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Atlantis

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.
—Philip Larkin, "This Be the Verse"

Jann Wenner stood inside a closet, tripping on LSD. A kitten purred outside the door. A young woman, sitting cross-legged, stroked the kitten and smiled mystically.

It was the spring of 1965, and Denise Kaufman, a dark-haired free spirit who played blues harmonica and wore tall velvet boots, had met Wenner a few hours before while sitting with friends at the Terrace, the outdoor café on the campus of the University of California at Berkeley. The sit-ins and protests of the Free Speech Movement, which pitted students against the university's administration over civil rights and the First Amendment, had focused the nation's attention on Berkeley in the preceding months and now dominated the talk. They all seemed to think they were making history, destinies colliding in nearby apartments and along Telegraph Avenue over joints and copies of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*.

A couple of Kaufman's friends had shown up with a grinning preppy in a Brooks Brothers shirt. The brash fireplug of a boy declared he was going to take LSD for the first time and write a psychology paper about it. Kaufman's eyebrows went up. She'd heard of Jann Wenner before. Her parents, successful Jewish liberals from Presidio Heights, were acquainted with his mother, Sim Wenner, whose racy dime novel

Kaufman had furtively thumbed through as a teenager back in 1961. Kaufman also knew a society girl, the daughter of a British diplomat, who told of a notorious Jann Wenner (to whom the society girl lost her virginity). "I was like, 'This is that guy,'" she recalled. "We were sitting next to each other, and he started talking about LSD."

For his class, Wenner had checked out library books about psychedelics, including *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the "Tibetan Book of the Dead"* by Timothy Leary. The chemical compound lysergic acid diethylamide, discovered in 1938 by Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann, was still legal in California, but not for long. In the preceding months, people had been returning with tales of wild experiences with Ken Kesey, the author of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest,* whose playful social experiment in a garishly painted 1939 International Harvester school bus was already taking shape on a ranch in nearby La Honda. LSD-25, Kesey's acolytes reported, plunged the user into a state of euphoric revelation, the unconscious mind emerging from the depths like a lost kingdom. In his 1968 best seller, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test,* Tom Wolfe would quote a woman who inadvertently drank "electrified" Kool-Aid at an early Grateful Dead show:

> I stood close to the band and let the vibrations engulf me. They started in my toes and every inch of me was quivering with them . . . they made a journey through my nervous system (I remember picturing myself as one of the charts we had studied in biology which shows the nerve network), traveling each tiny path, finally reaching the top of my head, where they exploded in glorious patterns of color and line.

Wolfe would portray Kaufman, who joined Kesey's Merry Pranksters that summer, as Mary Microgram. And so Ms. Microgram had to laugh at Wenner's absurd proposal. "Well, you're not going to be able to write that paper!" she explained to Wenner. He would need a guide, she said. "How about you?" Wenner flirted.

On the way to his apartment on Carleton Street, they stopped by a dormitory and a friend's house to borrow a kitten and a stack of LPs, including a modal folk guitar album by Sandy Bull called *Inventions.*

When they got to Wenner's apartment, the living room was littered with wine glasses from a sorority party he'd thrown the night before. "We went into his room, and [he] took this acid," Kaufman recalled. "We were just talking, and the kitten was playing, and then the acid started to come on. I had the Sandy Bull music on, and he was like, 'Take that off, I can't stand it.'"

Freaking out, Wenner opened his closet door, stepped inside, closed the door, and stood by himself in a laundry basket full of starched shirts. "And I said, 'That's fine, if you need me, I'm here,'" said Kaufman. "He was in there for a long time."

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RAINBOW ROAD.

That was the name the Wenner family gave the woody drive leading to their new house. In 1951, Edward Wenner, a stout man with dungarees hiked to his chest, bulldozed the grounds himself. His wife, Sim, a slim and attractive woman who wore her hair short, had paid $3,000 for the five acres, and Ed banged out a ranch-style dwelling with exposed beams and large windows, a flagstone fireplace, a playroom for the children with a tiled checkerboard on the floor, an office for his wife, a carport for their imported sports cars—her Alfa Romeo, his MG. A towering oak tree stood out front. It was their homemade version of the California dream, nestled in the base of a land preserve in rural San Rafael, eighteen miles north of San Francisco.

All this was paid for by Baby Formulas Inc., the business Ed Wenner came to California to create. At one time, he would claim his company fed 90 percent of the babies within a hundred miles of San Francisco. In 1946, Ed and Sim had arrived in San Francisco with a baby of their own, Jan Simon Wenner. For years to come, the son would look at 8-millimeter home movies of this life on Rainbow Road—his mother filming him as he hopped around the patio in a cowboy hat while his father dug a hole for the swimming pool—and craft a dewy vision of his childhood. "It was a pretty idyllic and archetypal childhood for that time," he said. "They came from the East Coast, out of the military, out to golden California to find postwar fame and fortune; I was the first child of the baby boom."

Wenner's early memories of childhood included baby bottles moving down the assembly line in his father's factory on Sacramento and Laurel and his mother playing *Moonlight Sonata* on the piano when he went to bed at night. There were weekends at Squaw Valley, near Tahoe, where his father taught him skiing, which became a lifelong passion for Jann Wenner. There were the dogs, Adlai and Estes, named after liberal Democrats Adlai Stevenson and Estes Kefauver. There was his mother writing on her Olivetti typewriter while listening to the Joe McCarthy hearings on the radio.

But Rainbow Road was as much an escape as an arrival. The Wenners' new son was born only a few months before they left New York, at Beth Israel Hospital in Manhattan at 12:25 p.m. on January 7, 1946. In Wenner's baby book, his mother, Sim, describes being startled by "the enormity of his nose" and reports his eyes as blue; Ed believed they were brown. (They were blue.) In a single stroke, Sim both blessed and cursed her son by naming him Jan, writing that his name referred to the Roman mythological figure Janus, a byword for betrayal and contradiction. "Two-headed," she wrote. "Gatekeeper of heaven." (As a teenager, Jan would add the *n* to his first name.)

Sim would describe the birth of her son as a time of intense loneliness: The bars on the hospital windows, she told Wenner in 1982, were all that kept them both alive. "I would have jumped," she said. Wenner's first pediatrician was Dr. Benjamin Spock, the progressive doctor and civil rights activist, who published the best-selling *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* the same year Wenner was born. Sim, whose name was shorthand for her maiden name, Simmons, came from a well-off family who lived on the Upper West Side near Central Park. Her parents were first cousins. Sim's mother, Zillah, came to New York from Australia, where her parents were unsuccessful merchants. Sim's father, Maurice Simmons, grew up poor in New York, but he shone with ambition: After graduating from City College in Manhattan, he served in the army during the Spanish-American War and helped found the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America. He became a judge in New York and gave the nominating speech for Al Smith's first run for office in the early twentieth century. Zillah, whom he married in 1919, ran an antiques store that sold silverware.

