



PROJECT MUSE®

My Many Selves

Wayne C. Booth

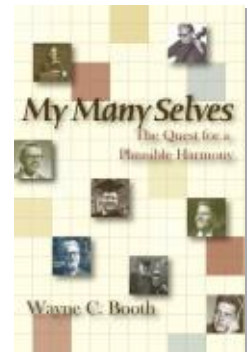
Published by Utah State University Press

Booth, C..

My Many Selves: The Quest for a Plausible Harmony.

Logan: Utah State University Press, 2006.

Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/9288>

Chapter Ten

A College Dean Struggles to Escape

December 1965

Edward Levi, Provost: It seems to all of us that you are by far the best qualified of our candidates for the deanship.

Professor Booth: But Mr. Levi, I just don't think I *am* qualified. For one thing, I'm not good at handling paper-clip details.

EL: Nobody qualified for real administering of a university is good at handling the paper clips. You can hire somebody else to do the boring details.

June 1966

Psychotherapist: But just what is it that has led you to come to someone like me for the first time in your life?

WB: I feel trapped—and I feel more daily desperation than ever before.

February 1968

WB: I really must resign, much as I know it troubles you. I just can't take it any more.

EL: That would be a major betrayal. With all of our rising threats of more demonstrations, we just cannot manage without you. So I say, absolutely, no. I will not accept your resignation.

To obey is better than sacrifice. . . . For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

—2 Samuel 15:22

May 14, 1967

I'm at Berea College, Kentucky. Having given my lecture, I'm now having a bad, restless night, worrying about the sit-in problems back in Chicago. Phone rings at 2 AM. Edward Levi, provost, has called to "order" me to return to Chicago immediately to help him cope with the sit-in. He is trying to sound calm, but his voice reveals that he is clearly seething below the surface as he says, "Maybe we've come off not too badly so far—I can't tell."

On the plane very early in the morning, I have the following wild fantasies: I'm chatting with Ed and say, "I'm tired of pulling your chestnuts out of the fire." I'm asked to take over on Levi's resignation. I'm fired. I'm back again, telling off the students for betraying the university—defending them against excessive reprisal—then standing them off—persuading them to drop it, with my superior rhetoric . . .¹

Except for the two years in the army, the only sustained period when a single longing dominated almost all of the splits was my five-year term as dean of the college at the University of Chicago (1964–69). I began with an exhilarated sense of a terrific opportunity to make a difference; I would restore the sense of excitement and innovation and intellectual quest that had marked the so-called Hutchins College when I taught in it for three years (1947–50). But I soon found that I had infinite responsibilities and almost no authority or power or skill for carrying them out.

It took me a while to discover the trap I'd landed in. But I did quickly see the inadequacy of my ability to correlate the complex demands of the job with the surprising lack of authority to impose decisions. The authority was mainly in the hands of department chairs and division deans—and on up the line. As mere *college* dean I was, much of the time, only a smiling public image.

Edward Levi,² whom I greatly admired, had most of the power and "gave me no rope," as I put it after more than a year of disappointments. Even the

1. See my journal entry on the plane.

2. Not long after, he became the president, and then Attorney General of the U.S. under President Ford—said by some today to have been the most important, and certainly the most passionately committed to integrity, of any of the Attorney Generals we've ever had.



Dean of the College, 1964



5411 S. Greenwood, the house we lived in for almost forty-five years

chairmen of minor departments had more actual effect on day-by-day decisions than I had. I was mainly a showpiece, even from the beginning. And to put on the show, my main assignment seemed to be deciding which mask I should put on for this or that occasion. Unlike the masking I had done as a missionary, these hypocritical moments seemed always imposed by . . . well, not by an army exactly, but by a collection of external forces.

