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A Shared Belief in Social Justice; A Shared Passion for Rock and Roll

IN A WORLD THAT PITS DAVIDS AGAINST GOLIATHS, SAM

Himmelstein '79 and Martin Silberman '77 fight on the side of the little guys. They wouldn't have it any other way.

The two men met at an antiwar rally at Brooklyn College in 1969. They became good friends, and political activists, even colonizing a local apartment building and converting it into their own dorm. Silberman drove a cab. Himmelstein worked at a drugstore.

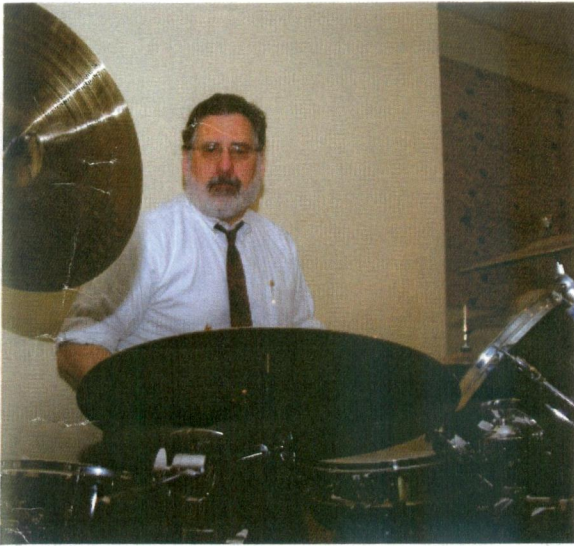
As the Vietnam War drew to a close, Silberman decided the best way to channel his passion for social justice was to become a lawyer, and enrolled in classes at New York Law School, inspiring his good friend to follow suit.

"Marty said, 'You should think about law school. There's a lot you could do as a progressive person,'" Himmelstein recalls. "It opens up a

lot of options for you. You could be a labor lawyer, an immigration lawyer, a housing lawyer. You could make a living, you could sleep at night, live with your conscience.' So I followed in Marty's footsteps."

The two became active in the National Lawyers Guild in law school, organizing events and often opposing the administration on various issues. They both loved music and dreamed of starting a band. After graduation, they remained friends, but as demands of work and family grew, their contact became more sporadic.

Serendipity brought them together at a July 4 Emmylou Harris concert in Battery Park City. They decided then to realize their ambition of forming a band. The next week they met up at Sam Ash, a music store in the city, where Silberman bought a new set of drums, Himmelstein a keyboard.



Above: Martin Silberman on drums, Sam Himmelstein on keyboard and vocals. Right: The Love Handles, including, from left, guitarist Brian Mich, Silberman, and Himmelstein. Other band members include Jeff Nathan, Felicia Michael, and Vince Alban.

Soon they recruited several new members for the band, and what had once seemed an improbable quest became reality when The Love Handles (www.lovehandlesonline.com) played their first gig that December at Himmelstein's birthday party in Windsor Terrace, Brooklyn.

"It's infectious when you perform," Himmelstein confesses. "It's sort of like litigation." Silberman fills in, continuing the riff: "It's like a good cross-examination, which in the legal profession, as far as I'm concerned, there's nothing better."

The band, which also includes Felicia Michael on vocals, Brian Mich and Jeff Nathan on guitars, and Vince Alban on bass, plays covers from the icons of Himmelstein and Silberman's youth, including The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and Bob Dylan, as well as newer songs from Talking Heads, Elvis Costello, and Steve Earle.

While the two men don't agree on everything—Himmelstein's a Mets fan, Silberman roots for the Yankees—their belief in social justice has remained constant. Both represent tenants in

landlord/tenant disputes. "We both like to poke our fingers in the eyes of the rich and powerful and actually make a living while we're doing it," says Silberman.

In 1988, Himmelstein started his own firm, Himmelstein, McConnell, Gribben, Donoghue & Joseph, on Maiden Lane in downtown Manhattan. He will not represent landlords under any circumstances, Himmelstein says.

Silberman formed his firm, Silberman & Rhine LLP, in 1989 with fellow New York Law School alumnus Arthur Rhine '78. One of the top firms representing loft tenants in the city, it is just steps away from New York Law School on Worth Street, and Silberman has served as a judge at the school's annual Robert F. Wagner Moot Court Competition.

Silberman says, "It's stimulating work and it puts us right in the kind of struggle and fight we like to be in. We haven't helped make the revolution, but we do make rock and roll." ■