The Simmonses poured their immigrant hopes into their firstborn son, Robert, but the birth of their second child, a daughter, two years later, would mark the abrupt end of the marriage. A serial philanderer, Maurice had an affair with the family governess in a drama that actually made headlines: *The New York Times* reported that Zillah filed for divorce, the governess was arrested for physically attacking Zillah with a dog leash, and Maurice sued Zillah's sister-in-law for libel after she called him a "scoundrel." By the time Sim was born in 1922, Zillah was so bitter she couldn't bring herself to name her daughter. "She was 'baby girl something' for the longest time," said Wenner.

Sim's childhood was shadowed by Zillah's anger—her mother regularly threatened to throw herself out the window—and starting at age twelve, Sim was raised by her maternal grandmother, Kate Gilbert Symonds, with whom she often shared a bed. By the time she reached adolescence, Sim had developed a flinty independence and a desperation to escape her mother. Around 1940, a white knight presented himself: Edward Weiner, a stocky but sporting fellow she met on a ski trip to Stowe, Vermont.

Ed was raised by a single mother who immigrated to Boston from Russia with a penniless and ne'er-do-well husband. After Ed's father died of cirrhosis when Ed was five, he and his mother, Mary, and an older sister made their way to Brooklyn, where Mary changed the family name to Weiner to escape her past (the previous name was forgotten, as was her husband's name). Mary Weiner struggled with a lingerie business and tasked little Edward with helping women snap on their brassieres. Ed spent hours alone in the library, educating himself enough to start high school at thirteen. He came to hate his mother for reasons he couldn't discuss: He had watched her and his sister spread newspapers around the shop and burn their business down to collect the insurance money—an act that nearly killed the Italian fruit vendors who lived upstairs. As he would recall later, he and his mother stood on the street and watched it burn: "The fruit merchant came out and he said, 'You did this! You did this! You could have killed my baby!' "

His mother fainted. "After the fire," Ed later said, "the Italian family moved out and she used the insurance money to expand and buy new merchandise."

Though he spent years in denial, the event left Ed tortured with guilt. "I could have killed somebody," he confessed in a documentary made by Jann Wenner's sister Kate. "You don't know what that feels like."

"Cheating, lying—I thought that's the way life was," he admitted. "How could I be something people respected or admired? I'm going to be something that people will like. I'm going to make myself something."

One day, Ed stole money from his mother's cash register, she discovered it, they fought, he struck her, and she had him arrested. After a night in jail, Ed left home and never returned. "No matter what I did, I had to do something bigger, tougher, to prove myself," he said. "I had to compensate for being poor and growing up in the slums."

At the dawn of America's entrance into World War II, Ed's ambition was the antidote for Sim's desperation. After Ed enlisted in the air force, Sim joined a women's volunteer unit. And while on spring break from Hunter College, she flew to Alabama, where Ed was stationed, and they got married in an air base chapel in the spring of 1941.

At first, the couple lived apart. Sim was training as a supply officer at Radcliffe College in Cambridge when she discovered what she would call her "homosexual gene," having an affair with a fellow volunteer. The woman, nicknamed Smitty, asked Sim to run away with her to California. Sim confessed the affair to Ed, who was surprisingly understanding and offered to end the marriage. But Sim would say she wanted a "normal" life with children—not one living as a lesbian pariah—and went with Ed. To cement the decision, they decided to have a baby. In the spring of 1945, while Sim and Ed were furloughed in New York, they conceived Jann Wenner on a train trip to Chicago. After he was discharged from the air force, Ed became a traveling salesman of surplus mattresses for recycling into paper mulch. With Jan Simon Wenner in utero, they moved to Elmhurst, Queens.

Ed and Sim rejected Judaism, viewing the old-world culture as an embarrassing millstone. In Wenner's baby book, Sim wrote that "any religious ceremonies will be of his own choosing and not ours." For Ed Wenner, "the words 'Jew' and 'poor' were synonymous," Kate Wenner wrote in *Setting Fires,* a loose fictionalization of their father's history

published in 2000. If they were going to reinvent themselves, they had to get away. Around the time Jann was born, Ed and Sim changed the family name to Wenner from Weiner. "The explanation was that he didn't want us as children teased," said Jann Wenner. But it also obscured the Jewish background that Ed resented.

In 1946, Ed dreamed up a business idea, inspired by a story he'd read in a magazine: The babies of British war brides, while on boats to America, had gotten sick from drinking unsterilized milk. "It hit me right then," Ed told *Newsweek* in 1961, "terminal sterilization had possibilities as a commercial venture." So in 1947, they put Jann Wenner in the back of their Dodge Coupe and drove west, part of a great postwar migration to California. "Of course," wrote Sim Wenner in a memoir published in 1960, "that's where any real pioneer headed in those days. It was the land of gold, a state littered with patio pools and producing parents."

After a period in the city, they settled north of San Francisco in Mill Valley, just over the Golden Gate Bridge, and Ed Wenner rented a former butcher's shop with a freezer, spending nights in a sleeping bag while he figured out how to sterilize and bottle formula. To sell the idea, he peddled a twenty-five-page "Mother's Guide" describing the benefits of formula but then shifted to bulk sales to Bay Area hospitals. Despite her skepticism, Sim's mother, Zillah, lent them money to expand, and Ed bought a green truck, had a stork stenciled on it, and began delivering formula.

The business boomed, and so did the Wenners. Sim became pregnant again not long after they moved to California and gave birth to Kate Wenner in 1947. Two years later, she had another girl, Martha. But as Ed became consumed with the business, Sim began to think of motherhood as both too much and not enough. When Jann Wenner was two, she began going to work as the office manager for Baby Formulas, leaving the kids at home with a series of African American nannies. Sim Wenner later maintained that her motherly remove made her son independent. He could scramble an egg when he was three years old, she claimed.

However it happened, what nobody could deny was that Jann Wenner was precocious in the extreme. Short and pudgy, with a prickly intelligence and a bracing self-confidence, he was kicked out of nearly

every school he attended until the age of eleven. "A pain in the ass," his father said. He could be unpredictable and cruel. In third grade, he physically attacked the principal of his public school. A year-end review by his teacher characterized eight-year-old Jann as unusually intelligent but with a compulsion to violence. "In group situations he tries to dominate," his teacher wrote, "withdrawing when the group does not recognize his leadership. He attempts to make friends by teasing, which has recently resulted in fighting. Once he is involved in a fight or argument he becomes extremely angry and attacks, with every ounce of his rather considerable strength and energy, sometimes with any 'weapon' convenient to his hand."

