

Interview Transcribed

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Place of Interview: The Duris residence- 275 B SE 24th, Hillsboro, Oregon 97123

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In what ways and to what extent did the Vietnam War affect the life in our area?

The first question is going to be general residential info:

How long have you resided in Hillsboro?

Well as I mentioned, we've been here since 1949. We got married in Hillsboro in 1948, I was still in the service, and so we've been living in Hillsboro since then, well, since '49. Except for 8 years, which I mentioned I we move to, uh, I was assigned to the Washington DC field office for techtronics and I lived in Vienna Virginia, which is only 13 miles from DC. So other than that, we've lived here all our lives, we've lived here at this residence for since 67, so that's 34 years now.

And, next question is, how old were you when you first moved to Hillsboro?

When I first move to Hillsboro, well, I was in the Navy then, and as I mentioned, I got to, uh, we got married in 1948, so I was 20 years old in 1948.

What was your general situation for the years 1964-73, and that includes, (that's a really broad question), your family life, your job, and your home, just basic status of it.

Well part of that time, from '64, I was a field engineer for Techtronics Incorporated, which was a big electronic company which is located here in Beaverton from 64 67. Then from 67, I came back as reassigned to the parent company here, and there I held several jobs, the last which was a technical writer for the the company.

It said that you served a term as mayor here?

Yes, after coming back from Washington DC, in 1968, I was appointed to be a city council man for the city of Hillsboro, and shortly after that, I was, there was a vacancy that occurred and I was appointed by the present mayor for the council position and after which I ran there was an election I was reelected as council man. Then after that point, in 1972, the position of mayor was open because we established a two term limit on council men and mayors in Hillsboro during the time I was a council man a so the present mayor, had to had to vacate so I elected to the mayor's position in 1972, and again reelected in

1974, it was at the time a 2 year term, so I served on there from '72 to '76 as the mayor of Hillsboro.

Have you ever held or ran for any other political offices?

Yes, yeah, after 1976, again had to leave because that was my two terms were up, so I was interested in county matters, so I ran for the position of county commissioner for Washington county and I was elected in 1977, and then in several more elections later when I as county commissioner, I was elected to a full time board of three members which was a charter change, and I was chair man of the board, so I left that position in 1980.

Ok, and so you said you became mayor of Hillsboro, in 1972, so you ran for mayor in 1972?

Mmhmm (yes)

So, did your political campaign, was it affected at all by the war?

No, I don't think so, by that time in '72, the war was really heated up by then, as you recall, it started on kind of a low key basis and pretty soon the pictures on the TV began to appear every evening and the war got more involved but it didn't seem to affect, that I noticed, on the political stand point on the local level.

Next part I have is Hillsboro during the Vietnam War:

The first one is did the city council discuss any possible resolutions for the Vietnam War? Did they ever just brainstorm..?

Not to my, not to my recall, no we didn't. Everybody had their viewpoints, and I'm a veteran of World War 2, as I mentioned, so I'm looking at it from a different pair of eyes than an ordinary person that did not attend or wasn't in the service for example. We used to refer to them as civilian, but no, it wasn't, it wasn't a topic that anybody really wanted to get into, everybody had their viewpoints and opinions, but it never got to be a topic

And you said that they all had different opinions, my next one was what was the council's overall opinion of the Vietnam War, but you said that they were all kind of spread out...

They each had their own view points, again depending upon, we had several guys on the fellows on the council who were, who were in the service during World War 2 or after World War 2, and so on, but nobody that I recall it never got into a discussion.

The next one is the most interesting one, is the public, what was Hillsboro's public reaction to the Vietnam War? If they even had any...?

Hard to gauge, I don't recall it being much of a political thing, that is it never exploded into something political, rallies or something like that. I don't recall any rallies like Kent State; you know some of those other colleges that were rallying. Towards the end of the war, everyone wanted us to get out of it, and as the TV pictures showed all of the atrocities, and the bombings and the napalm, that was being used, and or the defoliant the agent orange, everybody had their views on it and people began I think to turn more and more negative because it they didn't see, at least I didn't see, how in the world we could win, and it was in my opinion, it was too bad that Kennedy had to be assassinated, because I think he could of pulled us out of there way early on and not lost the 50 the people that was killed there ultimately.

