knew it was going on They had a lot of things on MTV. MTV pretty heavily recruited it

H What was your impression then?

W I thought it was kind of a sell-out, a little cheesy, and way too commercial The original was a lot more spontaneous and original. There was a lot less commercialism There was more of a spirit of the times going on instead of an orchestrated event just to make money The original Woodstock was to make money, too, but it was unique. It was the first of anything like it at the time

H What made you decide to go there?

W Well, the on weekend of the festival I was actually visiting my brother in Buffalo He is attending school up there for physical therapy I had not planned on going We did not buy tickets They were way too expensive Most of the bands, actually the vast majority of the bands, were not groups that I wanted to see After the first day, we heard that it was a free concert, and that they were opening up to anybody that wanted to come So, the Almond Brothers were playing that night I felt we would check it out, plus we would get to see the Almond Brothers for free We decided to leave from Buffalo to Saugarties that morning and head out there

H So, Was it kind of spontaneous in nature then?

W Yes, it was fun

H Did your brother go?

W My brother went.

H Describe the trip for me and your first impressions when you arrived

W We took my brothers Prelude We left about ten in the morning It was Saturday We drove and there was a lot of traffic going in After a while the freeways were all jammed up, plus

the weather wasn't too great. It was raining. We didn't know if we would make it or not, if we would get there in time for the show. After a few hours on the freeway they were just completely congested. We had to stop. We had to walk a while. They had shuttle busses running into the Saugerties area where it was held at. I remember the mud was the first thing I noticed. I knew I was going to be completely covered with mud by the time I got in there.

H: What were your first impressions?

W: I didn't know if I was going to be able to deal with all the people there and being completely immersed in mud. The people were really trying to have a good time, trying to make things run smooth.

H: What about that in light of the original?

W: What do you mean?

H: Was it run smoothly? Was it planned versus actual events?

W: They both had rain, but I don't think the mud was as bad in 1969. It was a horrible mess. I just think that the original Woodstock, and to be at the original Woodstock, was to take part in the whole youth movement. Being a hippy then was something completely unique and completely radical. There was more of a bond I think between the people then. People going to the original Woodstock knew what these people signified. This one, first of all, was 25 years after the first Woodstock. A lot of people were going because maybe they thought it would be cool. They thought that it would sort of be like a re-creation of the past instead of being a Woodstock of what the 1990's stood for, even though the bands were 1990 type bands. A lot of people were posers. It wasn't a unique, original movement like the original Woodstock in 1969. I think that the music from the 1960s is from a higher caliber than a lot of the bands out today.

H: In what way?

W: The rock industry had actually got hold of those bands then. Now, record companies make the band. That is what a lot of the bands are now. The music is a lot more commercial. I think it is a lot more angry, a lot of the bands.

H: Do you think there is a reason for that?

W: I don't know. I think a lot of this angst type of music that is out now is a lot of whining. I think it is "poserish".

H: Define "poser" for us.

- W A poser is a person who is trying to be something they are not. This means they are fakes
- H Do you agree that there was certainly angst in the social uneasiness at the time of the original What makes that music in your opinion, as you said earlier, of higher quality and maybe not angry as compared to the music of 1994 being angry
- W I think that in 1969 the expression of angst in music was representative of a lot of social problems and it had some sort of resolution It had some sort of plan to deal with these social problems You need to free your attitudes about love and brotherhood among people A lot of the 1960's youth were actively involved in movements whether it be anti-war movements throughout the civil rights movement or being involved in political campaign Nowadays there are not a whole lot of youth movements going on I think even the environmental movement by the time of Woodstock, 1994, had somewhat lost some of its luster I think a lot of the angst now doesn't propose any solutions, it just complains
- H On that note I've had individuals tell me in the past that some of the difference in the music itself is that 1969 focused on more of what could be said as a solution as opposed to 1994 focusing more on the problem and not moving ahead. What do you think about that?
- W I think that's true I think that a lot of people were trying to come up with new solutions, but a lot of them were against the grain at the time If I hear any music now, any modern music, I don't hear any solutions being proposed
- H. You do see some things on MTV or other channels about the promotion of love and anti-violence and anti-crime, do you not?
- W Yes, but then you also see a lot of videos and music on MTV MTV, the actual channel itself, has specials and it has a lot of things that try to be positive There are a lot of anti-violence campaigns, and a lot of shows about Aids, which is a very big topic that people in 1969 didn't have to deal with. I think also that MTV is so commercial that a lot of the positive they try to bring out is deleted by a lot of the music and the images on MTV
- H Now that we are on that topic, what roll does MTV play that it obviously couldn't have played in 1969?
- W It is 24 hours a day of music A lot of teenagers that are in very informative years, even pre-teenagers, are watching it and they get the sense of what life is supposed to be like from MTV They have these shows, like The Real World, that are supposed to be these reality shows It is still television Even though the 1960s generation was the first T V generation, the T V was vastly different than what is on T V now in terms of variety and what is actually allowed on T V
- H Can you recall the first thing you did when you arrived there?

