

Signs of the Times

Photographer Peter Simon documents his generation in *I and Eye*



At a 1969 draft resistance demonstration on the Boston Common, a peacenik finds another use for his sign after being confronted by the notorious self-proclaimed "Polish Freedom Fighter" Jozef Mlot-Mroz.

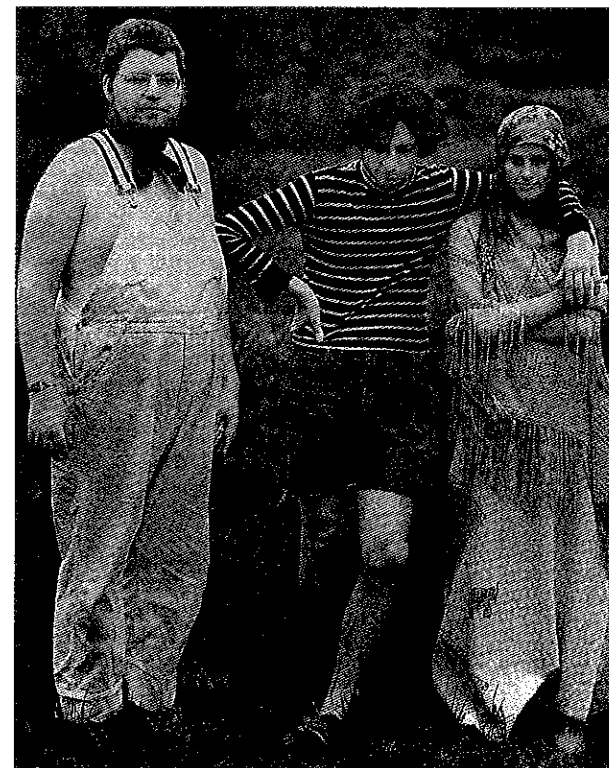
BY NATALIE JACOBSON McCracken

WITH THE REST OF THEIR GENERATION, Peter Simon and his BU classmates listened, "maniacally," he says, to the Stones and the Beatles, demonstrated against the Vietnam War, and traveled en masse to Washington to levitate the Pentagon. They held

love-ins and smoke-ins at the Public Garden, burned draft cards at the Arlington Street Church, and reveled in the antiestablishment *BU News*. After graduation, Simon (*COM*'70) and friends founded Tree Frog Farm, inspired by neighboring Vermont back-to-the-land communes, but with some differences, among them indoor plumbing and color



Students prepare to strike in protest of the Kent State shootings, 1970.