When he was interviewed by a psychologist for his next potential school, Presidio Hill, near the Golden Gate Bridge, Wenner morphed into another child entirely—the charming little genius. "In light of this boys [*sic*] affable, pleasant, personal manner and his advanced social and mental maturity, it would seem that his school problem should be almost nil," said a school psychologist in 1954. "Most probably, his greatest difficulties will arise when teachers feel threatened by his very superior intelligence."

Wenner was kicked out of Presidio for pulling the keys out of the ignition of a school bus on a field trip.

Wenner said he felt isolated from the working-class people in San Rafael, few of whom were Jews, most of whom were less wealthy than the Wenners. But he was also desperate for attention from his absentee parents. Ed was a workaholic, once collapsing from a burst appendix because he refused to go to the hospital while waiting for a shipment of formula. Meanwhile, his mother made it a philosophical imperative to focus on herself and not her children. In her 1960 memoir, *Back Away from the Stove,* she codified her lack of attention into a child-rearing philosophy. "I missed a great deal of my children's childhood and they missed a great deal of me," she wrote. "My individual choice was to leave housewifery behind . . .

"I quit everything and concentrated on making enough money so that when the kids grew up we could have them psychoanalyzed," she continued. "Just because a lot of statistic-happy sadists want to make you miserable if you work by pointing to correlations, don't be taken in."

In its way, Sim's book foreshadowed *The Feminine Mystique,* published three years later by Betty Friedan. For Wenner, the product of his mother's pioneering philosophy, it simply meant he never saw his mother. "In grammar school, all the moms were around all the time, except our mom," he said. "We didn't have the conventional house, or home. They would travel away on the weekends, and even in the winter, on vacations, we would be shuttled off to the places we went for summer camp—long weekends with the people of the camp, in their houses."

Every summer, the Wenner children were sent to Camp Lagunitas, in Marin, run by a man named Ed Barbano, who Wenner told his parents was an alcoholic. His sister Martha Wenner described how the drunken camp leader veered off the road with a carful of kids until Jann Wenner grabbed the wheel to keep it righted. (The Grateful Dead would later hole up near Camp Lagunitas to write songs.)

Ed Wenner was hardly a source of comfort. Frustrated by his intemperate son, Ed frequently hit him. Kate said her brother would crawl out his bedroom window to hide from spankings. When Wenner threatened to run away from home, his mother put a can of creamed corn in a handkerchief tied to a stick, handed him a nickel, and said, "Here, take this, you'll need it."

While the Wenners sold themselves in magazine articles as baby experts, they tended to ignore their own children for more idealistic pursuits, namely politics. In the 1950s, Sim was involved in the California Democratic Council, a liberal wing of the Democratic Party, and befriended Democrat Alan Cranston, who later became a senator from California. On Rainbow Road, Ed and Sim socialized with two other couples, like-minded Democrats: the Roth family, who owned the Matson shipping company, and the Flaxes, who owned an art supply store in the city, enjoying cocktail parties around the patio and pool. Despite their parents' many failings, the Wenner kids were deeply influenced by their politics. The Wenners took their kids door to door around San Rafael for a Dollars for Democrats drive and once set up a hot dog stand so their mother could raise money for Guide Dogs for the Blind. In 1956, ten-year-old Jann Wenner met the Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson at the offices of the local Democratic committee that his mother headed.

But on the eve of the 1960s, the Wenners were cracking up. The business was creating a growing chasm between Ed and Sim. When he wasn't laboring to expand Baby Formulas, Ed spent endless hours in Freudian analysis; he loved hearing himself talk. Meanwhile, Sim was stirred by dreams of becoming a literary writer. They fought constantly, their screaming matches the central event of their children's young lives. "The money and the business took down my parents' marriage," said Martha. In the late 1950s, Sim began staying home to write a memoir, which doubled as a bitter attack on Ed, describing her regret at having devoted her time to the formula business, only to be ignored by her husband. "I'd much rather be crewing on a Tahiti-bound schooner, or selling nonobjective art on the Left Bank," she wrote. "Anything but business. I hated business."

As she embraced personal liberation, Jann got a brief but powerful close-up of the mother he idolized, imbibing her progressive opinions and ideas about literature or politics and basking in the glow of her increasingly eccentric personality. His mother primed him for an interest in writing. "She turned me on to E. B. White," he said. "And that was her background. She had been a magazine freelancer for a number of years."

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WENNER'S JOURNALISTIC CAREER BEGAN at age eleven, when he joined two neighborhood kids who were producing a mimeographed newspaper. Wenner quickly shouldered them aside, renaming it *The Weekly Trumpet* (from *The All Around News*) and crowning himself editor in chief, which he made a stipulation if he was going to join. Wenner typed up news items about a neighbor "cracking open his skull" and getting stitches or earthquake damage to local pools and wrote editorials arguing, for instance, that kids who won prize money on TV quiz shows shouldn't have to pay taxes. He also asked his readers—all sixty-four of them—not to vote for a state legislator that his mother despised, asking, "Are you going to elect a man with racial prejudice, or are you not?" In the spring of 1957, he and his friends appeared on the front page of San Rafael's *Daily Independent Journal,* which reported that Wenner made $5.97 on subscriptions.

His sister Kate later recounted how Wenner conscripted her as a delivery girl, but she quit after he refused to give her a raise. When she threatened to start her own newspaper, Wenner replied, "Oh yeah? What are you gonna call it?"

She was flummoxed by his dare.

"He knew that without a name you had no concept and without a concept you had nothing," Kate said during a toast at Wenner's sixtieth birthday party. "Jann had the confidence to pull it off. It was as simple as that."

Wenner's confusion about his budding feelings for boys also started early. When he was twelve, Wenner was arrested at the local library for engaging in ambiguous horseplay with the son of a local sheriff, who told his father Wenner had harassed him. "It wasn't gay sex; it was roughhousing and goosing," said Wenner. "All of a sudden I ended up spending a day in juvenile hall."

According to his mother, this was why Wenner was sent to a coed boarding school in Los Angeles in 1958—because his father hoped the proximity to girls might cure him. Wenner said the incident was "misconstrued," and he had already been accepted to Chadwick School when he was arrested because his parents were getting divorced. When Sim's father, Maurice, died in Florida in 1958 after a long period of estrangement, the tension between Sim and Ed, over money, control of the company, and lack of love, came to a head. When Wenner flew home from Chadwick for Thanksgiving break, his father took him out to lunch and delivered the news of their separation. Wenner sobbed. "I lost my appetite and couldn't finish my food," he said.

In the divorce proceedings, Sim gave custody of Jann to his father and took the girls with her. It was a decisive blow to Wenner's sense of self. For years to come, Wenner would tell friends his parents fought over not who got to keep Jan Simon Wenner but who had to take him. His mother, Wenner said, once called her son "the worst child she had ever met."

