

"How can you do this?" she asked, her voice soft but ringing in my ears as loudly as the shots beyond the fence. "They're just little birds, they're just birds." While we were bellowing our frustrations, she was pleading, words as small and vulnerable as the birds themselves, lost within the sweeping hostility of both sides. "Why?" she asked, "You must know this is wrong, they're just birds."

I lost her sound as we headed down to the fence that kept "us" from "them." When I reached the bottom of the field that abutted the shooting zone, I looked out beyond at the trees and my mind cleared. Until then, it had only been shouting and distant gunshots that sounded no more threatening than a child's toy caps banged



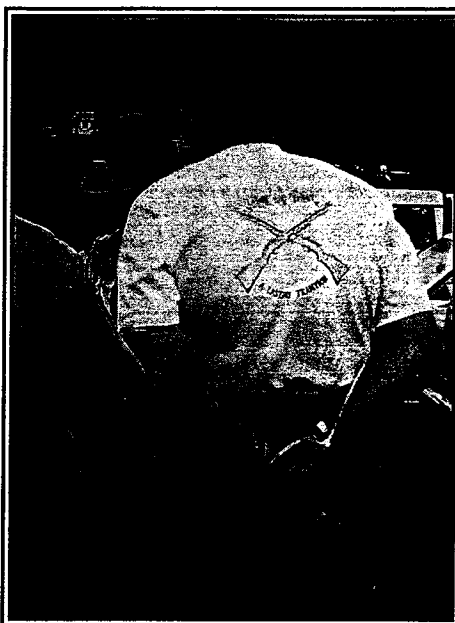
Florence Kelly Photos

changed forever.

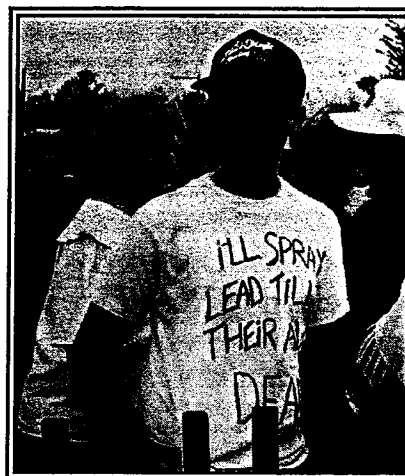
I cannot describe the horror of a pigeon that has been shot, but is still alive. I couldn't look at them and apologize, as I had to the little girl who was even now among the ranks of those who cheered at this apocalyptic vision of suffering. All the symbols of peace were torn aside, replaced by a slash of blood against white feathers.

For the rest of the day I watched protesters practice civil disobedience, and I cheered with every flash of another body running onto the fields to the pigeon cages. I saw one of my friends run out and

open a cage before state troopers descended upon her. For an instant, before she was captured, she looked up to watch the birds go; both human and pigeon for a moment, free.



This man was found with a gun stashed in his ankle.



the whole line who looked at me as if she might understand, who would be willing to listen. What language was she learning now?

The bus left Hegins, left Pennsylvania, brought me home. But still, even from that distance, and all the next day, I could hear the gunshots. ■

The shoot supporters booed at us, raised their beer cans (the first of which had appeared at 8:30, with no sign of let-up) at a heckler's sign, "Save a Pigeon—shoot a Protester," which we, understandably, just didn't get. But the oafish blond man holding the sign wouldn't give specifics regarding his slogan choice when questioned.

At the end, when we had to take the bus back up across the dark highways, I looked across the field to the crowd inside the fences. How could I be the same species? How could we share blood, teeth, hair? They spoke a language I didn't recognize, that brutality and human enjoyment of animal suffering. I thought of the little girl with the big brown eyes, the only person in