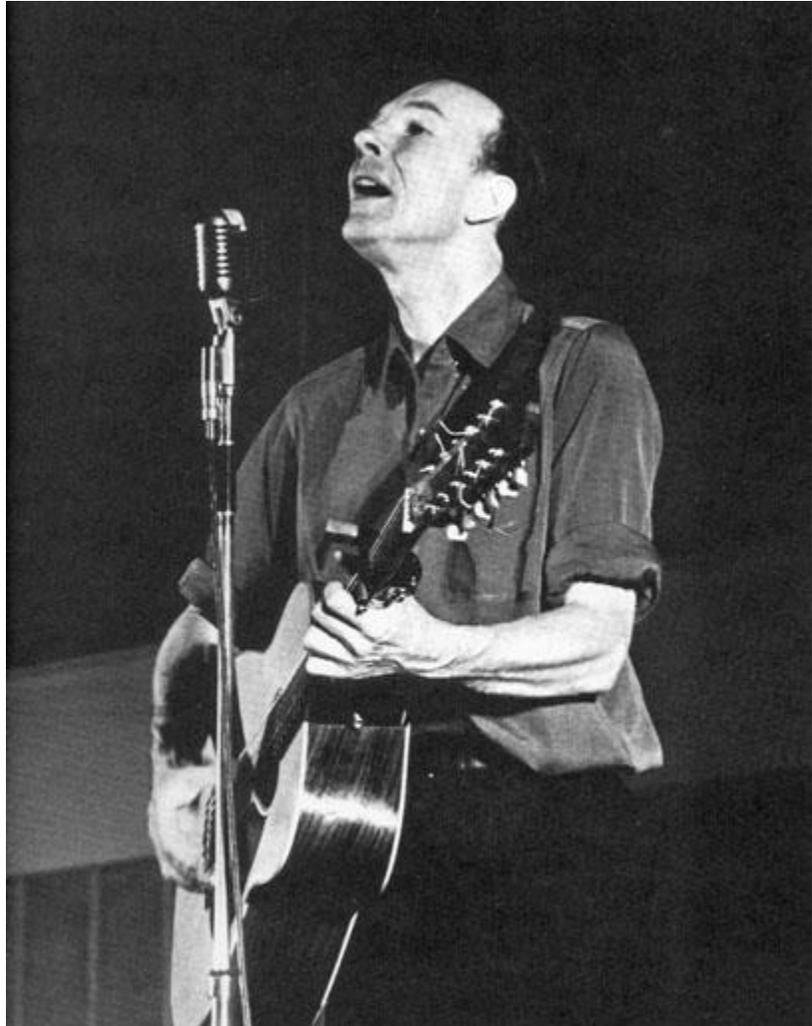


The Way We Were: In 1966 a Mob Tried to Stop a Peaceful Protest

Thursday, April 12, 2012

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On April 21, 1966, a mob of 2,000 students tried to stop 20 members of the New England chapter of the Committee for Non-Violent Action from holding a half-hour silent vigil in front of the Memorial Union Building to "mourn those dying in the present war." (A student poll showed 26 percent against U.S. Vietnam policies.) As the pacifists approached the MUB, the crowd of students swarmed down on them, blocking the way and throwing eggs. The next day, a group of students and faculty and staff members circulated a resolution condemning the mob action, collecting 700 signatures. A Joint University Committee was formed, and as a result the pacifist group was invited back to campus.



PETE SEEGER 1966

One of the signers of the petition was folk singer Pete Seeger, who had coincidentally been scheduled to perform at Snively Arena on the 22nd as part of the university's centennial program. Seeger said he signed the petition because "If you're going to protest, there are ways to do it. I don't like to see eggs thrown at anyone." Known for his ability to coax his audiences to sing along with him, Seeger led the audience of 1520 people in more than half the songs, many of which expressed anti-war sentiments. In the current issue of Smithsonian Magazine, the legendary folk singer, now 92, says that performing college concerts "is probably the most important job I ever did in my life."

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The stories are written by the staff of [UNH Communications and Public Affairs](#).
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