

Tape missing

Interview with Marilynn Stribling conducted by Joel Popick, June 1, 2001

“MS: looking at an article about the Moratorium”

MS: A lot of what we did was spend the whole day talking about it. I couldn't remember if it was our school or just our department.

JP: Did you know about the . . . did it correspond with the nationwide Moratorium?

MS: Of course I remember the stuff I was involved with in the day, but not really what the other teachers were thinking about it... what went on at Hillsboro High School at least during this period of time.

JP: Some of the things I want to know about are class sizes during the Vietnam War.

MS: Much smaller than today's so ... 25 was about an average. If you got up to 28 it was considered big. I had classes that were down to 20. We got to know the students a whole lot better and I think you got a whole lot more done.

JP: When the draft started, did you start losing students when they got drafted?

*Draft*

MS: No. High school students didn't get drafted. One of the things though that I remember was being interviewed and having to attest to the fact that some of my students were conscientious objectors. These students had left Hills and maybe went to college or were of draft age and then applied for conscientious objectors status. So then they came back and talked to me. What did I see or hear or learn about this student that was a true indicator of his philosophical beliefs? Or was it all of a sudden he got drafted and became a conscientious objector? I can remember two or three of those sorts of things happening. One actually became a minister, so he truly was deserving of a conscientious objector status. But no, we didn't have students drafted at our school.

JP: What sort of ethics did the students have during the war and before the war and after? did they change their study habits or um.. what really

MS no I didn't see study habits changing what what happened was this sort of gradual change maybe you have studied this in your class but it was this sort of gradual sliding into America's involvement of Vietnam until we were deep deep deeply committed did people conscience ness really get raised once high school students saw college protesters and protests in downtown Portland turning on the TV and seeing protests around the country .. did our high school students awareness increase there were students that were deeply truly and ethically committed to the idea that did believe that America's involvement in Vietnam was wrong and at the same time this was a rather conservative rural farming community

JP: and these people disagreed with the government?

JP did her views or there views change at any time during the war

MS it was hard for me to know because I would have the kids in class for no more then a year and of corse the Vietnam war went on for years I don't know what happened to her after she left my class or after she left hill hi but I am sure she went onto collage and became a protester at the university level as well after she left hill hi as well

JP so you could really tell if the student was if the student was going to be an avid protester?

MS well yea there was some that you could just because of the views that they voiced in class on the other hand there was some students that were rather quiet ya know the old expression the quiet water runs deep and so there were some of those students too they really didn't say much in class but you could in some of the things they wrote and turned in you could read there views maybe they didn't feel like they needed to express themselves over and over.

JP as a social studies teacher did you feel that you could get more in touch a little more about the topic of Vietnam

MS yea yes .. but we were cationed as teachers over and over again to make sure that because the emotions were running so high and because this was basically a conservative community we were cationed by our administrators to be very certain that what we did was be very fair and present all sides if we expressed our opinion to be sure that we announced that this is MY opinion not nessicerily that this is the truth like I say there were times when there were some pretty heated emotions that came out there was a teacher I wont name the names there was this teacher that taught next door to me he was quite liberal he had a beard which for those days it was pushing the envelope a little and he taught a class called American problems and of course discussed what was happening in his class and he had invited some people who were friends you know the society of friends sometimes called quakers who were anti war anti violence so they he had invited acouply of them to come to his class and talk about Vietnam and they brought with them a film strip that they showed that had some early early footage of the secret bombing of Cambodia woah I tell you and so from this film strip and from there presentation the students discussion ranged throughout the class and they left class and went to there next class and continued this discussion and another staff member had over herd what had happened in there social studies class and they second staff member had been a counral or major or some such officer before becoming a teacher. Well! I tell you he ranted and raved and stomped and screamed about the communist doctrines being forced on the students by this commie social studies teacher! Well the social studies teacher got wind of what this other staff person was saying stomped down to the principals office and demanded this this other teacher be fired and demanded that his reputation be erased clean and all this sort of thing it was quite a scene, and Mrs. Duyckinck will know who this teacher is she knows him too and so what the principal and the vice principal had to get these two men teachers together (laughs) and mend some fences but I don't know if

they ever spoke to each other again but you see it tells us something about how high emotions were running.

JP: How teaching did you teach about the Vietnam war

MS: yea I thought US history and so of course we had our lesson plans and we had to cover the early history and WWI and WWII and all of that. As the war began to unfold and as different issues came up we examined it in terms of things like the presidents power you know the constitutional issues and who has the right to make decisions and influence of the press and the public on the president and Johnson's decision not to run again as these issues unfolded then they became part of the classroom decision, you are a student of history and so you understand that sometimes perspective time cooling of emotion reflection all of which comes from a period of time allowed history to be looked at with a more critical eye then when emotions are flaring and its hard to then really teach objectively for the teacher .. for the kids its only been within the last 10 or 15 years that we have included the study of Vietnam.

JP: Can you think of any people who evaded that draft?

