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**Free-speech movement celebrates four decades**
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WALNUT CREEK, Calif. - (KRT) - Forty years ago Friday, a student named

Jack Weinberg was arrested for distributing civil rights leaflets on

Sproul Plaza at UC Berkeley.

Weinberg - who later coined the maxim "Never trust anyone over 30" - was bundled into a black-and-white police car. But before it could take him away, more than 2,000 students sat down around it.

They stayed there for 32 hours.

One by one, students climbed onto the car's roof, taking care to remove their shoes first, and voiced their opinions about the university's ban on political activities on campus. It was the opening act of the Free Speech Movement, a moment that transformed a generation.

"It changed my life," said poster artist David Lance Gaines, whose work came to define Northern California's graphic image.

"I was studying classics and headed for an academic career. Instead, I was expelled from school and became an apprentice printer, which led to my artistic career, which would never have come to pass had I not been forcibly removed from the arms of my alma mater."

Some Free Speech Movement members were veterans of Mississippi Freedom Summer earlier that year, in which they were deeply influenced by the nonviolent militancy of Robert Moses and Martin Luther King Jr. But the movement drew support from across the political spectrum, including fraternity boys, sorority girls, even Young Republicans.

"We were all sitting there, shivering for our careers," remembers Michael Rossman, one of the first people to sit down.

"We had just come out of the McCarthy period, when people's lives were destroyed for walking a picket line, let alone sitting around a police car in the middle of a plaza of a great university."

 Within months, there were "student power" demonstrations at UCLA, Harvard, Michigan, Wisconsin, Columbia and dozens of other campuses, laying the groundwork for the larger anti-Vietnam demonstrations that came later. At the movement's core was the personal charisma of a single, forthright philosophy student from Queens, N.Y., named Mario Savio.

 For many baby boomers, including a Georgetown University freshman named Bill Clinton, Berkeley and Savio became symbols of all that was right about their generation. For others, including a Yale freshman named George W. Bush, they were the opposite. Ronald Reagan was elected governor of California two years later largely on his promise to "clean up that mess in Berkeley."

 The Free Speech Movement's influence is everywhere. It is in course offerings and entire academic departments, such as ethnic studies, that had been unthinkable at universities across the country; in the decentralized design of UC Santa Cruz, meant to discourage mass protests; in the cultural wars that continue to split the nation; and in the hearts of the people who lived through those heady days.

 Restaurateur Alice Waters said, "Without FSM, there would have been no Chez Panisse." Waters opened her trend-setting restaurant in north Berkeley in 1971, instigating a "delicious revolution," according to a documentary by that title. Restaurants across the country emulate her techniques.

 "Mario led by example, not by telling people what they ought to do, and I've tried to do that, too," she said of Savio, who withdrew from the public eye in the late 1960s because he feared that a cult of personality was forming around him.

 Along with Waters, state Assemblywoman Jackie Goldberg, D-Los Angeles, plans to be on hand for a commemoration and reunion Oct. 5-10 at various locations in Berkeley. A member of the Free Speech Movement Steering Committee in 1964, Goldberg continues in Sacramento as a voice for the powerless. In 1985, she got the Legislature to declare Oct. 1 "Free Speech Day" in California.

 For many, the Free Speech Movement spurred an epiphany.

 "It was the making of me," said Les Felsenstein, an electrical engineering student in the '60s who went on to help develop the Osborne 1, the first portable computer.

 "Before, I thought I was just part of a huge machine, where I would find my little place and do my little bit. But FSM made me an adventurer."

 Savio was a gifted and patient orator.

 "When he gave the speech on top of the police car, we were being heckled by a mob of ROTC and fraternity boys," Rossman said. "They were flipping lighted cigarettes at us and howling for our blood, and everything was getting really tense. But Mario was still trying to reason with them."

 Marilyn Noble was on the ninth floor of Barrows Hall, delivering the first draft of her master's thesis to her faculty adviser, when she looked out the window and saw the crowd around the police car.

 "I took the thesis and shoved it across his desk, and went down to see for myself," she said. The next day, she and her friend John Sutake moved into Savio's house at 3546 College Ave., which became known as FSM "John took over the phone, I took over the household, and we put Mario out front," she said. "People would drift in, and I'd assign rug space for

 sleeping bags every night."

 Noble's vantage point as den mother gave her a unique view.