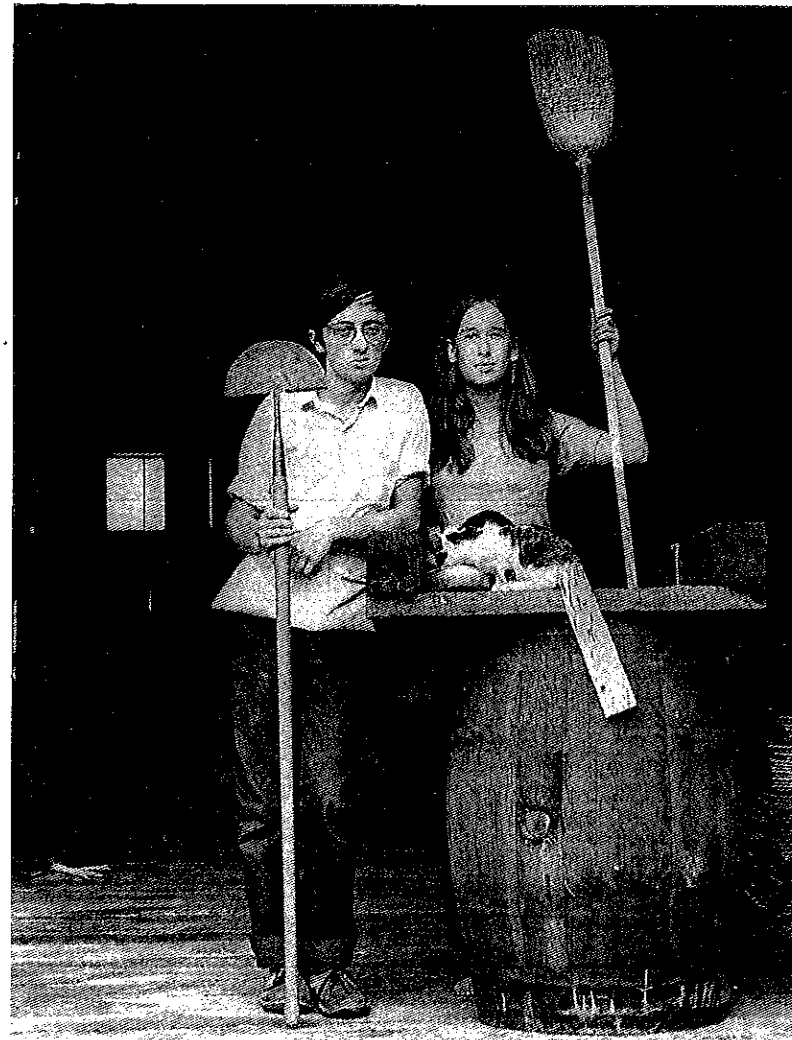


The late Doug Parker (*SFA*'66), Bostonia's longtime designer, Stephen Davis (*CAS*'69), and Judy Arons (*CAS*'69) at the Tree Frog Farm commune in 1970.

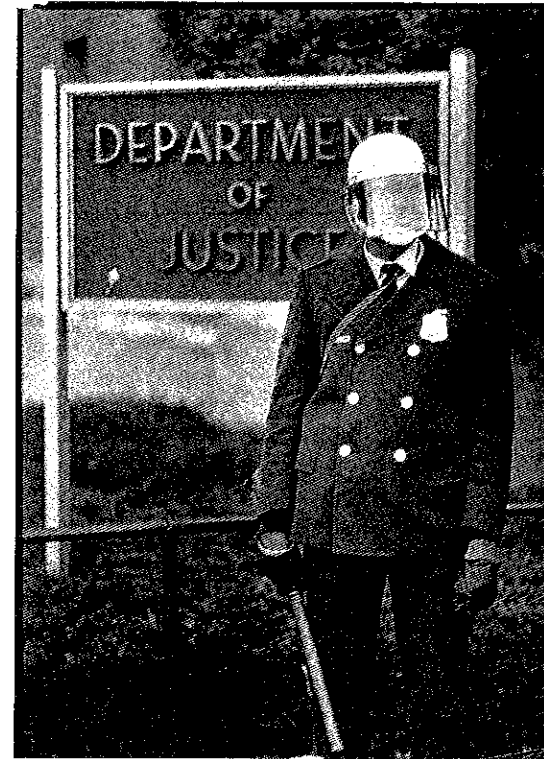
television. For two years, until the realities of farming and communal living took over, he lived joyously free of conventional obligations, "Ed Sullivan middle-Americana," and clothing — with breaks in the city to fulfill freelance photography assignments for album covers and magazines, visit his bemused and loving mother, pitch a book idea, or cheer for the Mets.

He was born to that openly double life. Son of Simon and Schuster cofounder Richard Simon and younger brother to exuberantly creative Joanna, Lucy, and Carly, his affluent childhood included famous family friends, spontaneous sing-alongs day and night, and early darkroom lessons from his father, a leader in the growth of amateur photography (today photographers search out-of-the-way antique stores for copies of his 1937 *Miniature Photography, from One Amateur to Another*).

All that — combined with immense talent — was the basis of a precocious career. His first work for *Popular Photography* was publicized by an appearance on television's *To Tell the Truth*: he was the real fourteen-year-old professional photographer. By the time he was at BU, press credentials were giving him access to the musical obsessions of his generation: Jim Morrison, Mick Jagger, Cat Stevens,



Raymond Mungo (CAS'67) and Ellen Weiss update American Gothic. The photo appeared on the cover of Mungo's 1973 memoir *Famous Long Ago*.



Washington, D.C., November 1969.



The Grateful Dead pay a visit to the Psychedelic Supermarket, a little club near Kenmore Square, in 1969.

the Grateful Dead, the Jefferson Airplane.