Wenner began a campaign to get his parents back together. Sim told her son she wanted him to call only every other week to reduce her phone bills. "Your demand that Dad and I be something to each other that we're not, is basically a child's demand," she wrote to him in 1959,

when Wenner was thirteen. "One stamps one's foot and says, 'Change the world and I will be all right!' and it's a nice comforting thought to have, but the world can't be changed, families can't be changed, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers . . . There is only one thing that can be changed, or rather, only one thing that you can change, and that is yourself." ("Maternally yours," she signed the letter.)

As soon as she was able, Sim Wenner freed herself entirely from motherhood by sending Jann's sisters, Kate and Martha, away to boarding schools in Vermont and Colorado, respectively. The house on Rainbow Road was sold, and Ed Wenner moved to Southern California. Wenner would never forget his mother's parting words: "You're on your own, Buster Brown."

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"I WAS UNHAPPY," Wenner wrote in an English paper about his first year at Chadwick School. "The year was miserable."

But he had arrived at the right place. A way station for the progeny of the wealthy and famous from Bel-Air and Hollywood, Chadwick was a progressive private school on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, nestled like a bucolic camp at the top of a shady hill. Founded in 1935 by Margaret and Joseph Chadwick, it enrolled fewer than four hundred students, with only fifty-two in Wenner's class. In his first year at Chadwick—or "Chad-suck," as he called it—Jann Wenner spent weekends sitting in his dormitory watching TV alone, a picture of his mother on his desk, sulking over the divorce. Ed had a new girlfriend, a nurse from South Texas named Dorothy, who recalled meeting Jann in a garage in San Francisco that year: A straw hat on his head, no shoes on his feet, he looked to her like Huckleberry Finn. She told Ed that his son would be famous one day because he "had the courage to be different."

For Wenner, Chadwick was, among other things, an education in celebrity. He was surrounded by the children of movie stars and famous directors: the offspring of actor Glenn Ford; the daughter of Jack Benny; the children of George Burns and Gracie Allen; and Yul Brynner's son, Rock, with whom Wenner roomed in ninth grade. In a letter to his mother, Wenner described waltzing with Liza Minnelli at

else's. In the very last sentence of the book, Daisy acts out her rage at Philip by raising a .22 rifle to his temple and pulling the trigger.

Wenner was horrified. After reading it, he wrote back to his mother, "The last paragraph was too much for me to bear psychologically. Your bitterness must be great, whether justifiable or not, but when so openly expressed as in the précis paragraph, you must have some idea of the effect on me."

In reality, Sim Wenner did have an abortion before the divorce. As columnist Herb Caen wrote of *Daisy* in the *Chronicle,* "definitely not for baby unless yours has a different formula than most."

After 1959, Wenner's mother parented him almost entirely through letters, updating him on the family business, calculating his allowance and debts, correcting his grammar, suggesting books to read, and even upbraiding him for his souvenirs from a field trip to Mexico ("A bullwhip and a switchblade knife are the weapons of a [pachuco] not a gentleman"). Wenner, feeling orphaned, wrote "Bastard" on a letter. But even as she drifted away, she was intent on conscripting her children in battles against their father, who once sued Sim to reduce child support. It was an attitude Wenner slowly absorbed and would last for years to come. "She turned us against him, me and my sister," Wenner said. "We didn't realize it at the time, but it was a constant, steady stream of picking away, a slow character assassination."

His sister Kate, after years of therapy, would maintain that Wenner and his sisters were deeply impacted by their mother's bitterness and cruelty—a view Wenner only partly subscribed to. "I came around to her point of view about how crazy our mother was," said Wenner. "My mother is, like, according to Katie, a classic narcissist.

"I escaped the impact of it," he insisted. "I mean, I went off on my way, fairly young, and just had this enormous success, which just overwhelmed all the need to be introspective, all the need to be insecure, it just vanished."

In eleventh grade, Wenner added an extra *n* to his own first name, making it Jann, inspired, he said, by a friend named Tedd. (His mother, a sometime fabulist, would tell a different story: Wenner was embarrassed when the school delivered his luggage to the girls' dormitory, believing "Jan" was a girl.) Wenner tried out other names as well, once

asking people to call him George and printing up business cards that read "Jan G. Wenner." In 1961, when the surf craze hit Southern California beaches, Wenner saw surf guitar legend Dick Dale and started wearing huaraches. "He put a bleached streak in his hair," remembered Andy Harmon, "and my father, obviously, sensing something that ended up having some truth in it—'This is not something a man does'—went after Jann about it . . . He implied that Jann was gay."

In 1962, Wenner was nearly suspended from Chadwick for leaving campus without permission but was saved by the headmistress, Mrs. Chadwick, who admired his writing in her English class. Divining Wenner's troubles, she arranged for him to see a Beverly Hills psychiatrist and also directed him to the theater department, where Wenner starred in Christopher Marlowe's *Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus,* playing the title character who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for occult powers. Onstage, Wenner, as Faust, mused before Mephistopheles:

> *Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,*
> *Resolve me of all ambiguities,*
> *Perform what desperate enterprise I will?*

He later played in *H.M.S. Pinafore* and became a lifelong fan of Gilbert and Sullivan.

Wenner's best friends were two boarders, Andy Harmon and Jamie Moran, the son of a social worker at Chadwick. Wenner and his pals identified as proto-beatniks, inspired by the Maynard Krebs character played by Bob Denver in *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis* on CBS and humor magazines like *Mad*, intent on bucking the "bourgeoisie." While Wenner received middling grades, he gravitated to current events, keeping up with Kennedy and Nixon in the papers, writing a critical essay on the right-wing John Birch Society and another on the historic ramifications of the atom bomb. In keeping with his mother's quasi-socialist worldview, Wenner was an orthodox Adlai Stevenson liberal, aping his rhetoric in school papers and precociously imbibing books like *A Nation of Sheep,* a liberal critique of American foreign policy and the media by William Lederer, co-author of *The Ugly American*.

But Wenner was primarily distracted by the pecking order at Chadwick. Moran thought of Wenner as a kind of innocent hustler who admired creative people but was seduced by "the false glamour of celebrity." Even as he hung out with the bohemians, Wenner organized his calendar around popular kids in whose wealth and fame he found deep affirmation. "At Chadwick, he dressed in a fucking coat and tie," Harmon said. "He hung out with the preppies, which I couldn't bear . . . and was very attracted to power. I think he was attracted to my dad, because he had a reputation as a prominent filmmaker."

Even then, journalism synthesized Wenner's interests. In his junior year, he befriended Chadwick's publicist, Frank Quinlin, who assigned Wenner to cover sports for *The Mainsheet,* the school paper, and helped him get a weekly column in the local *Palos Verdes Peninsula News,* reporting the goings-on at Chadwick. Quinlin, known as Uncle Frank, also involved him in Chadwick's yearbook, *The Dolphin*. This gave Wenner access to the school's Graflex camera, and he used it like an all-access pass, snapping pictures in classrooms, study halls, and dormitories. It also gave Wenner access to a twenty-foot-long closet with a desk and a typewriter, dubbed Shaft Alley, over which Wenner put a sign reading MEMBERS ONLY. "I was the only person in the school who had an office," he said.