 "As I was cooking in the kitchen, I listened to the arguments going on, and I was struck by their scholarship and sophistication. These were highly educated people trying to figure out how to do the right thing. It was like listening to the founding fathers debating the Declaration of Independence. I kept thinking, 'The administration are idiots if they don't realize what they're up against."'

 The impasse around the police car finally broke when negotiators reached a deal: The demonstrators would disperse, Weinberg would be booked and released, and the university would not press charges.

 But the agreement broke down a few days later when the university expelled the "ringleaders." The Free Speech Movement held rallies *and* marches, and put out a record of "Free Speech Carols" ("Oski Dolls, pompom girls, UC all the way/Oh, what fun it is to have your mind reduced to clay").

 Things came to a head the afternoon of Dec. 4, when 1,200 students, led by

 folk singer Joan Baez singing "Blowin' in the Wind," filed into Sproul

 Hall, the administration building, and held a sit-in.

 Savio gave his most famous speech:

 "**There comes a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part, you can't even passively take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop.** And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all."

 At 3 a.m. the police moved in.

 Laura Murra, now known as Laura X, witnessed it from a phone booth across the street. At 2 a.m. the demonstrators had elected her to call members of the Faculty Senate and ask them to come bear witness.

 "I was on the phone with Owen Chamberlain, the Nobel laureate, when I looked up and saw truckloads of police coming down Bancroft," she said. "One of them broke ranks and ticketed my car, which added insult to injury. Then I saw them dragging the students down the steps by their feet, so their heads would crack against the concrete with each step. The first person they busted was our lawyer, Bob Treuhaft. So I stopped calling professors and started calling bail-bonds offices."

 More than 800 students were arrested and sent to Santa Rita Jail. When they returned to campus, they were greeted as conquering heroes.

 Seeking to calm things, UC President Clark Kerr convened an emergency university-wide meeting Dec. 7 at the Greek Theater. It went reasonably well until Savio walked up to the microphone. Campus police grabbed him and dragged him away, as thousands of students stood and roared in protest.

 Recognizing what a public relations fiasco had occurred, Kerr ordered them to release Savio. But the damage was done. Later that day, 10,000 students rallied at Sproul Plaza. The next day, the Academic Senate voted 824-115 to back the students.

 A week later, university officials announced that political speech on campus would be regulated only by the First and Fourteenth Amendments, which guarantee the rights to free speech, due process and equal protection under the law. Edward Strong, the chancellor who had dug in his heels against the movement, was replaced by the more accommodating Martin Meyerson.

 But it was a temporary victory for the students. Two years later, Reagan was elected governor, and his administration fired both Kerr and Meyerson within a year. Savio died at age 53 in 1996 of heart disease after a lifetime of heart trouble.

 Many veterans of the movement have paid for their involvement, Rossman says, citing a poll he says found they have earned only 60 percent as much over their lifetimes as other people their age.

 "Maybe I could have had a more lucrative career," said Smith, who has done stints at the Berkeley Barb, KPFA, Earth Island Journal and Common Ground Magazine. "But it wasn't for want of skills. I made my choice."

 And contention remains. Some Free Speech Movement veterans say next week's

 celebration is too heavy on left-wing speakers such as Bettina Aptheker, Bobby Seale and Angela Davis.

 "I'm disappointed that they didn't include a broader spectrum and a little more self-examination," said journalist Kate Coleman, a member of the Free Speech Movement Steering Committee.

 But the movement was empowering. Psychotherapist Devorah Goldberg says she saw women lead for the first time.

 "Before that, the men gave the speeches and ran the organization, and we were the envelope lickers," she said. "Because of the important role of women like Bettina Aptheker and Jackie Goldberg in FSM, I was actually able to be a leader and make speeches in graduate school during the strike against the Vietnam War."

 And Savio's legacy lives.

 "He was so humble," said Coleman. "I don't think I really appreciated that until later, as the left got ugly and started to eat its own."

 "It was a time when people were feeling their way and unsure about what to do, and he reflected that perfectly," said late professor Reginald Zelnik in an interview before he died in May. Zelnik, who joined the movement as a young faculty member, co-edited YEAR'S "The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the '60s."

 "He took his audience through his own thinking process, acknowledging his own doubts, before arriving at a conclusion.

 "As an historian," Zelnik said, "I always like to remind people that nothing is as beautiful as it appears on the surface. But FSM was as good as it gets. It certainly never got that good again."