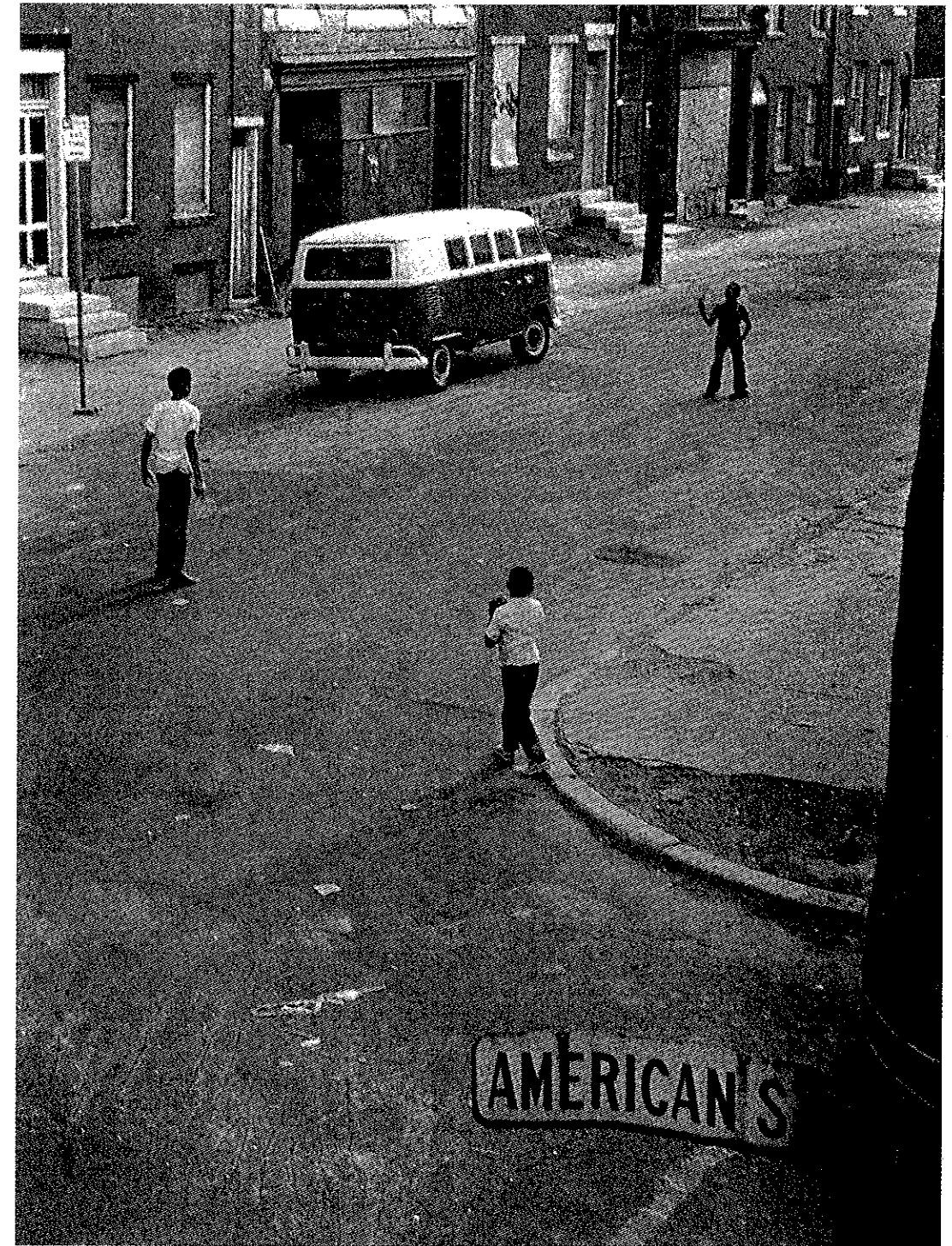
In his most recent book, *I and Eye: Pictures of My Generation* (Bulfinch, 2001), he chronicles it all in text and photographs: childhood, his years at BU and on the farm and concurrent scenes in Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C., his search for spiritual enlightenment leading to Ram Dass (who while still Richard Alpert had been fired from Harvard along with Timothy Leary for sharing LSD with students), big league baseball, Martha's Vineyard — the life of his generation, the mainstream as well as the counterculture.

Coda: Simon didn't make it to Woodstock; that summer he had fled the Boston scene as far as Martha's Vineyard and a ferry breakdown stranded him there. He was living on the Vineyard again thirty years later when his thirteen-year-old son persuaded him they should attend Woodstock '99. There he photographed "middle-aged post-hippie holdouts," mostly "burned out and slightly degenerate," and

their successors, mimicking late-sixties dress or lack of it, affluent "rebels without much of a cause, out only for a good time." The chaos, the nudity, the mountains of trash, the music seemed at best meaningless and, well, "yucky." Back home, he mused on how the times had changed. Still, he concluded,

"I sincerely feel my generation is leaving our world in a better place." ♦

Photographs from *I and Eye* will be on display in the GSU Gallery from September 21 to October 14. See "Calendar of Events," page 5.



An American Street scene: Philadelphia.