The hopelessness of my effort was revealed in my first dispute with a department chairman about an appointment. The history department had chosen to appoint a young man whose specialty was Japanese naval history in the late nineteenth century. Protocol required that I interview him about how he would meet the requirement to teach in the college core courses, especially History of Western Civilization. After two hours probing his interests, I could see not only that he was indifferent to and ignorant of western civilization studies; he was opposed to the requirement that he teach beginning undergraduate courses. So I had a long argument with William McNeill, the history department chairman, appealing to his decades-long commitment to the college. And, of course, I lost.

June 13, 1965

Effect of the conversation: depression. Prof. McNeill so clearly represents the new mood of indifference to undergrad. education. He reminisced proudly

about the great days (late forties) when he and five others developed the Western Civilization course. "We really gave ourselves to that, almost thoughtlessly, you might say; we paid no attention to whether it was valuable to our professional advancement. What you ought to try to do—well, maybe it's impossible, but if you could find a similar group of young men now and turn them loose to develop their own course, that might get more of them involved. . . ."

Nobody can predict what will happen to undergraduate education in the next ten years. Will the grotesque rush for graduate positions continue? [Of course.] What can reverse it?

The discouragement soon moved to moments of despair about the entrapment.

July 20, 1965 [about six months in]

Still working, with a sense of desperation, to complete what we call the "team" of [five] Associate Deans, or "Masters." And every morning, as I try to get myself down to work, I am filled with a revulsion for my job that is stronger than anything of the kind I can remember—except my sense of being trapped when I was a missionary. [Somehow he fails to mention the entrapment of the army.] I can tell no one how much I hate my present situation, not even Phyllis (because it depresses her needlessly); to tell anyone at the University that I hate it would automatically spoil my chances of success—and might make it more difficult to obtain a replacement when I quit.

Why do I not quit now? In theory, hating a job must ensure failure. Why not admit to myself (and others) that I made a mistake and get out? Well, one difficulty is that I don't feel steady revulsion: once I get down to the work I enjoy perhaps half of it, and there are even moments when I have fantasies of staying at it by choice, not necessity. I even (God help me) have occasional fantasies of being offered other administrative positions and accepting! There is something really curious about my character, something that I do not see clearly yet: I impress others as suited for administration, I inspire confidence, I can do what is required (some of it even with flair), but I have not the central drive, the central pleasure in power—*something* is lacking that is a necessary part of effective leadership. One trouble is that I simply detest giving orders, yet orders must be given. . . . What I enjoy are the surface moments, the speaking, and the rhetoric of the job. What I hate is the substantive, day-by-day decision making.³

3. It's amusing to me now to see so little in my journals about the negative side effects of being a preoccupied dean. I don't mention the loss of time for playing chamber music or the neglect of Phyllis and the children. (See chapter 14.)

Then, after some thoughts about “the panic of middle-age” and not knowing what he really wants to do with his life, the trapped dean rounds it off:

Have I ever used the word “despair” about myself before? It is wrong, even here, because it is not my temperament (or so I tell myself) to despair as many men despair. But what other word is there for the empty-gutted feeling I have as I think, now, at 9:30 AM, of having to face that desk and the [promotion] decisions about Irving Kristol and Don Levine?

A week later he thinks he’s surviving.

July 26

Since that last despairing entry the mood has gone generally up. Why? No good reason. A talk with Ed Levi, whose air of competence no doubt accounts largely for my sense of incompetence, cheered me, for once:

“When do you think we should appoint the committee to look for my successor, in two years’ time?”

“Oh, you don’t want to quit in two years.” [Obviously his refusal to describe me as a failure is what kept me going for the full five years.]

“But I don’t have the temperament for this job.”

“Nobody does. Who could have a temperament for academic administration? . . . Anyway, you’re doing beautifully, beautifully.” . . .

Even on this fine clear cool Sunday morning (after a heat wave) I cannot really understand how I could have “done this to myself.”