Wow, that's interesting, because my next question's was there any anti-war protests or demonstrations?

Not in Hillsboro that I recall,

That's interesting.

Yeah, it's very interesting, I think in Portland there may have been some, I can't remember now then but there was an upheaval of people; wanting to express themselves that were killing all these GI's and folks and were not getting anywhere it was kind of a dead end.

Ok, um, how did the schools respond to the Vietnam War? That means, was anything censored, were the kids taught anything at all, were there any sort of school board meetings or discussions held on how they should teach the kids about it.

No, I can't answer that, truthfully, because I don't know plan was, the teachers as far as I know didn't have that as a topic, they may have. In colleges that was a topic, in several colleges the campuses had many different demonstrations and this sort of this, but at the high school level here, or certainly at the grade school or the high school level, I don't recall anything, certainly nothing public that I remember.

It's fascinating that a war is going on -"yeah"-but the town is...well...

Well that's the thing you see everybody saw the war we sat down at 6 o'clock at night, see the news, see the bombings, all of the stuff that was going on, and that was over, you turned the station to some other station. People weren't physically affected by the war, and that was a mistake, in my opinion, because had they affect personally, gas rationing like it was in World War 2, and those kinds of things, food rationing because of various foods that wouldn't be available to you, like when we were in World War 2, if the public had been affected by that war, I think the war would have ended a lot sooner, but there wasn't anything like that so people only knew what was shown on TV about it really.

I'm opinionated on this one already by looking through months of it, but do you think the Hillsboro Argus properly represented the views of Hillsboro at the time, or really showed a lot about the war or anything?

I don't remember reading very much about it in the Argus to be honest. I think the Argus, took a dim view of it but they never editorialized as I recall.

Yeah, we're going through months and months

And you couldn't find an editorial about it to save your soul?

No, it's about, we heard a lot about bake sales

Oh yeah stuff like that, and not touch on the major issue of the day

Yeah, and we were it was so interesting, the paper, you think they would talk about stuff like that...

They fell short of their responsibility

Yeah, I think so too

Which was pretty strange, it was in the early days one of the best papers around, it won a lot of national awards, but it just seemed to have different priorities when it came to covering the Vietnam aspect of it.

If you don't know anything about this, it's fine, but can you tell me anything about the draft board? Because we're trying to find more information on it, if you recall anything...

Well, that was interesting because there wasn't really a draft board as I recall at that time. So you had volunteers going over joining, and later they instituted kind of a draft classification and as you recall that's why a lot of anti-Vietnam young men and women not agreeing with what was going on defected to Canada. And you probably read how it was pretty controversial people called them "yellow-bellies" and of different names but they did go to Canada to escape the draft and some of them are apparently still. There were thousands of them that went to Canada to avoid being called into the service.

But it didn't really happen around here?

I don't know of anybody personally that did that, but there were a lot that, which riles me up, because we were picking people to join the services, and that was again a controversial thing because they were saying that the minorities were being picked because they had less education and didn't have as much money so they went into the service and went over to v and got killed. So that was a controversial thing, that was again was one of the after affects of the war itself.

Were there a lot of people in Hillsboro that served in Vietnam?

My son and law was a helicopter pilot, (he's a retired cornel now), he was shot down, and is highly decorated now. He could recite his own views, which are obviously are bias, because he was in the thick of it, and he's still getting disability because of it.

Was there a welcome home for the Vietnam soldiers?

