

### **Jean Fritz: Chicago Eight Juror**

(Originally edited by Andrew Lutsky and edited for the classroom by Cari Ladd. The longer interview is available at: [http://www.pbs.org/pov/disturbingtheuniverse/interview\\_fritz.php](http://www.pbs.org/pov/disturbingtheuniverse/interview_fritz.php))

Well, as far as the Vietnam War was concerned, I was against it. Very much against it. But I never paraded or anything. I never did anything to try to stop it. I said what I felt to people, but I never, uh, joined. I had a daughter that marched against it. And, uh ... and she marched for a long time, but then when, uh, other people started being nasty she quit. Cause people got nasty. Then she dropped out.

In a way I was against the protests. I wasn't, uh ... I thought they shouldn't be doing this, but I didn't like what [Mayor] Daley was doing, either. Daley's group were beating those boys up and girls up, and I didn't believe in that, either. So it was a hard time, because I didn't, uh ... I wanted these kids to be able to say what they wanted to say, that was important to me, and yet I didn't want all that trouble.

'Course it was just almost the beginning of long hair and, uh, I wasn't used to people like that yet. You know, I came from Des Plaines, a smaller town, and I wasn't into stuff like that. So at first I was a little taken back, but after a few days I wasn't taken back anymore and I enjoyed them. I listened to them and, uh, I thought they were pretty good. I thought they were very, highly intelligent boys, and I think we should listen to them.

*What was the trial like?*

The conspiracy trial was a very hectic trial. And some days you were actually frightened what was going on, and some days you could laugh. It ... it ... every day was just a little different than the other day. And sometimes at night you couldn't sleep, worrying about what was going on, and the next day you were just fine. So you never knew what was going to happen. But I thought, as a whole, Judge Hoffman was a very unfair judge. He didn't give them ... he didn't give the defendants enough chance. I really felt that, that he, uh ... You could see his dislike for them, and I don't think any judge should show a dislike for anybody in their courtroom.

But yet a lot of times, even the ones that didn't like him had to laugh, which was a miracle. Because when Jerry Rubin and Hoffman came in with the judge's robes on, you had to laugh, I mean you had to laugh ... and you weren't supposed to laugh. But Judge Hoffman got them out right away, got us out, and into the jury room.

*Can you tell me about the day that Bobby Seale was brought into the courtroom bound and gagged?*

Ohh ... I think that was the worst day of my life the day they brought Bobby Seale into court tied like that. It was ... it was absolutely sickening ... you could, uh, you just felt that the world was coming to an end that you were actually seeing this in the United States of America. Somebody tied up like he was. Because he wasn't a killer that was going to shoot somebody. He didn't have a gun, he had nothing ... he was only going to talk. And he wasn't allowed to talk, he wasn't allowed ... Judge Hoffman just made him be quiet and had him tied up. I felt so bad for Bobby Seale, I thought it was the most horrible thing I ever saw.

I don't think we ever talked about it to the other jurors. All of us, I mean Shirley and Frida and Mary and I all felt terrible, but we never talked to the other jurors about it, so ... I'm sure that they didn't care at all. That was their attitude. They probably didn't like him in the beginning. So ...

they never liked any of the defendants, you know ... you could tell that from the very beginning. They made up their minds before the trial even was into it that they didn't like them, and that was obvious, always.

*Did you feel like you had to compromise with your verdict?*

We felt we had to make a compromise because Judge Hoffman would not take a hung jury, and also we didn't really want a hung jury if we could help it, because then they would go on trial again, and we just thought they were innocent. But we figured if we did the one count-- I think there were ten counts, I'm not sure anymore-- that it would work alright, and then we felt very guilty afterwards that we even gave in. At least I did. I felt very ... that I betrayed my belief by doing this. I really did.

When the verdict was read in front of the court, I ... I just couldn't believe it. I felt like screaming. I really didn't, uh, ... I said to myself, "Oh my god, I don't even remember the speeches and I'm convicting them on 'em." And I ... that's why ... I was just sick. I was just absolutely sick. I thought, "This is my fault, we shouldn't have given in." That's how I felt, that I betrayed my own beliefs. That's why I was so upset when I got home, and everything.

When we got home the whole street was full of cameras and reporters and neighbors. The whole street, all the way down. And I was sick, petrified, and I just got out of the car and ran as fast as I could to get in the house. I wouldn't talk to anybody, I wouldn't look at anybody. And then I went in the house and went hysterical. So ... it wasn't easy.

After the trial when I got home, it took a long time for me to settle down. Cause I had customers people around us coming in and telling me how ashamed they were of me, and things like that. And it took me a long time. For a while then I quit going to the store, I wouldn't go. And that lasted for ... I don't know how long that lasted, but I wouldn't even go to work.