Within a very short time, I became so depressed that I went, for the first time in my life, to a psychotherapist.⁴ It’s hardly surprising that the main themes in my sessions with him were fear of failure and embarrassment about resigning. After three months I wrote this:

October 21, 1965

My sessions with Eugene Gendlin, a “non-directive counselor” [trained by Carl Rogers], have been extremely helpful:

(a) my fears of failure are not only contemptible, which I have long known them to be, but they are explicable—in the sense that they have a long history. I have feared failure from earliest memory, often when I was succeeding very well—and there’s the comforting thing. My history, talked over in four sessions, reveals that fear of failure, for me, bears no relation to the external facts of success or failure.

4. The only other time was after Richard was killed.

- (b) I am unusually dependent on the judgment of “the world” . . . long years of dependence on father figures [he then lists them] . . . and Edward Levi.

My chief hope, before I had quite realized my utter powerlessness, was to recover for the college something like the full intellectual brilliance of the “Hutchins” curriculum. Robert Maynard Hutchins and Richard McKeon and others had constructed what many of us saw as the most profound and coherent basic curriculum in educational history—four years of requirements culminating in a capstone yearlong course putting it all together: *Organization, Methods, and Principles of Knowledge* (OMP).⁵ I had become deeply converted to that college, particularly because of learning so much in our weekly staff meetings.

Through the preceding decade the curriculum had been, from my perspective, grotesquely mutilated,⁶ and it was time to restore at least some of the lost coherence. And so, working with the five new “Masters” of the “Collegiate Divisions,” we developed a plan for reducing the first-year requirements in order to redistribute some of them into the third and fourth years, including a genuine capstone course pursuing how the greatest of educational philosophers had attempted to organize all knowledge.

The plan still seems to me almost brilliant. We did not then, and I would not now, commit the folly of claiming that there is some one complete and unique way to organize knowledge; the plan was “pluralistic” in ways that, if understood, would harmonize with many “postmodernist” efforts to discredit various dogmatisms. But the proposal, with its genuinely challenging intellectual quality, was defeated—perhaps mainly because of my political naïveté as an administrator. In our passion for a challenging change, we six completely ignored the political problem that no administrator should ignore: the need for elaborate “precinct work.” We failed to consult in advance with all of the factions. We worked the plan out privately, quickly printed it up, and mailed it to all the professors. They must have felt that it just came out of the blue, as an authoritarian effort to take charge, and it was immediately attacked—on all

-
5. That impulse to help students put together what they’ve learned through four years survives strongly. Two colleagues and I developed a pale imitation of that “OMP” in 2001, now designed as an elective for seniors: *Organization of Knowledge* (OOK), using Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Comte, and some modern thinkers’ efforts to “put it all together.” Many students said, “Best course ever,” and nearly all of them wrote in their anonymous evaluations that we should do it again. (We did, in 2004. See chapter 5.)
6. I had written from Earlham College in 1954 or ’55 a protest letter, telling the president that his abuse of “my” college had led me to decide never to give any further donations. A few weeks later I received his response: “Dear Professor Booth: We think we can manage without your \$25 per year.”

sides. We had *intended* to produce discussion and only afterward a vote. But to those receiving the mailed proposal, the discussion was already over; we six had done the discussion, and they had been ruled out, their interests ignored.

A passionate movement against it arose quickly, with very few taking the trouble to do an actual study of what the proposal was about; some professors openly refused even to read our plan. It was soon voted down, with no serious discussion. I was shattered. Here's how I recorded the protests:

A petition from the philosophy department, protesting that the plan was too philosophical. A petition from the Jr. English teachers, protesting that it would make them work too hard. Radical misreading all over the campus. . . . some active politicking. Delegations from students—they had not been consulted. . . . Why haven't you done this? Why haven't you done that? . . . Home to bed, bowels churning. Hardly any sleep; endless arguments, counter-arguments, pleas, angry letters. Just as I would get to sleep, cramps would wake me; and I would lie twisting the whole thing over again. Two AM decided to resign. . . . Felt sense of betrayal, to self and others. Whatta mess. An unfair mess. Why me?

