

Silvert Reminiscences Project: Students at Dartmouth College

From 1962 to 1966, Kalman Silvert taught Latin American politics and methodology at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. He had an enormous influence on a large number of undergraduate students. Some of them have written separate reminiscences of their times with him. This article includes interviews with six Dartmouth students, all of whom describe how he changed their lives.

One of Kalman Silvert's courses was on Latin American governments and politics. The course catalog described it as "an analysis of the contemporary distribution of political power and the major government forms in Latin America. Special attention will be paid to the political aspects of economic and social development, the influence of ideology on public policy, and the role of relevant interest groups." He also taught seminars on political modernization and methodology.

These interviews were conducted by Peter Cleaves in August and September 2012. The interview date appears below each former student's name. Short bios of the participants are included at the end of the article.

James C. Cason Interview *September 22, 2012*

PC: What do you remember most from Kal's teachings?

JC: Kal helped cement my interest in international affairs and Latin America. At the time there were very few academics writing on Latin America. I always thought his approach was the best, compared to other academics like historian Tannenbaum's "Ten Keys to Latin America." Other professors on

international affairs were not as intellectually rigorous as Silvert. He created my interest in Latin America, beginning with Uruguay. My recollection is that Silvert pointed out that development was more complicated than people might think. He asked, "What are the cultural conditions for modernization?" This is a question that is still being asked today.

When I again read "Discussion at Bellagio," I find he was asking all the right questions about development. The things he wrote about are still very relevant today. He talked about freedom and development, and nationalism as a social value. His definition of the "state as the impersonal arbiter of human affairs" has stuck in my mind. The state helps create an integrated country, freeing people from the bonds that constrain human development. All through my career, I have seen this element missing in national leaders. In the years since we were in college, it became increasingly common for analysts to point out that economic growth requires rule of law. As an academic, Silvert was pointing this out well before others, stressing the relationship between human freedom and democracy for development.

Back in the 1960s, modernization theorists thought they were like social engineers—how to guide countries to democracy. Silvert was grappling with what values ruling elites were willing to give up to achieve this goal. He considered that elites either lead—or do not lead—a country toward development, and described what happened in England and India. Neither of these country's elites was willing to extend opportunities to the masses. The people had to fight for it.

The key to development is to allow the human potential to blossom. One of his sayings was "Freedom equals opportunities

for choice." Also, "Development is asymmetrical." Other scholars said a country was either wholly developed or undeveloped. Silvert's approach was multidisciplinary. He said a society could be developed in some aspects and underdeveloped in others. Humans are any country's principal resource for development and economic resources. Unleashing their potential was the key to development.

I thought Silvert was a God at the time. At all the other universities I attended, when professors and students spoke of other scholars, I always quoted Kalman Silvert.

PC: What might you recall from his ethics, values, or philosophy?

JC: In my 40-year career, dealing with democratic and authoritarian governments, I found that Silvert's precepts were correct. If the former elites chose not to give choices to the masses, like in Venezuela, you get a dictator like Hugo Chávez. Silvert was a humanist who believed that human freedom and a state that provides unity beyond class and family gives a society its best prospects to develop.

In identifying nationalism with the state as the ultimate arbiter of human affairs, I believe Silvert was referring to countries like Guatemala. These societies are divided by ethnic, religious, and language cleavages and dominated by powerful classes. The state as the impersonal arbiter could bridge these differences. The concept of the state was that we all are part of a common collectivity. If the country does not have an open system allowing everyone to develop his talents and share in the fruits of development, it will not progress. East or West, it was the same process. Elites have to be forced to give up political power. In the 1960s this was true in Latin America

and during the civil rights movement in the United States, and we see the same today.

PC: How would you describe him, in one or two phrases?

JC: Ahead of his time. Profound humanist. Firm believer that freedom is a precondition for modernization.

PC: Can you describe any times when you thought of him in guiding your career?

JC: Silvert got me interested in Latin America. My diplomatic career spanned nearly 40 years, mainly in Latin America. Uruguay fascinated me. Batlle y Ordóñez was a president who increased choices for the people and integrated them under nationalism. My thesis research in Uruguay was on why people became communists. Why was it that you had a Communist Party in a middle-class country like Uruguay? I was grateful that he sent me in that direction.