The yearbook was the perfect tool for social climbing. "His friends were mostly friends that would advance him socially at school," recalled his mother-in-law. "I remember he had made friends with this girl from Chadwick. She was able to give him a lot of money for the annual. Then I remember we were at the house one time and she called him. He was really abrupt with her. He was like, 'Why are you calling me? We don't have anything in common anymore.' And it was just awfully rough."

As graduation approached, Wenner set his sights on Harvard, Jack Kennedy's alma mater. His archrival at Chadwick, a handsome jock and class valedictorian named Dennis Landis, was also gunning for Harvard, while Wenner's friend Bill Belding applied to Yale. "I distinctly remember December of '62," recounted Belding. "Mrs. Chadwick came out and Jann and Dennis and I were talking in the rotunda. 'I have good news for you, Bill, you were admitted to Yale. And, Dennis, you were admitted to Harvard. And, Jann, you were not admitted to Harvard.'

"She handled that so badly, and I know Jann was devastated," he said. "Jann really, really wanted to go to Harvard and he didn't."

Instead, Wenner would be going to the University of California at Berkeley, where his mother had taken continuing education courses.

But Wenner found another way of pursuing his rivalry. His senior year, he devised an unorthodox plan to take over the student council and block Landis from becoming vice president. Instead of running for president himself, he created a slate of candidates on a so-called progressive platform, with swim champ Belding at the top of the ticket, an attractive girl named Cydny Rothe for secretary, and Wenner wedged in the middle as vice president. The Wenner sandwich worked: Advocating, along with a liberal agenda, for coffee for seniors, the progressives soundly defeated Landis, which Wenner ran as news across the front page of the premier issue of a rogue newspaper he'd recently founded, *The Sardine*. In his paper, Wenner described the campaign—his own—as one of "innovations and uniqueness." "Jann's whole reason for wanting to run for student body," said Belding, "was so he could become an insider and start an underground student newspaper . . . When he did *The Sardine,* he had the school at his feet."

With a title that spoofed the nautical themes of Chadwick, *The Sardine* published a gossip column called Random Notes, modeled on Herb Caen's "three dot" column in the *Chronicle,* using ellipses to separate news items. In the second issue, Wenner wrote a snide taxonomy of "poseurs" who adopted the surfer look—as he had done the year before. The school's main disciplinarian, Ed Ellis, shut down *The Sardine* after three issues, claiming it undermined school spirit (among other things, Wenner attacked the school for banning white Levi's). Regarding Wenner as egotistical, Ellis also tried unsuccessfully to remove Wenner as editor of the yearbook, but Margaret Chadwick intervened again. When the yearbook, *The Dolphin,* arrived in the spring of 1963, it was a fully formed Jann Wenner production, a blueprint for everything he would aspire to. "I designed the yearbook, layout, variety of pages, length and all the things," he wrote to his grandmother. "There are dozens of new things, innovations, and changes, all my ideas except one. I designed the cover, and picked out the class symbol, which I like very

much, the whole think [*sic*] cost $6000, and we charged $6 per book, sold nearly 400 books, collected nearly 4500 in ads and patronage."

He also created a two-page spread to mock the faculty, featuring a photo of his friends posing as teachers and "reading books about how to get authority because they did not have any, with their cigarettes and their coffee cups."

On Wenner's personal page, he listed his accomplishments (skiing, sports statistician) and declared in his class quotation that "greatness knows itself"—a line spoken by Hotspur in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*.

In the back pages of the yearbook were irreverent photo montages that Wenner spent hours cutting and pasting together, including several images of shirtless boys horsing around in their dorm rooms. Wenner was keenly aware of his homosexual feelings, but he kept them concealed, not even telling the Beverly Hills therapist he was forced to see every week (his mother, perhaps attuned to Wenner's sexual confusion, complained that he was "manipulating" his therapist). Wenner said there were several teachers at Chadwick he believed were gay, including Bill Holland, the man who had dubbed Wenner "Nox." "He had a big friendship with a couple of cute guys in my dorm," he recalled. Another teacher took Wenner on a trip to Santa Barbara in a Corvette and put his hand on Wenner's knee, causing him to squirm. "I felt I was not being polite by moving over and getting away from him," he said.

Wenner clung to a girl he began dating his senior year, Susie Weigel, who was everything Wenner felt he should want: rich, blond, popular, Jewish, her father a federal judge in Northern California appointed by President Kennedy in 1962. Wenner impressed her with his literary interests—he co-edited a literary journal called *The Journey* with Andy Harmon—and gave her a John Donne love poem. But in other ways he treated her more like his acolyte than a girlfriend. Wenner returned her love letters with red grammatical corrections. Indeed, he tried editing her into an outline of his mother, noting she had the same initials as Sim Wenner and buying her replicas of his mother's clothes. Wenner was convinced he would marry Weigel once she graduated in 1964, a year after him. In Wenner's yearbook, Weigel wrote in floral cursive, "I love you very deeply, I honestly do. With all my love, forever and ever."

tion, especially with drugs. Warnecke introduced Wenner to another friend, the square-jawed Ned Topham, whose family were fixtures of San Francisco since the nineteenth century. The three became fast pals, Warnecke and Topham admiring Wenner's scampish energy and independent spirit. Greil Marcus, a friend of Barry Baron's who met Wenner at Berkeley, was impressed that a freshman had his own apartment, let alone a Mose Allison LP on the stereo. "[I] went into this place and it was a bohemian student apartment like I had never seen before," said Marcus. "I was also struck by the fact that the *San Francisco Chronicle* two-page spread of this year's debutantes was pinned to the wall. So I thought, 'Whoa, interesting crosscurrents at work here.'"

As he social climbed, Wenner dated and slept with a series of debutantes, a relentless suitor battering away at his quarry. "In Jann's case a refusal is almost always a guarantee that he will pursue relentlessly," a former girlfriend wrote in a remembrance from 1966. He treated women strictly as social conquests. One of Wenner's roommates, Ted Hayward, recounted to writer Robert Draper how Wenner slept with the daughter of a British diplomat and used the sheet from their tryst as a tablecloth for a dinner party the next night, strategically placing her plate over a stain and giggling during the meal.

Wenner denied the incident occurred, claiming Hayward was only bitter about another incident: While they sought a third roommate to pay the rent for their pad, Wenner accused Hayward of scaring off candidates with his gay affectations. "Ted, let me do the roommate thinking," Wenner told him. "Everybody thinks you're gay."