W We started walking to an area where there were shuttle buses taking people into the area

H: Did you take one?

W Yes, we both took one in there We both decided that we weren't going to stay the night there It was just completely covered with mud and there were tents and sleeping bags and stuff all over This wasn't going to be a place I wanted to spend the night I just wanted to see who I could see that night I didn't care if I had to stay up all night to get back to the car I didn't want to spend the whole night there

H On that note, what was your impression of the scene, the people, the sights, and the sounds?

W It was wet and hot I didn't know what the actual crowd was going to be more of a mellow type crowd like the Dead shows or if there were going to be a lot of high strung vibes I didn't know if there would be a lot of drinking I didn't know if there was going to be a lot of fights breaking out I was really pleasantly surprised that it was a pretty calm scene There were a lot of people trying to have fun and just have a good time I didn't see any violence There were a lot of people playing in the mud and dancing around

H What were people wearing? What were they doing to the best of your memory?

W A lot of people had on sandals and tie-dies There were people braiding their hair trying to get a Woodstock type look going A lot of people had cut-off jeans, and other hippy type apparel You can't really say alternative look anymore, but a lot of people were into Nine Inch Nails and bands like that The crowd there was not like any crowd that I had seen in Dead shows There were not the real hard core hippies there There were a lot of middle class kids, a lot of high school and college students, and pretty much clean cut kids who are just going to have a good time.

H You said much of the apparel was almost "Woodstock-usque." To what extent is it a copy and are there any elements that make it original, or unique in character?

W I think it was more of a copy A lot of the stuff was store bought A lot of hippies back in the sixties made their own tie-dies, or whatever they were wearing Here you could tell they were not hand crafted clothes or anything like that

H You mentioned a few bands earlier. What particular bands did you want to see?

W I wanted to see the Almon Brothers that night because I never got a chance to see them and I figured they would probably put on a really good show that night, which they did They play a lot of their classic tunes like Blue Sky, Whipping Post They had real long, drawn out jams They just had the crowd really into it It was a really good show

H What is the appeal of the Almon Brothers, as opposed to the other bands that you were not so interested in?

W The appeal is due to their musical style I like real flowing, free form type music I don't like real rigid, unstructured music I don't like a lot of the dance music that was there, although Delight is a fun band I did like to go see them I like the improvisation of the southern rock style of the Almon Brothers, plus they are known as a great live band They tour constantly They have two good guitarists It was a really energetic, soulful show

H What do you think Woodstock, 1994 said to America? Did it have any overriding or underlying social messages?

W It had overriding social messages I don't know if I could say there will be any long-lasting effects from Woodstock 1994 because it was more of like a commemoration instead of its own event It kind of marked the 25th anniversary by having a three day musical festival I don't think it was the climax of a decade like 1969 was, the original Woodstock It was towards the middle of the 1990's There was no whole youth movement or social movement There wasn't a pinnacle to an era It didn't signify what this generation, my generation, can do It was such a commercialized event and so well orchestrated that it ran smoothly, but I don't think it had any long-lasting social value The times we are living in now seems sort of bland domestically compared to what was happening in the sixties The sixties were such an utter shift in our nation's history We are still feeling that shift, now

H Some may respond to that saying that blandness might be a sign, a good sign in a sense because maybe the reason that the pinnacle and the way people were moving in the sixties is because of Vietnam Many of the other revolutions that were happening at the time pattern the thoughts, or on the flip side of the coin it was just idleness What I'm trying to get at is what made that era in Woodstock, the combination of the pinnacle of the movement, so significant that it can't be recreated or repeated or at least done for our day and age?

W Are you trying to ask what made the 1969 Woodstock so special?

H Yes

W A lot of people were skeptical of the hippies, the whole idea of drug abuse, free love, rejection of middle class values was quite a scare of a lot of people. Now we know a lot of the government activities that were designed to infiltrate a lot of the youth movements to suppress them It was radical for the times A lot of people weren't accepting of it When these three days in 1969 occurred, when 400,000 or so people got together without any major incident, I think it really showed that this generation was serious and that they could be a positive force.

H Why didn't 1994 have that?