He believed that people everywhere were basically the same. If they had freedom of choice and rule of law, they could become modern. I always thought it important that society's fortunate people should share their wealth. He got me interested in human rights, and I defended them wherever I worked—whether in countries run by rightwing dictators like Uruguay or by the left in Cuba.

In my diplomatic career, I always picked difficult countries to go to. I focused on helping those individuals trying to create a better country—in favor of rule of law and civil society. I worked for a level playing field and to help those not in power to compete. My most fulfilling activities were helping small groups working for freedom.

I worked in Uruguay, Venezuela, Portugal, Honduras, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Panama. I asked the question, “Who owns this country?” If it was run by family firms who controlled the executive, the legislature, the judiciary, and the economy, it was not nationalistic. They were using their power to promote their own interests. All this was a subset of what Kalman Silvert was saying. These were not all fair and impartial countries.

In the embassies' political sections, I was always frustrated with the typical impressionistic reporting. In contrast, I started with the data. For example, in most countries where I worked I researched who owned the top 500–10,000 companies, building databases and family trees of the owners to ascertain just who “owned” the country. In Uruguay, I tried to figure out why people voted socialist or communist. I read every issue of the Communist Party newspaper over 30 years. I researched electricity consumption by neighborhood and how each city block voted in past elections. It turned out that the communists were the only one defending the meatpackers. Decades later, the document I wrote with biographies, family trees, and networks in Panama is still being used. I think Kal would have approved my approach to go from empirical data to conclusions substantiated with evidence.

PC: Were there any times you remember thinking of him when making important decisions or ethical judgments?

JC: We went to Dartmouth College as empty glasses that the college filled with concepts, values, and theories. I am thankful to Dartmouth. I received a better understanding of freedom, human rights, and was willing to take risks in their pursuit. Sometimes I was tossed out of the country. Other times I got a medal.

I remember Grenadians throwing their arms around me saying the U.S. saved them from communism. I worked against thugs like Noriega. I was always interested in going the extra mile and taking risks. The Uruguayan military threw me out of the country when I tried to arrange a prisoner swap between Russian dissidents and Tupamaros. As a young person I was inculcated with a sense of duty and responsibility. I joined these values with many of Silvert's teachings to guide decisions made during my whole career.

PC: If you were to think of the ten persons who inspired you as a young professional, would Professor Silvert be on the list?

JC: Kalman Silvert would certainly be on the list. Winston Churchill would be at the top. While a pupil in French Morocco, I read Churchill's collective works. Afterwards I never doubted that I would become a diplomat. Others on the list would be Truman and Roosevelt. Silvert would be number four or five. I can't think of any other professor who had such an influence on me. Silvert steered me in a direction that became my life's work.

Peter S. Cleaves
August 21, 2012

I remember Kal's rendition of the Parson Pattern Variables to distinguish between modern and traditional behavior. It went something like this: Modern values were change oriented, relativistic, rational, and universal. Contrasting traditional values were static, rigid/dogmatic, ritualistic, and parochial. Individuals and societies could be measured from tradition to modernity to the degree they espouse these value sets. Interestingly, this formalization was never published in his written works that I saw. He just made allusions to these concepts.

He also taught a strategy of change. A modernizing political leader can most easily change the political system, followed by the economic system, then educational, then the religious, and finally the family and personal. I used this construct in my undergraduate thesis on Turkey's modernization by Kemal Atatürk, who did not face strong opposition till he banned the fez. I recall my thesis advisor (a Middle East historian) saying at the time, "Now I understand what Kal's theories are." Granted, however, that Kal never published this sequence (to my knowledge) except in a mimeographed handout.

Perhaps his most controversial theoretical statement was his definition of nationalism as "the acceptance of the state as the impersonal and ultimate arbiter of human affairs." This shorthand definition did not sit well with scholars who integrated language, religion, culture, territory, ethnicity, and history into their definition of nationalism. He added many qualifiers to the definition, but in its short form it seemed fully at odds with Kal's own belief in freedom and abhorrence of state compulsion. I never understood why he chose that definition.

