

HipPocrates

Eugene Schoenfeld M.D.

1970

The audience stared incredulously at Old Glory.

Their eyes moved down the little wooden staff and remained fixed on its base, a candle in the shape of an erect penis. The candle was red, white and blue and larger than life. Silver stars covered its blue testicles.

Jon Stedman, a Berkeley candle maker had been busted a few days earlier on Telegraph Avenue. He was charged with displaying obscene material, disgracing the flag and vending without a license. Bail was set at \$800.

The flag-topped candle remained on the podium during my talk at a VD Teach-In held February 7th at the University of California's San Francisco Medical Center. _

"As long as this part of the human body is considered obscene, we won't be able to eradicate venereal diseases," I told the assembled public health workers.

A week earlier, I had stopped at Byron the jeweler's tiny Dwight Way shop to rap a few minutes with Byron and Sheila, his old lady.

They showed me a ring she had just finished, a fine piece of craftsmanship. Byron is as skilled and patient a teacher as he is an artist. And Sheila is a good apprentice.

While looking at the rings my eyes caught the Stars and Stripes in their display case. It was a Jon Stedman objet d'art.

"Where did you get it?", I asked with patriotic zeal. They pointed across the street to a fellow near the entrance of a parking lot once part of People's Park. (The University of California has leased the western end of People's Park to an Orange County parking lot firm. A constant police guard is necessary to protect the few cars parked there through ignorance, malice or stupidity. Someone loses a lot of money on that lot. Autos often leave with smashed windows, broken antennas or slashed tires.)



Dr. Eugene Schoenfeld speaking at Community Arts Auditorium, May 28, 1969 at a benefit for Open City.

Photo: Alan Gotkin.

I crossed Dwight Way and walked to the entrance of the parking lot where the candle maker was talking to a group of pickets. Inside his van were several colored phallic candles but all his red, white and blue models had been snatched up by flag-waving Berkeleyens.

"I have more at home," Stedman told me. "I'll leave one for you at Byron's later today."

When I told Byron and Sheila another show of the flag could be expected, they offered me their own candle. Returning to my bus I heard the usual sounds of Telegraph Avenue.

"Acid, grass, mescaline?"

Recent "mescaline" samples have contained STP or TM A but no mescaline. The chances of finding unadulterated LSD on Telegraph are slim as -a speed freak. Maybe the grass was real.

The night before the VD Teach-In I read that Jon Stedman had been arrested.

Whether or not he was vending without a license I can't say. But displaying obscene material? Only if our bodies are obscene. Disgracing the flag? The Vietnam War disgraces the flag. Judge Hoffman's contempt sentences disgrace the flag.

Stedman's candle honors the flag. Long may it wave.

Dr. Schoenfeld welcomes your questions. Write to him c/o PO Box 680, Tiburon, California 94920.

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