Draft

MS There were. When I was in collage particularly, we had organizations of veterans opposed to the war in Vietnam. there were students that were very concerned on keeping there draft status or there student deferment status to avoid the draft. They had to have so many hours of status, they had to be in classes, they had to be enrolled in so many classes, they had to be passing so many classes. If they flunked or then there grades dropped then they lost there student deferment status. It was a very very big thing. It was a concern of the young man making sure that they kept that. I guess I can tell you a story about my sister, she is on the staff here so I wont tell her name because I don't know if she wants this all around over school. this was something that happened well maybe 10 or 8 years ago. My sister and I have shared most thing. We tell each other most things. She had held this story in for a very very long time. She was an enormously bright student. She was just an exceptionally good student in collage I think she had strait A's unlike her sister me, (laughs) and one of her professors who graded the class curve on the highest score in the class. Maybe some of your teachers do that too. Lets say if the test was worth 100 points and the highest grade in the class was 70 then the curve would be based on 70 rather then 100. He also had this VERY nasty habit of passing back the tests with the worse one first and the best one last. So everybody in the class knew about what you got, and so she was in this class with large lecture hall and it was teared and like the good student she was she sat down in front. So the professor is passing back I guess it was the final and he just handing these out and he says 17 23 26 29 Ohhh big score 32 ya know 47 and around the room he went and around the room he went. He goes all the way up. The scores were like 71 or 72 and here is the last paper a 98 and walks over and hands it to my sister and now of coarse the curve is based on 98 instead of what ever 72 or what ever it was going to be. From down the teared the lecture hall comes stomp stomp stomp stomp (hits the table). This young man and he comes around and gets right in my sister face. His face is quivering and his eyes are filled with water. He can hardly get the words out and he says "GOD DAMN YOU" ... "GOD DAMN YOU", "because of you I have to go to Vietnam and if

I die its your fault and out the door he went. Wham, they didn't move and my sister said she just (crying) she just hung on. She was just so shaken by it 20 years later. I hear the story she is telling the story and she says he went to Vietnam and she gets all emotional again because she never saw that boy again. She says I wonder I wonder what happened to him, those are the stories that still affect people. It was a very emotional time, how long it took her to tell me that story. See there's me getting all emotional.

JP: Is there anything else you want to tell me?

MS: I really can't think of too much more, um, protest songs were really big music was a huge part of that culture at that time have you talked about that in class at all?

JP: we got the top 10 from that time but other then that I don't really think..

MS: Okay there were some songs that were protest song that was a part of the high school experience you couldn't be a part of the era without hearing the music on the radio or on the TV with um, play the songs and uh, recording artists you wouldn't think they were protest artists and they would play the songs it really became part of the culture too. I am sure you have talked about smuthers brothers and have you

JP: no

MS: you know the smuthers brothers TV show well the smuthers brothers were a brother team they were basically musicians and they were not really good enough to make it as musicians but they incorporated enough comedy in there act that they became quite popular and they really did on the collage circuit so they end up on TV and they have an hour long TV show and they began making fun of the ministration president Johnson and president Nixon and the conduct of the war and the America roll and that sort of stuff of course the sponsors got upset with them the corporate executives got upset with them and it was another show that did the same thing was lap dance with Goldy Hawn you know Goldy Hawn?

JP: yea I know her.

MS: OK well she was one of the original marksman that makes fun of the weather spoon handle that we were being lied to by the administration and it was just there were people who refused to watch these shows and there people who wouldn't miss them and it sorta happened I guess when Clinton was under siege by leno and letterman and Saturday night live made fun of you know it was the same thing happened only it was prime time TV, and just indicates again how much impact how much this war had on our every day lives music TV the way we went to school confrontations people had at work confrontations at work people quit talking to each other you know long time friends agreed not to talk about it where they very depressed time in our history. I don't think all of the scars about it are healed either I just look at this last memorial day weekend there were so many specials on pearl harbor and WWII also about all of the veterans of course Vietnam and it was amazing how people were still dealing with it particular the veterans

JP: how where the veterans treated when they came home

MS: it just depend on what situation you found yourself in I think veterans who came home to a small community where everybody knew them were welcomed and treated with respect and treated like the veterans earlier there were other veterans that came home to face hostility I knew veterans who came home and wouldn't put on the resume on there job resume who wouldn't put that they were a Vietnam veteren because they were afraid that someone was going to read that and they were going to just toss it out people who would ware there uniform and would step off the plane and would face nasty stares and people calling them baby killers and you know just giving them grief which was really a difficult thing to face cause you know they had gone over there and then they came home and none of what they were ordered to do and had to do was appreciated.

JP: did you ever have and students that got out of high school to go to the Vietnam war and had to come back.

MS: not that I am aware of no we had staff members who went to Vietnam and then joined the teaching staff I would encourage my students to go to them and do an interview and I quit doing that because for some of them it was just too difficult to talk about or they would give such a superficial accounting of it that it wasn't a worth wild interview and so I just not ask the students to interview the staff I think that because there is a different relationship with the students they have in there class and maybe if they were interviewed by someone that wasn't in there school or in there class they would be more open but I know there were people who came back from the war and just never adjusted and had marriages break up suicides they just couldn't face it couldn't face man or society I always asked my students to interview someone who could remember the Vietnam war not necessarily someone who was in the Vietnam war sorta like you were doing with me what was life like what happening how did this change you life and stuff like that and you know the interview you know sometimes they would get a good story and sometimes they are told I don't talk about this to anybody and I am not talking about it to you but that shut them down pretty fast, anything else?

JP: no that's pretty much all

MS: Yea, this has been .. I got some good questions thanks and good luck on finishing the project