Mostly, Kal spoke authoritatively and affectionately of his times in Latin America. He referred frequently to checking his theoretical interpretations with Latin American scholars in long and far-reaching debates in "Buenos Aires coffee houses." That sounded pretty good to undergraduate students with a romantic image of intellectual life in Paris in the 1950s—but taking place in an exciting new land waiting to be explored.

Kal was passionate about values. A question he raised in the classroom was telling. "How is it that Germany—with its philosophical, musical, literary, scientific,

and architectural accomplishments—being among the most advanced countries in the world, perpetrated the Holocaust?" I believe he found the answer in his interpretation of German society's value system within the parameters of modern versus traditional. While on the surface the country was modern; in its soul it was traditional in a way that permitted horrendous crimes. He saw some of the same dangers under Latin American military governments.

Kal also made a distinction between technicians and artists. Technicians simply applied rules or procedures created by others, whereas artists were creators and intellectuals leading society to a higher purpose. Clearly Kal considered himself in the artistic class and probably felt many of his students would at best be technicians. We could suffer this implied label due to our youth and inexperience. Kal ran into trouble, however, with bureaucracy and with some of his senior peers who sensed he thought of them as mere technicians.

One more aspect of Kal's personality is worth mentioning. He did not take care of himself. He smoked heavily, was overweight, and did not exercise. He admitted in class that he drove automobiles too fast (which could be said to be the way he drove his life). This behavior turned out to be harmful to him and, when he passed away, to all who admired him.

After leaving Dartmouth, Kal joined the Ford Foundation as head of the Social Science Program in New York. The Foundation was recruiting for the assistant social science advisor position in the Lima office. While finishing up my PhD dissertation, I had submitted my resume to Ford (not to Kal) through Ford's Chile office. After a first candidate chose instead to go to Harvard (Jorge Domínguez), I

received a letter in Santiago from Kal to the effect, "I was rummaging through the CV's on file for the Lima position. Why don't you fly up to Lima and interview with Dick Dye and Abe Lowenthal?" (Dick was Ford representative and Abe held the social science position.) I did so, was offered the post, staying with Ford for ten years.

Kal died in 1976, so we overlapped at the Ford Foundation only four years. He visited Lima on a few occasions where he would meet grantees and speak to office staff. These were magisterial seminars in which he would impress with his broad knowledge of world events, and not pull punches on what he approved and did not approve in the United States, in Latin America, and in the Ford Foundation itself. He saw great evil in the military governments of Chile and Argentina, had more nuanced views of Brazil, and was suspicious but withheld judgment on the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces in Peru under General Velasco. Ford had a research grant with the Planning Institute. At a meeting in the Institute, I recall his forceful rejection of their intention to keep the research findings confidential. If they would not publish the results, Ford would withdraw the grant.

All social science grants went to him for review, and he would write two- or three-page opinion recommendations. These were highly valued for their erudite historical and theoretical content. To be sure, they were received anxiously in the field office and analyzed and discussed thoroughly by the local program officers. Hints of praise in the memos made the program officer's day. Admonitions or circumspect disapproval caused heartburn. Sometimes one had to be satisfied when the verdict was that the grant, or the grant justification, was "unobjectionable."

I began my Latin American career in his class in 1966, and the career continues to this day. It included senior positions in three foundations, several years in Latin American banking and investment, several books, university teaching. He was the key figure in my recruitment to the Ford Foundation. His value categories helped me understand the mind-sets and political views of elites and revolutionaries I met and observed throughout my career.

After graduating from Dartmouth, I went to Chile on a fellowship and conducted interviews with municipal councilmen from the five political parties, from the rightist National to the leftist Socialist and Communist Parties. The politicians received me cordially as a young academic. After finishing my interviews, I was invited by the political officer in the U.S. Embassy for a meeting. He asked whether I would turn over my interview data for them to understand the councilmen's views. I thought of Kal's deep anger over the Camelot Project, where U.S. researchers were to conduct surveys of Chileans ostensibly for academic purposes, but were really secretly employed by the U.S. military. I declined the political officer's request, replying that my study of Chilean municipal councilmen was based on a promise of confidentiality. My findings hopefully would be published (they were) and available to all interested readers. I think that would have been Kal's answer.