My next plan had more success. I managed to persuade the faculty to close *all* classes for a full week of “free inquiry”—a week of widespread, informal discussions of “The Knowledge Most Worth Having.” With scores of faculty members volunteering discussions of why *their* knowledge was worth pursuing and with our characteristically engaged students joining enthusiastically, we had a fabulous week.⁷ I felt that we were on our way to a genuine Hutchins-style revolution.

I must ask those readers here who are teachers, have you ever seen a college cancel all classes for a week in order to have scores of somewhat chaotic discussions of what education is about?

Despite that success, the misery, the chained-down misery, continued.

February 15, 1966

One morning recently, as I walked to my office, I found myself thinking, over and over again, “This is the worst period of my life. This is the worst period of my life.” . . .

7. This memory is one that receives confirmation still today, more than three decades later. A junior colleague recently wrote me a full page of praise for that week: “The Conference was the first thing to help clear up my dark edges [about what my education was about]. . . . People were explicitly talking about the meaning of education . . . saying things that had direct personal meaning. . . . For the first time I felt I might be able to belong to the University community.”

Dream: Someone is drowning, someone jumps in to save him, is grabbed, begins to drown. I jump in to save them both, but the second man, already dead, has grasped my hand in an unbreakable grip. We go down, down; I realize that I cannot save myself except by cutting off my own hand. I take out my machete and am just about to hack at my wrist with it when I wake up.

. . . My misery is really caused by my knowledge that as a dean I'm a fraud: except for making speeches and being cheerful, I'm no good at it.

On through to the end of my mostly miserable five years, I felt I was “accomplishing nothing”—partly because of the sit-ins we come to below. I often tried to resign, but Edward Levi would “plant his foot on me,” as my journal put it, and talk me out of it.

Do I now think of those five miserable years as a total waste? Of course not. They taught me the strongest lessons ever about my own deficiencies—my total ineptitude in political matters and my ignorance of how social improvements can be managed. Somehow sticking out the five years and being pressured to take a second term, I resigned as a considerably less arrogant guy than I had been at the beginning. And as I escaped from my hated office, I swore never to become another administrator.⁸

The point here is mainly, however, to dramatize how those five years, like the army two years, somehow transformed the whole pattern of my division of Selves. Most of the time I was faced with only one debate about what to do with my life: resign or not. Circumstance, not the free agency that Mormonism had promised me, controlled every moment of every day. I was facing conflicts between “impossible” dean-demands and my duties to family; I was plagued by getting no writing done, by accomplishing nothing as a “scholar.” Though I did teach one course every term, the classes became more and more routine heirs to what I had managed to invent earlier. In general I felt chained to my circumstances and thus—most of the time unconsciously—freed from any need to grapple with my divided Selves.

But was I really freed? Some of the journal entries reveal a deeply divided self.

July 24, 1966 [after reporting how miserable Phyllis was, working on her dissertation]

Deaning absorbs me without transforming me. Or if it transforms me, it is into something I don't like. I no longer really enjoy sitting down to the

8. I had actually turned down several direct offers, including the presidency of one of the Seven Sisters in the Ivy League: no more administration for me!

typewriter. I can't write letters, I can't read steadily. When I listen to music, as I just listened to the Brahms Cello Sonata (which one? which one?) I fiddle with other things—munch food, glance at the comic strips, think about things to be done. . . . I am so scattered that this morning, when I had planned four hours of solid work . . . I am instead writing here, a bit tense, blue, unable to face any one of my immediate tasks.

And on I go, with a “definite decision” every few months to “resign now.”

At 10:30 AM, after talking with my assistant, I decided that I will definitely resign on or before Dec. 10, 1967—one year from now. . . . Like Huck Finn, I immediately felt washed and cleansed of sin.

