

They reach people who might not want to face cops at a demonstration. But what's the big secret? I can go to those meetings with you."

"I know you could, but I wanted to get more directly involved. And you had that organic chem lab exam you were worried about."

"Yeah, but I'm always worried about organic chem. And you told me meetings were a waste of time."

Reiko paused; she was deciding how much to tell me. "Look, I don't know what's going to come up at these meetings. If someone has an idea for a protest that could lead to major problems, like blockading a bridge, I don't want to have it sabotaged."

I was speechless. I looked at her but couldn't think of anything to say.

"We're different," she said. "You grew up in a lily-white community. You never had soldiers with guns keeping you behind barbed wire. But I know what the Vietnamese are going through in the 'strategic hamlets.' We have to speak out against this."

"Reiko, we both want to end this horrible war. We may not always agree on tactics, but we can work through whatever our differences are."

Reiko looked right into my eyes, she was really serious. "Well, that's the thing, isn't it? Let me ask you this: if you knew about another demonstration blockading a bridge, would you let the cops find out about it?"

Oh boy. I knew I could equivocate, say it would depend on the specific circumstances. I hesitated; it seemed like our relationship had come down to this question. I wanted to turn the conversation back to renting a place together in the fall.

"I'm just not sure, Reiko. I'm trying to be honest here; I can't say I would go along with something I thought could harm people or hurt the antiwar movement."

I had never seen Reiko so intense, so unhappy. "You realize thousands of people are being killed now, right? You see the body bags for U.S. soldiers on TV. This war is not only destroying Vietnam, I think it will destroy the U.S. if it continues. Not in terms of bombing civilians and burning forests like in Vietnam, but in terms of the ideas in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. It's happened before, because people didn't question their government."

We ended up skipping the movie, some silly Woody

Allen comedy with a crazy title, *What's New Pussycat?* We just grabbed a pizza. I spent the whole meal trying to convince Reiko what we felt for each other was too important and that I wanted the war to end as much as she did.

"I believe you, on both counts," she said. "I don't want to lose what we have. But I just can't ignore what my family went through. And I couldn't live with myself if I didn't do everything I could to stop that from happening to others."

Reiko went to several more antiwar meetings without me. She didn't want to take the chance that I would short-circuit another demonstration. I hated to think Reiko didn't trust me. But I couldn't backtrack what Steve and I had done. And I still wasn't sure what we'd done was wrong.

What I was sure of was that I would have stayed with Reiko no matter what she wanted to do to protest the war. I wasn't willing to take the risks she was, but I admired her for it. I loved her in spite of that, or maybe because of it. I never did ask her to live with me. I was afraid of what her answer would be.

Reiko left me the second week of May 1965. Just a few weeks later, a thirty-six-hour teach-in took place on the Berkeley campus. Senator Ernest Gruening gave a passionate speech against the war, saying the eighty-eight senators who had voted for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution had abdicated their responsibility to represent the American people. Norman Mailer called President Johnson "a bully with an air force." Thirty-five thousand people attended the Vietnam Day teach-in, by far the largest attendance at any teach-in that year.

Over the past fifty years I've asked myself many times how I should have answered Reiko's question; would I let the cops know about a planned blockade on one of the bridges? I still don't know the right answer. But I know the answer I had back in 1964 lost me my first love.

Hugh Fowler attended the University of California, Berkeley for much of the 1960s. In the mid-1960s he worked full-time helping to organize peace and civil rights demonstrations in the Bay Area and other cities. Fowler participated in some of the political events related in "Reiko." However, the names, characters and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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Curb Alert 2, 2018
Gouache on paper, 24 x 30 in