Kalman Silvert was an intensely serious intellectual who lived passionately in pursuit of fundamentally important causes of democracy, freedom of thought, human rights, and scholarly accountability. He believed that education was a public policy intervention that could reinforce traditional values negatively or imbue individual citizens with modern, empathetic, and positivist values. He was very influential in

my life, and would clearly be among the top four persons who inspired me.

John F. Keane Interview
August 22, 2012

PC: What do you remember most from Kal's teachings?

JK: I took a Silvert course on Latin American government, very focused on empirical evidence of long-term trends largely related to weak democratic institutions, oligopolies, inequality, and impatience for change which engendered social unrest and repression. He used a very empirical approach to develop theories on why events happened as they did and what may happen in the future.

He was a mind-numbing empiricist. Some would consider he relied too much on empirical data to develop his theory of political dynamism and social change, and the reaction of elites to change (through repression).

At Dartmouth I also took two courses from Frank Safford (still teaching at Northwestern University), who wrote on the country of Colombia. As a historian Safford spoke of culture, thought processes, and trends to explain political change, in contrast to Silvert's empiricism.

PC: What might you recall from his ethics, values, or philosophy?

JK: Today we would call him a progressive. He profoundly believed that social reform was a moral imperative. He was very strategic in his approach. For him social inequality was personally repugnant—as he observed the extreme inequality in Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s. He was concerned about the

exclusion of indigenous populations in Guatemala and Peru.

I remember his strong objection to the U.S. role in the 1954 Guatemala coup. And he was very enthusiastic about the Christian Democratic Party coming into power in Chile. It had a solid base and was committed to changing the system of injustice.

I was in Peru during the ham-fisted efforts of the Peruvian military government to achieve social reform. I thought of Kal's emphasis on inclusion of all social sectors. I worked a lot with APRA, which had national inclusiveness as an objective in their image of "Indo America." Much of the Velasco military regime program was to give indigenous peasants in the sierra and workers in the sugar refineries a role in decision making through cooperatives. I remember thinking how this corresponded to Kal's thinking of the peasants and workers being participants and not subjects.

PC: Did you continue with Latin American interests?

JK: As a Latin Americanist, Silvert was a strong influence on my life. On entering the Peace Corps, I insisted on being sent to Latin America and preferably Colombia. In fact, that's where I went. I became enamored with Colombia, and I spent 37 years of my career as a U.S. diplomat in Latin America.

PC: If you were to think of the ten persons who inspired you as a young professional, would Professor Silvert be on the list?

JK: I would place Kal certainly in the top ten, perhaps six or seven. Those above would be other persons who also inspired

me, like some of the ambassadors with whom I worked.

PC: How would you describe him, in one or two sentences?

JK: Kalman Silvert felt that social change was a moral imperative in Latin America, and he constructed strategies drawing on his values, knowledge, and research to address inequality and repression.

Peter T. Knight Interview
August 25, 2012

PC: What do you remember most from Kal's teachings?

PK: I audited Kal's course at Dartmouth. I recall the content was based on his time with the American University Field Services in Latin America. He taught that Latin America is a fascinating place dealing with significant issues. That is what stuck with me from his class. Although I just audited his class, his teachings piqued my interest, even though time passed before I dedicated my career to Latin America.

PC: Did you have other interaction with Professor Silvert?

PK: I joined the Ford Foundation in 1971 when Kal was social science advisor in New York. But Kal had nothing to do with my appointment, as far as I know. I was at Brookings and wanted to go to Latin America. Abe Lowenthal had already left Brookings and joined the Foundation's Lima office. He encouraged me to apply for a position in the Ford Foundation. I figured that Ford had indirectly financed much of what I had done to date—my position at Brookings and my fellowship from the ACLS [American Council of Learned Societies]—so the idea made sense.

There were three positions open—Chile, Peru, and Brazil (at the Viçosa Agricultural University in Minas Gerais). I visited all three locations. The Brazil option was not attractive; Chile during the Allende regime was exciting, as was Peru to a lesser degree but more likely to remain stable than Chile. I chose Peru, where I worked from October 1971 to the end of 1974. Afterwards I took a leave of absence at Cornell University and continued my Latin American career at the World Bank.

PC: What might you recall from his ethics, values, or philosophy?

PK: Kal was a liberal who stood up against the forces of reaction on the left and right. His attitude at Ford was, "We've come here to help you do what you think needs to be done. If you have the will, we will back you."