February 22, 1967 [my birthday; a letter to a friend]

On the phone you said I sounded dead. Phyllis dreamed night before last that I *was* dead, and she felt very bad about it indeed. I have recorded that I feel “destroyed” by the job; sometimes it has indeed felt like a kind of death, though more often it feels like a depletion or emptying—a probing into an empty container. Today I decided . . . to get some counseling with a [second] psychologist who will see me next week and explore why I can be ok one minute (as this minute) and destroyed with self-loathing and a sense of incompetence and/or *acedie* the next. Won't he? Surely he'll be able to say what was/is wrong with a man who is overwhelmed with a job that is, objectively speaking, intolerable!

Actually the counseling worked—at least for a bit. Three months later I wrote my sister:

Talking my fears out each week with Dr. Lipkin and Phyllis . . . has proved tremendously helpful: after our Thursday morning hour, I go to work with real bounce; all of my thoughts about resigning have disappeared, and I'm really looking forward to the summer in which I can make solid plans for the last two years of my term.

Then, two months later, I sent a formal letter of resignation to the president and provost—and again Levi talked me out of it.

THE EFFECT OF THE PROTEST GENERATION

No doubt my response to all of the pressures would have been much different if we had not suddenly found ourselves dealing with a series of threatening sit-ins. Not long after the success of the “Knowledge Most Worth Having”

conference, we began to have sit-ins—three crises (and other threats) over four years. These became my obsession, and all possibility of serious curricular improvements disappeared.

The first administration building sit-in occurred over the issue of the government's using college grades to determine eligibility for the Vietnam draft. I found myself mainly on the students' side, though often troubled by their extremism. I attempted a lot of negotiation and was accused of fence straddling. I openly joined the students in opposing the Vietnam War and the unfairness of the draft policy, and yet I was often seen by them as only an "administrator," a member of the detested establishment who wanted nothing but to get the students out of the building. We found ourselves endlessly engaged with meetings and demonstrations, the faculty and administration inevitably divided on how to get the students to clear out.

Now there you have my memory as of May 2003. Today I happened on the following penciled journal entry, written on a plane flying back from St. Louis on May 14, 1967; it's a much more complicated version:

The "troops" occupied the adm. bldg. at about 2:30 on Wednesday. That morning at 10:30 about nine faculty members came to my office, hoping to "stop the sit-in"—all but one clearly meaning "to get the adm. to change its mind" [and side with the students]. Kim Marriott, who had been at the Council Meeting, had a different view—"find some way to get the two sides together." It was reported that the students had, the night before, "moderated their demands," now insisting only on postponement of the provision of ranking [for the draft] until the fall.

It was proposed that I meet the students at the door and "plead" with them—or as K. M. said, explain how slight was the difference between their demands & what the administration statement meant. I said I was willing—but could not think it would do any good. (I *was* willing, too.) [Richard] Flacks agreed [that it would be useless], & we decided not to. This now seems to me to have been a mistake (perhaps)—is there a chance I could have stopped them? So slight as to be meaningless.

They wondered if a further statement from the adm. would not be a good idea—if only to clarify. (Some were insisting that the adm. change—all were opposed to the draft policy [as of course I was].) I tried to explain the nature of the present decision, including the Council's role. . . . After they left I phoned W. Blum [Professor of Law]—he was absolutely adamant [about any compromise]: "just smile and tell them to go to the students and talk *them* out of it." . . .

I cancelled my lunch and went on talking w/students and faculty—always trying to defend the adm. while making clear that (a) protesters had

not really understood the adm.'s position, and (b) that the position could not be changed under threat. (Am I sure we are right in this? No—only that we must not appear to change out of fear of the threat. To change, as we should, *regardless of the threat*, could be an act of magnanimity.)

At 2:30 I was being harangued by a hysterical young man who somehow expected me to stop the whole show by some kind of last minute phone call. I phoned [W.] Blum twice to see if he would talk w/the student; he would not. And by then the students were in the bldg anyway.

