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# Tom Roderick

Tom Roderick lived in Judson House as a full-time student from September 1965 to the summer of 1966.

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I can't remember how I heard about Judson or the Student House. Bill Coffin or Art Brandenburg, chaplains at Yale, may have mentioned it to me. Howard Moody interviewed me in his office. I was struck by his blue eyes and his crewcut—not the haircut of choice at that time!

In any case, the Student House suited my needs perfectly. In the early 1960s, while attending Yale University, I had come down to the city several times with friends for all-nighters in Greenwich Village. We would go from coffeehouse to coffeehouse, listening to folk music, talking, and drinking coffee and other concoctions. The Village had come to symbolize the new sources of excitement and meaning I was beginning to explore. And now I would be living in the midst of those coffeehouses, just off Washington Square Park.

I was determined not to repeat the mistakes of my first year out of college. After graduating in June 1964, I had worked for the Northern Student Movement in Philadelphia for a year. The experience was a fiasco. Our grandiose scheme was to set up a tutoring program for children as a base for fomenting revolution in the North Philadelphia black ghetto. As it turned out, we could not even organize a competent tutoring program before racial tensions tore the staff apart. Aside from the terrible work situation, I realized that I had moved from the sheltered environment of college to a new city where I knew no one and had undertaken a challenging job, completely unaware of the need to create a network of support for myself outside of work. By June 1965 I knew that I wanted out of Philadelphia and that I would pursue education as my profession. A friend had enrolled in the one-year master's program at the Bank Street School of Education, which at that time still was on Bank Street in the West Village. I decided to follow in his footsteps. Having learned from my experience in Philadelphia, I was happy to be-

come part of the Judson Student House, which promised to ease my transition to life in New York City.

I was not disappointed. Although the living accommodations were cramped and shabby—my room was a tiny cubicle barely large enough for a bed—the people were very special, and it mattered that the Student House was closely connected to the church. We had a cook, Willie Mae Wallace, who prepared our food on an old institutional stove and served us family-style around a big wooden table in the kitchen, which was in the basement just off the corner apartment. I do not remember how many students lived in the house at the time—somewhere between ten and twenty. They included Chris Holt, quiet and intense, who was studying the flute at the Manhattan School of Music; Sandy Padilla, an energetic and outgoing student at New York University, who took part in a number of Al Carmines's productions; and the reserved and beautiful Lurline Purvis, who was studying at the Columbia School of Social Work and with whom I later became romantically involved.

## OUR MENTORS

Jack Matlaga and Beverly Waite served as our mentors and lived in the Student House. Jack had recently graduated from Union Theological Seminary. He smoked Gauloises and loved to hang out in bars, practicing the fine art of conversation and making beautiful entries in his diary. Jack later moved to Greece and had an apartment near the Acropolis. I spent two wonderful weeks with him when I traveled around Europe.

Beverly Waite had split up with Ralph by that time and lived in Judson House with her two daughters. We had meetings in Beverly's apartment. I do not remember what the meetings were about, but they probably had to do with issues that arose in our communal life. I recall a visit by Ralph in which he danced beautifully and theatrically with one of their young daughters. The image of father and daughter dancing has stayed in my mind all these years.

Through the Student House I got to know Ed Brewer and Al Carmines, who lived in Judson House as well. Ed was Judson's music director at the time. He played the piano, directed the choir, and brought in his many friends to provide special music. He also built harpsichords and played his harpsichord in church services. He had

the corner apartment right off the kitchen, and night and day we could hear him practice his beautiful renditions of Bach and other composers.

Al Carmines introduced me to the Beatles. A classical-music snob, I had actually gotten into folk music and Bob Dylan, but the Beatles seemed to be having so much fun I could not believe they were worthy of my attention. Al pointed out the complexity of their rhythms and arrangements and compared them favorably with Bach in that regard. That was all I needed to give them a serious listen, and they quickly won me over.

I greatly admired Al, of course: his singing and piano playing, his preaching, and his perceptiveness about people. He used to tease me, saying I was “pink and white,” referring to the color of my skin, my scrubbed midwestern look, and my naiveté.

While I was at the Student House, the church sponsored an activity for college students called the Urban Life Project. Howard Moody and Ron Bailey ran it. It consisted of a series of seminars and meetings in which the students from Judson House discussed various social and political issues affecting the city. I do not remember much about these sessions except that some of them took place at the house of Ron and Sue Bailey in the East Village, not far from Tompkins Square Park. Howard loved the city and communicated his enthusiasm well.

## A PARENTS' VISIT

During my year at the Student House, Yoko Ono and Anthony Cox, her husband at the time, did an art project at Judson, which they called *The Stone*. This was before she and John Lennon got together. They had a young child—three or four years old—who wandered around Judson House completely unsupervised while Yoko and her husband were absorbed in their work. The art project involved taking off your clothes and crawling into a big black cloth bag. You could see out but people could not see you inside the bag. I do not remember any great insights I gained from the activity. However, when my parents came to New York city from Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, to see how I was getting along, they experienced Yoko's art. They received a special dispensation: they did not have to take off their clothes, only their shoes, before crawling into the bag. Far from

being scandalized by the experience, they loved it and talked about it for years afterward.

Through the Student House I formed lifelong friendships, met musicians and artists who enriched my life, and began an association with Judson Memorial Church that continues to this day. I am deeply grateful for the experience at the Student House and for Judson's commitment to reaching out to young people.

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**TOM RODERICK,**

his wife, Maxine Phillips, and their two daughters live in New York City. Tom still teaches school.