Kal was instrumental in getting Ford to support the Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento (CEBRAP) in Brazil and the Corporación de Estudios para Latinoamérica (CIEPLAN) in Chile. Kal's thesis was that, during these countries' military governments, if social scientists were not under immediate physical threat and wanted to stay in the country, Ford would support the establishment of new research institutes where they could work productively while they sought additional financing. He had to fight to get these ideas accepted by Ford, but he prevailed. He broke the ground in Brazil, and the strategy extended also to CIEPLAN in Chile. This support—which would not have occurred without Kal's convictions—was one of the most important things the Ford Foundation did in Latin America at the time (still felt today) and perhaps globally as well.

I admired the goals he set for the Ford Foundation in Latin America. After he passed away, Ford changed to a more technocratic and direct action mode. It abandoned the idea of using social science to enable Latin American scholars to understand their own situation and put forth policy recommendations. Ford started supporting "direct action," becoming more like the Inter-American Foundation while the IAF was mutating to become more like the old Ford Foundation. In my view, this change at Ford was regrettable. Staff became less incorporated into local society and spent more of their time flying between countries they covered. Consequently they were less integrated into the social science communities in the countries where they lived. There were fewer field offices and less staff.

PC: Can you describe any times when you thought of him in guiding your career?

PK: Even though I just audited one of his courses, exposure to Kal was a key influence on my career. He was the reason I launched my lifetime engagement with Latin America.

But the path was roundabout. At Dartmouth I took a course on Middle East politics. I was one of the first two undergraduates to receive an overseas internship to study Middle East politics, with the country choices being Turkey or Egypt. I chose Egypt to study the formation of the Arab League, and spent five months based there, but also traveling to the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. On my return to Dartmouth for the winter term 1962 I wrote my undergraduate thesis on this topic, and also a term paper on Zionism as a pressure group in U.S. politics. I got a Fulbright Fellowship to Oxford (Worcester College and the Middle East Centre, the latter

headed by Professor Albert Hourani). At the Middle East Centre I participated in seminars with Hourani, the author whose books I most admired when researching my thesis. My experience there, in the Middle East, and at Dartmouth led me to appreciate how powerful a hold Zionism and oil companies had on U.S. foreign policy. There was very little space for a student to operate without being wedded to one of them.

Speaking with older mature fellows at St. Anthony's College, the full implications of becoming an Arab region specialist came home to me. I'd need to spend a full year just to learn Arabic and then to work in a region plagued with the Zionist and oil issues mentioned earlier. In the Arab region, you were either a friend or an enemy; there was no grey area.

I thought back to Kal's description of Latin America, and all the adventures he had. I just decided that for all these reasons—and despite the huge intellectual investment I had made to the Middle East region—that I should switch to Latin America. The region offered a more legitimate political space for Americans given the diverse U.S. players active there, the languages would be easier to learn, and Latin America had all the fascinations Kal described. Kal had planted a seed in my mind that was ready to blossom.

PC: Were there any times you remember thinking of him when making important decisions or ethical judgments?

PK: By extension, Kal was responsible for my doing my PhD dissertation in economics at Stanford University on Brazil. My principal dissertation advisor urged me to study hedging in the Brazilian agricultural market as a way for producers to protect against price fluctuations. After

checking this out during my first months in Brazil, I concluded that producer hedging would not be viable in Brazil for many years. While doing my research, I was also teaching macroeconomics at a Brazilian government training center, and across the street there was a group of economists advising the Planning Ministry led by Professor Albert Fishlow, then of UC Berkley. He became a kind of mentor and suggested I change my topic to import substitution and export expansion in Brazilian agriculture. I convinced my Stanford dissertation advisors to accept this change. I am sure that Kal would have considered this subject more relevant.

PC: If you were to think of the ten persons who inspired you as a young professional, would Professor Silvert be on the list?

PK: Of course Kal would be on the list of ten, along with Albert Hirschman, Albert Hourani, and Joseph Grunwald at Brookings. During my postdoc at Cornell University, Jaroslav Vanek, Peter Miovic, and Branko Horvat were influential for my studies on worker management. I can't say that I had any mentors during my 21 years at the World Bank. If I had had more interaction with Kal, I'm sure he would have been an excellent mentor.