I phoned Jeff Blum later in the afternoon to see if I c'd not get thru to him that the "exploration of alternatives" promised in our statement was really intended. It was clear that if he and I had been able to deal together no sit-in would have occurred. Earlier Peter Rabinowitz [protester who was one of my favorite students, now a "lifelong friend"] had said, "If you were in charge the whole thing wouldn't have happened. I hope you don't give up, lose yr. faith."⁹ I also talked with . . . [etc.]

W[arner]W[ick, professor of philosophy] & EL said I should feel free to go [give my talk] at Berea—nothing to do here. So I got on the train, feeling guilty, and had a beautiful night's sleep—next day was advised not to return, by WW; speaking for W. Blum and C[harles] Daley [presidential assistant]. WW's talk was full of EL's anger, threats against the College, against the students. Redfield phoned me in St. Louis Friday evening to say that EL had talked of cutting College to 500—"what would it matter"—talked of resigning. Very angry, very disgusted. Redfield thinks we should—now that main group is out (leaving perhaps 25 in) work at convincing the moderates to abandon threat of another sit-in. I'm disturbed at EL's anger, his threats of reprisal against faculty & students.

EL waked me at 2 AM to ask me to return [from Berea] for meeting at 10:00 this morning. I gather that the purp. of mtg. will be to agree on punishment—for me about the last pt. we sh'd be working on now.

My mind is churning w/fantasies: I am resigning, w/a flourish. "I'm tired of pulling your chestnuts out of the fire."—I am asked to take over on Levi's resignation.—I am fired.—I am telling off the students for betraying the university—defending them against excessive reprisal—standing them off—persuading them w/ superior rhetoric—

EL was calm, at 2:00 AM, but clearly seething below the surface—"Maybe we've come off not too badly so far—I can't tell."

What line do I take at that meeting this morning?

9. I'm pretty sure he couldn't have had in mind the multiple meanings the word "faith" would carry for me.

The outcome was ambiguous. The students did not carry out their threat of another sit-in. The administration held firm—for a while, but within a few months the Senate faced the moral issue of basing draft status on grades and cancelled it. The student *position*, backed by many faculty members including me, had finally won. But that's not how it felt just after the sit-in.

Saturday, May 21, 1966

At no point [in the meeting of administrators, where I was expected to make a speech but did not find any way to fit it in] did we ever arrive at a clear administrative line. Our meetings [have all been] horrible examples of how not to arrive at staff decisions. Whether this was [President] Beadle's fault . . . or Levi's, the result is terribly wearing, and no doubt it is what made us all finally so snappy and—the last two days—so depressed and apathetic. I've managed to keep going, with far more energy for action than I normally have, but Edward is utterly defeated—talks of resigning. . . . I *think* of resigning, but cannot do so if he does. His resignation in itself would be disastrous. His and mine together at this point would be, for me, unthinkable, much as I have hated my entrapment.

The second sit-in, the only one that yields me any pride, has never been reported until this moment, so far as I know.¹⁰ Black students, of whom we had only a shamefully small proportion (and still have; my student assistant has told me that in his class of graduate students in English “there's not a single African American or Latino!”), were organizing a protest. The administration, in the aftermath of the first sit-in, was preparing both an elaborate disciplinary code for protest movements and a document promising improvement on all “black” issues. I was sitting as an official observer at a large public protest meeting when word came that the black students had already occupied the sixth floor of our administration building. I ran out and across campus, found the elevators closed and the stairs blocked by a huge male student. I convinced him, somehow, that I was hoping to help, and he let me climb the six floors, where I found about fifty students chatting, lunching, wandering about. Nobody would speak with me. So I simply sat down on the floor, uncomfortable, wondering what I could do.

Suddenly two white policemen came in from the stair entry. I jumped to my feet and accosted them.

“Why are you here?”

10. When giving a talk about this event recently (June, 2004), I was told that some people did learn about my “secret” event from reports in some fringe newspapers.

“We were called because of this sit-in.”

“Well, I’m sorry, Sir, but this has nothing to do with needing police help. We are handling it ourselves.”

We argued, I won, and they retreated down the stairs.