"He was so hurt," said Wenner. "He never spoke civilly to me again. He was very flamboyant in his gestures."

But the woman in question confirmed that Wenner used the sheet as a tablecloth, as did Wenner's friend Robbie Leeds, who married her. "I found it to be in poor taste," he said. "It was embarrassing. It was their intimacy, and he made a big thing about it."

That summer, NBC made Wenner a gofer for the anchors of the NBC broadcast of the Republican National Convention, fetching coffee and Salem cigarettes for Chet Huntley and David Brinkley. As Barry Goldwater accepted the nomination of the party, Wenner inhaled the rarefied air of the eastern establishment, the big three TV networks,

and the power brokers of party politics glad-handing in the hallways. His media credentials gave him a sense of privilege. "They are the rabble," he remembered saying to himself. "We are the pros."

The following month, Wenner drove to Newport Beach to see his father. Ed Wenner had started another branch of Baby Formulas Inc. in Anaheim, south of Los Angeles, this time partnered with Carnation. Jann Wenner went out with two boarding school friends to see a movie in Pasadena: *A Hard Day's Night,* the Richard Lester film depicting four long-haired lads running from ravenous female (and a few male) fans in a series of comic bits. In stylish black and white, the Beatles crashed through the screen, having more fun than anybody in human history. Ringo Starr parodied the media machine they were manipulating (Reporter: "Are you a mod or a rocker?" Ringo: "No, I'm a mocker"), and George narrowly escaped the clutches of a teen marketer who traded in "pimply hyperbole." There was Paul, the cute one, and John, the comic rebel, who was immediately Wenner's favorite.

Wenner had never been a die-hard music fan. His first record was a 45 of "Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Haley and the Comets. It didn't make a lasting impression. In high school, he was a fan of Paul Anka. "He is one of the two good singers that 'rock n' roll' has produced," Wenner wrote to his grandmother, "the other being Johnny Mathis, who I like a lot." Even the Mose Allison record was more fad than musical interest (everybody who met him in this period remembers him playing the same album). Jann Wenner missed the Beatles' iconic performance on *The Ed Sullivan Show,* but in *A Hard Day's Night* he saw young men who looked like himself, though infinitely more appealing. "They were young, fresh, and good-looking in that same sort of way Jack Kennedy was," he said. "These kids who are your age, who are so alive and upbeat and joyous and taking the piss out of everybody—man, that's how life should be."

His high school friend Susan Andrews, daughter of actor Dana Andrews (*The Best Years of Our Lives,* 1946), recalled driving to Los Angeles with Wenner in his VW Beetle, windows down and wind in their hair as Wenner shout-sang Beatles lyrics from the window. *Hey! You've got to hiiiide your love a-way . . .* Wenner was a committed mod, but he loved the rockers, too. Andrews's mother was confused when she

got a credit card receipt for a tank of gas that Wenner had evidently signed "Mick Jagger."

The arrival of the Beatles and the Stones dovetailed with larger forces at work at Berkeley, where youth activists were challenging institutional power for the first time. In October 1964, a former student set up a table of civil rights literature in front of Berkeley's administration building, protesting the school's ban on political activism on campus. Jack Weinberg, who coined the phrase "Don't trust anyone over 30," was arrested by university police, prompting Mario Savio, a campus activist, to scale a police car and give a series of impassioned speeches on the First Amendment rights of students, sparking a thirty-two-hour protest. The fight between the students and the administration was national news, and Wenner dove headlong into the mix, attending protests and racing his audio recordings back to NBC News in time for the evening broadcasts. He positioned himself as the inside man. The day Savio gave his most stirring speech in December 1964, imploring activist students to put their "bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus" of the "machine" of society, Wenner looked on from the steps as Joan Baez sang Bob Dylan's "With God on Our Side"—the first time he heard a Dylan song, he said. A few days later, Wenner would appear in AP photos chasing Savio up the stairs of the Greek Theatre, boyish in a trench coat, tape recorder strapped to his chest.

Wenner was electrified and proud when a right-wing newspaper, citing his membership in SLATE, called him a communist sympathizer. "I was ID'd as a red," he said. But his true convictions lay with the "apparatus" of NBC News. When the police beat and arrested protesters at a sit-in at the Sheraton-Palace Hotel—the site of the Cotillion balls—Wenner had run away "before the busts went down." Indeed, Wenner rarely failed to mention his NBC job at parties, pushing the outer limits of his role there. The head of NBC News in Los Angeles accused him of misrepresenting himself to the administration at Berkeley, issuing an angry memo reminding the staff that "Jann Wenner is not a correspondent. He is not a reporter. He is not a field producer. He is a campus stringer."

But Wenner had already managed to capitalize on his position by publishing a long account of the Free Speech Movement from the point

of view of a news stringer who sympathized with the students. He had briefly dated the daughter of Jack Vietor, heir to the Jell-O fortune, who published *San Francisco* magazine; Wenner convinced him to run his story about the protests. "He was the most ambitious person I've ever met," said Jane Kenner, whom Wenner dated that winter. "It was so clear, and he didn't care at all what kind of attention he got. He didn't care if it was negative or positive, as long as he got attention."

Wenner's love life was complicated by the arrival of a handsome young society man named James Pike Jr., son of the controversial Episcopalian bishop of California, James Albert Pike. A progressive civil rights advocate, Bishop Pike became famous for putting the images of Albert Einstein and John Glenn in stained glass in his Grace Cathedral in Nob Hill. The junior Pike attended the same deb balls as Wenner and also struggled with sexual confusion. Wenner said Pike was his first gay crush. For a time, they were constant pals, going on a road trip to Mexico to smuggle a kilo of marijuana back over the border in the car door, all the while tortured by their desires. "At that age, being gay wasn't an identity or an option," said Wenner. "The times that Jim and I came close to making that breakthrough, I don't think either of us knew there was a breakthrough to be made. We were running away from it, as much as we might have wanted it."

In a lightly fictionalized account of his life at Berkeley, Wenner would describe a character much like Pike getting an erection while the two wrestled in bed. Wenner was "afraid to tell him I love him," he wrote. "I wanted to make love to him." Their arrested romance did not go unobserved. Jane Kenner, who had also dated Pike, viewed Jann and Jim as rivals. "Very few people liked Jann," she wrote in 1966. "They envied him his job as campus reporter for NBC, and his aura of superiority was thought obnoxious. Jann and Jim each had several qualities that the other needed, and in turn they needed each other very much."

Friends whispered that Pike was impotent. Wenner had no such problem, but Kenner said "he received no pleasure from making love." Frightened by his own desires, Wenner insulted Pike at parties and paraded new girlfriends in front of him, as if to mock his sexual confusion. "It was about proving to himself that he was hetero," said Kenner. "He was trying to prove that to himself."