PC: How would you describe him, in one or two sentences?

PK: Kal Silvert was a consummately tough-minded liberal.

Walton N. Smith Interview

August 24, 2012

PC: What do you remember most from his teachings?

WS: I took two courses from Professor Silvert. One was on methodology that included Max Weber. That was the one Dartmouth class notebook I kept for many years. Just recently while cleaning, I looked at it and asked myself, "Why am I keeping this?" Well, unfortunately I don't have it anymore.

His teaching on methodology has had a lasting effect on the way I interpret things—like an S curve on population. He introduced us to analytical tools we could use later in many ways. He influenced how I read a book. For the methodology course, the class read a little short book by Weber. It was heavy Germanic going. When we got to class, Professor Silvert asked us, "To whom is the book dedicated?" Well, that was the last question we were prepared to answer. No one knew. He then directed us to the two names in the dedication, and explained the following. By choosing these names, Max Weber was taking a position in an ongoing intellectual debate, as did the introduction which we had all skipped as well. Simply by selecting these names, Weber was stating his position. Kal advised us, "Don't ever ignore the dedications." Since then, I have read every word an author puts in his printed work and find that I would have missed a lot of good stuff had I not done so. The way Kal conveyed this message was very embarrassing for us. We had all the notes on the Weber book – but nobody had noticed the dedication. This was characteristic of Kal's academic theatrics.

Let me tell a story on his teaching style. A bunch of us were invited to his house one

evening. For some reason he was prompted to play the violin. I had never been that close to a violin, being more interested at the time in opera. He said that we would not understand music unless we understood the violin, especially Pablo Sarasate. He showed if you don't play the violin correctly, all you get is a hissing sound. He demonstrated that if you miss just a bit with your fingers or the bow, the sound was awful. But his real message was that you have always to pay attention to the little things, to the details. If you do that, you will *get it* (whatever "it" is). As with the violin on his shoulder, the notes from the instrument vibrate and reach your brain, and you will see that you are getting it right—by paying attention to the little things. The lesson to pay attention to the details—explained in this way—stayed with me for the rest of my career.

One other thing about his teaching actually bothered me. It was modernization, which I thought was a soft concept. It did not seem to be backed by data. I was more in line with the social science side, and felt there was not enough hard definition of the concept. He was striving to give a hard definition to modernization but had not gotten there.

PC: What might you recall from his ethics, values, or philosophy?

WS: I remember there was an event that related to his time with the American Field Services. Project Camelot was a research project by American scholars secretly funded by the U.S. military to find information on Latin America that would be reported back to the U.S. government. Kal was extremely annoyed. He was not so bothered that the military would want this information, but that the academics went along with this plan. The academics never had considered how their actions would

affect their profession and harm other legitimate researchers. Latin America officials and interviewees would never know whether an American researcher were not really a U.S. spy. These academics did not consider the real-world implications of their behavior. Kal felt that they entered academia without professional accountability and ended up violating its principles.

Kal was important in forming my personal worldview in ways that I would never have imagined in 1960 going to Hanover, New Hampshire, from Macon, Georgia. If you look at where I came from and the influences making me see what was wrong and out of place, you begin to understand the changes I experienced. I was not getting these new ideas from Macon's Lanier High School.

In the winter of 1960 Jere Smith and I went on a tour of civil rights activities in Atlanta. We wrote it up. At the time John Lewis was leading a sit-in at Loeb's restaurant. I put the civil rights movement in a development context.

Drawing on Silvert's classes, my analysis was political and economic. The South was disadvantaged in economic growth because the division between poor whites and blacks was perpetuated by Bourbon Democrats who wanted to maintain control. That major portions of the population were not integrated into society was similar to Latin America. This integration was not going to be handed out. The disenfranchised had to make the play themselves to move up—and they did. The process could have been more violent, and fortunately wiser heads prevailed. But the lesson was that you could not hand out freedom but had to take it on your own.

By extension, development forced from the outside is less likely to prevail compared to when it comes from the people themselves. I remember reading a book on Turkey that pointed out that village leaders did not like specific Atatürk policies but found a different way to make them their own. Change in Turkey was more successful because it came from the people.

In sum, I found many applications of Kal Silvert's teaching through my experiences in the American South and Vietnam.

