

This is an interview conducted by Annie Nguyen and Karina Reyes in May 25, 2001. The interviewees are Donald and Betty Eidem.

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

Donald Eidem: I wasn't too happy about it because my son had to go.

AN: What was his name?

DE: Michael.

Karina Reyes: How old was your son?

DE: He was just 18. He graduated high school in '69 and he left in '69. He enlisted of course because he knew he was going to be drafted anyways. He was there 2 years. Luckily nothing happened. That's how I got my gray hair though. Every time I got a phone call. It was kind of worrisome.

AN: How did life in Hillsboro change from pre-war to during the war? Was there any changes?

DE: The population has certainly exploded. With all housing and stuff. When we first moved to Beaverton it was only I think 2900 people. And now what is it? 70, 80 thousand I think. It's more Hillsboro. They're kind of jogging back and forth. Control I think.

KR: So, was there anything that affected you during the period of the Vietnam War?

DE: I was worry about my son being drafted. I was working at Tektronix at the time. Other than that...

AN: What was the public opinion of the war and did it change over time?

DE: Yeah well, it's a lot better now. Most people were against it. It was one of those wars we shouldn't have been in it, but we were involved and there was nothing we could do. We couldn't back out. Back then, nothing would have got solved because the North Vietnamese still got their way. I guess we're getting around to it now.

AN: How was the economy based in Hillsboro before the war? What was it based on?

KR: Was it on agriculture, or industrial?

DE: It was a lot more agriculture. Now a lot of the farms have been developed over the last 20 years. When we first moved to Beaverton, there were farms all over the place. In fact, we were in the sub division section back in the war.

AN: Did the economy change over time? Over the war?

BE: During the war, things. You couldn't buy things without having... what were they called?

DE: Well the Vietnam War. WWII was more rationing and stuff.

BE: Oh, the Vietnam War. No, I don't think there was much of a change.

DE: WWII was the big one

DE: My son. They were involved. In fact, he and his two buddies. They were all through Vietnam War. Luckily, they got together. They probably went to Fort Lewis to train and stationed at the same place. Vietnam, Laos.

KR: Did your son and the students graduate before they enlisted?

DE: The old Hilhi.

KR: Were there any anti war or pro war demonstrations around Hillsboro or around the schools and how did they affect you?

BE: I don't think there were any around us because we had a son in Vietnam and I wouldn't have gone along with it at all.

DE: I don't remember anything so there probably wasn't any.

AN: How did people in Hillsboro treat the young men that wanted to go to Vietnam and fight?

BE: I don't think the boys were treated very nicely at all, they weren't backed up at all. I can remember World War II and how we treated our men and that war. They did what they were supposed to do even though they weren't fighting on our ground necessarily. And one of the things people said was that 'you're not fighting on our ground, for our ground.' But I think the thing of it is, is the Vietnam War, there were too many no-no's for everybody, the servicemen.

DE: And it was kind of a no win situation, you see we could have done war, but we held back.

BE: But the boys weren't treated real good. The minute they got home and the uniforms went off and they didn't put them on until they had to go back.

A: How were the soldiers treated when they returned and were there any programs set up to help them?

DE: Not as many as there were during WWII...they never really declared war actually.

KR: Were there any pro-war community sanctioned activities such as a blood drives for the soldiers or maybe a gift drive?

BE: I don't know of any. Not during Vietnam

DE: I gave blood, but...

A: What do you know about the draft and how did it effect Hillsboro?

DE: Well they took a lot of young boys... the draft wasn't like it is now.

BE: Our boy knew he was going to be drafted because of his number, so he decided to enlist, which would give him two years in the service. And he was in Vietnam practically the whole time.

A: Did you know any men who openly resisted the draft?

KR: To what extent did young men enlist voluntarily?

BE: If they knew they had a low number

DE: Like our son.

A: Is there anything else that I did not ask that you could relate to me about the happenings in Hillsboro?

BE: I don't think there were very many things in Hillsboro that happened during that time. But I know... our kids were going to school there. To my knowledge I knew nothing about anything going on. And living this far... when you live on the outskirts of Hillsboro you don't really know about everything that's going on.

DE: We were so busy working. It wasn't all combined like it is now.

BE: And my oldest boy, he was always stern about going to school there. He was into football and wrestling. He was very involved, and I think... it seems to me we would have heard of something, but most of his friends were...

A: How did you react when you found out he enlisted?

DE: We weren't too happy...

BE: When he came home on leave, he said to me mom, 'what would you do if I said I was going to go to Canada?' and I said, "what would you do if I said get in the car and I'll drive you."

DE: It was a protest during the Vietnam war, and a lot of people did that.

BE: And just coming home from leave too, knowing the things that he had gone through, I didn't want him to go back.

I'm really a patriotic person, but I feel that the government was not acting for the service men, and they needed their backing not my backing. They needed to end the war... get in there, if you're gonna have a war, let's go to war and get it over with, not drive it on and on. Do whatever it takes to get rid of it. That's my philosophy.

KR: Did the war affect the lives of your children that were still in the school at the time?

BE: I think that people were quite supportive of the war, and the boys and the young men that were going over there, because they knew them all. But I'm sure there were a lot of them that protested.

A: Did the war change Hillsboro in any way?

DE: Not that we know of, because of course....

BE: We were farmers. I don't know if you've ever been on a farm or if you've lived on a farm... we also worked outside the farm, so your day is like a 15, 16, hour day and you really didn't know what was going on beyond the acreage. I don't think we were really into that kind of thing. Maybe we should've been, but we didn't have the choice.

A: Would you say that most of the Hillsboro population was based on agriculture?

BE: Very definitely. That's why their kids got out of school early-- to pick berries. Our kids had to pick berries; it was good for them. I had to pick berries with them because my second son was too young to pick and the only way for him to get in the field was for me to go with him.

KR: Did local churches take any position on the war?

BE: It was supportive of the war. I'm sure our churches were at the time.