I returned to where I had been sitting on the floor. A woman student who had been in one of my classes and who had looked a bit embarrassed earlier about not greeting me came up to me and said, “Mr. Booth, would you like an apple?”

We chatted and finally agreed to have a meeting to talk over what could be done. As the whole group met, I gave as forceful a speech as I could muster, pursuing two lines: “What will you gain if you continue this sit-in?” and “What might you lose if you continue?” I explained that simultaneously across campus a disciplinary committee was preparing an indictment that would lead to suspension or expulsion of everyone identified with any sit-in. I then gave a detailed account of the University’s plan for improving the lot of black students, a plan that none of them had yet seen. I described it—I hope honestly—as designed both to improve relations with black students and to increase recruiting.

I like to think that it was one of the best extemporaneous speeches of my life. They voted to leave the building, and the whole event disappeared.

So the troubled dean did have the power of rhetoric. But that was not of much use through the next months—ending in the third sit-in, the most prolonged of the three, in the winter of 1969.¹¹ I won’t bother you here with the many journal entries about how we managed, day after day for fifteen days, to avoid calling the police (our decision committee was always divided, with Edward Levi always agreeing with my side that this should be an internal matter, not one for the police). The behavior of some faculty members was atrocious. One arrived at most meetings wearing his army uniform with all of his badges. Another suggested, before the students actually got in, that we leave some cash distributed about the office desks so that we could have students arrested for theft.

After the students’ fifteen days of increasing frustration (and some vandalism), they left the building, confessing defeat. Then we had endless disciplinary

11. No one has ever been able to offer a precise single cause for the huge sit-in. One version had it centered on our not offering tenure to a Marxist woman, Marlene Dixon; as time went on, student views of how good she had been as a teacher shot up, while faculty views shot down. Another explanation was, of course, the Vietnam War. And another has been cultural analysis of that generation of students. What I am sure of, having known many of the protesters personally, is that some were genuinely, deeply motivated by wanting to “improve the world.”

hearings (in which I was not involved), ending in punishment, excessive in my view: total expulsion of about thirty-six students who had refused to appear before the committee to defend themselves, along with innumerable “suspensions” of those who did turn up.

Whether or not social historians approve of that sequence of decisions—recent accounts have reported it as the best handling of protest by any university—the effect on my hopes for college reform was again disastrous. There was nothing but “how do we deal with this protest mess?”

My deaning ended with an episode that could almost be called comic. I must report it because it provides a bit of semiviolent drama for a book where too much of the drama is merely internal. At the time of graduation, after those students had been expelled, many seniors, perhaps a majority, either refused to attend the graduation ceremony or wore black armbands. We feared the kind of open violence that had occurred on other campuses.

As we administrators gathered in a side room, preparing to march into the chapel, we heard from a security officer that someone had spotted a machine-gun among the students who were gathering downstairs. Levi hastily reorganized our scene; instead of my being on the west side of Rockefeller Chapel, calling out the names of the would-be graduates, with him on the east side handing out the diplomas, I would move over beside him, with someone else calling out the names. My job was to scrutinize the students’ hands as they walked toward us, to see if any gun appeared. HypocriteB stood facing the marchers with a broad smile, trembling inside. I had put on the mask of utterly cheerful innocence.

Sure enough, one young man did begin to pull something out from under his robe. An automatic rifle! I leapt forward, and quickly realized, as I grabbed the gun, that it was a toy. The student whispered to me, “Mr. Booth, it’s just a fake!” I tucked it out of sight, Levi gave the student his degree, and the ceremony went on, with HypocriteB still smiling as I scanned for any more guns.

Only later did I learn that a security guard standing behind me had a *real* gun aimed at the kid, with me actually in the line of fire. Wouldn’t this *LIFE* be a hell of a lot more interesting if I’d actually been shot at that moment?

Instead, after five years of distraction from my split Selves, I escaped—back into the conflicts of “real” life.