PC: Did you have other interaction with Professor Silvert?

WS: At Dartmouth, I became a public administration major (rather than government or something else) because I knew I wasn't going to be a political scientist, but I took his courses because I enjoyed the subject and I enjoyed him. The Max Weber course was the only methodology course I took since the PA major required taking only one of them. I chose that Max Weber course because I enjoyed being in Professor Silvert's class. I already knew I wanted to be a lawyer and was able to benefit from the course without considering that it required a full professional engagement.

I mentioned to him that I wanted to be a lawyer. He let me know that he had walked up the steps of the University of Pennsylvania law school—"before turning around to do something more useful" with his life. While I did not take his advice, I definitely remember it. I have told people that Dartmouth took this boy from Macon, Georgia, and introduced him to the great world. Silvert did a lot of that introducing.

After Dartmouth and three years of law school, I ended up in the military in Saigon, Vietnam. It was 1967. One day a

Dartmouth classmate from a U.S. naval outpost—also a Silvert student—visited me in Saigon. We got roaringly drunk while talking about our Vietnam experience. We decided that we needed to tell Professor Silvert what we thought, so we got a four-track tape and dictated our findings. We talked about what we had seen up country and in Saigon. Lots of what we saw related to what Kal had taught about Latin America—social change in a traditional society, nationalism, the struggle against entrenched forces, and a developing country in revolution. It is illustrative of our feelings for Kal Silvert that we thought sending him this tape was the appropriate thing to do. (It would be great to find that tape today.)

PC: How would you describe him, in one or two sentences?

WS: Kal had a great personality. A very hard worker, he grappled with the challenge of raising the technical part of his intellectual craft to a high level. He was able to convey his values and work ethic to students, whom he treated as adults.

I cannot let this pass without some mention of Frieda Silvert, who seemed to me to not only be Kal's wife, but also frequently his partner in his work. She seemed a great support to him. There was some half-remembered story he told about their living in a village in perhaps Central America where the air was blue at night from the high bean content of the diet, and her working along with him in whatever the study was. She also put up most graciously with students descending on their home in Woodstock, Vermont, and—at least in my case—into a rather large and fancy party they were having at their double apartment at NYU after they had moved to New York City. Frieda was part of the sharp, solid,

and yet friendly and welcoming environment that I felt surrounded Kal.

PC: Any other thoughts or anecdotes to share?

WS: In March 1964, a major civil rights incident erupted in St. Augustine, Florida. The situation was getting out of hand. It was during spring break, and a lot of students from the Northeast traveled to St. Augustine. The head of the Tucker Foundation (Fred Berthold?) led a group of Dartmouth students to join the movement. Well, they got arrested and needed bail money to get out of jail. WDCR, the college radio station, hooked up a live telephone line to St. Augustine to follow events.

The radio station needed people in Hanover to fill in dead air. Among those who talked were Professor Silvert and me. Kal used his airtime to speak of the larger social and political context of the civil rights movement and the events in St. Augustine. But when he was off air, he had ironic statements about the whole enterprise. He said that the students and university official who had gone down were basically ivory tower academics who were ill prepared for the mission. How could they not foresee how they would be received and what would happen? And they had not even taken the precaution of arranging beforehand for bail money!

As a final word, I remember him saying, "Chile has the most beautiful women in the world."

PC: If you were to think of the ten persons who inspired you as a young professional, would Professor Silvert be on the list?

WS: I thought the world of him. Silvert would certainly be in the top ten. Kal was

not influential as "Herr Professor," but in the way he affected my life in a general way. He was the number one influence at Dartmouth and would be in the second five overall.

When I told my wife about this reminiscence project and how I would reflect on his influence, she commented, "I'm not surprised with what you say since you have been thinking this way for 40 years."

Eric Paul Veblen Interview
August 23, 2012

PC: What do you remember most from Kal's teachings?

EPV: Kal had been in the places he was writing and teaching about. He had been there and observed events firsthand. You did not find that much on the part of many academics.

I took two courses with Kal—Latin America politics and methodology. The methodology seemed more like sociology and focused on Max Weber.

