

The following interview was conducted on behalf of the Oral History Program of The Washington County Museum, and Century High School.

The interviewee is Jeff Wagemann. The interviewers are Karina Reyes and Annie Nguyen.

The interview took place at 8166 SW 184th Ave. Aloha, Oregon 97007.

On May 28th 2001.

What was your first reaction when you found out about the United States involvement in the Vietnam War?

Well,... the concern that the United States was at war, it was kind-of scary. People were wondering how it was going to go, how big it was going to get. You know, in the past history classes we learned about World War II, so we knew how that was gonna go, how that went. So my first reaction, I guess, was, Oh Boy, it's big time, it's something serious.

How did life in Hillsboro change from prewar to during the war?

The attitude of people was a concern for the war. There was, a, feeling that people wanted it to be over with, and calmness and happiness could be restored, and not the concern about the war and all the terrible things that were happening.

What was the public opinion of the war, and how did it change over time?

I think that the majority of the people felt that it was a war that the United States should not have been involved with, but we were, and some people were angry but it had to run it's course. The government of course was leading it or heading it. So we had to just kind-of grin and bear it I guess.

Did it change over time? Did the attitude change over time?

Open

Yeah I think it did come, a little bit, people got old of tired of hearing of the tragedies over there, but yet it was still something that was kind-of at the back of your mind. You kind-of wondered if anybody you knew, anybody's family, relationshi.. relations, distant cousins or anything like that, might have been over there. Whether it was in school, your neighborhood, or even in your family, it was always concern, and the fact that, how it affected people, it was, yeah it was, if it hit close to home, people became more sensitive and upset about it, and others if it didn't affect them it was.

How was the economy based in Hillsboro before the war, did it change, and in what way?

Not really sure if I understand the economy part of it, Hillsboro economy based...I think people continued to live and spend the way they lived and spend before, is that...

I think what the question is that how was...how were people making a living, like that, like right now you see tektronics, and umm

Oh, so before the high tech industry

yeah

It was farming, typically rural farming, small businesses, there wasn't a big shopping center, and uh, high-tech industry hadn't really quite hit yet. Intel was here, but they weren't as big as they are, and they were just in Aloha, they didn't have any of the Hillsboro site stuff yet. So it was still small country, mom and pop type businesses and farming.

Opinion **Were there any anti-war or pro-war demonstrations? and if so how did they affect you?**

Locally?

Yeah

None that I know of, um no demonstrations that I was aware of.

Once people knew that certain young men were going to war in Vietnam, how were these people treated?

With care and concern, the regret that they had to go, the safe of the United States to go over there and fight in the war, it was sad and very emotional for people.

Were there any pro-war community sanctioned activities in Hillsboro during this time such as blood drives for the soldiers in Vietnam?

I'm not sure if pro.. or blood drives, were set up. There was the um, I'm not sure if this is the right answer for this question, but the POW bracelets, they were, oh, I don't know if I should say it was fad, but something it was quickly caught on, and people were participating, buying POW bracelets, and you'd get a uh, send in some...I didn't own one, but uh, you'd send in some money, and you could get a Prisoner of War bracelet, persons name in it, what infantry, and what division, what branch of service, and it was uh, it was money that was collected, and I think it was to help offset some of the expenses that were happening over there that weren't paid by the government.

How were soldiers treated when they returned, and what programs were set up to help them reintegrate into the community?

They were treated with kindness and respect, programs I think weren't necessarily set up right at the beginning, I think it was kind-of delayed effect with the programs for helping them back into the community, and there was a lot of emotional problems that they encountered because they lost friends and loved ones over there in the war, people they worked with I guess, they become a really close family in service and in the war so the programs were to try to help them get back on the mainstream, some suffered a lot of emotional problems. I think to this day, there are still some that have problems.

What do you know about the draft and how did it affect Hillsboro?

Um, the draft was something that you had to sign up for by the time you were 18, and I did, and I think it was my senior year, the last year of high school, that it was required, I think after that it became a voluntary program, so the men, the guys in the Hillsboro high school area, all talked about it and laughed and scoffed, but they knew it was something you had to do, for the, you know, for good reasons. It wasn't something everyone was real excited to do, it was kind-of a chore.

To what extent did young men enlist voluntarily?

Well, I suppose there was a fair amount that did, voluntarily like they want to serve the country, it was some that didn't want anything to do with it. Is that kind of what you were looking for, the answer?

umhum, yeah

Is there any evidence of students becoming aware of the war?

Yes, it was, it was in high school, it was in classes called current events, and uh, that was the discussion that came up, and there were teachers that had, uh, siblings in the war, so you would hear from them, time to time, depending upon the subject matter and the timing, teachers would bring it up in class and have it uh, the war, and touched on it in some way, it was still enforced and it was still.

Did they respond to it in anyway we can find, either pro or con? Did the students respond to it in anyway?

I think most of the students were kind-of confused sometimes, and a lot of them were asking questions, so the teachers would explain the best they knew how, and tell us, you know, explain to us, what was going on and why the government got involved, that's kind-of where I learned that it was a place we shouldn't have been, and over time you keep hearing it said over and over again. Even after school. They did talk about it in..., in a manner that was educational to the students, I don't think I ever had a teacher that ever got up on a soap box, and said pro or con about it, it was just, mostly from an educational stance they took.

Were there any changes in dress or hair over time? Um, Like the way the students reacted to the war? Like a fashion, did it change over time, maybe?

Yeah, you know the '60's were kind-of the freedom children, child, peace-lovin, and that carried over into the '70's, and I don't know if it was 'cause of the Vietnam war, it was just kind-of, part of the combination of that era, but uh, yeah the longer hair, the freedom to do what you want to do when you want to do was more pronounced. Kind-of the lack of respect, kind-of came into play for people and each other, more of their own selves. Part of the Hippie-Days seemed like it was linked with Vietnam. The phrase that was said quite often, was, Make Love not War. That, you know was a common saying in those times, and so people were kind-of revolting the war, and then partying, and being more free with themselves.

Was there ever any evidence of increased drug use in Hillsboro during this time?

I guess I don't know that part, I couldn't honestly say if there was an increase.

What music was popular, during this time?

Um, are you looking for like band names, or type or style?

Well you could tell us whatever you want, it doesn't, there's no specific, you can.

Some of the older artists from the '70's, had some music out that was, Best Of Bread for example was a band, it's an old, old band, but uh, they were during those times, it was more smooth and melancholy kind of music, it wasn't the rebel, head-banger type. It was kind-of ummm, before the disco era of course. More songs about their, the artists lives, I think,

Is there anything that I did not ask to you that you would like to relate to me?

I don't think so, the questions are covered pretty broadly.

When that things on, I'm like, nhhhh.

o.k., um, can you repeat what you just said? Cause that was good,

you put your number in, but then certain numbers would come up, and then you were supposed to call in or report to, I think it was the post office, or federal office someplace.

So, were there any people in your family that were drafted, maybe your relatives or..?

Umm, not that I know of, I think they were, they had signed up of course, but I don't think anybody that I can recall was drafted. Some of my family, well, most of them are in the Midwest, umm, so I, some of them I was close to, and some not very close to, so I don't know ifmaybe the other ones.