If his sexuality was unresolved, his ambition was not. Wenner published another story in *San Francisco* called "Marijuana, Who's Turned On?" Wenner tried pot for the first time in December 1964, around the time he bought *Beatles '65,* and fell over laughing at a jar of mustard in the refrigerator. He was an instant convert. "A close observer will tell you that 'nearly everyone is turning on,'" he wrote, sprinkling his story with anonymous stories from socialite friends at Berkeley and Stanford. "It is not unusual to come across madras-shirted students sitting beneath the house picture of a former U.S. president and 'blowing grass.' At least nine fraternities, including nearly all of the 'best houses,' have pledged 'potheads.'"

The story quoted the vice-principal of a local high school blaming the uptick in pot use on "too much money and too much freedom." Wenner, assuming an authority beyond his years, advised "a realistic and sensible approach" to legalization. (He edited out a concluding joke from the early draft: "Potheads, arise!") The story landed like a stink bomb among the matrons of Pacific Heights. Frances Moffat, society columnist at the *Chronicle,* accused Wenner of using the story to social climb. "The more serious article by Jann would have been improved if he hadn't been so busy making a point of his connections," she wrote. "In this case, his social connections, not the 'connection' of the marijuana user." ("I'm sure I was social climbing," said Wenner, "but not through that article.")

In the same story, Wenner cited a news item about a drug bust at Berkeley in February 1965. Five students were charged with possession of LSD. The ringleader, who was exonerated, would go on to become a drug-world legend: Augustus Owsley Stanley III, the Berkeley chemist whose powerful underground formulas blew the minds of every major figure in the brewing counterculture, including the Grateful Dead. As it turned out, Jann Wenner was among those trying to buy LSD from Owsley when the bust went down. He lost $125 and failed to try LSD. But not for long.

(Margaret Chadwick congratulated Wenner on the yearbook but also advised, "Stop and think first my impulsive friend.")

When Wenner and Weigel returned to San Francisco for the summer, Weigel served as Wenner's entrée to the small and provincial Bay Area society set, children of local industry and politics who mingled at lavish debutante balls. Wenner was enchanted by the Cotillion, the seasonal rite of house parties hosted by parents of young women and culminating in a grand ballroom party at the Sheraton-Palace Hotel in the winter. The swanning of the elite was closely monitored in the social pages of the *Chronicle,* complete with photo spreads and boldfaced captions, and Wenner read it religiously. "The wealth was on display, the booze, the big settings, young kids in black ties," said Wenner. "I was just dazzled by it."

Wenner was a quick study, absorbing the backgrounds of the local gentry. There was Ned Topham from the Spreckels sugar fortune; James Pike Jr., son of the famous Episcopalian bishop and civil rights spokesman; John Warnecke, son of John Carl Warnecke, the architect of the Kennedy memorial. A few, like Richard Black, whose father worked for the California energy company PG&E, traveled in the same social orbit as the Hearst family, and Black's stories of visiting the Hearst ranch in San Simeon were potent fuel for Wenner's imagination.

Meanwhile, Sim Wenner was living in Potrero Hill, at the time a largely black and industrial neighborhood that was becoming a bohemian enclave. After selling her share of the Baby Formulas business, she was socializing with a literary set at Berkeley, including beat writer Herbert Gold and artist and bullfighter Barnaby Conrad, and dating the Wenner family doctor, Sandor Burstein. Susie Weigel was fascinated by the unconventional divorcée but appalled by her lack of warmth for Jann. "She had three children and one bedroom," said Weigel, later Susan Pasternak. "I was so upset for Jann because there was no place for the kids. And Jann wasn't wanted by either [parent]."

Weigel, who went on to become a Manhattan psychoanalyst, had a simple, powerful theory of her boyfriend's psychology. "It was all about Sim Wenner," she said. "There was no room for anybody else except her. I think Jann internalized that. The only way he was going to have room for himself was to create himself."

Through an acquaintance of Sim's, Wenner was offered a job that summer as a traffic reporter at KNBR, the NBC affiliate, which required him to show up at 6:00 a.m. He didn't like the hours so instead took a job as a day laborer on a construction site. He quit after a week—"I didn't have the clothes for it," he said—and accepted the NBC job. He fetched coffee, memorized the traffic jargon, and dubbed himself the Traffic Eagle around the bureau. Wenner spent his free time at the Weigel family's retreat in Mill Valley, feeling at home with a Jewish family who had an "air of normalcy," he said. Wenner impressed Weigel's father, who told his daughter he believed Wenner would be famous, while Wenner labored to lose his virginity during secret make-out sessions with Susie in her bedroom. Weigel showed Wenner off to her friends, the brash young man with the oddly Swedish name and dashing grin who bragged a lot. They recognized the charm but also the grasping edge of his ambition. "When you're on the inside where we were," said Richard Black, "you can see faces pressed to the windows, and Jann was really determined."

Wenner opened a charge account at Brooks Brothers and had the pockets monogrammed on his button-down shirts, adopting the old-money look of William F. Buckley. That summer, Wenner bought a 1954 Jaguar XK120 for $120, hoping to fix it up himself and ferry his new friends around. When Weigel took him to pick it up, Wenner revved the engine and peeled off, leaving Weigel to frantically chase after him in her parents' car. "He drove so fast," she said. "So crazily fast. I was furious with him. It was so show-offy and made me so mad." After that, Judge Weigel forbade her to drive with Wenner.

The couple fought constantly. "He would annoy me to death," said Weigel. Wenner enjoyed access to her family compound until her father discovered them making out to a Johnny Mathis record.

In the fall of 1963, Wenner started classes at Berkeley, majoring in English literature with a minor in political science. A public school with twenty-six thousand students, Berkeley was a university at a crossroads. It was still an institution rooted in the 1950s, a factory producing graduates to plug into Eisenhower-era American capitalism. But a revolution was coming. In 1964, beatniks and Marxists were conspiring in local cafés to the sounds of Joan Baez and Bob Dylan while absorbing the lit-

erature of dissent from left-wing intellectuals like Eugene Burdick and Herbert Marcuse and North Beach cult heroes like Jack Kerouac and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Wenner joined a student advocacy group called SLATE, run by two earnest young lefties named Phil and Joan Roos, who assigned Wenner to help edit student questionnaires for a tip sheet that rated professors called the *Slate Supplement to the General Catalog.* He took the most savage feedback from students and fashioned it into cheeky reviews tarring especially authoritarian professors. He remained an indifferent student—"it KEEPS ME OUT OF THE ARMY," he told his grandmother—but he manicured his social life with great care, throwing parties for debutante girls and getting himself invited to the Sugar Bowl, a resort near the Nevada border that was a premier skiing destination for wealthy families. Joan Roos became Wenner's surrogate mother, and he regularly showed up at her house for dinner and his favorite television program, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* Wenner became the associate editor of the *Slate Supplement* and bragged to the Rooses that he would one day be the head of NBC.