You know that's a touchy subject with me because one of the things that came out of this was that the public, because they were watching what was on TV, I mean the cameras were right into the Mai Lai Massacre, and just recently the senator Carey situation came up, and he's a senator and a medal of honor soldier, the highest award that the country can bestow upon a soldier or a serviceman, and here this cropped up because they went into a village and did those kind of things in a war. That biased many, many thousands of people against the military. And when the soldiers come home you've heard and read about <the soldiers> being spit upon and called all kinds of names, murderers and so on and so forth, and that bothers me more than anybody. It certainly bothers the servicemen that serviced there; they were ordered into service, they were ordered to go over there, and yet to be treated like that, with no respect, was one of the terrible aspects of the outcome of the war and we still hasn't lived that down to some degree. The Desert Storm incident helped give us some pride in the military but if you interview some people that thoughts about Vietnam War, they would probably still say that the servicemen did this and did that and it's an awful thing. Time will wash all of that away but right now if I was a Vietnam servicemen I, that's why a lot of them committed suicide afterwards, they just couldn't stand it. Its an awful awful situation that was one of the worst situations from the outcome from that war, our own servicemen being treated like a bunch of murderers and so on, that's awful.

Now your personal opinion, tell me about your feeling at the time about the Vietnam War?

At the time? My personal feelings?

Yeah

I'm biased because I'm a World War 2 veteran. We shouldn't have been there. For a lot of reasons we shouldn't have been there. The military leaders, I think, number one failed us, they failed...their policies were very much in error, as I mentioned before, the agent orange kind of thing that was developed to defoliate the areas around there, not regarding the fact that it was falling on our own men, see, so you wonder did they do that regardless knowing that's gonna happen, a lot of unanswered questions there. It's a pity because many thousands of men have died or have been maimed by those kinds of policies. Our military leaders, as well as our nation's leader, including the president...As you know, president Johnson resigned because of the war, so here was a great man in his own right, that the war itself caused him to resign outta there because of what happened. My own views are the fact that we should have listened to our own military leaders I know in hindsight it's easy to say but we should have listened to people like general Macarthur

who long time ago predicted that you never want to get into a fighting war with Asia, and no one listen, so that was the sad outcome of that entire conflict.

Did you have any pressures, or feel any pressures while you were mayor, pertaining to the war?

No, we were rather nonchalant about it, there was no call for resolution or anything along those lines to affect the population in Hillsboro, it was pretty... I don't know how best to describe it but everyday was just like any other day it seemed like until you got home and watched TV and then everybody make their own views and feelings based on what they saw on the tube.

Were you involved in any civic organizations during the war?

I was president of the Optimist Club at the time, I was in Rotary, but that was, I think was before the start of the war, or later, I can't remember now.

Were they involved with the war at all, any fundraising?

No, nothing that I can recall which is strange. Oregonians are independent people and it didn't strike to me the Oregonians as much as the other states where they had demonstrations and different activities related to or because of the war.

It's just shocking that there wasn't really a reaction towards the war going on

No

The reaction time began to get involved when people were agreeing with the demonstrators, and even congress was saying get us out of the conflict as you remember, they were trying to decide how to get out of the conflict with an honorable exit, well 55 or so thousand people are already dead with thousand more wounded, and there're trying to save face trying to get out of Saigon. You see the helicopter on top of the building trying to vacate the building, so finally they compromised and got out of there, which was about 8 years too late.

Basically to sum it up if you have anything else you need to add about what it was like the home front, was it really unaffected..?

Well think when the war ended, everyone took a sigh of relief. And now we can go back to regular business, but again in my mind, an awful testimony as to how our returning servicemen were treated, I think that was a huge shameful blot on the American public, and just because information given to the public, the public never supported the war. It was the political leaders who were running the place and treating our American servicemen who gave their lives a lot of times, their sacrifices, were treated like dirt, that was awful and we hope we never have to see that thing again. Complete opposite as to des storm were we had parades that sort of thing, which they deserved. I think again it was a terrible lesson for our congressional and political leaders to learn after all those

men had been killed so... Most of the public that I have come in contact with you don't really talk about the Vietnam War anymore, and the World War 2 veterans, the ones that were really in heavy contact, and I belong to the vets of foreign wars post here in Hillsboro, I am the quartet master for it. We have Vietnam veterans in members we have a fellow now still going to the hospital, has had several operations, can't hardly walk, all because of Vietnam. That sort of thing you see and shake your head and say "Why did this even happen?"