W For the same reasons, I don't think there is any real tying issues or camaraderie that the generation has. I don't think they have a big cause to rally around. Then it was student rights, civil rights, and the war movement. Even then a lot of people kind of jumped on the band wagon because it was a cool thing to do. Also, it was like the first student explosion back then. There was actually a lot of people attending college in that time. That was a bonding force. Now we have had high college attendances for the past twenty years. They have become a lot more diversified. That was 25 years ago. A lot of things have changed in this country since then. I just don't feel there was any real rallying point for this Woodstock, besides the fact that you could make some money, though I was really happy they decided to make it a free festival.

H You mentioned the idea of drug abuse. What role, if any, did drugs play in the recent Woodstock?

W. I didn't see a whole lot of drugs there. I saw some pot, and there were people claiming to be on acid. I don't know for sure. I don't think the extent of drug abuse was very large at this Woodstock. There is tighter security now-a-days. There is a larger police apparatus to control drugs now than there were in 1969.

H Of course, synonymous with the 1960s, people tie in the idea of drugs and the use of pot, marijuana, and hallucinogens. How important was it in your opinion then and what role do you think it has in society, in general, now?

W: I would say then that it was startling to a lot of people. Back then to smoke pot was a political statement. It just wasn't to get high and have a good time. It was a statement to say who you were and what you stood for. I don't accept everything that my parents generation was telling me, what they are telling me in school, what the government is telling me. There was a lot of excess and self destructive behavior that came out of the sixties. I think there needs to be moderation. You can't really talk about the whole drug scare, how certain drugs are viewed as normal here and some aren't. Alcohol and tobacco are vastly destructive to people. Thousands of people die because of them every year, yet they are legal. The whole way that drug enforcement has been set up in this country is somewhat skewed. A lot of pot was deemed illegal largely because the fear of Mexican immigration. It was a way to keep out Mexican immigrants. The same thing occurred with opium. It was to keep out Chinese immigration or it was a way of controlling the Chinese immigrants that came to work in the United States, and a way of keeping them separate. It was a way of suppressing them.

H Do drugs play any role whatsoever in enjoying or listening to music?

W I would say, yes. I would say for more free form music you can get into the music more. You could follow more of the creative pattern as a long continuous line, one big flowing

conversation. It kind of opens up your senses to music. You get more of a sense of what the music actually is, how it is being created. You can see how the music goes up and down, in circles. It varies.

H: What do you think the original said to the parents of America and what do you think the Woodstock of 1994 said to America?

W: I think the original said to the parents of America that as a generation we could take care of ourselves and we could do positive things. We could live peacefully. We are going to be able to take care of ourselves and that what we have to say is not some farce, not some fad. It can have some lasting value. I don't know what the 1994 is going to say. It has only been a year since it occurred. Beyond that, the kids can still get together and have a good time. At the 1994 Woodstock, I will say, there were a lot of organizations there, all types of organizations, environmental, woman groups, all sorts of political groups there, which I liked because I think there should be more of student involvement.

I think the student involvement of the sixties was a very positive feature. I with kids were as strongly involved as they were in the sixties in any type of movement. For some reason they are just not as interested. I would say many of them don't care because a lot of them are ill informed about a lot of issues. In the sixties to be informed was part of what was going on. You can't make decisions unless you are informed. I think that people in the sixties knew they had to be informed in order to make a change. I think there is maybe a little too much contentment now-a-days.

H: You touched upon this earlier. Another common thing I hear about the original is that it had a sense of community, sharing, and empowerment. Did you get a sense of that at all at the new one?

W: I got a sense of community when I was there. In the sixties there were a lot of tying forces among the youth then. Now there is not. There is still a sense of community that everyone came together at this event. In terms of sharing, yes, people were genuinely nice to each other. Everybody was trying to have a good time. I think now we sort of had something to prove. We can pull this off. I think it has to go beyond that. It just can't be a temporary state. It has to be a permanent state of mind.

H: Are you glad you went?

W: Yes, I'm glad I went. It was fun and I wanted to see what it was like. I was interested in the original Woodstock and that whole era. I wanted to see how this one compared. Compared might be the wrong word, I just wanted to see what this one was about. I was somewhere near the area at the time.

H: Do you have any final thoughts on anything that was on your mind that you would like to say?

W No, I really can't think of anything Is there anything else that you would like to ask me?

H How about this What would you like to see in the future of music?

W I would like to see sincere, genuine musicians who are capable musicians, who use their instruments, who try to become masters of their instruments, and try to do something unique You could take influences from other musicians, but take those influences and make it your own and make it good and really love what you are doing I just don't like to see musicians just for the sake of money

H On that note, if that is all you have to say, thanks for your time.

W It was my pleasure

END OF INTERVIEW