The goal of his Latin America course was not to learn facts. Rather he stressed the context and ways to think about the topic. In Latin America, he used typologies of political systems. The method revealed the great differences between countries' levels of development, and relative development of regions within a country. He taught the heterogeneity of development and modernization. In his work, modernization was his main theme, extending from overall concepts to the makeup of a modern man or woman. He did a good job of conveying the vastly different levels of modernization, from those segments of the population not oriented toward national politics to those

who shared values associated with education.

The modern parts of the country attained a greater ability to identify with the nation in approaching politics. This was Kal's way of getting you to think about politics in developing countries rather than just facts about the country. He was successful in doing this.

Kal gave a lot of emphasis to typologies to conduct social science analysis. He gave us an unusual midterm exam question—to write out the table of contents of Weber's book. Partially it was his way to find out who was doing their homework. More importantly, he was helping structure our minds to understand Weber's approach.

Kal's theories were most important for the development field. A book that has stuck with me for a long time was "Man's Power." This outstanding work was a terrific demonstration of the scope of his mind. We once talked about [the renowned political scientist] Robert Dahl, whom Kal referred to as a "small theory man." This was *not* meant to be derogatory. The phrase stuck with me as a significant contrast from Kal, who was a great synthesizer intellectually. He was thinking in the grandest terms. His was "big theory." In "Man's Power," Kal was trying to answer the most difficult questions.

While an undergraduate, Kal influenced me to learn Spanish. Not necessarily related to his teachings, but one vivid memory from his class was Don Bross saying in Spanish, "President Kennedy has just been shot."

PC: What might you recall from his ethics, values, or philosophy?

EPV: Kal was a highly principled person. He did not hide his disdain for

totalitarianism and violent aspects of politics. I read Chris Mitchell's essay on Kal's reaction to NYU's procedure for dismissing junior faculty. I did not observe this aspect of Kal, but it was consistent with other impressions of him. He was not willing to compromise beyond a certain point. He was against repressive forces holding back human dignity in Latin America and everywhere. I believe that Kal had strong ethics and they reinforced my own.

PC: Did you continue with Latin American interests?

EPV: After Dartmouth I went to graduate school at Yale in political science but did not emphasize Latin America. My main interest was American politics and political behavior. I went back to Dartmouth to do research for my dissertation and had some contact with Kal, but not really in close touch. Then in 1968–69, he asked if I'd like to be at the Ford Foundation. I went for interviews at Ford in Latin America. He helped to get me hired. I worked in New York, Venezuela, and Colombia. I was with Ford from 1969 to 1971, but I was not around Kal very much. Later I went into a business that did not have a Latin American component. I attended Kal's 1976 memorial service.

PC: How would you describe him, in one or two sentences?

EPV: Kal Silvert had a great and powerful intellect that synthesized diverse areas of knowledge. All who were around Kal would agree that he had a compelling personality. At Dartmouth, he attracted a following of students devoted to him. Part of his personality was a fantastic sense of humor. He was sociable and fun to be with. For those who continued in

academia, his influence was important for our own writing and teaching.

Kal had spent so much time in Latin America, this direct experience gave him many anecdotes. He once told us about a heated dispute he had in an Argentine restaurant. After things calmed down, Kal's adversary left the restaurant. An anarchist approached Kal and said, "Would you like me to go outside and break his arm?"

PC: If you were to think of the ten persons who inspired you as a young professional, would Professor Silvert be on the list? If so, what number in importance?

EPV: Kal would certainly be on the list of ten. He had a tremendous influence on the Ford Foundation and while in academia. He would be right up at the top at number one or two.

Bios

James C. Cason received his AB degree from Dartmouth College in 1966 and MA from the School of Advanced International Studies (Johns Hopkins) in 1968. After joining the U.S. State Department, his career included postings in El Salvador, Venezuela, Portugal, Italy, Uruguay, Panama, Guatemala, Bolivia, Honduras, Jamaica, and Cuba, culminating as U.S. Ambassador to Paraguay. His bold diplomatic style resulted in his expulsion from Uruguay and wide press coverage while Chief of Mission in Cuba. He speaks Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Guarani, and serves as President of the Center for a Free Cuba. Currently he is the elected mayor of Coral Gables, Florida. *Contact:* 1040 Alhambra Circle, Coral Gables, FL 33134, jimccason@yahoo.com, Tel. 305-409-4061.

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