

The Frank Modesto Interview

Written by Administrator



Members of the PPPM. Frank Modesto is on the far right. Frank Modesto, between 1969 and 1976, was the official spokesman of the Progressive People's Peace Movement. The Progressive People's Peace Movement was started on the college campus of San Francisco State University and wielded a great social impact on the San Francisco Bay Area. In December 1976 he disappeared. There have been stories about a move to Columbia, there were stories of assassination and it was even suggested he had jumped off of the Bay Bridge. Except for public figures, all names have been changed. Obviously, we can not use a current photo of him. References to recent locations have been omitted. This is the first in a series of transcript interviews. The interviewer has asked to remain anonymous. Because of security issues, this interview is being delivered in 5 parts. I am expecting the next part to come in sometime next week.

CPP: Hi, thanks for talking with us.

Frank Modesto: No problem, thanks for listening.

CPP: Okay we are going to start with the obvious question. Where the hell have you been for the last 30 years and why have you chosen this time to finally let people now you are alive?

Frank Modesto: That's two questions....

CPP: Yes.

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Frank Modesto: (pause) You know, I'm little nervous about talking about my present, I would prefer we start with my past until I get to know you a little better.

CPP: Fair enough. My next question, why did you pick a fledgling website like Crackpotpress.com to give your story to?

Frank Modesto: I have my reasons.

CPP: Okay, we aren't off to a great start.

Frank Modesto: Can you turn of your tape recorder for a moment? I want say something off the record.

(Tape Stops and starts again.)

Both men are laughing and coughing.

CPP: Okay I am here with former 70's Radical Activist, Frank Modesto. So, how did you get you start in political activism?

Frank Modesto: I was going to San Francisco State in 1968. I was 18 years old. A lot of people were really angry about lot of things. Sure, I was against the war and I sure as hell wasn't gonna let myself get drafted but it wasn't the bane of my existence. Civil rights? I watched the March on Washington on TV, (I had to work that weekend) I mourned the loss of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy. I wasn't at Woodstock.

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But you know what introduced me to the movement and kept me coming back? It's was the chicks, the broads, the babes.

Debbie Ellison (fictional name). Wow. What a looker 19 or 20 fresh freckled face straight outta (omitted), California. She was a dance major, the newest addition to the curriculum at SF State. We met in February 1968 and dated for about six months or so. She took me to sit ins, drop outs, rallies and just some good all "be-ins" in Golden Gate park. Everything was just totally alive with color; sage-smudged, head-humping drum beats, and man, could Debbie dance. I actually saw her at a Starbucks in (omitted) with her grandkid last Christmas. I was incognito and am pretty much unrecognizable from my youth. I slid into a chair within eavesdropping distance. To hear those kids call that woman Grammy, now that was trippy. She took a call on her cell, from what I could make out she was some kind of pilates instructor. She looked fantastic.

This first thing I thought about was the blowjob near the lake at Park Merced. I mean I thought of other things too, but that just happened to be the first thing that came to mind. It was just as the sun was melting and weeping into the water, one of those few days you can actually see the Sunset in the Sunset District. We were both living at our folks house at the time so sex in public (I count cars as "in public") was pretty much our thing.

CPP: So why didn't stick with her?

FRANK MODESTO: You wanna know what broke us up?

The fucking free love movement. Girls were naked and putting out everywhere. My god, I must have gone to 15 Bra Burnings one month. "That's right sister! You are oppressed! Take off that shirt and bra and burn it! BURN IT ALL, here's my zippo." It was brilliant. I even spoke at one to show my support and rally the base. You could satiate you most inner male urgings and the chicks CREAMED over your support. I went home that night and threw away the Communist Manifesto Debbie had given to me. The required reading list from this gal was long and heavy. Also, after all that was going on.... I knew this stuff wasn't happening in Russia and couldn't happen in Russia. So fuck that.

There is no way you expect an 18 year old man to stay monogamous under these

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circumstances. Hell, half of the city drenched in sex, drugs and good old fashioned craziness. There was a new protest every week and people just got together and hung out. Half the time, I didn't even know what we were protesting.

The word spread about what was going on and new people arriving every day and they all wanted to be a part of the experiment. Debbie and I started cheating on each other about the same time. It wasn't an "I hate you" kind of break up. We both knew that it had just run its course. And there was a whole wide world to hump out there. We both just wanted to be a part of it. There was some awkwardness when we ran into each other every now and then. That seems so, so, just dumb now.

We both settled down after a while.

It was nice seeing her at Starbucks though. Maybe I will take one of her classes.

CPP: Okay, so this was the beginning of your activism ? To meet women? So what was the turning point?

FRANK MODESTO: I was giving a speech at another Bra Burning, those were my stock and trade, this one was in Oakland. You know what they say "A guy claiming to be feminist is just trying to get laid." And that wasn't so far from the truth. Anyways some cop comes over out of somewhere and beats the crap out me. I look down at my beard and it 's full of blood... and all this snot came out of my nose. That's the part that no one admits. When you get hit hard in the back of the head, snot flies out of your nose. Then it mixes with the blood spitting out of you too. It's very unmanly.

So I get my ass kicked at a Bra Burning, and when I wake up I am in the Emmerlyville holding pen, with REAL criminals. There was this drunk Mexican grabbing on to my shirttails trying to keep his balance over the commode, let's face it no one wants to sit on the john in the holding pen. This man was my only ally. He kept saying stuff I didn't understand.. and I told him "No Hablo Espanol," and he says "I'm speekin englishhhhhh mutherfucker!" And that's how ya make lifelong friends.

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CPP: I am assuming that this Jesse Ramirez, co-founder of the Progressive People's Peace Movement?

FRANKMODESTO: Yes, he had gotten a DWI and was drunk as hell. He never took a drink again after that day.

CPP: But wasn't he killed in a Drunk Driving accident in 1975? He had some insanely high blood alcohol level.

FRANK MODESTO: Yeah, believe what you want to.

CPP: So how did the Progressive People's Peace Movement begin?

FRANK MODESTO: Don't jump ahead, this is MY story.

CPP: Sorry, I am just trying to...

FRANK MODESTO: I get it, you need to make a deadline.

CPP: Well, yeah.

FRANK MODESTO: Well tell your editor this isn't some one night stand. This is gonna take some time. Let's take a break. I want a burrito.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

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