

Washington Matters:

Connecting Activism and the Nation's Capital

Bill Goodfellow's sounding board is Pennsylvania. When speaking of Pennsylvania, he brings up political commentator and pundit James Carville. "You know what Carville said about Pennsylvania, don't you?" he says. "There's Philadelphia on one end, Pittsburgh on the other, and then in between you have Alabama."

Bill grew up in the Alabama part— BY ALLISON KRUISE (MFAW) graduating from Mercersburg Academy, rural Chester County to be exact, where he made his way to Boston University to "the most exotic people we met were Catholics." But this place is where he goes to find "grounded" people. It's the place where he learned that if you don't understand the people outside of Washington, D.C., you're wasting your time.

A lifetime anti-war activist and an experienced analyst of U.S. aid policies, Bill is the executive director of the Center for International Policy (CIP), which he co-founded in 1975, three years after he finished studying in the Southeast Asian studies program at the Goddard-Cambridge Graduate School for Social Change (CGCS).

"I'm doing what Goddard wants me to do," he says. "I got to D.C. in the early '70s and started doing what I was trained to do."

The CIP is a progressive research and advocacy organization whose effect on Washington rests mainly with its allies in the legislative branch. "We work in partnership with our allies and try to enlist the support of interest groups and activist organizations to bring other members of Congress around to our point of view," Bill says.

The CIP has several programs that try to change unjust international policies. For instance, its Cuba program focuses on ending the 44-year U.S. economic embargo of Cuba and the ban on Americans traveling to Cuba.

The journey to making "change in Washington" his life's work started when he was an adolescent. Bill, whose parents and the majority of his family are Republicans, found intellectual solace with his Aunt Charlotte. She was a professor at Wellesley College for 32 years and a very progressive liberal.

"She was the only liberal on my father's side—a Kennedy-type liberal," Bill says. "She was an amazing woman." Each year, he spent a month with his aunt, traveling in the United States and abroad and being exposed to political and societal ideals lacking at home in Chester County.

Taking what he could from his aunt's tutelage and after

study political science. The switch from an Alabama-like town in Pennsylvania to the BU campus, "the hot bed of radical liberalism," was a change Bill says he was more than ready for. He attended during the height of the anti-Vietnam War movement, a time period he considers a cultural revolution.

"There was a tremendous energy and all sorts of political activity. There was at least a demonstration a month in Boston," he says. "I was never a real insider, but I was always in the middle of things."

His main duty was to organize people. He jokingly points out that he was given "special status" as an activist

due to his family's comfortable financial situation. During and after his time at the university, Bill traveled to conferences in Canada and Europe to meet with representatives from the Vietnamese government. At the conferences, he also came in contact with Jane Fonda, Tom Hayden and Fred Branfman, who were all top American anti-war activists at the time.

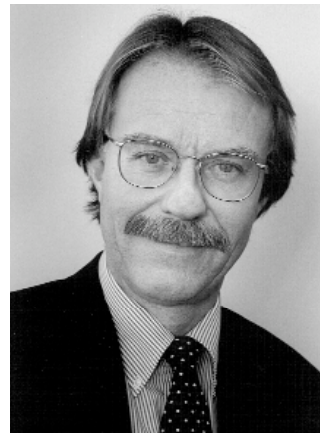


Photo: Nick Reinhard

Bill Goodfellow (G-C '77)

objectives were," he says. "They saw us as occupiers and invaders, while Americans were told we were liberators."

He started the groundwork for his career while attending BU, working part-time as a bartender, becoming a pro at charming customers, honing the skills of a sharp salesman and collecting excellent tips. "I like to think this was the real beginning of my fundraising training."

He also studied with Howard Zinn, the author of *A People's History of the United States*. Zinn, a leader in anti-war activism, became Bill's mentor early on. "He is the most charismatic teacher we had. He was at the center of everything," Bill says. "He wants people to be skeptical. He taught us that those in power write history, own newspapers and dictate the narrative of our lives."

Zinn was also the one who steered Bill to Goddard, saying, "Even revolutionaries need graduate degrees." Zinn recalls the situation with a bit more detail, saying he nudged Bill toward Goddard's Cambridge gates because he

"Meeting with the Vietnamese helped me gain a better sense of who the 'enemy' was and what their objectives were. They saw us as occupiers and invaders, while Americans were told we were liberators."

thought it would give him the breathing room and the thinking room he needed. "It would encourage him to take the initiative in organizing his own education," Zinn says, "and he would encounter teachers and students who were on his political wavelength and make him part of a community where he would feel comfortable."

At first Bill was a bit skeptical about going to graduate school, wanting to get out and get involved instead. "I didn't want to be an academic. I wanted to be an activist." Zinn introduced him to Dr. Cynthia Frederick, his future professor at Goddard and, at one time, the director of the school. She and her expertise are Bill's fondest memories of his time at Goddard. "She was so disciplined and smart and stern. She brought academic rigor into the program," he says.

Ultimately, going to Goddard was serendipitous for him. He and just two other students worked with Frederick in the Southeast Asian studies program. He says that it wasn't the subject matter at Goddard that has stuck with him but the methodology and Frederick's unique abilities.

After completing his studies at Goddard, he took the analytical and organizational skills he learned into a world that needed social change. He took these things with him to Washington, D.C., when he attended a Nixon counter-inaugural rally and was offered a job: Fred Branfman asked Bill to come work at the Indochina Resource Center (IRC). After a trip to Boston to collect his old VW bus, he headed back to D.C. to become a researcher and fundraiser at the IRC.

"We saw ourselves as a bridge between the activism-academic world and the policy world-Washington, D.C.," he explains. "We understood that Washington matters."

In December 1974, he took his analytical skills to Southeast Asia and spent six months in Vietnam and Cambodia, researching and writing papers opposing the

continuation of American funding of the war. "When I went over there, I didn't know the end was so near."

He calls his final months in Cambodia "the most intense two months of my life." He became the IRC's "Cambodia expert" when he moved into a once-ritzy, non-air-conditioned, electricity-less hotel. Although he first chose to take a penthouse suite on the top floor, he quickly decided to move closer to the ground when another patron told him of the rockets that crashed through the top floors of buildings.

"You didn't have to go far to watch a battle," he says. "I never experienced death until I was there. I saw so much

blood and gore." He came closer to death than he would have liked when a command post he visited came under attack. He remembers diving behind palm logs that were more like caves and mortars blowing up dust and dirt mere feet from him. "It was a very dicey hour or two."

Bill came back to the United States in May 1975 due to the evacuations of Americans, but also because he was "an anti-war activist without a war." When he arrived back in Washington, the IRC closed down, and Bill and three other people opened up the Center for International Policy.

It is here that he continues to advance the need for social change—the same thing Goddard promoted with the help of Cynthia Frederick.

Taking his education and his experience, along with the help of others, Bill kept with the cause to try and make sure history did not repeat itself. "We opened up the CIP in order to keep lessons of the war alive," he said. "We wanted to bring activists together to develop relationships with key senators and congress members in Washington."

He has lived in the nation's capital ever since. He lives there now with his two children and wife, Dana Priest, a *Washington Post* reporter who won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for beat reporting.

As the executive director and the only co-founder still with the center, Bill is in charge of keeping alive a \$3 million budget by fundraising and writing proposals to foundations, organizations and individual donors. Jokingly, he humbles his job duties by saying that he just "writes letters to rich liberals."

In all seriousness, he takes prides in his life's work. He says he remains committed to the CIP's mission of promoting a U.S. foreign policy based on international cooperation, demilitarization and respect for basic human rights. ■