Despite the far-left politics of SLATE, Wenner remained a stalwart establishmentarian. This was made clear the day President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, November 22, 1963, news of which Wenner heard over loudspeakers coming from the student union at Berkeley. "This strange cry of agony went around, as if people were in pain and bodies being tortured," he wrote of the moment. "I kind of slumped and bowed my head and cried." When Barry Baron, a society friend Wenner met through Susie Weigel, showed up at Wenner's apartment that evening, Wenner was conducting a private vigil, sitting cross-legged before two big candles, with tears in his eyes. "He took himself extremely seriously," said Baron.

Unlike Wenner, the SLATE crowd saw Kennedy as part of an imperialist conspiracy with ties to corrupt power. "The SLATE people were probably right, and had I been smarter, I would have agreed with them," said Wenner. But Kennedy's death, Wenner later said, was also the pivotal event that made the nascent counterculture possible.

"It all wouldn't have happened if Kennedy hadn't got killed," he told the British underground magazine *Oz* in 1969. "Everybody was still digging what was going on in that other scene. Kennedy made politics &

the whole thing very relevant because he was young, he was attractive, he was just plain beautiful you know & not ugly."

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WENNER, like many young men, was focused on losing his virginity, though his reasons were more complex than some. He was troubled by his homosexual urges and thought that once he'd crossed that border, he'd be on the right path. When Susie Weigel came home for the holidays, she refused him sex. So Wenner pursued Weigel's best friend, whom he considered the most "in" of the society crowd. Over the holidays, Weigel's friend relieved Wenner of his outsider status. "I love you for what you have done for me," he told her in a letter. "I hope you feel the same way."

She didn't. After a weekend fending him off at the Sugar Bowl, she confessed the affair to Weigel, who was appalled and broke up with Wenner (and immediately took up with his best friend from Chadwick, Andy Harmon). Later, she saw Wenner crashing a deb party and was thoroughly disgusted. "I thought he was gross," she said. "It was so obnoxious. I actually wanted nothing to do with him."

In his journals, Wenner admonished himself for pursuing Weigel's friend, wondering what motivated him. "Is it her herself I want or is it what she represents?" he wrote. "There is something special, I can't grasp it, about the SF society which I want."

Weigel, he wrote, had offered the "normalcy" he craved, a normalcy that resolved the homosexual feelings that had plagued him "for the past five years." "Years of misery in which for all my time of happiness and joy were years of discontent," he said. "I met people at Sugar Bowl, SF socialites, who I wanted so much to be. I wanted security . . . so bad. Perhaps that is why I cling to Susie so much.

"In those weeks since this Sugar Bowl experience," he continued, "I have dropped more and more of my homosexuality which was never dominant but always present. I come more and more to what is called normal. But not completely. I don't know why."

At Sugar Bowl, Wenner also met a striking society boy named John Warnecke. He had all the qualities Wenner desired in friends: dashing good looks and a sterling pedigree, plus an appetite for experimenta-

a school dance. "Are the movie stars' kids the big shots in school?" she asked. "You sound impressed by them."

He was—*very*. He later claimed Minnelli was his first girlfriend at Chadwick and that they held hands for a week. "I would go home with friends on the weekends, and that was always great, to stay at someone's fabulous house in Beverly Hills," recalled Wenner. "It was the first time I saw these extremely big, extravagant houses. I stayed at Dean Martin's house; I was friends with the Martin girls."

Chadwick was accepting in a way his own home wasn't. He said being surrounded by wealth, and by Jews, made him feel more at ease. "I felt at home at last," he said. "They became my family."

With Wenner, there was a lot to accept. Bristling with insecurity, he regularly insulted the other students and teachers and gained a reputation as a prickly braggart. "He can be, and frequently is, extremely cruel to his classmates," reported one teacher, "and his actions show an alarming lack of integrity." His English instructor, Bill Holland, dubbed him Nox, for obnoxious, and the nickname stuck. "The obnoxiousness was very interesting," said Wenner's friend Bill Belding. "I originally attributed it to his being short, but looking back, it was his way of getting attention."

Wenner was advised by school counselors to tamp down his attacks. "I was not Mr. Popular at that point," said Wenner. "I didn't become popular until the tenth grade when I decided to work on it."

Wenner abused his teachers with impunity, starting with the adult head of his dormitory, a disciplinarian named John Simon. "Jann wanted to walk around barefooted; [Simon] wanted him to wear shoes," said Dorothy Wenner, the woman Ed Wenner would eventually marry in the 1960s. "He refused. They had a battle going on all the time. Every time the phone rang, I was nervous. He was always in trouble."

Once, Wenner cleaned his room to inspection standards but then hung closet hangers from the ceiling, claiming it was a piece of art inspired by the school's own philosophy of "self-expression." "It looked like a messy pile of shit in the middle of the room," recalled Andy Harmon, son of Sidney Harmon, who produced the 1958 film *God's Little Acre*. "And [Simon] got so angry, because everything was neat—the beds were made, we dusted, it was just 'self-expression.' Jann was going,

'I'm going to fuck you so bad that you aren't going to be able to retaliate.' And that was the way his mind worked." (For another infraction, Simon barred Wenner from going on the annual school ski trip, a stinging rebuke because Wenner considered himself the best skier in the school.)

But as people got to know him, they found Wenner strangely sophisticated for his age. Every morning he would open his box of Raisin Bran and count the number of raisins in the bowl, declaring the economy good or bad. "It was a revelation at that age, when I started school there, that one of my contemporaries could be that erudite and fascinating," said Terryl Stacy, formerly Kirschke, who went to school with Wenner and later to Berkeley.

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IN 1961, Sim Wenner published a dime-store novel called *Daisy* about a group of swingers ("The Club") who lived in a Northern California suburb. "But one Saturday night they ran out of kicks—so someone jumped in the pool . . . with no clothes on," went the copy on the back flap. "From then on things were different."

The book was a thinly veiled roman à clef. The protagonist, Daisy, was the fill-in for Wenner's mother. Philip, the character who stands in for his father, "worked long days and played long nights, and if another woman was more sympathetic than his wife, well, he just wanted someone to talk to." Jann Wenner didn't have to scratch very hard to see beneath the surface: Here were the neighborhood families from San Rafael, with whom the Wenners had evidently been having affairs, if the book was to be believed. In one scene, Daisy gets pregnant and tries to have an illegal abortion, a procedure she recounts in excruciating detail:

> Soon she could feel the scraping inside of her and then chopping and she thought, Oh, my God, he's cutting it up. He's cutting up my baby! . . .

When Daisy starts bleeding profusely and is rushed to the hospital, the hapless husband believes she's miscarried his baby, not someone